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Crossing Divides

Archaeology as Long-Term History

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Few cultural and political events have stimulated as much debate among social scientists as the Columbian Quincentennial. For archaeologists especially, the 1992 commemoration of Columbus's landfall in the New World provoked a wide-ranging and critical debate. At first, the discussion was largely reflexive and focused on the political context of archaeological practice, on the responsibilities of archaeologists to descendant communities, and on the disciplinary divide separating history from anthropology (Lightfoot 1995; Rogers and Wilson 1993; Thomas 1989; Wylie 1992). More recently, attention has turned to the development of new theoretical approaches for studying colonial interaction, inspired especially by political economy and poststructural social theory (Cobb 2003; Lightfoot, Martinez, and Schiff 1998; Gosden 2004; Silliman 2001; Stein 2005). The result has been a surge of interest in post-1500 indigenous communities and a rapidly growing body of archaeological knowledge about the ways in which the processes of European colonialism were integrated, accommodated, resisted, and transformed by native peoples.

But even as research on colonial interaction has become more prominent and methodologically sophisticated, many scholars have continued to rely on untested conceptual frameworks for understanding how and why native societies changed after the advent of Europeans (McNiven and Russell 2005). Despite evidence of their inadequacy (Cobb 2003; Rodríguez-Alegría 2008; Rogers and Wilson 1993), the same conventional explanations for the course of post-1500 culture change continue to be given. American Indians and First Nations peoples continue to be portrayed as primitive environmentalists, living lightly on the land in a homeostatic state of nature, even as evidence

mounts that they were responsible for shaping the ecosystems encountered by the first European settlers. Archaeologists continue to assume that European technologies rapidly and decisively replaced indigenous technologies, despite evidence for the persistent use of stone and bone tools. Historians acknowledge the impact of native actions on colonial society, but the dominance of the colonists, with their more powerful weapons, their superior disease resistance, and their outsized avarice, is seldom questioned. And although the triumphal story of European progress has lost some of its luster, the teleology at its heart can still be found in the assumption of inevitable cultural collapse that infuses research on recent native peoples.

In part, the ongoing reliance on conventional narratives of change reflects the asymmetrical outcome of colonial interaction. In the end, the result was decisive: millions of native people dead, the survivors driven from their homes, forced to assimilate, forced to deny their heritage and their identity. Many of their descendants now live in crushing poverty. The consequences for native peoples have been so overwhelming that many scholars have believed they also were inevitable, and this has discouraged critical research on the course of colonial interaction. But the assumption of inevitability merely poses questions: On what evidence are conventional narratives based? Who produced them and when? In this chapter, we explore the origins of these narratives, consider why they have endured, and introduce the approaches the contributors to this book use to challenge them.

Colonial Discourse

The current conceptual framework for understanding post-1500 native culture change remains deeply rooted in what Edward Said (1978) and others influenced by the philosopher and critic Michel Foucault have termed "colonial discourse." Over the last three decades, these postcolonial theorists have shown that European colonial power was intimately intertwined with European knowledge about colonized peoples (Bhabha 1994). On the one hand, European military and economic expansion made colonial knowledge possible by bringing large numbers of Europeans into contact with indigenous peoples around the world. On the other, such knowledge provided the moral and legal bases of conquest and control.

Thus, colonialism both enabled and necessitated an array of "cultural technologies" by which Europeans segregated, classified, and ranked the peoples they conquered (Dirks 1992:3). Central to these techniques of control were European descriptions or representations of native societies and native lifeways.

Everywhere they went, Europeans produced travelogues, allegorical images, novels, maps, scientific treatises, promotional pamphlets, and administrative reports containing representations of indigenous peoples (Jaffe, Viola, and Rovigatti 1991). Some of the earliest accounts reflect long-standing European expectations of the exotic: in announcing his discovery, Columbus reported that one of the islands he visited was populated solely by women and that on another, "everyone is born with a tail" (Zamora 1993:8). Others say at least as much about European society and European politics as they do about indigenous cultural practices. Warkentin (2003) argues that both the content and the rhetoric of Pierre-Esprit Radisson's seventeenth-century descriptions of the native peoples of New France were specifically designed to appeal to the influential courtiers surrounding England's Charles II. Some narratives are famously judgmental, but even those claiming nothing more than dispassionate curiosity subtly reflect European values. Captain James Cook's accounts of his encounters with native peoples, for example, should be read not simply as objective descriptions but also as "parable[s] of Europe's scientific, civilizing mission" and as expressions of European moral progress (Clayton 2003:152).

Together, these texts and images comprise a body of knowledge that Europeans used to make sense of the people they encountered and, later, to legitimate their power over them (Axtell 2001; Trouillot 1991). At first, the flood of representations that appeared in the wake of the earliest encounters helped shape European views on their place in the world (Hodgen 1964), but soon enough, they were used to justify colonial domination. For example, the widely held view that native North Americans had failed to adequately develop the lands on which they lived became the legal basis, known as *terra nullius*, for the appropriation of those lands by colonists (Gosden 2004). Colonial discourse justified the social domination and material exploitation of colonized peoples by categorizing and then ranking them relative to Europeans, who placed themselves at the apex of a moral, intellectual, biological, and

technological hierarchy. Not only did colonial discourse passively reflect preexisting power relations, it was also integral to their production and reproduction. As Said (1993:xiii) observes, in addition to economic and military power, the colonists exercised the "power to narrate." Colonial discourse did more than simply report on indigenous societies. It literally produced "indigenousness" for a European audience.[1]

But colonial discourse always entailed far more than the production and maintenance of power. The representations of native life produced by colonists, conquistadors, missionaries, and merchants also helped define what it meant to be European (Thomas 1991:9). They did so by establishing and sustaining an opposition between a European "self" and an indigenous "other." This divide emerged from both expressed and implied contrasts between the reported actions and character of indigenous peoples and those of Europeans. Thus, by cataloging the moral and intellectual shortcomings of colonized natives, colonial discourses fortified European beliefs in their own superiority (Williams and Chrisman 1994:127). The courage and fortitude of European conquerors were affirmed by reports of the native's irrational fears. Observations on the timelessness and simplicity of native life helped throw into high relief the narrative of European progress. And just as technological achievements were thought to have liberated Europeans from their bondage to the natural world, technological simplicity was thought to have been at the root of native social stasis. By establishing and maintaining these contrasts, the discourses of colonialism helped construct the fundamental features of modern Western identity. In the process, ideas about native peoples became deeply intertwined with European views on sexuality, race, and class (Montrose 1993; Stoler 1995). This is the reason colonialist narratives, and the conceptual great divide they foster, have retained their salience, even after the passing of the colonies and empires they legitimized.

Colonialism and Anthropology

But there is more to the story. For many social scientists, especially anthropologists and archaeologists, colonial discourses and the narratives of social change they support have been difficult to transcend because they are built into the theoretical fabric of their disciplines (McNiven and

Russell 2005; Thomas 2004). In the seventeenth century, the influx of representations of native North Americans was crucial to the development of European ideas about human nature and the relationship between culture and the environment. Thomas Hobbes's famous phrase describing the lives of early people as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" was thought to apply equally well to contemporary American Indians and First Nations peoples, who were seen as remnants of a past age. By the middle of the eighteenth century, scholars had proposed various models meant to explain the reported differences among human groups. These schemes combined previously accepted "conjectural prehistories" with newly developed ideas about human cultural and biological evolution (McNiven and Russell 2005:38). By connecting intellectual and moral achievement to specific technological practices and modes of subsistence, they helped establish the hierarchies on which colonial rule was based.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, social scientists reframed and systematized these ideas. Edward Burnett Tylor, Sir John Lubbock, and other scholars interested in cultural evolution inherited theories about technology, society, and the relationship between nature and culture more or less directly from their eighteenth-century predecessors. They also mined colonial texts and images for data to support their arguments about the mechanisms and course of culture change. Using these materials, nineteenth-century evolutionists transformed the biological and cultural divide established by colonial discourses into a temporal and structural divide. For these thinkers, native peoples represented the evolutionary past, Europeans the future. In North America, for example, Lewis Henry Morgan built his unilineal classificatory system around the idea that technology is the principal engine driving human moral and intellectual progress. By his account, the failure of American Indians to develop iron metallurgy forever condemned them to a status no higher than the "Middle Period of Barbarism," fully one period below the "Civilization" enjoyed by Europeans.

Nineteenth-century social scientists also inherited concepts from Romanticism, including an emphasis on subjectivity and the individual and an obsession with the exotic. One of the most influential Romantic concepts was the notion that American Indians and First Nations peoples represented a "vanishing race." Well-developed versions of this ideology can be found in many narratives written by European explorers during

the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Morgan, for example, made liberal use of the pictures and detailed descriptions produced by George Catlin, a self-taught artist who traveled extensively throughout the Great Plains from 1830 to 1836. Catlin (1989:3) believed that his pictures and words were "snatching from a hasty oblivion what could be saved for the benefit of posterity." The ideology of the vanishing race is perhaps best expressed in the images and ethnographic sketches of Edward S. Curtis, a professional Seattle photographer and self-styled ethnographer (Sandweiss 2001). Like Catlin, Curtis's tireless efforts to document indigenous lifeways were motivated by his belief that American Indians were "passing into the darkness of an unknown future" (Curtis 1907: List of Plates).

Thus, while representations of native peoples first appeared in the sixteenth century, it was during the latter half of the nineteenth century, concurrent with a dramatic expansion in the extent of European colonial possessions, that coherent colonialist narratives finally matured. That maturation was fostered by the political needs of the growing European empires, which were satisfied, in part, by anthropological progressivism. That is, anthropological theories and methods sustained the cultural and racial divisions that sanctioned colonial rule. In turn, colonialist ideas became firmly lodged at the heart of anthropological and, later, archaeological theory.

Even after unilineal cultural evolution fell from favor, anthropologists working in North America continued to nurture the conceptual divide between natives and Europeans. In the 1930s and 1940s, acculturation researchers, reacting equally to the excesses of nineteenth-century evolutionism and of anti-historical functionalism, began to frame the study of post-1500 indigenous culture change in terms of "culture contact" (Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits 1936). They focused especially on the spread of cultural practices from dominant "donor" cultures to passive "recipient" cultures. Contact, which was limited in their model to face-to-face interaction, did not initially refer exclusively to European colonialism. However, in practice, acculturation research almost always focused on the spread of Western lifeways and the concomitant loss of native technologies, cuisine, architecture, and social practices. As a result, acculturation research was tacitly bound up with contemporaneous debates about immigration, modernization, and cultural integration (Cusick 1998).

Because their work emphasized first-hand interaction, most anthropologists engaged in culture-contact research explicitly privileged historical documents over archaeological data. However, in the 1950s, archaeologists working with recent native material culture also began to adopt the acculturation framework. Acculturation research fit well with the prevailing culture-historical approach pursued by most archaeologists at the time, because it defined culture in superorganic, functional terms and because it emphasized the study of atomized traits (Rubertone 2000). In the process of engaging in this approach, archeologists transformed acculturation research from a theoretical standpoint into a technique for measuring the impact of European colonialism on native peoples. The axioms on which the method is built—that the adoption of European material culture is a monotonic, cumulative process; that technological change is unavoidable; and that the processes of material change lead to dependency and cultural dissolution—recapitulate colonial ideas about the superiority of European technologies and the inevitability of indigenous culture change. The idea that native cultures were static and that interaction with Europeans initiated a process of deterioration was further reinforced by the increasingly widespread use of direct historic analogy, which matured in tandem with acculturation research (Stahl 1993).

In the 1960s, renewed interest in cultural evolution and in the connections between culture and the environment unwittingly endorsed other aspects of colonial narratives. Leslie White's neoevolutionism echoed Morgan's emphasis on the critical role played by technology in social and cultural change. The power to control nature, a capacity denied American Indians and First Nations peoples by colonial chroniclers, became a defining characteristic of social complexity. At the same time, ecological systems theory, a model seen as especially appropriate for the analysis of so-called simple societies, moved the locus of culture change outside society, into the environment. As a result, systems theorists saw hunting and gathering peoples in particular as inherently static and governed by universal laws of nature.

Even the postmodern turn in anthropology has reinforced, rather than dismantled, the conceptual partition separating Europeans and indigenous peoples (Cobb 2005; Dirks 1990; Ohnuki-Tierney 2005). By defining the premodern as a foil for the modern, it has reified and essentialized the notion of traditional culture, in the process perpetuating colonialist

categories. In searching for the origins and consequences of modernity, it has inadvertently taken up the views of the seventeenth and eighteenth century primitivists, who saw premodern social change as gradual and ritualized. Community, they believed, was more important than the individual. Social identity was well marked and stable. Globalization, postmodernists argue, ruptured that prior world, destabilizing identity, accelerating the pace of change, and detaching people from the landscape. All of these ideas are familiar to the readers of colonial discourses.

Narratives of Change

All of this, to be sure, is well-plowed ground. In fact, many anthropologists (and some archaeologists) have written against the most egregious oppositions of colonialist thought. Nevertheless, colonialist narratives—sometimes distorted, sometimes abbreviated, and sometimes inverted—remain embedded in both scholarly and popular thinking about American Indians and First Nations peoples, where they continue to provide many of the essential schemata guiding research (Rodríguez-Alegría 2008). They specify assumptions about the nature and rate of change and identify salient analytic units. They point out significant events and identify causal processes. And they establish theoretical standpoints and stipulate degrees of analytic closure or completeness.

Colonial discourses drape a whole series of interconnected and mutually reinforcing contrasts over a basic underlying dichotomy (Ohnuki-Tierney 2001). One pole of the dichotomy is taken up by progressive, literate Europeans. They are the bearers of modernity, the controllers of nature, and the producers of history (Dirks 1990). They make self-interested, rational choices. The other pole is taken up by traditional, static, nonliterate natives. They are the bearers of tradition, bound by custom, myth, and legend. Their choices reflect timeless cultural values. Colonialist narratives of change therefore trace the transition from the traditional to the modern, from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*.

For archaeologists, the most potent narrative of change describes the process by which European technologies replaced native technologies. Steel tools, the narrative explains, hold an edge better than stone tools and therefore quickly replaced them. Metal kettles are more durable than earthenware pots. Rifles outperform bows. As a consequence,

native peoples did whatever was necessary to obtain European tools, eventually becoming economically and culturally dependent on the traders who supplied them.

Another narrative describes the state of native culture after the advent of Europeans. Many colonial observers believed that indigenous peoples were too uncreative and inflexible to accommodate the sweeping changes brought about by European expansion (Trigger 1980). Instead, change was thought to be imposed on native societies, whether by market forces or by force of arms. Their inherent inability to adapt meant that the transition from traditional to modern lifeways and beliefs was everywhere marked by disruption and loss, as authentic traditional cultural practices were replaced by distorted or derivative "postcontact" practices (Williamson 2004). Change, seen as liberating for Europeans, was for Indians seen as corrupting.

Yet another narrative contrasts European and indigenous systems of value, a polarity famously exemplified by the story of the 1626 purchase by the Dutch of the island of Manhattan for what universally have been described as "trinkets." The overt meaning is clear: native peoples did not, perhaps could not, comprehend the true value of the land or its resources. But a second meaning, that natives and Europeans invariably assigned value in incommensurable ways, pervades scholarly thinking about native culture change. Natives, it is said, gave gifts to establish social relationships, while Europeans sold commodities to extract profit. When the two systems came into contact, the narrative concludes, native economies inevitably gave way to European economies.

From the beginning, Europeans viewed American Indians and First Nations peoples as part of the natural world (Krech 1999). They were wild, sometimes dangerous, always an embodiment of America's primeval character. For that reason, their ability to affect ecological change was seen as limited. Their communities were small and dispersed and they possessed functionally inferior tools. Only Europeans were capable of large-scale environmental change. And just as the appearance of Europeans has been seen as socially disruptive, European-induced environmental change has been seen as disequilibrating.

Colonial discourses associate the beginning of Indian history with the arrival of Europeans. Native peoples, the colonists believed, existed outside history in a perpetual present. Even after the wave of European

history broke over the Americas, native choices were determined not by historically conditioned self-interest but by culture and habit. Thus, the signal importance of tradition for indigenous communities was seen as more than simply an expression of respect for the past. Rather, it was viewed in biological or racial terms.

All of these narratives reflect the basic, though frequently implicit, belief that the indigenous past can be divided into two sequent stages punctuated by the arrival of Europeans. Before colonization, the settlers believed, native life was conditioned by custom and belief. Change was slow and stately. Native communities maintained complex but nevertheless stable relationships with one another and with the natural world. Change, when it occurred, was induced by external processes, especially changing environmental conditions, over which native communities had little control. European settlers, the narratives tell us, changed all that. Politics and economics intruded. The pace of change accelerated, inevitably costing native peoples their work, their identities, and their lives.

Crossing Divides

Because representation was crucial to the processes of colonialism, postcolonial theorists have focused their attention on "decolonizing" or "demythologizing" knowledge about indigenous societies (Dorris 1987; Scott 1999:12). The resulting work has taken several distinct but related forms. One strain of postcolonial criticism has sought to unmask the colonial origins of ideas about indigenous peoples by tracing their history and by calling attention to the cultural meanings and power relations they sustain. This work has exposed linkages between the colonists' self-conceptions and their descriptions and interpretations of native life and has shown how the power relations of the present have been conditioned by those of the colonial past. Together, these historical and critical projects have worked to deconstruct colonialist narratives, opening up the theoretical space necessary to rewrite the "West's theory of the non-West" (Scott 1999:12).

Another strain of criticism has grown out of the recognition that the social sciences are themselves products of colonialism (McNiven and Russell 2005; Thomas 2004). By unraveling the colonial origins of

"European cultural reason," this criticism has shown that the conceptual apparatus of Western social science is, in part, an expression of colonial knowledge and colonial practice (Scott 1999:13; Trouillot 1991). This strain has also investigated the ways Western social science has contributed to the creation and maintenance of colonial power relations (Asad 1973) and shown how anthropologists and archaeologists have sometimes helped perpetuate stereotypes about indigenous peoples (Trigger 1980).

It is to this second strain of decolonization that indigenous research, including archaeology conducted by and on behalf of indigenous peoples, has recently made important contributions (Atalay 2006; Silliman 2008; Smith 1999). Perhaps more than any other form of postcolonial critique, indigenous research exposes the intimate connections between colonial discourses and the development of Western conceptual frameworks. It also calls attention to the ways contemporary political forces affect social scientific research and highlights the consequences of that research for native peoples (Smith and Wobst 2005).

The contributors to this book believe that archaeology can contribute to the work of decolonization. While acknowledging their discipline's colonial patrimony, they also contend that it brings two great assets to the task: its distinctively long-term perspective and its democratizing ability to expose the rhythms of everyday life (Wylie 1992:592). By comparing and contrasting patterns of change and continuity before and after the arrival of Europeans, diachronic archaeological research can challenge the assumptions of difference and rupture on which colonialist narratives are built (Cobb 2005). At the same time, synchronic research on everyday practice can show that conventional models of change do not encompass the diversity and complexity of native experiences during the last five hundred years (Lightfoot, Martinez, and Schiff 1998). Over the last two decades, these two lines of research have demonstrated that patterns of technological, social, and economic change varied significantly from place to place and through time. In some places, economic systems remained largely intact, even as political or social institutions were radically altered. Elsewhere, economic practices were transformed but social organization remained stable. In painting this picture of processual diversity, archaeology exposes the partiality and preconceptions built into colonial accounts.

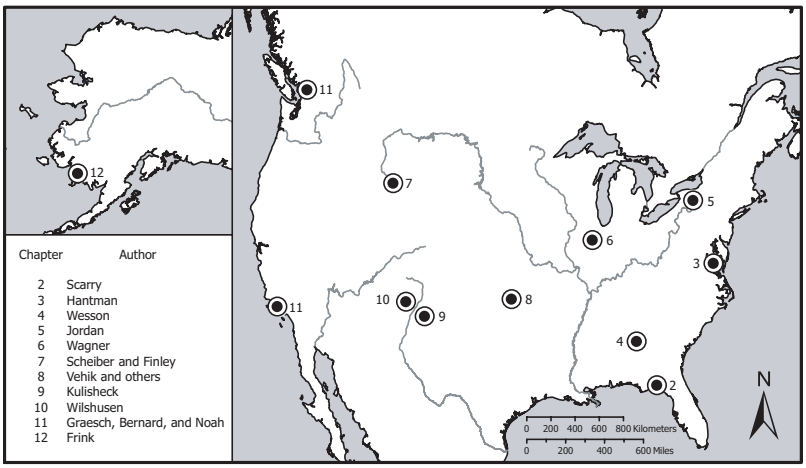

Figure 1.1. North America, showing locations of the case studies.

However, the process of decolonization does not mandate a sweeping rejection of all colonial observations or interpretations or an unmitigated denial of the differences between Europeans and indigenous peoples. Sometimes, native peoples *did* abandon stone tools as soon as steel tools became available. In some places, indigenous systems of value *did* collapse when confronted by novel and incommensurable market systems. Some native communities *did* maintain sustainable economies that were disrupted by the advent of exotic European plants and animals (Crosby 2004). Europeans and native peoples sometimes *do* hold dramatically different views on time, on labor, or on wealth (Pickering 2004). Rather, the work of decolonization requires careful documentation of local processes and local patterns of change. It demands empirical evaluation of multiple explanations for these patterns. In short, it is not enough simply to deconstruct or debunk colonialist narratives. Ultimately, they must be replaced with grounded, contextual explanations that do justice to the richness of the cases from which they emerge. This focus on local variability shifts the center of analytic gravity away from the kinds of sweeping, deterministic accounts offered by the colonists, toward accounts that seek to understand native peoples in their own terms.

This book showcases the diversity of native experiences of colonialism. The cases are drawn from all corners of North America (see fig. 1.1).[2]

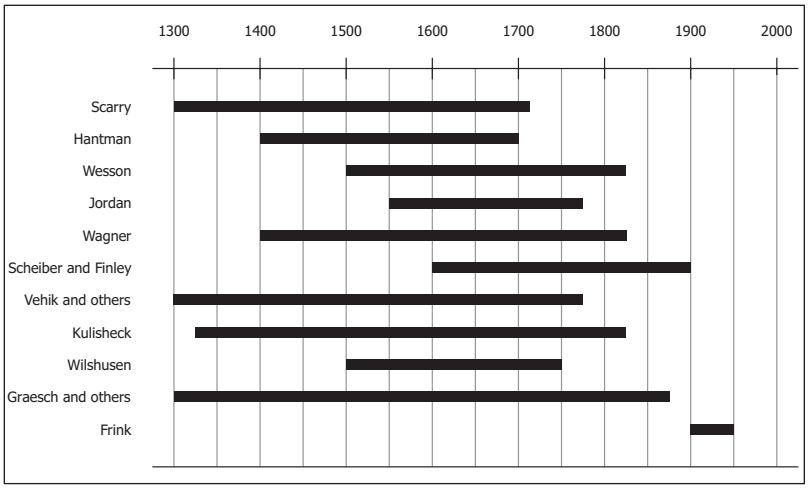

Figure 1.2. Timeline of the case studies.

Some of the earliest interactions are described, as well as some of the most recent (see fig. 1.2). The book also draws attention to the theoretical and methodological diversity archaeologists bring to the study of post-1500 native societies. In the following sections, we examine tensions as well as points of agreement in the approaches archaeologists studying recent native culture change have taken.

The Language of Indigenous Culture Change

Terminology matters. The words used to describe something affect how it is analyzed. One hallmark of archaeological research on post-1500 indigenous culture change has been an attempt to recognize and differentiate "prehistoric," "protohistoric," and "historic" sites and artifacts. However, it is increasingly clear that these terms are deeply rooted in the conceptual divide separating indigenous and European societies. Together, they embody the belief that the forces unleashed by the arrival of Europeans were both novel and irresistible. They imply that the effects of European economic practices and technologies were so pervasive and so compelling that all native societies were forced to respond in similar ways. Perhaps most insidiously, they frame native culture change in terms of European processes and European experiences. In the end, they simply reinforce the notion that post-1500 culture change was unidirectional

and imposed, a product of inexorable global forces that native peoples were powerless to stem.

The term "contact" is similarly weighed down. Like "protohistoric," it confusingly mingles temporal with processual meanings. Like "prehistoric," it defines native culture change in arbitrary, extrinsic terms. As Silliman (2005a) persuasively argues, the rubric of culture contact has simultaneously overemphasized the influence of brief encounters and underemphasized the long-term effects of colonialism. It perpetuates the view that European interaction with indigenous groups was an event rather than a protracted process. By privileging so-called traditional cultural forms over syncretic ones, it helps sustain an image of American Indian and First Nations societies as passive and unchanging. And its seeming detachment downplays the effects of slavery, disease, and warfare on native communities.

These terms also sustain the methodological divide separating anthropology from history. By partitioning the native past into two parts, separated only by the availability of documents produced by Europeans, they reinforce the idea that historians, using historical methods, are best equipped to study post-1500 indigenous culture change (Krech 2002; Lightfoot 1995; Trigger 1983). Scholars have assumed either that the arrival of Europeans triggered a radical cultural rupture or that the alleged incommensurability of archaeological and historical data puts limits on the usefulness of archaeological inquiry. As a result, archaeological research on post-1500 sites has focused mainly on European settlements. Data on indigenous settlements, when available, have been used primarily to corroborate written testimony. By contrast, problem-oriented archaeological research has been reserved for the study of pre-1500 native settlements. Thus, the study of colonial interaction has been linked implicitly to particular research methods, a linkage that in turn has reinforced the conceptual divide separating native and European societies.

In place of these terms, the contributors to this book adopt language reflecting local changes in settlement patterns, architecture, economic practices, and material inventories. In some parts of North America, the material conditions witnessed by early European observers were a product of long-term developments that were under way well prior to Columbus's landfall. Elsewhere, they reflected processes only recently

begun. Sometimes, Europeans intervened directly in native political economies, but more often, change was precipitated by the appearance of European commodities rather than Europeans themselves. The use of local terms emphasizes this diversity, as well as the increasingly well-documented lack of synchrony between the advent of Europeans in a particular region and the initiation of significant native culture change.

At the same time, several contributors to this volume frame their analyses in terms of an expansive definition of colonialism. Until recently, European colonialism has been equated mainly with overt violence and the establishment of settler colonies. Now, many scholars subsume under the term a mixture of shifting—sometimes contradictory—processes, ranging from the informal trading practices of sixteenth-century English sailors to the missions and *encomiendas* of Spanish settlers to the genocidal warfare waged in the nineteenth century by the fledgling United States. However, agreement on this broad definition is not unanimous. Some scholars, including Jordan (chapter 5), prefer to reserve the term "colonialism" for describing interactions marked by demonstrable power differences among the participants. However it is framed, archaeological data increasingly have shown that no single mode of interaction was everywhere the most important nor was the interaction with Europeans always the most important process at work (Rubertone 2000).

Native Agency

Native peoples were not simply passive witnesses to history after 1500 (Gosden 2004; Rubertone 2000; Silliman 2005a; Stein 2002; Rogers and Wilson 1993). While keeping the violence of European colonialism in sight, the contributors to this book contend that the choices made by native peoples affected its course. The failure of natives (or Europeans, for that matter) to fully anticipate the catastrophic effects of colonialism does not mean that they were powerless to affect its course. Even in the face of sweeping transformations brought on by disease and displacement, indigenous people made knowledgeable choices affecting, for both good and ill, the content and context of their transactions with one another and with Europeans. In some cases, those choices continue to affect contemporary native communities.

A focus on social agency is an important antidote for the determinism of colonialist narratives and is a critical aspect of the decolonization of

knowledge. However, archaeologists interested in recent native culture change have conceptualized the factors affecting choice, as well as the nature of the relationship between an individual and society, in a variety of sometimes incompatible ways (Dobres and Robb 2000; Dornan 2002). Many draw on theories of practice, especially those articulated by Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and Anthony Giddens (1979, 1984), to frame their discussions of agency, but even different theories of practice grant social agents different degrees of autonomy and knowledgeability (Joyce and Lopiparo 2005).

Most agentive analyses spring from the premise that individuals always possess the capacity to "do otherwise." That is, social actors can attempt to intercede in events, to manipulate the situations in which they find themselves, or they can refrain from acting; intervention and forbearance equally express an actor's agency (Giddens 1979:56). Of course, it is one thing to possess the capacity to choose and quite another to successfully achieve one's goals. People are constrained by their own values and beliefs, by the actions of others, and by the material circumstances of the moment. Moreover, the consequences of action are frequently unforeseen, and even the most faithfully pursued strategies may bring about unintended results.

Although it may seem counterintuitive, the social actors that appear in agentive analyses are not named individuals, but rather groups of individuals sharing common characteristics. Scarry (chapter 2) uses the term "categorical individual," consisting of people with shared goals, motivations, and understandings, to describe these agents. Frink's (chapter 12) "identity collectives" and Vehik and others' (chapter 8) "interest holders" carve out similar but nevertheless distinct concepts, with Frink emphasizing the importance of self-identification and Vehik and others emphasizing the importance of self-interest.

Three features of social agency are important for the analyses described in this book. First, agency is always grounded in history. Social actors base their actions in cultural practices, in beliefs, values, and institutions that have developed over time (Pauketat 2001a). Both conscious strategies and unconscious dispositions are determined as much by past actions and prior understandings as they are by emergent conditions. At the same time, beliefs, values, and institutions are maintained and transformed by the practices of social agents.

Second, social actors are knowledgeable, but their knowledge is conditional and imperfect. They are intimately familiar with the structure of their society, with expectations for conduct, and with cosmologies and systems of value because it is to these features of the social setting that agents refer when asked to warrant their actions (Giddens 1979:144). But at the same time, much of the knowledge from which practice emerges is tacit and unacknowledged. Such practical consciousness or habitus only becomes recognized as such under certain circumstances, and even then only by some people. Moreover, individual knowledge is localized: the knowledge an actor brings to bear in a particular setting depends on the scope and nature of his or her day-to-day activities (Giddens 1979:73).

Third, the power and position of social actors vary. Because resources are unevenly distributed, and because the rules of conduct depend on identity, different individuals or interest groups experience events in different ways. Thus, an individual's decisions and dispositions are determined in part by his or her position within society (Ashmore 2002). Gender, status, faction, and ethnicity affect individuals' social perspectives and in turn influence their experiences of events and the extent to which they can control them (Deagan 2004).

One of the most important insights of practice theory is that both change and continuity require explanation (Pauketat 2001a). That is, continuity is more than just the absence of change. Just as the transformation of tradition requires social agency, so does the recapitulation of tradition. Explanations for the maintenance of cultural practices, for the decision "to reiterate what was done in the past," therefore must be linked to an appreciation for the ongoing interests and values of individuals and communities (Joyce and Lopiparo 2005:368). Neither change nor continuity can be understood apart from those interests and values. The signal importance of this insight is well expressed by Graesch and others (chapter 11), who recognize the complexities underlying the maintenance of long-standing foodways in different social settings.

For these reasons, many scholars now view native resistance to European colonialism as both multifaceted and pervasive. In some cases, resistance was overt, involving political or military struggle against European incursion. But in others, it amounted to nothing more (and nothing less) than private expressions of identity and solidarity (Spielmann, Mobley-Tanaka, and Potter 2006). Silliman (2001:195)

aptly describes such attempts by dominated peoples to materialize new social identities as "acts of residence." Both Wagner (chapter 6) and Wesson (chapter 4) explore the complexities and contradictions of native resistance, especially the ways in which acts of resistance intertwine with acts of residence.

Archaeology as Long-Term History

In the wake of the Columbian Quincentennial, archaeologists have increasingly recognized that indigenous economic, social, and political processes profoundly affected the course of colonial interaction (Rubertone 2000; Silliman 2005a; Williamson 2004). The actions and attitudes of native peoples were shaped not only by the new circumstances presented by the advent of Europeans, but also by their cultural understanding of the world (Sahlins 1981). Like those of the colonists, the worldviews of native groups were rooted in their histories, emerging from long-standing social relations, economic practices, cosmologies, and systems of value. Some elements of native worldviews were broadly shared, but many varied within and between native communities and societies. Colonialism, therefore, cannot be seen simply as a bipolar confrontation but must also be understood as an intersection or conjuncture of multiple histories, both native and European (Stein 2002).

Because the course of colonial interaction cannot be interpreted solely as a reaction to European immigration, but must also be seen as a product of indigenous historical trends and indigenous choices, scholars cannot hope to achieve a balanced picture of post-1500 culture change without investigating pre-existing native economic systems and social relations. Historical research will continue to supply important clues to precolonial social and economic practices, but archaeology is the only discipline capable of providing data on patterns of change and continuity for a broad spectrum of native North American societies. Archaeological research is not limited to regions penetrated by literate European explorers. It is not limited by the brief temporal horizon of many colonial accounts. And it can encompass all members of native societies, not only those with whom Europeans interacted.

This long-term approach highlights the fact that native worldviews, native economic practices, and native political relationships were not static. Culture, as Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney (2001:244) observes, "is always in

motion." Every culture is a mediation between local and global processes. However, no single temporal scale is uniquely appropriate to all analyses. Different scales may be suitable for different cases or different problems. In some cases, the most salient processes began centuries before the advent of the colonists. In others, critical changes began only in the 1400s. An emphasis on local cases points to the essential tension between detail and coverage, resolution and scope, both spatially and temporally.

Political Economy

Archaeologists have long recognized that material culture was an important medium of colonial interaction. Exchanged objects cemented social and economic alliances and bridged differing systems of value. But the exchange of highly valued commodities, including European trade goods, is not the only, and perhaps not the best, measure of interaction. Colonialism also produced sometimes subtle and sometimes profound changes in the material lives of both colonizers and colonized. Such changes started long before and continued long after initial face-to-face interaction between natives and Europeans. For this reason, research on the changing relationships among consumption, production, and distribution over the long term is critical for monitoring the effects of colonialism. A focus on political-economic relationships also works against the culturalist explanations of native responses to European colonization embodied in colonialist narratives (Binnema 2001).

Current approaches to the study of economic processes are concerned not only with patterns of production, exchange, and consumption but also with the social and political settings in which those patterns are embedded. For this reason, the household, as a place and as an institution, has become an important context for understanding colonial political economies (Deagan 1995; Lightfoot, Martinez, and Schiff 1998; Rodríguez-Alegría 2005). As Silliman (2001) points out, seemingly prosaic practices can become politically charged in colonial settlements. Everyday routines can mark or assert identity, and power often flows along lines established by such routines. Research on cuisine, on the arrangement of domestic space, on the production of common containers, or on patterns of refuse disposal therefore can illuminate the distribution of power and the processes through which identities are constructed and reconstructed.

However, archaeologists have drawn on an eclectic mix of economic theories to understand recent native culture change. For example, Vehik and others (chapter 8) explicitly invoke formal economic models to understand changes in the Wichita hide trade. Wesson (chapter 4), by contrast, uses the concept of the moral economy to interpret trends in Creek hunting practices.

Another important aspect of the political-economic approach is a focus on multiple spatial scales of analysis. Everyday experience is bound up with a host of interconnected processes. Households cooperate and contend in complex ways to constitute communities. Communities, in turn, build dynamic relationships with their allies and competitors. Multi-scalar analysis can often reveal the complexities—and contradictions—of the structural settings in which native actors operated (Lightfoot and Martinez 1995). Jordan's (chapter 5) analysis of Seneca community dynamics highlights the strengths of such an approach.

This focus on social production also highlights the complex connections between material culture and social identity. In colonial settings, where unequal social relationships are common, people make use of the objects at hand to signal the creation of new identities. But objects are more than simply expressions of identity; they are also integral to its production. Food, tools, and vernacular architecture carry with them social and political meanings. For this reason, production and consumption carry moral as well as functional weight. And as Wilshusen (chapter 10) illustrates, new material identities can engender far-reaching and unexpected consequences.

Conclusion

If archaeologists are to bridge the artificial divide separating history from prehistory, they must overturn a whole range of colonial ideas about American Indians and American Indian history. While acknowledging the responsibility anthropologists and archaeologists bear for preserving and promoting colonialist narratives, the contributors to this book nevertheless believe that empirical archaeological research can help replace the false dichotomy between evolution and stasis with more nuanced, multi-linear models of change. The great strengths of archaeology in this work are its focus on everyday materiality and its diachronic perspec-

tive. By marshalling evidence showing the ways interaction expressed historical trends in native material production, cultural values, and social structures (Greenblatt 1993:x), archaeology can challenge conventional colonialist narratives and in the process play a major role in decolonizing knowledge about native peoples.

In pursuing these approaches, archaeologists will inevitably shift their attention away from European-indigenous interaction per se, and toward a broader concern for the full range of processes responsible for native culture change over the last five hundred years. Archaeological research has already shown that European colonialism, though novel in some respects, was not the only important factor affecting post-1500 native societies. Rather, it has become increasingly clear that the actions of American Indians and First Nations peoples were calibrated to a broad range of processes, only some of which involved Europeans (Binnema 2001).

At the same time, archaeology can play a larger role in research on colonialism itself. Ethnohistorians have argued for some time that native peoples helped shape the history of colonial North America (Axtell 1987; Cronon 1983; Trigger 1985). But the longer-term approach uniquely available to archaeologists can provide an even more inclusive view. By emphasizing the importance not only of indigenous agency during the Colonial period, but also of long-term native history, archaeology can contribute to a better understanding of the course of European colonialism. The fact that colonial interaction expressed both native and European histories means that a comprehensive understanding of colonialism depends at least as much on an understanding of native history as it does on an understanding of European history (Gasco 2005; Greenblatt 1993). Archaeology can provide such an understanding, by tracing the major processes of indigenous culture change during the centuries leading up to the arrival of Europeans in the western hemisphere, and by revealing patterns of change and continuity in native life after 1500.

The process of decolonization illuminates the pervasive and persistent network of connections between long-standing scholarly and popular ideas about American Indians and First Nations peoples and the politics of indigenous-European interaction. Colonial narratives express power relationships; uncritical acceptance of such narratives tacitly endorses a continuation of the power relations of the past. The study of the colonial

past cannot, therefore, be divorced from the ongoing struggles of indigenous peoples or from the politics of contemporary native communities. Understanding the process of colonialism matters; it matters to descendant communities, whose livelihoods continue to be affected by the colonial experiences of their ancestors (Lightfoot 2005).

By pursuing local analyses that take indigenous agency seriously and are grounded in empirical data on patterns of change and continuity, archaeologists can construct a better, more balanced understanding of the processes affecting recent native societies and of European colonialism. In doing so, they will be helping native North Americans emerge from the shadows cast by the colonist's representations.

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Notes

1. Over the last five hundred years, Europeans and Americans have expressed a wide range of attitudes and beliefs about American Indians and First Nations peoples (Berkhofer 1989). Primitivists, for example, saw native life largely in romantic terms. Negative views of indigenous people have generally been the more prominent and have influenced to a greater degree the relationships between them and European colonists and their descendants.

2. Although the term "North America," strictly defined, includes Mexico, it is commonly used by historians, anthropologists, and others to refer to that portion of the Americas north of Mesoamerica. For example, the *Handbook of North American Indians* explicitly excludes Mesoamerican societies.

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Across a Great Divide

Continuity and Change in Native North American Societies, 1400–1900

Edited by **Laura L. Scheiber**
and **Mark D. Mitchell**

The University of Arizona Press
Tucson

We dedicate this book to

Kent G. Lightfoot

for inspiring us to cross many divides

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