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## INTRODUCTION: POSTCOLONIALISM AND ARCHAEOLOGY

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Writing as we do from two settler colonies—Australia and the United States—that continue to struggle with their pasts, we are confronted every day by the legacies of colonialism in the form of persistent structural inequalities within our societies, which determine differing life expectancies, health care, education, and other basic rights for more or less privileged groups. As archaeologists, our professional and intellectual concern with the past makes very clear to us that these inequalities originate from the colonial experiences of our countries. This volume explores the relationship between the postcolonial critique and archaeology, two fields of intellectual endeavor that intersect in a growing body of research concerned with the concrete and pervasive heritage of colonialism and imperialism.

In a research handbook in a series sponsored by the World Archaeological Congress (WAC), it is appropriate to reflect that such a synthesis owes its existence and form to the organization's central goal of addressing present social inequality through a concern with the past. WAC was founded in Southampton in 1986 in response to the call by the Anti-Apartheid Movement to impose sanctions against the South African regime in accordance with United Nations resolutions (Stone 2006; Ucko 1987). Among its objectives, WAC is "committed to diversity and to redressing global inequities in archaeology through conferences, publications, and scholarly programs. It has a special interest in protecting the cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples, minorities and economically disadvantaged countries, and encourages the participation of Indigenous peoples,

researchers from economically disadvantaged countries and members of the public.”<sup>1</sup> Hence, many of WAC’s aims and programs reflect broad global processes of scholarly and political acknowledgment of the inequalities created by colonialism, Indigenous and minority demands for restitution, and the ethical necessity for us all to engage with strategies of decolonization.

This handbook to archaeology’s engagement with postcolonialism specifies strategies for decolonizing archaeological research that still bears the marks of the colonial enterprise. Summary articles review the emergence of the discipline of archaeology in step with the colonialist enterprise, critique the colonial legacy evident in continuing archaeological practice around the world, identify current trends, and chart future directions in postcolonial archaeological research. Contributors provide a synthesis of research, thought, and practice on their respective topics. Many of the articles take a regional approach, a perspective that emphasizes the diverse forms of colonial culture that emerged around the globe. There is no one colonialist experience, nor its concrete ramifications in the present; such local perspectives foreground the need to counter totalizing narratives of historical and cultural process. These diverse perspectives regarding colonialism reflect historical loyalties and experiences as well as contemporary geopolitics.

In addition to the review-based chapters, each section includes commentary chapters, which provide short, specialized narratives related to the larger theme. Unusual in such handbooks, these shorter chapters

offer space for new ways of thinking and formally challenge the structure of a traditional handbook. In its entirety, this collection provides a companion to archaeologists grappling with postcoloniality through a global survey of key concepts, developments, and directions, contributed by leading practitioners and particularly scholars from traditionally disenfranchised communities such as Indigenous peoples, minorities, or other historically and politically marginalized populations. Archaeological interpretation is widely perceived to play an important role within contemporary articulations of identity in providing a deep foundation for modern assertions of authority, and contributors explore this process. Overall, the handbook provides guidelines to enable practitioners around the globe to understand how these issues are integral to archaeological fieldwork, and to assist archaeologists to better understand and to implement the approaches reviewed.

#### **Definitions: Colonial, Postcolonial**

Postcolonial scholarship developed in relation to the expansion of the empires of Western Europe that occupied most of the world from 1492 to 1945. As a body of ideas and methods, it originates in the political activism of post-World War II anti-colonial liberation movements, allied to the intellectual critique of the structures of colonialism—a project often said to have been initiated in 1961 by the publication of Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968 [1961]). Such a critique aims to show that colonialism and European culture are

deeply implicated within each other, and to demonstrate the reliance of Western systems of thought upon the colonial “other.” Postcolonial scholarship has also revealed the disjunction between the apparent progressivism and benevolence of the universals of the European Enlightenment tradition—concepts such as historicism, reason, and humanism—and their restricted deployment in colonial practice, where they were reduced to the figure of the “White settler male.” As historian Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000: 4–5) points out, universal categories such as a “conception of a universal and secular humanism” continue to underpin the human sciences, and they are indispensable because “without them there would be no social science that addresses issues of modern social justice,” including the critique of colonialism itself. Hence, Western concepts such as “historicism” and “political modernity” are both necessary to non-Western histories yet are simultaneously inadequate to explain them.

In temporal terms, “post-colonial” therefore pertains to a distinct period in world history—namely, the aftermath of European imperialism post-World War II. The colonialism of this era is distinguished from earlier forms by its global scale, integration, and overlap with the emergence of modernity and capitalism. However, the term does not imply the triumphant transcendence of colonialism: while these great world systems have been dismantled, various disguised forms of colonialism and neocolonialism continue to flourish. In what follows, we use the term primarily to refer to a specific theo-

retical approach rather than denoting a temporal period; we remain wary of defining our own time as somehow having left colonialism behind (see also Pagán-Jiménez 2004).

It follows that postcolonial scholarship may be distinguished from earlier approaches toward the study of colonialism by its integrally self-reflexive, political dimension: it has been termed a kind of “activist writing,” committed to understanding the relations of power that frame colonial interactions and identities, and to resisting imperialism and its legacies. The postcolonial critique, unlike those of poststructuralism and postmodernism with which it intersects, has a fundamental ethical basis in examining oppression and inequality in the present, including those grounded in neocolonialism, race, gender, nationalism, class, and/or ethnicities. Postcolonialism’s concern with the past is guided by that past’s relationship with the present, foregrounding the links between cultural forms and geopolitics. It is intellectually committed to contributing to political and social transformation, with the goal of countering neocolonialism and facilitating the assertion of diverse forms of identity.

Postcolonial scholarship has therefore reconsidered colonialism from the perspective of colonized peoples and their cultures, as well as revealing its continuing ramifications in the present. Interdisciplinary and transcultural in its theory and effects, postcolonialism has followed diverse historical trajectories, making it difficult to generalize or to satisfactorily theorize the process of colonialism as a coherent project. As

Ania Loomba (1998: xvi) warns, colonialism's historical and geographical heterogeneity means that "we must build our theories with an awareness that such diversity exists, and not expand the local to the status of the universal." While colonialism has often been evoked as a "global and transhistorical logic of denigration," a "coherent imposition" rather than a practically mediated relation (Thomas 1994: 3), here we seek to place these diverse processes in historical and global contexts.

Colonialism centers on the conquest and control of other peoples' lands and goods. In its inescapably material character, it is particularly amenable to archaeological investigation, raising a range of questions that have long been central to the discipline, such as the role of material culture in constituting identities and mediating between cultures. Like Michael Rowlands, we use the term "colonialism" to refer to the modern phenomenon in which the colonizers' relations of domination over the colonized are of primary salience. By contrast, the more specific term "colonization" is restricted to describing the movements and settlements of people with no implication of power relations (Rowlands 1998a).

### Colonialism, Culture, and Representation

Crucially, postcolonial scholarship has revealed the importance of representation in securing the West's dominance over the colonized. Drawing on Foucault's arguments for the mutual constitution of knowledge and power through discourse, and for the

role of classification in differentiating and governing populations, Edward Said's (1978) *Orientalism* demonstrated how management of the peoples of the Middle East was effected through a Western discourse of orientalism organized through such academic disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, and history. Said showed that Western conceptions of history and culture, and the devices we use to conceive, construct, and convey meaning about other peoples, are profoundly implicated in imperialism and oppression. While Said has in turn been criticized for distinguishing between the "fantasy" of Western imagination and the reality of its political effects (rather than seeing these as belonging to the same system of operation), one of his most important insights was to show the interpenetration of power and knowledge in colonial rule.

Another critique of Enlightenment epistemologies was developed by the Subaltern Studies school of historiography that formed around the historian Ranajit Guha and his followers during the late 1970s (see Lucas, chapter 27, this volume). This collective asked to what extent subaltern groups such as peasants, women, the working class, and other marginalized people had been able to make their own history and constitute an "autonomous realm" (e.g., Guha 1982). Utilizing Antonio Gramsci's notions of the subaltern, this school sought to recover marginal experience through the fissures, silences, and rhetorical strategies of colonial documents, producing a critique of modernity and its master narratives focused on Indian colonial history (e.g., Chatterjee 1998; Spivak 1988).

During the 1980s, these insights were developed within postcolonial scholarship through a central concern with representation and the analysis of colonial discourse—that is, the ways that Western powers wrote about, depicted, and administered the colonized. A chief analytical tactic of postcolonial critique has been to identify and destabilize discursive strategies such as the use of stereotypes and the construction of binary opposites; by demonstrating the radical interdependence of cultural and political formations, it has been possible to challenge oppositions between East/West, center/periphery, us/them, Black/White, and so undermine the basis for colonial inequalities. In an influential approach drawn from semiotics and psychoanalysis, Homi Bhabha has argued for the "ambivalence of colonial rule," suggesting that "the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference" (2004: 153). Confronted by paradoxical colonial demands, the subaltern must assume a stable and essential identity. Yet, as Bhabha notes, simultaneously for the subaltern's transformation, a doubleness in enunciation can emerge—an excess that comes through colonial mimicry and produces a threatening, subversive hybridity in cultural forms. Bhabha advanced the notion of a "liminal" or "interstitial" category that occupies a "space between" competing cultural traditions, historical periods, and critical methodologies. The performative excess of colonial mimicry suggests a capacity for resistance that has proved appealing to many scholars. However, the psychoana-

lytic dimensions of Bhabha's program have also been criticized for their fixity, imposing a predetermined meaning on cultural processes regardless of their historical or cultural specificity. Postcolonial scholarship's emphasis on discourse and language has been extended by cultural theorists, following Bourdieu, to embrace "a pluralized field of colonial narratives, which are seen less as signs than as practices, or as signifying practices rather than elements of a code" (Thomas 1994: 8). Conceiving colonialism as a series of cultural projects has proved a fruitful avenue for anthropological analysis, while situating colonial images and narratives in a specific time and place reveals how localized subjectivities are constituted.

A key question remains the extent to which Western structures of thought, or epistemologies, permit us to understand subaltern experience—a question first, and powerfully, posed as the title of Spivak's article "Can the subaltern speak?" (1988). The question of subaltern status has been complicated further by feminist scholars. Within these newly negotiated cultural logics, feminist scholars complement the postcolonial critique with an enhanced understanding of subjectivity, exposing the layers of a double colonization (Spivak 1999). This enterprise is no longer solely concerned with the colonial self and colonized other, but rather, considers how gender schemas place the colonized women into categories that must contend with simultaneous gender and racial inequities. Feminist critiques have confronted postcolonial scholarship for its tendency to construct a single category of

the colonized, thus erasing the axes of gender, class, and other social categories.

Affecting both subject and object, Third World and postcolonial feminisms both emerged from this history of colonial oppression, critiquing Western forms of feminist philosophy in which the female experience is universalized (see Mohanty 2000 [1986] for critique). Postcolonial feminism pushes beyond the binary of male/female as homogeneous group or category, forcing Western feminists to recognize that they are not the only true "subjects" of feminist practice, and that Third World women should not be viewed only as the "oppressed woman," never rising above their generality and their "object" status (Mohanty 2000 [1986]: 1202).

When the "Third World woman" is displaced, removed, and categorized as "transnational"—or moved into minority status—she is simultaneously given a voice but is also rendered static and "other." Women of color in majority white populations find themselves in what Trinh T. Minh-ha has called the "triple bind," a critique that revolves around the simple fact that these women can never be known just through their professional attributes, but rather must first be viewed through the lens of their race and sex. As Minh-ha argues,

Neither black/red/yellow nor woman but poet or writer. For many of us, the question of priorities remains a crucial issue. Being merely "a writer" without doubt ensures one a status of far greater weight than being "a woman of color who writes" ever does. Imputing

race or sex to the creative act has long been a means by which the literary establishment cheapens and discredits the achievements of non-mainstream women writers. She who "happens to be" a (non-white) Third World member, a woman, and a writer is bound to go through the ordeal of exposing her work to the abuse of praises and criticisms that either ignore, dispense with, or overemphasize her racial and sexual attributes. (1989: 6)

In a similar manner, the confines of heteronormative Western sexuality have a very specific history within colonial frameworks and are structurally bound to the ways in which we understand the past, present, and future of such relations. Continuing to deconstruct these power structures past the first wave of postcolonial critiques has allowed for postfeminist, queer, and masculinist studies to pose new questions (e.g., Chopra et al. 2004; Gopinath 2005; Mohanty 2003; Srivastava 2004). Such questions are particularly relevant for revealing how colonial states affected domestic orders and household power structures: from this standpoint, it becomes untenable to apply the Western heterosexual ideals of passive/femininity and active/masculinity, as these preclude recognition of the colonized as fully human (Sen 2004). This critique finds its roots in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), which uses psychoanalysis and psychological theories to uncover the desire, realities, and affects of becoming white in order to survive and succeed.

Within the academy, survival depends on citations, publications, and conferences, in particular for those groups that have been traditionally marginalized both within the state and within the discipline of archaeology. The politics of representation are thus significant for scholars in terms of their identity and practice (Rizvi 2008: 111). The recognition that identity, particularly as concerns marginality and alterity, informs and shapes one's standpoint is best illustrated by a question posed by Bhabha: "What changes when you write from the middle of difference, when you inscribe that intermediary area that invites the ambiguous gamble with the historical necessities of race, class, gender, generation, region, religion?" (1997: 435). Such a question is, of course, contingent on having the space, resources, and opportunity to write. We contend that it is important to have these voices heard and valued, despite criticism of postcolonial intellectuals as complicit with the Western academy and global capitalism (e.g., Dirlik 1994). We believe that it is crucial to understand the global place of academics and to deconstruct those power structures.

### Postcolonialism and Archaeology

Several major themes have emerged from archaeologists' engagements with postcolonial studies, including the critique of colonial traditions of thought, new accounts of the past that emphasize Indigenous and subaltern experiences, and strategies for restitution and decolonization. Archaeologists have reflected on how their discipline is

shaped by colonial forces, tracing the intimate relationship between imperialism and forms of archaeological knowledge. As Chris Gosden (2001: 245) points out, archaeology and anthropology are both outgrowths of liberal philosophy, and their agenda has been to study the "other," an enterprise that has been fundamental in justifying colonial intervention, constituting a colonial tool of governance in charting and knowing subaltern peoples, and dissociating Indigenous descendants from their heritage (see also Gosden 1999; Pels 1997). Such critique has followed Said in tracing the continuation of colonial discourse, structures, and practices into the present, revealing the role of archaeology within current relationships and inequalities. In a classic essay originally published in 1980, Bruce Trigger's "Archaeology and the Image of the American Indian" showed how assumptions that Native American culture was primitive and inherently static were linked to archaeological arguments for the comparatively recent arrival of Native American peoples in North America, and their consequent dissociation from the material remains of social complexity. This important study documented how archaeological interpretation reproduced popular stereotypes of Native American peoples and reinforced the political interests of Euro-American culture.

Since that time, Trigger (1980, 1984, 2003, 2006) and other historians of the discipline (e.g., Díaz-Andreu 2007; Dietler 2005; Gosden 1999; Kehoe 1998; McNiven and Russell 2005; Mulvaney 1981; Murray 1989; Rowlands 1998b; also González-Ruibal and T. Patterson, this volume,



chapters 2 and 10, respectively) have systematically reviewed the Enlightenment tradition that framed archaeology's inception and professionalization and its relationship with colonialism. Western ideas of progress, human difference, and "prehistory" were developed through colonial experience, in the Americas and Africa during the 17th and 18th centuries, and in the Pacific and Australia during the 19th century.

Directly emerging from these processes was the idea of social evolution in which human populations move from less complex to more complex societies—with the colonial state sitting on the top rung of the evolutionary ladder of civilization. These models of complexity have continued to affect archaeological interpretation, in assumptions that the progress of civilization inevitably follows from "primitive" hunter-gathers to civilized state-level societies. The resulting nomenclature draws on such texts and scholarship as Lewis Henry Morgan's influential book, *Ancient Society, or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization* (1877) and, more recently, Elman Service's four classifications of the stages of social evolution/political organizations (1962). Such a linear model of social evolution is complicated by the continued usage of terms such as Stone Age, Chalcolithic, Bronze Age, and the like.

The professionalization of prehistory as a science during the 19th century was stimulated by a wider search for national identity across Europe (for a Soviet example, see Dolukhanov, this volume, chapter 8). In addition, as contributions to this volume show

very clearly, the national imagination played a constitutional and fundamental role in creating the discipline of archaeology. Colonialism and nationalism have recently been conceptualized as connected systems of thinking and practice, and archaeology often developed at the intersection of colonialism and nationalism (Hamilakis 2007). The recognition of this process stimulated research concerned with the intersection between archaeology and nationalism from the mid-1990s (e.g., Atkinson et al. 1996; Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996; Kohl and Fawcett 1995). Yet archaeologists have not always linked this process to the larger imperialist and modernizing ambitions of the major European powers, nor to the ways that these also entailed the creation of particular views of the colonized that justified conquest and domination and appropriated Indigenous or subordinate groups into a national identity. Nonetheless, it is clear that many conceptual categories and techniques of governance were symmetrically applied in order to subjugate external cultural others and to subordinate internal groups (e.g., Cooper and Stoler 1997; Hall 2000; Stoler 1995; also González-Ruibal, this volume, chapter 2). A growing literature traces the intersection of anti-colonial critique and heritage in a variety of locales (e.g., Crawford 2000; Smith 2004; Tsosie 1997; Watkins 2000). In particular, there is a much-needed critique of interpretations that position Indigenous materiality at a lower level of complexity and technology than that of other "civilized" groups (see McGuire 1992; McNiven and Russell 2005; Pikirayi 2001).

Only through contesting those ideologies can the image and trope of Indigenous people as ancient, timeless, and unchanging actually be reimagined.

Postcolonial scholars have revealed the importance of transnational histories in demonstrating the interdependence of social categories, as ideas about race, class, and gender were developed in global counterpoint between the metropolis and the colonies. Such accounts also throw into question the centrality of the nation and Western colonialism as analytic categories, by showing the diversity of movement and exchange "from below." As Chris Gosden has argued (2004: 20), there is a need for transnational archaeologies to develop a broad comparative framework to allow local specificities and differences to become apparent. Recent analysis has also extended postcolonial studies' temporal scope to explore processes of colonization over the millennia—defining what is really new about globalization. For example, Gosden (2004) emphasizes the central role of material consumption and exchange, and the mutually transformative effects of the circulation of people, ideas, and objects within colonialism (see also Stein 2005). Through its longitudinal, comparative perspective, archaeology makes an important contribution to this analysis, allowing us to better historicize these phenomena by showing that global processes of colonialism and exchange have a longer history than has often been understood, and illuminating colonialism by reference to a range of examples from different periods and regions (e.g., Given

2004; Lyons and Papadopoulos 2002; Stein 2005).

The use of the postcolonial critique to inform archaeological interpretation, specifically within a colonial context of exchange, has been instrumental in opening new research directions. Identity has become a significant variable (see also Part IV of this volume), showing how the politics and performance of personhood affect different forms of exchange. Additionally, significant research can be done on the role that scientific paradigms and language have played in dissociating Indigenous people and minority communities from their heritage and appropriating it in order to forward particular discourses of power and knowledge production (see Chadha, this volume, chapter 16).

Certain theoretical notions that emerge from the postcolonial critique may be applied to the materiality of archaeological studies more readily than others. Homi Bhabha's (2004) concept of *hybridity* is one such concept; it is often used to replace older terms such as "cultural intermixing," used to describe time periods such as the Orientalizing period in ancient Greece during the 8th century B.C.E. In a recent paper, Benjamin Porter and Bruce Routledge argue that hybridity can be a "more fruitful concept for archaeological interpretation if used not simply to signify the formation of new cultural forms, but rather to represent the struggle over the production of diverse cultural forms, especially cultural forms that diverge from those linked to dominant forms of political power" (2008: 3). Peter van Dommelen focuses instead on

hybrid practices. Investigating colonial networks controlled by the city of Carthage during the 7th to 4th centuries B.C.E., which developed out of an earlier Phoenician colonial presence, van Dommelen demonstrates how colonial interactions relate to subsequent hybrid practices and how the localized effects of colonization might be understood in the context of the colonized (1997).

One of the most significant sites where both localized and global effects of colonization can be located at once as both material and practice is the museum, founded on the colonial impulses to collect, order, and define. As an implicit strategy of colonialism, the museum becomes the site where identities are created and the interpretation of information affects the building of shared imaginaries and national ideals (Barringer and Flynn 1998; Preziosi and Farago 2003). In both the materiality of the often magnificent edifices within which collections are housed or displayed, the public learns about the Other in a very formal manner (Mitchell 1992). Thus, the contemporary Other is placed side by side with prehistoric artifacts assigned to the category of "primitive," establishing rational, scientific patterns of thought by contrast (Bennett 2004; Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008; Guha-Thakurta 2004). Perpetuating the desire to commemorate ancestors, museums have become Eurocentric regimes of memory, their fixity and permanence an antidote to modernity's sense of instability and anxiety (Butler and Rowlands 2006).

### Volume Organization

In response to these major developments within postcolonial archaeology, we have organized the volume into five parts. Where appropriate, these sections are regionally based to reflect distinct historical and intellectual traditions and modern geopolitical formations. These are followed by short commentaries in which scholars engage in an interdisciplinary dialogue or provide a specialized discussion of the theme. Part I, *The Archaeological Critique of Colonization: Global Trajectories*, examines the emergence of archaeology in conjunction with imperialism, and the ways that European structures of thought have shaped research in colonial situations across the globe. Part II, *Archaeological Narratives of Colonialism*, presents archaeological accounts that have only become possible with the recognition of the discipline's complicity with colonialism. These narratives foreground Indigenous perspectives and experience. Part III, *Addressing/Redressing the Past: Restitution, Repatriation, and Ethics*, presents concrete strategies that aim to redress injustice in the present. Part IV, *Colonial and Postcolonial Identities*, addresses the articulation of identities, one of the central issues raised by new forms of collaboration and interpretation. Finally, in Part V, *Strategies of Practice: Implementing the Postcolonial Critique*, the volume ends with practical and pragmatic approaches to changes in methodology that allow for a new kind of archaeological practice. Prefacing each of these five sections, we offer brief introduc-

tions that reflect on core questions addressed by individual chapters.

In an epilogue to the volume, the editors reflect on forms of alterity, the roles of cosmopolitanism, social change, and ethics in archaeology, and we canvass ideas for new research. In compiling and editing a volume that ranges across many scales, from the local to the global, and in varied histories and cultural contexts, we have found it necessary to embrace multiple voices, case studies, and approaches. We have consciously sought to recognize the utility of comparative work and interdisciplinary approaches to understanding the past. The chapters and commentaries included in this volume offer new ways to engage with the past, present, and the future.

### Note

1. World Archaeological Congress, 2009 (accessed 27 October 2009). Available from [www.worldarchaeologicalcongress.org/site/home.php](http://www.worldarchaeologicalcongress.org/site/home.php).

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