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Introduction

Re-Imagining Colonial Pasts, Influencing Colonial Futures

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Twenty years ago, the Columbian quincentenary inspired archaeologists to initiate conversations and debates about colonialism that extended well beyond Columbus specifically and modern European expansion in general. These conversations were particularly poignant and fraught among archaeologists in the Americas. Not only did they touch upon the raw nerve of the newly passed Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), they also brought attention to the gaping ontological and epistemological divides in our discipline over temporality and subjectivity. In the years that followed, we turned more attention to the question of colonialism and have found not one but many processes and historical outcomes and found not two categories of people involved (colonizer and colonized) but a vast plurality of variously gendered, racialized, aged, and occupied peoples of a multitude of faiths, desires, associations, and constraints. Perhaps one of the most important lessons learned in these investigations is that colonialism is not a phenomenon of limited historical duration, a phase or era in our chronology, but is ongoing. This we learn when we try to identify a finite end point of the process and do not find it and especially so when we learn from contemporary descendant communities. The impacts of colonialism, if not in some instances the same processes set in place by the likes of Columbus, are ongoing.

How are we to take on this challenge of interpreting ongoing circumstances? The comparative project of this volume, in which we engage archaeologists of the New and Old World in dialogues on the subject of colonialism, is an effort to compare the practices of the past while also

drawing attention to the unfolding consequences or futures in colonial circumstances. Unlike previous volumes on the archaeology of colonialism that draw upon ancient and modern cases from Old World and New World contexts (among them Gosden 2004; Lyons and Papadopoulos, ed. 2002; Stein, ed. 2005; Voss and Casella 2012), this volume gives explicit attention to the relevance of colonialism to contemporary communities regardless of the temporal spans under consideration. How do these themes and concepts resonate from settler societies to postcolonial societies, from the deeper temporal histories of Roman, Greek, or earlier empires to the making of the modern world? What frameworks have circulated across all of these contexts, and to what effect? Perhaps most importantly, how do these approaches help us to critically engage with the ongoing impacts of colonialism today, whether they lie in the federal recognition process for Native American nations or in the heritage representation of a Roman past? In this introductory chapter we explore the ways in which entangling colonial narratives, that is, the critical comparison of archaeological case studies from a wide variety of geographical and temporal contexts, can foster rethinking colonial pasts and influencing colonial futures.

Frameworks for Comparison

The approach in this volume draws together several frameworks for archaeologies of colonialism with the aim of highlighting the significance of colonial pasts to contemporary communities. First, we follow the example of Stein's work (1999, 2002, ed. 2005), which has shown that broadly comparative cases help to identify generalizable or cross-cutting processes of colonialism: a "nuanced, holistic understanding of the complexities of colonial encounters" (Stein 2005:18) via comparative colonialism from a wide variety of historical contexts. When we engage in comparative approaches, we are faced with a series of scalar tensions: the specific versus the general, the historical versus the anthropological, the practical versus the theoretical, and the broad-brush perspective on human history versus the local and individual experiences constituted and oftentimes lost therein (Gosden 2004; Lightfoot 2005a, 2005b; Rothschild 2003; Stein 2005; Stein, ed. 2005; Voss and Casella 2012). The scale of archaeological perspectives provides interesting and productive entry points into colonial histories. Recognizing the valuable insights that archaeology's on-

the-ground perspective offers, researchers (Casella and Voss 2012:2; Lyons and Papadopoulos 2002:9) often frame archaeologies of colonialism—comparative or not—as upending, or at least complicating, standardized approaches to colonial history, which tend to begin with archives and the global or national scale. These disciplinary and scalar tensions reflect that a comparative approach can identify common concepts and categories but can also be used to deconstruct common (received) concepts and categories. The dual roles of comparison are particularly apropos in studying colonialism, a process that relies on the construction of new social categories and hierarchies, often through material culture (Gosden 2004). Moreover, these constructions are still in circulation as we design our research.

For example, Horning (2006a, 2006b, 2007) while focusing specifically on her research in Northern Ireland and on her efforts to compare English colonialism on both sides of the Atlantic, has voiced concerns with global historical archaeologies that reduce complex colonial contexts to universalized, black-and-white portrayals of the oppressive, agentive colonist on the one hand versus the oppressed, passive colonized on the other (top-down models). She has pointed out the ambiguities or “grey areas” in such contexts (2006a:188), noting that we must take “the agency of transcultural actors, skilled in the translation and mediation of multiple identities” into account when drawing comparisons rather than reifying the same old dichotomous tropes. This point resonates with other colonial researchers concerned with issues of agency (as in Stein 2005). In this volume we build upon such studies to recognize the delicate balance between the “powerful” and the “powerless,” using great care to avoid the trappings of neoliberalism, which runs the risk of framing the potential of the “weapons of the weak” (Scott 1985) as limitless and fully liberating for colonized peoples despite the overarching colonial power structures in which they were or are enmeshed. An example of this balanced approach can be seen in the work of Kent Lightfoot, who has engaged in comparative colonialism for the purpose of identifying common factors while recognizing that those factors relate at least as much to indigenous histories as to colonizers’ strategies. These factors include colonial programs impacting native communities as well as political, subsistence, and settlement practices of those communities prior to colonization (Lightfoot 2005a, 2005b; Lightfoot et al. 2013; Panich 2013).

Common Themes

As we began the dialogues featured in this volume, we focused on a broad range of themes or processes that may be traced across cases: consumption, representations of temporality, slavery, diaspora, and the entanglement of descendant communities with archaeology. However, in drawing connections across case studies we realized that our comparisons converged on two main concepts: critical temporalities and critical geographies. By this we mean that compared cases radically challenge or lay bare the assumptions we have regarding the way archaeological subjects understood time and place. We find that an unexamined belief in the inevitability of colonial outcomes leads us to a flat and fixed view of temporality. Instead we could be open to a multitude of imagined futures and memorialized pasts (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2010; Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2006). Critical temporalities take on the concepts of innovation, creativity, continuity, and tradition and ask that we trace how and when they are deployed rather than treating them as ahistoric processes. Too often we find that innovation is assumed to be the province and power behind colonists and tradition seen as the shrinking haven of the colonized. Critical temporalities highlight false distinctions between continuity and change or traditional and modern and assert the value in pondering perception and intention even when we know they may be empirically irretrievable.

Critical geographies similarly challenge our assumptions about fixed or objective boundaries, borders, belonging and exclusion, and centers with margins.¹ Such a challenge might implicate specific places or landscapes, but more often we find they lie in the geographic metaphors that underwrite colonial relations. The term “native” can operate on both levels, in some cases referencing a literal homeland yet also making a statement of place and belonging by calling out its opposite in “foreigner,” “immigrant,” or “colonist.” The ethnonym “Pequot” demonstrates this point precisely. Now native to southeastern Connecticut, the Pequot Indians are thought to have originally come from the middle Atlantic region of what is now the United States, making their way northwest to upstate New York before settling in Connecticut sometime before European contact. The precise meaning of the Algonquian name “Pequot” is still debated, but many gloss the name as “invader” or “destroyer” (Brooks 2006:9; Cave 1996:183), and most agree that it was a name imposed upon the group by neighboring

tribes already settled in the area at the time of the Pequots' arrival. In this case, European colonialism overwrote more distant forms of pre-European colonialism and cultural exchange in North America, making both invaders and locals "native" to European "newcomers."

We see also how material culture may be used to mark (and mask) those distinctions of insider and outsider but that such meanings are subject to change as the scope of our local geography shifts, even to the point of globalizing, and can even reference multiple scales of geographic membership. The same may be said for the materiality of poverty that, as Mullins and Ylimaunu point out in this volume, is often framed in geographic terms of "mainstream" and "margin." These too can be framed at a multitude of scales, as a global comparative perspective on poverty demonstrates. Critical geographies, in other words, are frameworks in which we must trace how "the local" is constructed. In this regard we follow Latour (2005), who attacks the problem of scale head-on by noting that global phenomena only exist as they are assembled locally, a point that many anthropological linguists have known for some time. For example, the rules of grammar (often conceived as overarching or large-scale) are created via local interactions by agents simultaneously aware and unaware of the rules they are enforcing, changing, and sometimes creating as they interact and communicate.

Second, drawing inspiration from debates over the interpretive impacts of generalization (Horning 2006a, 2007; Orser 2004, 2011; also Meskell 2002), authors in this volume acknowledge and explore acts of creativity, resilience, and resistance to colonial impositions as well as the broad structural violence of those impositions. In part this debate in interpretive focus stems directly from growing attention and accountability to political standpoints and self-reflexive attention to the standpoint of most scholars in archaeology. We would be irresponsible if we did not detail the suffering that occurred both in daily experience and in long-term prospects of those who did not wield control of colonial encounters. We would be equally remiss to frame disenfranchised populations—indigenous communities, enslaved or conscripted laborers—as utterly lacking in any craft or adaptability to survive such conditions. Worse, we subscribe to the trope of inevitability when we do not attend to such capabilities. But we argue that these do not have to be mutually exclusive perspectives on the past. Given the nature of the evidence and its articulation with archives, heritage, and oral histories, the power of archaeology lies in the capacity