History and Its Discontents

Stone Statues, Native Histories, and Archaeologists

by Cristóbal Gnecco and Carolina Hernández

Through the recent symbolic appropriation of an archaeological site, an indigenous community in southwestern Colombia is subverting the colonial-created meaning attributed to the physical and cultural remains of ancient peoples; once feared and socially proscribed, these remains are now entering a new symbolic realm and playing an important role in the construction of territory and social life. A reflexive and committed archaeology can contribute to processes such as this one in the larger context of decolonization.

This is a story about the way colonialism shapes the symbolism of the societies it dominates and about the possibility of contesting and transforming colonial meanings. It is centered on the way the colonial historical apparatus works. Its main actors are a North Andean native community, archaeological practice, and historical discourses of several kinds. We contend that the past is a rhetorical space full of changing meanings that are situational and played out in terms of identity. These general assertions are better seen if grounded in particular cases. Ours come from Colombia.

The conception of the past of the indigenous communities of Andean southwestern Colombia was shaped by the Spanish conquest,[1] especially by the generalized ideological (and physical) violence exercised by the Catholic Church. Although we will never know how those communities conceived of their pasts before European colonization, we can at least argue that Catholicism condemned the preconquest era in terms of the moral evolutionism that underlay its project of civilization and that the ancestors of those communities were included in that condemnation. The pejorative treatment of past inhabitants (not just *others* but also the communities' own ancestors, in other words, *the ancestors turned others*) is typical wherever colonial domination occurs. Colonial domination sometimes destroys local histories (and their associated paraphernalia, such as shrines and votive items) and their historians (by physical destruction or rhetorical repression). It also creates histories anew by imposing new beginnings and condemning any time before those beginnings. This rupture of historical continuity is a powerful strategy for neutralizing

local histories because it replaces their myths of origin with a new one, that of civilization.

The history imposed by the conquerors does not simply erase the history of the conquered but distorts, conflates, and confuses it. Colonialism constructs more than it destroys, and this construction is insidious and far more effective than simple destruction; the symbolic universe of the conquered takes a new form. The historical disciplines further this process. Archaeology, for instance, contributes to the alienation of native histories by severing the ties between contemporary indigenous societies and the material referents that expert knowledge groups under the term "the archaeological record." It does so in two ways: by neglecting indigenous meanings and by appropriating those referents for a collective history (usually referred to as "national") that celebrates the native societies of the past while despising their contemporary counterparts.

One of the consequences of this process is that some indigenous societies (specifically, we will argue, those subjected to the domination of the Catholic Church) fear the material referents linked to their forebears that archaeologists call "archaeological materials." This fear is translated into neglect and proscription, creating the curious situation in which empowered native communities explicitly interested in historical matters disregard archaeological sites and materials. The interpretation and, eventually, the overcoming of this contradiction is the main purpose of this paper. Although it can be argued that the indigenous communities that were brought under the colonial yoke possessed theories of otherness and that those theories may have included dichotomous classifications of self and other akin to those of the West (that is, the self as civilized, primordial, and exemplary and the other as barbaric, referential, and negative), their perception of their

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1. On the similar effects of conquest elsewhere in the world, see Mudimbe (1988) for Africa and Chatterjee (1993) for India.

own pasts as uncivilized and negligible is the product of colonialism. This perception is now being contested and subverted by native political and cultural empowerment, with the result that what was previously feared and proscribed (the ancestors and their material referents) now assumes a positive valuation. We will discuss this process by showing how the Nasa, one of the most numerous and empowered contemporary native societies in Colombia, are contesting and transforming colonial-national history through the resignification of material referents (archaeological materials, especially stone statues, until recently ignored, neglected, or proscribed because of colonial symbolism), systems of representation (archaeology, especially its denial of local meanings), and colonial categories (histories that created new beginnings and condemned old practices). The growing interest of a number of social actors in matters that historical experts (including archaeologists) have routinely considered their own has broadened the significance of the past with the inclusion of other worldviews and different projections of the present and the future. Local autonomies consecrated by constitutional reforms such as the one that took place in Colombia in 1991,[2] reflecting ethnic agendas established well before multiculturalism became a state concern, are fostering the production of historical narratives and creating opportunities to resignify the past.

Local historical narrative production, with its linkage to a deep sense of territorial belonging, as well as the native resignification of material referents long ignored, is a refurbished apparatus that confronts (but also uses) both Western constructions of the past and native histories that have become official through their association with ethnic political agendas and literacy. Through the case study of a Nasa community that was recently relocated to a new territory in which it "discovered" an archaeological site, we hope to show that the transformation of pervasive colonial meanings in the framework of local (in this case, ethnic) struggle for self-determination can be assisted by public, reflexive, and committed archaeological practice. The argument thus comes full circle, but this time the circle is open. We begin by showing how colonialism transformed the history of an indigenous society and archaeology played a central role in that transformation; we then show how that history is being recast through the subversion of colonial meanings; and we end by showing that archaeology can abandon its long affiliation with colonialism to align itself with new historical meanings in the larger context of decolonization. This move of archaeology can be even more significant if we consider that in the postmodern era historical colonialism has added another, different

layer of meaning to its operating machine: nowadays history itself is under attack by the supremacy of the present, and so is its potential for social resistance. Although postmodern logic does away with history (Jameson 1984; Lipovetsky 1990), a multitude of actors—social movements, class organizations, academics—opposes the devaluation of the meanings attributed to the past. This opposition is not uniform, stems from different interests, and places emphasis on a variety of potential referents. Social movements stand out as leaders of this opposition, searching for historical meaning as a form of utopian resistance, finding in history their origin and destiny, and appealing to it in various ways against (and despite) postmodern mandates: as cultural densification, reflection about times to come, and the construction of a social fabric. Thus history is deployed in action and an old drama is cast anew. A decolonized archaeology is committed to the vindication of the past as a fundamental source for the construction of social projects, and therefore we conclude with a discussion of the role of historical consciousness in postmodern times.

The Nasa People

Some 200,000 Nasa, whose relationship with the state (colonial and republican) has been marked by both capitulation and rebellion, live mostly in a region of the Andes of southwestern Colombia known as Tierradentro (fig. 1). In 1994 an earthquake shook the heart of their territory. Several communities were uprooted from their ancestral lands because of the destruction of agricultural fields and geological risk. A relocation effort was launched by the Colombian state with the aim of finding suitable lands for them. After some initial hesitation and difficult negotiations with the state-run agency that directed the relocation, some 500 Nasa from Vitoncó accepted resettlement in an area around Santa Leticia, a small frontier town between the provinces of Cauca and Huila that lies outside current Nasa territory. They agreed to move after their *the'walas* (shamans) had given their approval on the basis of a sensorial survey.[3] The new settlement was named after Juan Tama, an eighteenth-century Nasa leader and a fundamental referent in Nasa history.[4] Strengthening their sense of territorial belonging and ethnic consciousness has become an urgent matter for the resettled Nasa. In the new settlement the younger generation has conflicting feelings about ethnicity much more intense than those of their parents a few decades ago, when capitalism was encroaching upon

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2. The Colombian constitutional reform is just one of many that swept Latin America in the 1990s. The key word linking them is *autonomy*, especially with regard to ethnic groups. Varying in intensity and scope, these reforms attempted to secure (or consecrate) the territorial, legal, educational, administrative, fiscal, and linguistic autonomy of those groups (see Stavenhagen 2002; Van Cott 2002).

3. Sensorial surveys among the Nasa involve feeling and interpreting cosmic energy through specific "signs" in the body—bodily energies with particular directions and points of expression which help to determine courses of action and, in some cases, rituals to be performed. The correct interpretation of signs is a task reserved to the *the'walas* (see Henman 1980, 176–200; Portela 2002, 106–17).

4. Gow and Rappaport (2002, 55–57) provide an account of the relocation and the internal struggles that accompanied it.
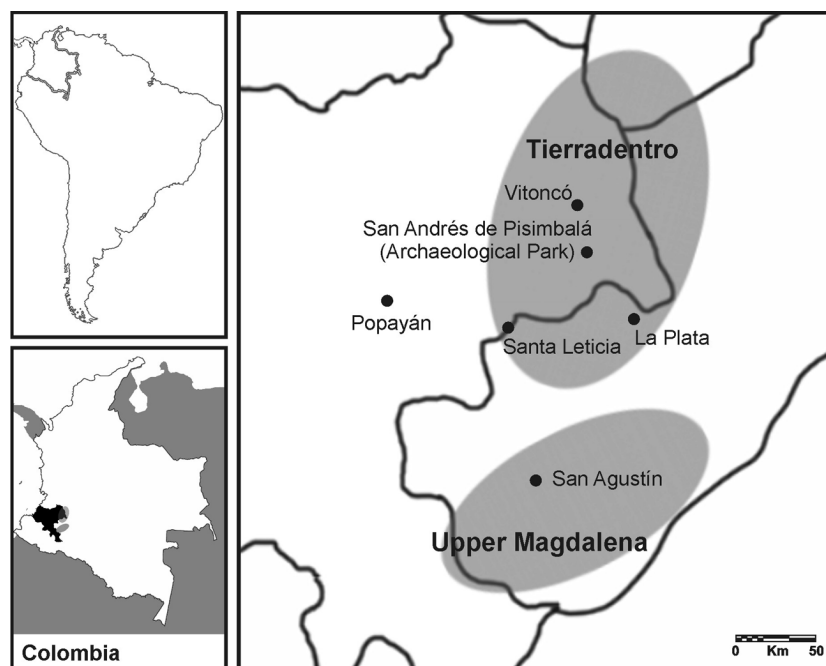
Figure 1. Southwestern Colombia, showing locations mentioned in the text.

their world and putting pressure on their ethnic identity.[5] Moreover, overt conflict is more prevalent in the region around Santa Leticia than in the ancestral lands because the Juan Tama settlement is surrounded by mestizo peasants with different priorities and worldviews rather than by other *resguardos*.[6] In such a situation a sense of territorial belonging can make a difference, becoming one of the bases of cultural life. Gómez and Ruíz (1997) have shown that for the Nasa territory is more than a spatial phenomenon; it is a dynamic social process resulting from multiple interactions (economic, ecological, political, cognitive, and symbolic) and the main locus of social memory.[7] Territory is also history, and history is territory. According to Rappaport (1990, 9), the Nasa "have

encoded their history of struggle in their sacred geography, so that past meets present in the very terrain on which they live, farm and walk." Nasa history "behaves so dynamically that it is constantly being re-created to validate contemporary actions. . . . Around the slightest physical event or social happening a local adaptation of the original version [of history] is inevitable. . . . Historical memory has been the cornerstone of territorial defense . . . and Páez[8] [Nasa] ethnicity" (Gómez and Ruíz 1997, 132).

History is a model for the creation and revitalization of ethnic identity, which prominently includes the defense of territorial integrity. Autonomous development requires a competent reshaping of history. In this endeavor Nasa oral traditions have been fundamental in providing the basis for a pedagogical model that nurtures territorial meaning, interest in historical matters, and consciousness of self-development. The relatively recent inception of an official native history has also been crucial in the revival of historical matters and the role accorded to that revival in the weaving of an empowered social fabric.

In the forefront of Nasa ethnic empowerment has been the Cauca Regional Indigenous Council (CRIC), a powerful indigenous regional organization founded in 1971 on the basis of the experience of widespread peasant revolts. From its mostly Nasa origins, the CRIC eventually became a panethnic

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5. Gow and Rappaport (2002, 56) note that education has been crucial in this regard: "[the residents of Juan Tama] have been obliged to fight against their enforced marginality by attaching increasing importance to the education of their children. . . . The school has played a crucial role in deepening an appreciation of Nasa identity in the resettlement through attention to oral history, the revival of shamanic rituals, and the increased value placed on the Nasa language."

6. *Resguardo* is equivalent to the English "reservation" but has precise connotations in both colonial and republican terms; therefore we use it instead of its English equivalent.

7. Throughout the paper we distinguish between "memory" and "history." The former is what people remember of their experiences or of those of people they have known or heard about (either individually or collectively, in which case we use the term "social memory"). We reserve the use of "history" for an apparatus (institutional or otherwise) that tells people what they have to remember, celebrate, and use in collective projects.

8. *Páez* (plural *Paeces*) was the colonial term for the Nasa; the latter self-designation is now more widely used.

organization with strong influence on native national affairs. Its activities and accomplishments include the recovery of ancestral lands and languages, instruction in legal matters, bilingual education, the promotion of communal practices (economic, social), and historical revitalization.

The transmission of history in ethnic communities has changed since the adoption of written communication and literacy as part of the political struggle for legitimacy and empowerment. Since the eighteenth century, political leadership has developed around cultural brokers, individuals capable of dealing with the colonial and republican authorities (Findji and Rojas 1985; Rappaport 1990). The perceived capabilities of those individuals have been based to a great extent on their reading and writing skills, notable in a basically illiterate society. Cultural legitimacy vis-à-vis the national state has been achieved since late colonial times in part by demonstrating the "factuality" of indigenous myths by providing written versions of otherwise "fictitious" oral accounts. Since the 1970s literacy has been widely promoted;[9] a visible effect has been the promotion of a formerly unknown official native history, disseminated through school curricula, political instruction, journals, and pamphlets.

This official history counters national history and plays a role that the state (colonial and republican) has condemned: serving as the basis for ethnic consciousness and mobilization. It has created a sense of community, a sort of national indigenous discourse, that goes beyond the borders of particular *resguardos* (Rappaport 2004). It stresses the importance of political heroes who fought for the Nasa. Those leaders left behind models for political action and, knowingly or not, a morality. The case of Quintín Lame, a native leader of the first half of the twentieth century, is illustrative in this regard. The political establishment, especially the leadership of the Quintín Lame[10] guerrilla movement, made Lame one of the historical cornerstones of native insurgency (Espinosa 1996); this move sharply contrasts with the almost total neglect of him until the 1980s because of his marked religiosity. Juan Tama was also virtually forgotten or remembered and re-

created only locally[11] until Lame's (2004 [1971]) political manifesto, which recounts Tama's legal struggle for colonial recognition of Nasa territory, made him the paramount historical referent of the Nasa.[12] For good reason Lame's manuscript is known as *la doctrina* (the doctrine). These leaders passed down what the current leadership interprets as rules to be followed. The 1971 CRIC political agenda closely follows the eighteenth-century mandate of Juan Tama, reinterpreted two centuries later by Lame: the recovery of culture, language, and territory. Native official history is therefore a morality based on the political actions of great past leaders. Myths dealing with less decisive events have not been accorded the same importance,[13] although they are constantly played out in many contexts. These myths, along with geographical features endowed with historical referents, remain the main historical repository of the Nasa.

The official Nasa history and myths accord a central place to territory. Therefore it is not surprising that the Nasa communities that were relocated after the 1994 earthquake have strategically employed the relationship between history and territory to give meaning to a physical space that, at least in recent oral tradition, was not their own. Representations are re-created according to ancestral worldviews and are articulated and adapted to provide a meaningful symbolic scheme for situational needs such as territorial expansion (Gómez and Ruíz 1997, 165, 193). In 1995, a year after the Juan Tama settlement had been established, one of us (Hernández) witnessed the confirmation of the mythical boundaries of the new area[14] based upon Nasa social memory. Although the area was devoid of indigenous peoples in the eyes of Westerners until a decade ago, it is widely believed that this de facto extension of the pre-1994 Nasa *resguardos* is a redrawing of the preconquest boundaries of Nasa territory (see Rappaport 1990, 29–30). The *the'walas*, elders, political officials (the governor and members of the *cabildo*, the corporate governing body), and members of the community walked the territory, finding similarities with their heartland in Tierradentro and recognizing points of reference mentioned in myths (notably a waterfall located to the west). While per-

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9. The title of a CRIC-produced booklet, designed for school curricula, is *Aprender a leer es luchar* (Learning to Read is Fighting). Likewise, the organization's newspaper, *Unidad Indígena*, stated in its twenty-seventh issue in 1977 that "the development of the struggle has shown that the indigenes must learn to read and write in Spanish." Yet literacy as ideology does not necessarily demand that every person read and write. What matters most is the promotion of written materials and the belief that their diffusion, analysis, and understanding entail empowerment vis-à-vis a national society that cannot be reached by other means. In fact, during the two decades that followed the creation of the CRIC, literacy was promoted through gatherings in which one literate person read a written document (such as a newspaper) and others listened (Castillo 1999).

10. This guerrilla movement began in the province of Cauca in the early 1980s and demobilized in 1991. Its purpose was the defense of indigenous culture and territory.

11. The first written reports on Nasa mythology were made by two anthropologists (Pérez de Barradas 1943; Hernández de Alba 1946) and a priest (González n.d.) at the end of the first half of the twentieth century, and they mention the centrality in certain communities of what can now be identified as one of the main Nasa foundation myths: a cultural hero is born out of the waters to give his people rules to be followed and the key elements of ethnic consciousness. That hero is sometimes Juan Tama but sometimes not (Llíban is another name for him, for instance).

12. Gonzalo Castillo, who published Lame's 1939 manuscript in 1971, made it clear that the publication had political implications: "With true patriotic pride we offer to the indigenous peasants of the country this document, born out of their mountains thanks to the great fighter and native intellectual Manuel Quintín Lame" (Castillo 1971, ix).

13. The most recurrent myths are also associated with individuals, mostly Tama.

14. Nasa shamans, upon reading Juan Tama's eighteenth-century text, interpreted it to mean that the Valley of La Plata was part of the *resguardo* of Vitoncó (Joanne Rappaport, personal communication).

forming this symbolic appropriation of the new *resguardo* they came across La Candelaria, an archaeological site with stone statues (located in a narrow valley in the upper reaches of the Aguacatal River near Santa Leticia) until then overlooked by Nasa history. The stone carvings from the site were given mythical meaning. For instance, one carving was said to be the chair of Juan Tama (Gómez and Ruíz 1997, 196), and the site itself was declared ancestral land.[15] Angel María Yoinó, a highly esteemed *the'wala*, claimed four years ago, recalling the discovery of La Candelaria, that the statues at the site

> take care of us and from now on we have to care for them, although we can't reach out or can't understand. If we the *the'walas* don't get together we will never understand this way. We know that they loved and love us, so we must do the same, love and respect them. Stones have existed since the origin of the earth; they have been rearing us. We have been living for a long time, and so we have to remember our forebears, but we forget and don't seem to remember them. But now that we have found them we must think with strength, walk with strength, and teach our grandkids. Only thus will we keep on living[16]

The stones are, of course, more than just *things*. They are animate objects that evoke emotions and beings (forebears) that appeal to larger (and more permanent, although changing) structures of meaning. Such structures, for the most part mythically re-created and displayed, link and transcend spatio-temporal contingencies and allow new territories to be given meaning and appropriated by a sense of belonging.

Mythical re-creation has thus been basic to the way the relocated community has constructed its relationship with the new territory and given meaning to the archaeological site. The people of the Juan Tama *resguardo* have revitalized Nasa myths (still basically oral) that were displaced by the written official Nasa history. Nasa foundation myths stress the importance of water. The Nasa and the neighboring Guambianos and Yanaconas all consider themselves people of the water (Portela 2000). Water is a central element of Nasa history that "is constantly reinterpreted and validated from the starting point of the lakes as home" (Gómez and Ruíz 1997, 121). The annual "refreshment" of the staffs, symbols of political authority, takes place at Juan Tama Lake and represents the ancestral blessing of current officials. Juan Tama's birth is also linked to water, along with the birth of other important caciques (chiefs). Stones are also important to the Nasa. St. Thomas, a prominent character in their mythology, is the stone incarnation of a powerful force related to earthquakes

and the origin of the earth; he turned *pijaos* (enemies)[17] into stone and lent his name to a stone that marks the boundary between two *resguardos*[18] (Gómez and Ruíz 1997, 110). The transcriptions of traditional Nasa myths made by Yule (1993), a Nasa writer, and Segundo Bernal (1953), an anthropologist, make extensive reference to stones, albeit with strong Catholic symbolism (which, in fact, pervades Nasa mythology to this day). The myths related to the aquatic origin of the Nasa and their cultural heroes and those related to stones were prominently mentioned by the *the'walas* and the community in appropriating La Candelaria. This is not surprising, given that the site is located on the bank of a river and close to a waterfall and that its most prominent cultural features are stone carvings.

This is a case of a varied mythical substratum's surfacing in the midst of a native history made official (or unintentionally produced) by political and other needs. It indicates that ethnic agendas are neither homogeneous nor fully consensual, and it shows that myths both explain and act upon reality (Gómez and Ruíz 1997, 201). As an explanatory tool they provide order and meaning to past and current events, while as action they provide legitimacy to practices that regulate Nasa interaction with their territory and with other groups.

The symbolic meaning attributed to La Candelaria by the Nasa resettled around Santa Leticia is a mélange of foundation myths and official narratives and shows that, no matter how codified, history is always in the making. What archaeologists call the archaeological record has been central to this process (figs. 2 and 3) as a tangible and motivational referent for reflection on temporality and cultural continuity. Yet until the appropriation of La Candelaria by the inhabitants of the Juan Tama settlement there were no records of Nasa relationships with the numerous archaeological remains that dot Tierradentro (mostly at San Andrés de Pisimbalá, where there are painted communal tombs and stone statues).[19] Some three decades ago the archaeologist Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff (1972a, 57; see also Gómez and Ruíz 1997, 155) noted that "many archaeological sites in Páez [Nasa] territory are still greatly feared . . . by the local Indians, who attribute them

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15. La Candelaria is across the river from the Juan Tama *resguardo* and belongs not to the Nasa but to a mestizo peasant. This situation has not created any inconvenience, legal or otherwise, so far, but it will have to be dealt with at some time in the future either through purchase of the land or by bringing the owner to participate in the saga depicted in this paper.

16. Excerpted from a video made in 2003 to serve as a pedagogical tool in the local school.

17. This term was used during colonial times to designate indigenous groups, especially those of the eastern flanks of the Andes of southwestern Colombia, who opposed the Spanish conquest. Although it may have been an ethnic category used by the indigenes before the conquest, the Spaniards used it to mean "enemies." A similar argument has been set forth by Pineda (1981) in his interpretation of the indigenous term *tama*, widely used as an ethnic denomination. For Pineda, *tama* embodies mechanisms of social subordination and ethnic assimilation through which native orphans were adopted and/or enslaved. These two cases highlight the colonial transformation of indigenous categories into ethnic labels.

18. Mythological analysis finds a strong identification between St. Thomas, Juan Tama, and even *kapish*, "thunder." They all encode a liberator messiah (Rappaport 1981, 390).

19. For an archaeological summary of Tierradentro, see Chavez and Puerta (1986).

Figure 2. People from Juan Tama at La Candelaria for a 2003 project
aimed at linking history and school curricula.

to the ancient *pijao-jaguars.*" However, this situation is chang-
ing, and not just among the Nasa. Indeed, the Nasa myth-
ological incorporation of La Candelaria may contribute to a
change in the traditional relationship between native groups
and archaeology in Colombia, which is still characterized by
the hegemony with which the institutional establishment deals
with indigenous peoples, archaeological material culture, and
the contemporary contexts of its symbolic deployment and
by native communities' marked lack of interest (reinforced
by social proscriptions) in archaeological remains. The rest
of the paper is devoted to arguing that this lack of interest
was a colonial creation and explaining how it is being
transformed.

Colonial-National History and the Nasa

La Candelaria, the archaeological site that the Nasa have built
into their territorial and mythical symbolism, was unknown
to Westerners until Henri Lehmann, a German-born French
archaeologist working for the newly established Institute of
Ethnology of the Universidad del Cauca in Popayán, visited
it in 1943. La Candelaria contained several stone statues
amidst other remains such as dwelling terraces, channels, and
pottery sherds. Lehmann noticed that these statues greatly
resembled those of San Agustín, a well-known site on the

Upper Magdelena River, and decided to move three of them
(fig. 4) to Popayán. Local excitement regarding the trans-
portation of the statues was as might be imagined for a small,
quiet, isolated Andean city six decades ago. The task was
monumental, given that the dirt road that currently winds 3
km to the south of the site was just being built. However,
Lehmann succeeded with the aid of several soldiers who built
a trail and dragged the heavy statues 12 km over uneven
terrain. The statues have remained ever since at the Univ-
ersidad del Cauca—initially housed in the so-called archae-
ological park in the main yard of the Santo Domingo cloister,
then for more than two decades in the Mosquera Museum,
and since 1989 in the Museum of Natural History.[20] The local
newspaper reported that the purpose of bringing the statues
to Popayán was "salvaging an autochthonous monument of
great value" (*Liberal* 1943, 1). Since their removal from the
site, however, they have been little more than decorative items,
sitting mute through the years. In their current location they
bear no labels indicating their origin, age, or any other con-
textual markers; tourists who visit the museum rarely notice
them and never ask about them.

The stone statues of southwestern Colombia have fasci-

20. Descriptions of the statues can be found in Lehmann (1944) and
Sotomayor and Uribe (1987, 225–33).

Figure 3. Juan Tama inhabitants with one of the stone statues from La Candelaria in 2003.

nated travelers and archaeologists ever since they were first reported by a Spanish soldier in the sixteenth century. Especially fascinating have been those of the eastern flanks of the Andes commonly grouped under the label "San Agustín culture," an umbrella name that covers several sites—including La Candelaria and nearby Agua Bonita, Yarumalito, and San José—sharing anthropomorphic statues with animal features such as feline fangs. Only a few reports concerning these statues were written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (e.g., Codazzi 1959 [1857]; Caldas 1972 [1808]; Santa Gertrudis 1994 [1956]), and it was not until Konrad Theodor Preuss carried out the first archaeological research at the eponymous site of San Agustín in the 1920s that the first serious descriptions of them were made (Preuss 1974 [1931]). The majority of researchers considered the statues and associated material outside any contemporary cultural context, that is, simply as the remains of past peoples. There was no attempt to establish cultural continuities of any kind with extant societies. Nor was any consideration given to the use of current indigenous symbolism in the interpretation of the archaeological data. This approach made sense, however, in the light of a national project dating back to the middle of the nineteenth century, when the governing liberal elite attempted to build an inclusive national identity. In this nation-building project contemporary Indians were a troublesome problem: while internal colonialism kept them subjugated and at a distance, nationalism demanded their rhetorical inclusion on

Figure 4. Three stone statues from La Candelaria in the Museum of Natural History of the Universidad del Cauca, Popayán (largest 1.70 m tall).

the basis of an egalitarian ethic. This dilemma was resolved, to a great extent, by the adoption of pre-Hispanic otherness as the cornerstone of national identity and the marginalization of contemporary indigenous societies.

The pre-Hispanic societies appropriated by the national identity were those deemed civilized such as the Muisca of the eastern highlands. A civilized society was a society with several decision-making levels, institutional discriminations, a legal apparatus, religion, an army, and taxes—that is, a society different in degree but not in kind from contemporary European societies. In the mid-nineteenth century Uricoechea (1984 [1854]) said that the Colombian nationality was based on the "nations" that peopled the Andean region, thus excluding the "barbaric" nomads of the lowlands. Building upon that logic, Law 89 of 1890, Colombia's most fully developed legal statement regarding native communities until the 1991 Constitution, established a legal distinction between savages (basically lowlanders), to be tutored by the church, and civilized Indians (basically inhabitants of the Andes), to be ruled by the laws of the republic. This distinction was based on the Western dichotomy between sedentarism and nomadism that is central to the legal conception of territorial rights. By virtue of their designation as "civilized" on the basis of the archaeological evidence, the Muisca were discursively treated as an alterity writ "self." This vindication of pre-Hispanic civilizations contributed to the production of the civilization/barbarism dichotomy that still pervades the discourse of the Colombian state when dealing either with the ethnic other or with the guerrillas. This interest of Colombian archaeologists in civilization led them to pay disproportionate attention to monumental sites (Jaramillo and Oyuela 1994, 54).

The division of otherness between past and present produced an indigeneity that was both present and absent, a dichotomy that fueled internal colonialism. As Fabian (1983) has shown, temporal distancing (allochronism) is one of the main discursive strategies for constructing alterity. The physical and typological time of archaeologists is used to naturalize their construction of an other effectively localized in another time, a time that has to be brought, by inclusion, into our time. Allochronism is a political cosmology (*sensu* Fabian 1983, 152), not an innocent disciplinary tool. The morality implied in allochronism produces a good past alterity and a bad present one. The location of conflict not in the past but in the present through the discursive degradation of the contemporaneous other explains the obsession of Colombian archaeologists with cultural discontinuities, catastrophes, and diffusion. Diffusionism is a central element in archaeology's reproduction of internal colonialism even today. It writes the atemporal history of atemporal societies (Fabian 1983, 18) in terms of spatial and directional comparisons. Therefore, the determination of origins is more political than disciplinary (Pineda 1984, 202–3). For instance, the notion of a Mesoamerican or Peruvian origin for Colombian pre-Hispanic societies helped to valorize the civilized other within and lent

credence to Spanish and internal colonialisms that aimed to civilize the uncivilized other.

Archaeology also helped to rationalize a divided alterity through catastrophism. Colombian archaeological discourse continually alludes to annihilation and disappearance: archaeological subjects (societies, cultures, even sherds) do not change but disappear. The disappearance of pre-Hispanic societies implicit in catastrophism (involving invasions, migrations, and the like) implies their annihilation in time and space and their textual salvation (*sensu* Clifford 1986, 112)—a salvation that is neither social nor political. The "more advanced" pre-Hispanic societies—those with metallurgy, statues, and large public works—were eliminated from the scene with catastrophic explanations and replaced by "backward" societies such as those of colonial and republican discourses about alterity. It is no accident that the genesis of civilization is usually linked to invading peoples who brought with them the gift of culture. Archaeological explanations mirrored colonial and republican policies toward the other. Through colonial relationships otherness was kept at a prudent distance. The marvels of pre-Hispanic civilizations, written out of the historical scene with the stroke of the archaeologist's pen, fell to barbaric invaders, the very people being colonized.

The disappearance of civilized pre-Hispanic societies recurs in the Colombian archaeological literature, which has acquired a seamless, almost atemporal narrative structure. The pre-Hispanic groups whose disappearance is most notable are those of the Upper Magdalena River, where "civilized" but "lost" societies once crafted stone statues and built large earthworks. Five citations from different periods and contexts should suffice to illustrate this point. The scientist Francisco José de Caldas (1972 [1808], 116), visiting the region at the end of the eighteenth century, wrote: "[The Upper Magdalena] is inhabited by few Indian families, and there are evidences of an artistic and laborious nation that exists no longer." Agustín Codazzi (1959 [1857], 420), an Italian engineer working for the Colombian government around 1850, reported that "manufacturing arts and a social culture [known to the Upper Magdalena societies] cannot be found amidst the barbaric remains of a now destroyed nation, nomadic and dispersed through the jungle." Carlos Cuervo (1920, 228–30), an engineer and traveler at the turn of the twentieth century, said, "[These monuments] reveal in detail and construction a cultural level far superior to anything known in Colombia at the time of the conquest. . . . Therefore, we have to refer these monuments to an ancient time and to consider them as impassive remains of a people and civilization extinguished long ago." The historian Juan Friede (1953, 116), said, "All this invites us to think that this Sculptor Society was sedentary and inhabited these territories for centuries. These qualities do not correspond to the primitive and unorganized tribes which peopled the Upper Magdalena at the time of the conquest." Finally, the archaeologist Roberto Lleras (1995, 54) reported that "[in the reaches of the Upper Magdalena] Am-

azonian groups reclaimed for themselves what used to be the territories of the megalithic sculptors." These five statements, although separated by more than 200 years, all argue the same idea: that the civilized sculptors of the Upper Magdalena (with whom the Colombian nation builders were eager to establish a rhetorical link) had been replaced by less developed, barbaric groups (excluded from that connection).

In this context of denial of cultural continuity between past and present indigenous societies, it is not surprising that the connection between the stone statues of the Upper Magdalena and its contemporary native inhabitants was not just ignored but severed. Few archaeologists departed from this trend. Schottelius (1939) mentioned Chibcha mythology from the eastern highlands of Colombia to illustrate some motifs depicted in San Agustín's iconography. Although he claimed that he was "confident to have demonstrated that the same religious ideas that informed the soul of the Chibcha from Cundinamarca and Boyacá [two Colombian provinces] were expressed in a people of the same or different race in San Agustín," his mythological account is rather sketchy. Preuss's (1974, [1931]) brief anecdotal references to indigenous mythologies in interpreting his San Agustín findings are even sketchier. Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, in contrast, in an essay devoted to the feline motif at San Agustín (1972*a*; see also 1972*b*, 83–113), effectively brought myths to bear on archaeological interpretation. Although he displayed vast knowledge of indigenous mythology from Mesoamerica to the Amazon, he began his argument with symbolism from the Nasa because they lived in Tierradentro (implying spatial contiguity) and because they preserved "many traits of the ancient belief system" (1972*a*, 54) (implying temporal continuity).[21] Whether this statement is considered true or not is a matter of choice between essentialist and constructionist perspectives, but the fact is that Reichel-Dolmatoff considered Nasa mythology a fundamental bridge for the cultural understanding of otherwise mute stone symbolism. In other words, he saw a cultural continuity between the makers of the statues and the current indigenous inhabitants of a nearby region.

Paradoxically, and because of the enduring influence of the

colonial apparatus (mostly of the church), the indigenous societies of Colombia and elsewhere have reproduced and helped to maintain the rupture of historical continuity instituted by most archaeologists and, in general terms, by the official history of the state with regard to native peoples. As have many other indigenous peoples, the Nasa have traditionally disregarded the archaeological record.[22] This disregard has been used by some anthropologists (in a stunning example of tautological thinking) to argue that they are relative newcomers to the territory they now inhabit. As Miñana (1994, 14) argues,

> When the Spaniards arrived the *Paeces* [Nasa] were newcomers in the zone they occupy today, probably coming from the forest. . . . The archaeological remains found in their territories belong to other cultures. Oral tradition is conscious of this fact; the Nasa themselves talk generically about "*pijao*" burials and do not recognize them as their own.

This behavior may seem surprising, given the Nasa's strong involvement with the indigenous struggle, in which history is paramount, and given that the ancestors are central to their social life. Establishing historical continuity with the material remains of the area's pre-Hispanic populations would have provided good ammunition for territorial struggle and cultural revival, but until recently this was never attempted. The reason is clearly not lack of interest in historical matters. The indigenous movement considers the defense of native history one of its purposes (CRIC 1983, 5), the Nasa think of themselves as heirs of the past peoples of the region (Rappaport 1990, 18), and historical consciousness is one of the pillars of the Nasa worldview (Piñacué 1994, 27–29). References to ancient petroglyphs are common in two collections of Nasa myths and stories (Bernal 1953; Yule 1993). For instance, in a story called "The Defeated Chief" (Yule 1993, 59), a young Nasa chief "defends and demarcates the communal lands with writings on the stones against the Spanish invasions." Therefore, as Rappaport (1990, 18) has indicated,

> The chains of transmission of the Paéz [Nasa] historical vision permit the drawing of a moral continuity between the precolumbian inhabitants of Tierradentro and the twentieth-century population that lives there. . . . Whether or not they are the same group is immaterial: what matters is that they perceive this link as existing, and have fashioned their ideology so as to legitimize it.

A paradox is evident here: the Nasa claim descent from the

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21. The anthropologist Anthony Henman also hints at this in his work on coca use in southwestern Colombia. Referring to the similarities between some engravings on the Tierradentro stone statues and contemporary coca-related paraphernalia, he writes: "The engraving of the coca bag has the same size and shape as contemporaneous versions used by the Nasa, so one suspects more than a simple coincidence" (Henman 1980, 50). He does not, however, develop this argument of historical continuity. Incidentally, Henman's idea about the representations of coca chewing in pre-Hispanic material culture from the northern Andes (mostly stone statues and pottery) is illustrated by one of the statues from La Candelaria (fig. 4, *left*). Another exception that must be mentioned is the work of Ann Osborn among the Uwa from the Colombia's Eastern Cordillera. In a book devoted to exploring Uwa myths (Osborn 1985), she reports that they refer to actual archaeological sites; yet hers is not an archaeological interpretation using mythical material but an account of myths showing that they contain references to sites.

22. Some colonized societies did not suffer this rupture as dramatically, did not suffer it at all, or recast it in imaginative ways. For instance, the analysis of Hamann (2002) of what he calls "indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology" shows how important and meaningful the remains of the past were and still are for postconquest Mesoamerican native societies. The explanations of such instances, so different from the one we are discussing, must be case-sensitive, but a general statement could be drawn from the policies of inclusiveness of some nation-states, such as Mexico.

pre-Columbian inhabitants of Tierradentro, yet they have until very recently made no effort to infuse the pre-Hispanic material culture found in their territory with local historical meaning or to reclaim it from state control[23] as has happened worldwide in the past 30 years. Despite its large and politically active indigenous population, Colombia still has not witnessed a confrontation of histories in terms of either the material record or historical narratives. Nothing comparable to the events prompted by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in the United States or the consensual arrangements agreed upon by native peoples and the archaeological apparatus in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand has yet taken place in Colombia, where indigenous peoples' confrontation of archaeological hegemony has been only marginal.

There may be several reasons for this apparent anomaly. The Nasa fear anything physically related to the dead (ancestors), and it is taboo to be associated with or be near their remains. This prohibition also extends to people outside the community.[24] One of the dreaded diseases in Nasa medical systems is the cacique illness[25] (Portela 2002, 70). Whenever archaeological remains of any kind but especially burials (known as *tumbas de pijaos*, "*pijao* burials") appear (e.g., during the construction of houses, ditches, roads), the *the'walas* advise a change of location. If archaeological remains happen to appear after construction, the *the'walas* conduct a refreshment of the site and a cleansing of the people who have acquired *p'tanz* ("dirt," in very general sense)[26] because of proximity to the remains. The cacique disease stems from the Nasa worldview, which posits the existence of three worlds, one of which is the underworld, where the ancestors, among other beings, have lived since they buried themselves to escape the Spanish invasion and domination.[27]

The ancestors also live in a proscribed region of *this* world, the world of the Nasa, a region that houses the untamed, the uncultivated, and the wild but also the sacred. The forces dwelling in this region are spiritual, powerful, and feared (see Portela 2000, 2002). Both the underworld and the untamed region of this world are places where the Nasa can enter into contact with the order and forces of creation—with a time before the advent of Catholicism (which for the Nasa is both an important cultural referent and, especially since the emergence of widespread political consciousness in the past three decades, the cause of cultural loss). Although *p'tanz* is not associated with stone statues and other unburied pre-Hispanic remains, these items are nevertheless included in the proscription because of their implicit relationship with the ancestors.

We contend that the active and meaningful relationship between indigenous peoples and some aspects of the contemporary material culture existing in their territories (which form part of what we now call archaeological remains) was severed at some point during the colonial period. The turning point in the European crusade against this relationship was the "extirpation of idolatries," a task entrusted to the church and an important goal of the colonial state in Latin America because the persistence of native religious practices (and the corporate sense they conveyed) was a potential focus of resistance. This long-lasting enterprise was directed against many practices and their related objects; some of the latter were made of stone, although they were not necessarily statues. A well-known account of the colonial war against "stone worship" is *Dioses y hombres de Huarochirí* (1975), a Quechua manuscript from the sixteenth century. The text contains several allusions to stone worship, among them the following:

> In that very moment the woman became stone. She is still there, with her human legs and visible sex, by the roadside, just as Huatyacuri put her there. And she is offered coca, even today, yes, for any reason. [p. 42]

> On that occasion all the people went to the stone into which Chuquisuso was converted. They carried chicha, a kind of foodstuff known as ticti, and guinea pigs and llamas for worshiping that she-demon. [p. 49]

> In the plaza of Huacsatambo, called Tumna, there are now some piled stones; upon arriving at the center of that pile, everyone began to pray. [p. 67]

The manuscript also mentions the repression of stone worship by Spanish friars; for instance, "Your name will be Capac Huanca. That is how you will be known. Then he cooled the body of the man until he was converted into stone. When Doctor Ávila [the priest responsible for collecting the manuscript] arrived on the site of Capac Huanca he blew him up" (p. 115). Duviols (1975, 153, 157) registered several instances of such of a repression from the same area of Peru during the sixteenth century; one priest noted that "many idolatries have been remedied, in discovering their rites and the ceremonies they had for worshiping stones. . . . These Indians, reduced to the truth, publicly confessed their mistakes, and said that what they worshiped as gods were nothing but stones."

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23. Tierradentro is one of Colombia's three archaeological parks, and it is managed by the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History, a state-run agency.

24. One of the explanations adduced by the Nasa for the 1994 earthquake was the excavations carried out by an archaeologist in Tierradentro (Gómez and Ruíz 1997, 143), the idea being that the ancestors were disturbed in their rest and reacted punitively.

25. The power of the caciques over the social body and the resulting abuses could also have caused fear, in which case the disease would name a merely social malady, but the fact that the cacique illness is related to the remains of the dead, with which the Nasa establish no links, points to the operation of the colonial apparatus. In this regard, however, pre-European notions of not disturbing the dead could also be involved.

26. A Nasa linguist has defined *p'tanz* as "a negative cosmic force" (Gómez and Ruíz 1997, 133) affecting people who violate cultural proscriptions. It also implies a threat to the environment, the community, and the individual (Portela 2000, 30).

27. Although in some stories the *pijaos* take the place of the ancestors and bury themselves to escape baptism (Rappaport 1981, 381), they are generally considered to be alien invaders, not the original inhabitants.

Although *Dioses y hombres de Huarochirí* is an account of a Peruvian experience, there is reason to believe that stone worship may have been widespread in the Americas at the time of the European arrival. Tierradentro remained outside Spanish control well into the seventeenth century because of armed indigenous resistance; therefore, no direct and detailed chronicles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centries are known from the area. However, an account from its southern fringe does document stone worship. The work of a Franciscan priest, Juan de Santa Gertrudis, about his mission in southern Colombia in the second half of the eighteenth century, *Maravillas de la naturaleza (Wonders of Nature)*, contains a passage describing a large boulder with petroglyphs in the Páramo de Letreros (some 80 km south of Tierradentro) and in front of it "many little baskets with stones" (1994, [1956] 402)—offerings that he attributed to pacts between the "barbarians" and the demon. The rhetoric and phrasing of this passage share the discursive structure of the texts produced during the war waged against idolatry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although we cannot know if those offerings had pre-Hispanic antecedents or even if that putative native practice was ever repressed by the church, at least there is a hint of what could have happened regarding the relationship between the indigenous societies conquered by the Spanish and the stone statues and petroglyphs their forebears had made.

The only direct account of the extirpation of idolatries in Tierradentro is late, from the end of the nineteenth century. Carlos Cuervo, a soldier and traveler interested in indigenous matters, described a large stone where pilgrims worshiped a reputed figure of Christ: "It is true that there were Indian hieroglyphs, probably very important ones, on this stone. Perhaps this was a shrine and the first missionaries, wanting to extirpate the idolatry, pounded the surface where the Indian paintings were and painted, instead, the image of Christ" (1920, 34). Stone worship in Tierradentro was witnessed in the late 1930s by the Spanish archaeologist José Pérez de Barradas: " In Mosoco there is the stone of St. Thomas, protected by a shack. It has engraved spirals and a human trace; the Indians go there when an animal is lost. By the sputter of the laurel wax candles they light there they think they can find out if the animal fell down a cliff or if it was stolen" (1943, 119).

The extirpation of idolatries created, above all, widespread fear that was used by the colonial authorities to break the chains of symbolic meaning that may have existed between the natives and their material culture, including the things related to the ancestors. The fear of ancestors that is common among indigenous peoples in Colombia is mainly the result of the preaching of Catholic missionaries. As Taussig (1987, 373) has noted, "the *infieles* or pagans of that other (precon-quest, pre-European) time, have been enfolded and iconicized into the bowels of the Christian cosmos as Antichrist figures—so that they live on forever rustling the leaves of memory in the colonially constructed space of death." Ramírez (1996,

99) found the same attitude toward putative ancestors among indigenous communities of the eastern flanks of the Andes, where they are called *aukas* or *andaquíes* and considered savages and cannibals. This image is built around the unbaptized, those who resist domination, and has ancient Judeo-Christian roots. As White (1985, 160) points out, "The archetypal wild men of the Old Testament are the great rebels against the Lord." Thus, *auka*, *andaqui*, and *pijao* are not ethnic denominations but terms applied in different languages to the same phenomenon: the incarnation of potentially subversive behaviors repressed and punished in the self by the morality of civilization. For instance, *auka* is a Quechua word meaning "warrior, enemy, opponent, cruel, sadistic, bad, traitor, savage, rebellious, barbaric, mischievous, unworthy" (Torres 1982, 39)—that is, all of the negative connotations attributed to the other. The ancestors are therefore to be left alone, undisturbed, lest their evil powers be awakened.

This fear and proscription created by the colonial process may have been widespread in other parts of the Catholic realm in the Americas as well. For instance, the Aymara historian Carlos Mamani (1989, 49) asserts that "the traumatic fact of colonial invasion changed our contact with the sacred sites of our ancestors. It was claimed that they were places of 'devil worship,' thus leaving us with only a mythological understanding both of our past and of the material remains of the past." Gil (2006) has noted that one of the meanings of *chullpa*, a Quechua word in wide use in the Central Andes, is linked to the tutelary beings of the underworld, who inhabit archaeological ruins and cause illness and death in those who fail to give them "due respect." For many indigenous peoples in the Andes "archaeological ruins are liminal places located at the spatial-temporal borders of the community and inhabited by exteme forms of wild alterity belonging to the past" (p. 4).

We can now see the cacique illness of the Nasa and its proscription of physical proximity to the places of the dangerous and feared other (the ancestors but also *pijaos*[28]) as an instance of the colonial fear reaching beyond mere abstract symbolism to encompass physical referents. The fear of ancestors highlights a colonial evil: the invention of an other within the other, a sort of double alterity imposed by the construction of the civilized self. There is a *good other*, bending to colonial domination and religious conversion, and there is a *bad other*, rebellious and untamed, a permanent morality constantly calling attention to the perils of subversion. This dichotomy created an other close to the *must* and another other opposing that moral imperative. Ancestors occupy the

28. According to numerous reports, the Nasa and the *pijaos* appear to have been allies against the Spaniards at the outset of the European conquest (Sevilla and Piñacué 2006). Yet, for the Nasa and other communities the *pijaos* became feared enemies because of operation of the colonial machine; it seems likely that the Spaniards enlisted the Nasa in their war against the *pijaos* by manipulating old and new alliances (cf. Bolaños 1994). The Nasa internalized their former allies as enemies, a move that eventually became entirely metaphysical.

ranks of the bad other (that is, *ancestors turned other*). They belong to a time when alterity did not suffer colonial subjugation and therefore embody behaviors that are to be repressed in and by the good other, on the verge of becoming part of the civilized self if only the colonial apparatus is capable of countering the courtship of the bad other.[29] The ancestors are among the unbaptized, spirits, while the Nasa are baptized, that is, humans. Catholic influence on Nasa historical morality, which impinges upon the very classification of beings and nonbeings, created two main eras: the time before Catholicism was imposed, dominated by spirits and danger, and the time of the civilized, converted self. The ancestors live in the former and are lumped, together with the *pijaos*, as bad others, with the result that the two have become indistinguishable and the terms for them interchangeable.

As noted above, Reichel-Dolmatoff (1972*a*) interpreted the iconography of the stone statues of San Agustín in terms of Nasa mythology; he argued that it was related to "the jaguar-spirit, the concept of fertility, and shamanism" and that all these aspects came down to social control—that what the statues and some indigenous myths portrayed were social proscriptions and the fear of otherness, embodied in the symbol of the jaguar and, by association, of the jaguar-people—sometimes enemy, sometimes ally, but always fearsome and untrustworthy. Reichel-Dolmatoff pointed out that images linked to the jaguar were normally thought of as pertaining to the natural world, the untamed, the uncivilized. The jaguar (brutal force of unrepressed sexuality and destruction) had to be tamed by shamanic practices in order to transform its evil into positive outcomes. The shaman was the agent of social control who turned the savage other into the tamed self: "According to many Colombian Indians part of man's essence is of jaguar origin, a wild, untrammeled energy, all-devouring in its impulses. . . . The feline rather represents an energetic principle, the natural life force which, on the social level, has to be controlled if a moral order is to be preserved" (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1972*a*, 61–62).

The moral sense of this fearsome and feared force was extended to the *pijaos* and, eventually, to the ancestors. Although it is possible that this extension to the *pijaos* was pre-European, our argument is that the extension to the ancestors is colonial. Reporting on Nasa myths and stories, Bernal (1953, 291) noted that "it is not necessary to highlight the role played by the *pijaos* in these stories. The memory of this forceful people is still fresh . . . alive the fear aroused by the name *pijao*. . . . They appear as phenomenal, as animals of enormous proportions and force." The *pijaos* had other connotations as well. Bolaños (1994) has explored their colonial meaning, which still lingers: the *pijaos* were cannibals and barbarians but also erotic monsters of the greatest lewdness and sometimes even incarnations of the feminine. All these

meanings are iconic of a colonial biopolitics controlling the native body (individual and social) by repressing and condemning behaviors and emotions. By being barbarians, cannibals, monsters, lascivious, feminine, and so on, the *pijaos* fully embodied the enemy of the civilized self. As enemies the *pijaos* cause anxiety because they are feared and dangerous, a permanent menace; as Bolaños (1994, 164) puts it, "the anxiety with regard to the *pijao* is not only because it is 'different' but, mainly, because is uncontrollable."

In sum, a dangerous other (embodied in the symbol of the jaguar, the *pijaos*, and the ancestors), whether it is outside or inside the social body, has to be held at bay or tamed. Morality thus confronts the danger of the other because it implies the dissolution of the bond that links the self with the civilized order. This reasoning makes it possible to understand why many native societies in Colombia and elsewhere have a tense and difficult relationship with the physical referents related to the dangerous other, including their ancestors and their material remains (the archaeological record). The distinction between bad and good others had an instrumental end: severing the relationship of native societies with the time before Christianity created a new beginning. The indigenous identification of the bad other closely follows the depiction of the savage Indian by early Spanish chroniclers, another indication of how deeply infused myths are with colonial-created categories.

The colonial origin of this discursive object can be better seen through ethnographic comparison. Indigenous groups located in areas where the influence of the church and its colonial discourse was less decisive or nonexistent do not display the rhetoric of the bad other regarding the ancestors. It is even possible to trace a sort of ideological frontier defined by the presence of the bad-other/fear-of-ancestors rhetorical complex, and this frontier coincides with the spread of Catholic domination. We want to illustrate this argument with two examples from contemporary Colombia: the native groups of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, on the Caribbean coast, and the Uwa of the Eastern Cordillera. Unlike the indigenous communities of the Andes and its eastern flanks, the native societies of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta constantly re-create the meaning of archaeological remains. The ancients are revered along with their material referents, such as agricultural terraces, mythological dwellings (among them pyramid-like hills), and large rocks (thought to be petrified mythical characters). There is a clear continuity in some material cultural items; for instance, the present-day Kogi use copper and stone objects (adornments, jingle bells, whistles, flat slabs for musical purposes, ceremonial adzes, and quartz beads) that either come from archaeological contexts (found by chance or deliberately sought) or are manufactured in traditional ways. Although some proscriptions exist (archaeological sites house the dead, are full of diseases, and must be left undisturbed), they are related to the constant fear of wrongdoing (according to their own cultural norms) and its consequent supernatural punishment, including that of the ancestors, and are mediated by

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29. We see here another curious twist of colonial logic: for most nationalistic discourses in Colombia, as we have noted, the "civilized" pre-Hispanic other was good and the contemporary other was bad.

mámas, the religious leaders of the Sierra Nevada[30] (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1985). So strong is their relationship with the material remains of their ancestors that they have even claimed territorial rights to the most spectacular pre-Hispanic remains in Colombia, the so-called Lost City (a large terraced settlement with households, plazas, and stairways that is widely promoted by Colombian governments as an icon of national identity comparable only to Machu Picchu). In 1987 the regional indigenous organization Gonawindúa Tairona claimed the city, locally called Teyuna, arguing that it belonged to their ancestors, the Tayrona. The site's importance as national patrimony was a reason the state gave for not acceding to this request, but that same year the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History agreed to cease archaeological excavations and allow the performance of native ceremonies there (Orrantia 2003). Some two years later Kogi elders from the Sierra Nevada visited the Gold Museuem in Santa Marta and requested the repatriation of ritually significant pre-Hispanic lithic artifacts that were on display. Although no repatriation occurred, a compromise was reached, and one special sacred artifact was removed from display (Luz Alba Gómez, personal communication).

The Uwa (formerly known as Tunebos) inhabit the eastern and western flanks of the Sierra Nevada del Cocuy, the part of the Eastern Cordillera bordering the interior of northeastern Colombia and the vast expanses of the Eastern Plains. The land currently inhabited by the Uwa is an isolated corner of the Eastern Cordillera spared by colonial domination and by Christian evangelization until the twentieth century; part of their ancestral territory, however, located on the western flanks of the Sierra, suffered the rigors of the conquest, resulting in ethnic destructuring of the native population (which became peasant, albeit with a strong ethnic memory) and the appropriation of their lands. The relatively limited impact of colonization (both colonial and republican) upon the Uwa (especially the eastern groups), at least compared with that suffered by many other native groups in the Americas, is apparent in the fact that their current culture is built around indigenous practices. Uwa territory is dotted with large menhirs whose meaning has not changed much since they were described in the seventeenth century. They are the pillars that support the world and were placed in position by their deities in their ancestral territory: "The chronicles of the conquest say that places with large stones were sacred to the Indians, and the contemporary Uwa hold that in the sites with menhirs their ancestors communicated with the gods of creation" (Falchetti 2003, 52–53). Further, "the Uwa have maintained the symbolic association between the sacred markers of their territory, the menhirs, and their shamans or traditional author-

ities" (p. 204). Although the sites with menhirs are no longer in use, the memory that relates them to ancestors and deities is still alive. The Uwa's sacred songs are linked to archaeological sites, and they use material culture items found there (Osborn 1985). Although there are several colonial accounts of Uwa "idolatry" (e.g., Falchetti 2003, 62–63, 65, 73, 154), the prosecution of its practitioners was limited because they always managed to escape to the eastern, inaccessible parts of the Uwa realm, from where they eventually ventured out into the western, colonial-dominated parts of their former territory.[31]

These two examples show that colonial historical domination was not homogeneous among indigenous societies. For reasons that are case-sensitive, some of them managed to escape the brutal transformation of their historical representations. But even in the cases in which colonialism condemned and proscribed pre-European times, feared ancestors could be converted into positive forces, and this new meaning implies a semantic and political subversion of the colonial order. Given that ancestors are central to Nasa life, forming with the thunder and the lakes a relational axis on which the three worlds of their worldview spin (Portela 2001, 55), at some point their relationship with pre-Hispanic material remains could change, and this is actually happening in the Juan Tama community.

Native Histories: History in the Making

Colonialist archaeological discourse about native histories imposed the idea that indigenous peoples and cultures were part of the past. The basis of this discourse, upon which the exclusion and subordination of ethnic alterity was largely predicated, was the idea that the subject matter of history is the past, not the present and the future. Native resistance to this discourse confronted a meaning-producing regime, that of national history, with local histories largely mobilized in the framework of ethnic struggle. The establishment of temporal continuity using material (archaeological) referents and the revitalization of social memories long silenced now become central elements of new social projects.

In the past two decades there has been a drift toward a restoration of the links with ancestral times that includes their material referents. In Colombia this still-developing process was started by the Guambianos, neighbors of the Nasa, who feared the *pishaus*, reputedly former inhabitants of their territory,[32] as much as the Nasa fear the *pijaos*. The *pishaus* were

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30. It can also be posited that these proscriptions are related to the influence of the church, in which case the use of this example for our argument is meaningless. Yet, these communities' relationship to the archaeological record is prominent enough to suggest that the influence of the church was marginal. For instance, although in the eighteenth century a missionary set out to destroy ancient bones, which were greatly revered (Langebaek 2004), such reverence persists.

31. The trip west of the eastern, more traditional Uwa is related to ethnic memory, sacred sites, and ancestors. Falchetti (2003, 159) says that "contemporary Uwa kept traveling to the western highlands to barter and to visit sites that have traditionally been sacred to them."

32. The idea that the *pishaus* were ancestors was traditionally not widespread. Some Guambianos thought the *pishaus* were *kallimachik*, ancient Nasa (Vasco 1992, 181), with whom they fought, especially for territory, until relatively recent times. In either case the meaning given to the word is that of an enemy, a feared other.

a colonial-produced incarnation of a feared alterity. Yet the Guambianos have recently turned the *pishaus* into their own revered ancestors (Dagua, Aranda, and Vasco 1998), and in this task they have been decisively assisted by anthropologists and archaeologists (Vasco 1992). Material remains uncovered by collaborative archaeological research have been endowed with new meanings in the context of ethnic struggle for self-determination and cultural revival. From considering that "bones and burial goods are dangerous and can cause disease and even death upon entering in contact with them" and that "those remains do not belong to Guambianos but to *pishaus*" (Vasco 1992, 181), the Guambianos came to say that "all the pottery and all the traces found in our territory are our own and not of other people. . . . The *pishau* are our ancestors and not strange people" (p. 188). In a manifesto coauthored by an anthropologist and two respected Guambiano elders a year after these remarks were made, any doubts about the cultural affiliation of *pishau* were dispelled (Vasco, Dagua, and Aranda 1993, 14–15):

> The *pishau* were not other people; they were the very same Guambiano. . . . White historians come now to tell us that the traces of the ancients that remain in our territory do not belong to the *pishau* but to the *pijao*, which were our enemies. With that story they want to snatch away our forebears, they want to cut off our roots from our trunk in order to assert their lie that we are not from here.

The manifesto thus makes it clear that the consideration of the *pishaus* as alien enemies was a colonial imposition and that their symbolic and physical recovery as ancestors is a political move of the greatest importance. This reassessment, an obviously conscious choice on the part of the Guambianos, sums up a moral story: the bad other disappears when the good other decides to confront domination, when subjugated alterity decides to become a respected and empowered self. Cultural meanings are historical and strategic.

There is yet another reason that this inverted semantics can occur: the bad other is certainly feared but also admired and made central to the symbolism of resistance (Taussig 1987). It embodies the power to confront the colonial order. Otherness is the locus of potential resistance, something the state has always known and that caused it to enlist the Catholic Church to curtail deviations from the norm of civilization. The bad other exemplifies everything feared and punished by the self, a moral void into which the good other is always at risk of falling, but the good other, no matter how afraid, finds in it a model, a positive morality, an icon of struggle. The ancestors fooled the Spanish by burying themselves in the underworld—a sign not of cowardice but of ingenuity—and thus avoided colonial subjugation. Burying oneself in the land or in the water (as Nasa myths say Juan Tama and other creation heroes did)—that is, patiently resting or hiding until the time arrives to return—is a pan-Andean trademark of the native messiahs eagerly awaited in the symbolism of these societies. Thus, the negative categorization of the bad other

is, simultaneously, its sign of purity, the signature of the "true" native.

The indigenous organization in Cauca has recently set out on the path of the Guambianos. The celebration of the thirty-fourth anniversary of the CRIC two years ago began with a trip to San Andrés de Pisimbalá, site of the Tierradentro Archaeological Park—a significant move signaling the commitment of the organization to previously neglected archaeological referents. The current events taking place in the Juan Tama *resguardo* contributed to and deepen this move. Although the three stone statues uprooted from La Candelaria six decades ago are still housed in the museum in Popayán, in the past year several respected elders of the Juan Tama community have come to the museum to see them. Learning that they were taken from La Candelaria and that the university is willing to give them back has been a thrill for them. The university and the Juan Tama community have agreed that the statues will return to their original location. Their trip back to the Aguacatal River will highlight a planned collaborative research project involving archaeologists and native peoples in the production of local history, deepening a brief joint project carried out in 2003. The earlier project produced audiovisual materials showing the importance of getting to know the archaeology of La Candelaria and adjacent areas. Schoolteachers and students were especially active in this effort to strengthen and redefine ethnic identity.

Archaeology can find places where historical production is truly meaningful for local populations, politically and otherwise, beyond the grandeur (and, quite often, the local uselessness) of universal narratives. Public outreach is becoming ethically mandatory and strategically necessary. Yet, for many archaeologists public outreach is still just a way of sharing results—that is, not a collective and collaborative enterprise but a one-way process by which expert knowledge is communicated to the public. Native peoples are included in this process with the idea that they may eventually find archaeological information useful for their own histories. In contrast, public archaeology (that is, archaeology for and by the public) is conceived not as a normally unidirectional process wherein wise archaeologists advise ignorant people about their own history but as a coproduction in which interested parties collaborate, learn from each other, and jointly (but not without productive conflict) produce history (Gnecco 2006).

From an academic perspective there is no doubt that history is crucial for the constitution and maintenance of the social fabric, but the situation may be different when one is dealing with communities experiencing living conditions on the margins of the well-being that the industrialized world takes for granted. In such cases mere survival and the fulfillment of basic needs (such as education and health) are more important or at least much more urgent than memory and its activation by history. It is one thing to talk about the importance of memory and history from the comfortable desk of a university office and quite another when the struggle for territory, economic self-sufficiency, and political recognition are at

stake. Yet, when urgent agendas have already been fulfilled or when historical narratives can accompany them, there is room for hope that desire will eventually meet memory. Although this is currently happening in the Juan Tama *resguardo*, the meaningful appropriation of archaeological remains by indigenous communities in old and newly settled territories is a process that has to be promoted and in which archaeology is a prominent actor.[33]

The Juan Tama community displays history in the making. Nasa history is cyclical, and one of its prominent features is times of renewal. It is also millenarist, and disasters are propitious for the restoration of order (Rappaport 1981). This idea seems to be widespread in Amerindian philosophy; the name it receives in the Andes is *pachacuti*,[34] a cyclical, cataclysmic destruction of the world followed by the return of the right order. The millenarist movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Tierradentro documented by Rappaport (1981), similar to others in the Andean realm, highlight the role of earthquakes in the reorganization of the world. The 1994 earhquake caused widespread destruction, but it was also a creative historical event: it has been thought of as a time of renewal and restoration, one capable of awakening history. This mythical renewal, moral in its postulation of the world as *it has to be*, combines with political struggle to produce a propitious time for the Nasa, a restoration of a lost order, a time in which historical meaning, through the symbolic appropriation of otherwise ignored and feared objects, can be paramount. As Rappaport (1981, 384) has noted, messianic thought is always present in Nasa culture, ready to become action when "available social conditions and cultural symbols coincide." In the case of the Juan Tama *resguardo*, the requisite social conditions exist in the strong involvement of the people in political consciousness-raising, bilingual education, historical revitalization, and the promotion of communal practices. Symbols are at hand, too, in the form (among other things) of archaeological remains that can be culturally appropriated and in the adoption of Juan Tama as the community's name: Tama was a messiah who defeated the *pijaos* and ended years of colonial terror, symbolically and proactively;[35] he made the Nasa proud of themselves. This coincidence of symbols and conditions deepens an apocalyp-

tic, millenarist native hope of a new opportunity to subvert the colonial order for the construction of autonomous, self-determining societies.

The native symbolic appropriation of archaeological remains, however, is marked by an approach that departs from that of most archaeologists. While for the latter the archaeological record is evidence of the past and therefore of vanished cultures worthy of being subjected to scholarly inquiry, for indigenous peoples an archaeological site is a living place (Mamani 1989, 49–50):

> The archaeological ruins left by ancient cultures are not inert or dead objects: they have a reality which actively influences our lives both individually and collectively. . . . The relationship we have with material evidence of our past goes beyond a simple "positivist" attitude which would treat them as mere objects of knowledge. Rather, they are for us sources of moral strength and a reaffirmation of our cultural autonomy.

It has been held that Nasa memory rests on material referents such as mountains, lakes, boulders, and waterfalls (Rappaport 1990; Findji 1993; Gómez and Ruíz 1997). In contrast to those of Western societies, these referents are almost exclusively geographical.[36] Yet, indigenous communities can appropriate other material referents, even what we call archaeological materials, into their symbolic realm. They are even willing to explore the symbolic possibilities of alternative (even Western) mnemonic devices such as museums (see Vasco 1992). In this regard, the statues from La Candelaria can act as historical acivators not only for the Juan Tama Nasa but also for many indigenous and local communities elsewhere. Material objects and features turned archaeological by academic or community-appropriated discourses can serve to strengthen the historical reflection that is needed to stimulate social participation.

Closing: Histories in the Postmodern Era

During the course of modernity the state was the only social actor fully aware of history as one of the main battlefields of identity. Nowadays there are other actors, empowered with the weapons of self-representation, on the historical scene. This situation may seem singular in the postmodern era, one of whose main tenets is the termination of the historical sense; yet the need for a historical horizon in the construction of utopia is prominent for a host of social actors. History becomes a source of collective meanings and a memory of negative events to be overcome—of the disasters brought about by colonialism. Colonial meanings, powerful and pervasive, are recast and resignified.

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33. There are cases in which the symbolic appropriation occurring in the Juan Tama *resguardo* has not happened despite similar conditions. For instance, several Guambiano and Nasa families settled some 50 years ago in a region near Santa Leticia, where they established the *resguardo* La Gaitana. Aguabonita, an archaeological site with statues and other remains similar to those of La Candelaria, lies in the middle of the *resguardo* territory, but it has not been symbolically appropriated by local worldviews and is still located on the margins of indigenous culture.

34. *Pachacuti* is a composite Aymara word. "*Pacha* can be interpreted as the energetic confluence of space and time and, therefore, as the radiation of life. *Kuti* can be interpreted as a violent change, a 'revolution' in western terms" (Mignolo 2005, 165).

35. Tama's defeat of the *pijaos* was more an affirmation of Nasa sovereignty and territory than the actual elimination of fear of the other, which lingered with the fuel provided by the church.

36. This may have been another product of colonial domination and, consequently, of native ingenuity: colonial proscriptions of vernacular religious practices may have forced native communities to endow geographical features, features that could not be removed from worship and reverence no matter how zealous colonial authorities were in the extirpation of idolatries, with historical meanings.

Walter Benjamin (1968, 254) noted that "the past caries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption"; he conceived the latter as the basic fuel of the utopian rocket. The past is filled with meaning by a present that dreams: "Every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably" (p. 255).[37] History is not the recollection of things that happened but the narrative of things that must have happened:

> To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was" (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. . . . The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. . . . Only that historian [capable of separating tradition from conformity] will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.

For over two centuries the "enemy" was national histories that not only transformed, appropriated, erased, and domesticated local histories but also claimed a monopoly on representing them. The enemy is different nowadays and is richly clad in the colorful dress of antihistorical rhetoric: in postmodern logic, history is devalued or plainly declared dead. Gilles Lipovetsky (1990, 305–6) expressed it well: "The reign of the past has been abolished; it is now neutralized, subdued as it is by the unquestionable imperative of individual private satisfaction. . . . The legitimacy of the founding past, characteristic of traditional societies, has given way to the organization of the future."

Although the past now plays a more discreet role compared with its grand appearances in the opera of modernity, a growing resistance is challenging this order of things. Archaeologists and other interested parties, prominently including social movements such as that of the Juan Tama community, are opposing the postmodern devaluation of history by mobilizing alternative interpretations of the past. Alternative histories are "critical histories" (*sensu* Nietzsche 2000) that read the documentary record with different eyes: they read it from different presents and futures anchored in a plethora of alternative identities.[38] Local communities worldwide are contesting the control of academic disciplines over historical narratives. Historical insubordination has displaced the locus of the enunciation of the past, formerly the exclusive privilege

of "professionals of memory" (*sensu* Wachtel 1986, 217), now placing it on the agenda of ethnic minorities, in school curricula, and in new constitutional and legal frameworks (multicultural, pluricultural, multiethnic). The relationship between archaeologists and the groups whose voices they have never heard has changed in the past two decades; these groups now have influence over the configuration of historical narratives, even beyond the borders of their own identities, as multicultural morality demands. The relationship is now marked by the struggle for self-determination, decision-making power, and control.

This new scenario has prompted new conditions with which some archaeologists do not feel comfortable, accustomed as they are to an unquestioned narrative monopoly. One of the aspects that trouble archaeologists most is sharing (or, in some cases, relinquishing) the control they have enjoyed over the archaeological record or, more generally, the public heritage. However, as Wylie (1997, 117) has noted, archaeologists "cannot presume an automatic priority of access to or control over (much less ownership of) archaeological resources on grounds that a commitment to promote (scientific) knowledge and inquiry serves 'society' as a whole." First, the notion that scientific enquiry benefits and pleases society at large is an arrogance that can only be conceived from the standpoint of a colonial ideology. Secondly, "archaeological record" and "public heritage" are terms drawn from the national imagination. The national (and postnational) conception of heritage as public and as the field of intervention of selected experts can only be imposed with violence (symbolic and otherwise). Yet, heritage is a contested field and its reputed public character questioned. Cojti (2006), for instance, has shown that contemporary native communities in Guatemala are challenging the state appropriation of the "Maya" heritage for nonencompassing nationality and for the tourist market: "The Maya past is considered a common good to be shared with the international community, rather than a cultural right for Maya to decide how our past will be shared with other people" (Cojti 2006, 13). The story told in this paper is just one instance of this new order, one in which archaeology gains wide legitimacy by "going public," by questioning its long marriage with national histories, by leaving the academic ghetto to which it has confined itself for so long and finding places where historical production is meaningful for a variety of peoples. Public archaeology is plural archaeology—not a way of broadening the reception of expert knowledge but a way of expanding and empowering the constituencies researching and giving meaning to the past (Gnecco 2006).

Acknowledgments

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37. Nietzsche (2000, 102) thought similarly: "The past can only be interpreted from the most powerful force of the present."

38. A case from Guatemala illustrates this point. Contemporary Mayas now read the 1524 text *Annals of the Kaqchikels* differently from the way it has been read by national history. For the latter the *Annals* consecrate the success of the Spanish conquest and the ensuing indigenous defeat; for the Maya they offer "a view from the past of the origins of a major indigenous people, their common cosmology, their experiences of armed European invasion, and, critically, their genealogical continuity and survival" (Warren 1996, 91).

to broaden our arguments. Alejandro Haber and Marcela Echeverri were enthusiastic about an initial draft and kept us going; we hope that this final version does not disappoint them. Chris Hensley smoothed our English. The editorial skills of Rose Passalacqua made the text readable and suggested ways to improve its rhetorical structure. Benjamin Orlove and five anonymous reviewers provided valuable comments, both substantive and argumentative; we appreciate the time they took to make this paper better. The Juan Tama community is to be commended for demonstrating how important historical meanings can be for the construction of better worlds.

Comments

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This article is a timely contribution for examining the process of political domination in the archaeological landscape. This discussion is part of a larger enterprise in Latin America and the global South (commonly disregarded, not surprisingly, by the North American academy) that is committed to assessing the role of knowledge in the production and distribution of social and cultural resources. Although I agree wholeheartedly with its tenor and main arguments, there are two specific elements that I seriously contest. The notes below are offered to continue this dialogue, which in many ways will define the nature of the archaeological enterprise in the years to come.

The first element is the nature of the anthropological enterprise. Gnecco and Hernández seem to argue that a committed archaeology could align itself with the oppressed native communities that it has ignored (and, worse, objectified) over the past century. However, I think that this argument disregards the fact that anthropology and archaeology continue to be colonial disciplines. They are essentially invested in reproducing global knowledge in ways that structure us and others and in the process reconstitute the West in unconscious forms of constant reidentification. The anthropological enterprise is therefore at best, in the words of Mexico's poet laureate Octavio Paz, the conscience of the West and at worst the rearticulation of "old new ways" (Hall 1987) of political and cultural domination.

In many ways, the appearance of this article and my commentary in a North American journal is evidence of this colonial and racialized hierarchy. To this extent, I would argue, it is less about including native points of view (which, fortunately, we are being forced to do), realigning official archaeological practice (which always must realign itself with the powers-to-be), or even offering alternative histories (which if successful will only be alternative for a brief mo-

ment) than about understanding that all these actors (and many others) are always present in all historical production. As Wolf (1992) stressed, no people or objects (even those gathering dust in museum vaults) are ever exempt from the process of history making, since (as Gnecco and Hernandez highlight) their very silence is an intimate element of historical production.

Therefore, what is at issue is no longer merely including natives in the research enterprise, recognizing the political commitment of archaeological discourse, or even the political emancipation of historically oppressed groups but the recognition that all of these elements are caught in the web of our own historical production—that we are historical subjects in the making, fed by continuous discursive practices about the past that can never fully escape our ideological repositioning. On the contrary, these positionings as well as our moments of transgression and agency are central maneuvers in the politics of the past that determines what we want to see and when and how we are able to see it.

The second element is contemporary intellectual production. The present moment of native resurgence (in New Zealand, South Africa, and Ecuador) is less a matter of unique local contributions than one of the rearticulation of these native strategies in our age of late capitalism. Unlike previous schemes of global domination, transnational capital's current one is less about eradicating cultural difference (at least, no longer genocidally than about essentializing it as a mechanism for maintaining similar forms of racial differentiation and hierarchies. In the archaeological landscape the development imperative to support and fund natives throughout the world has complicated configurations.

The contemporary setting highlights processes in which interest groups such as oil companies destroy contemporary Indian communities while being forced to invest in recovering their ancestral pasts. One of the important contributions of a postcolonial archaeology is to shy away from images of well-intentioned natives or native-saving agents and recognize the rocky boat (or ship of fools) on which we are all equally passengers. The CONAIE's lack of concern with direct ancestral claims to archaeological sites is evidence of the complex way in which we reconstruct the past. Perhaps this Andean tendency to make demands of the past that do not necessarily claim archaeological objects or sites is a (post-)modern historical strategy that "flashes up at a moment of danger." We must not forget that the "enemy has not ceased to be victorious" (Benjamin 1968, 255) and will continue to be unless we take stock of our contribution to this process of domination.

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This article is a welcome addition to the flowering literature on the politics of the material past, richly exploring the in-

tersection of archaeology, cultural landscapes, public memory, history, colonialism, and politics. By investigating how an indigenous community has been severed from its own past by colonial persuasion and the mechanisms by which the community can reconnect to that past, the authors adeptly show history as not a given but an apparatus that "tells people what they have to remember, celebrate, and use in collective projects." History thus underpins moral communities as myth does, though in contrast to myth it expressly aims to portray true chronologies and real personalities.

The authors do not refer to their methodology as an "archaeological ethnography," but their work fits within this novel framework (Edgeworth 2006; Low 2002), that of a "hybrid practice" that uses ethnography to explicate archaeology's "critical reformulations, political negotiations, and constitutions of theory and interpretations" (Meskell 2005, 82). This "reorientation" of archaeology takes as its focus contemporary culture, "the ways in which archaeology works in the world" (Meskell 2005, 84–85). Another way of framing this kind of research is in relation to what Kirsch (2006) has recently described as "reverse anthropology." Kirsch examines how one indigenous community in Papua New Guinea deploys theoretical analyses of its own political struggles with mining companies and the state. This approach illuminates indigenous people's understandings of their own political contexts and social landscapes, serving to "facilitate the recognition of indigenous critique and the articulation of political alternatives" (Kirsch 2006, 3). In a sense, Gnecco and Hernandez show the promise of what might be termed "reverse archaeology," a study that starts with indigenous paradigms of archaeology instead of established archaeological programs and concepts.

What makes this study distinctive, as with Kirsch's work, is its attempt to span colonial trajectories and contemporary advocacy. This is important because it points to the ways in which the material past has been contested over the centuries, demonstrating that archaeology is not locked into a single mode of engagement. In this sense, archaeology lies along a continuum that holds open the possibility of resistance, participation, and genuine collaboration (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2007*b*). Resistance and collaboration are two sides of the same coin; each mode shapes and informs the other.

As Gnecco and Hernández suggest, to come to terms with the scholarly community's long monopoly on defining and interpreting the archaeological record and to pursue alternative archaeologies we must confront the entwinement of archaeology's legacy with colonialism and nationalism. They cogently explain how, paradoxically, these two processes work in tandem and yet contradictorily. While colonialism works to subjugate Indians and so to divorce them from their own past, nationalism works to fold Indians into a collective narrative. This goes to the heart of archaeology's own contradiction, which has often at once excluded and included native peoples. In the United States, for example, one of the nation's first heritage laws, the 1906 Antiquity Act, separated American Indians from their ancestral sites by empowering professional archaeologists and government officials to control these places while at the same time incorporating native history into the nation's story by celebrating America's autochthonous monuments (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2005; McLaughlin 1998). Significantly, the legacy of this system is visible today in heritage laws and the political economy of research even as resistance has emerged in the form of new laws, tribal archaeology programs, and growing numbers of indigenous scholars (Dongoske, Aldenderfer, and Doehner 2000).

The use of language has been a key mechanism for archaeologists' assertion of exclusive authority (Joyce 2002; Thomas 2000). In this connection, I wonder about Gnecco and Hernández's somewhat loose use of the term "myth." Once, while conducting an interview with Zuni elders, I thoughtlessly referred to an oral tradition as myth. I was gently corrected by a Zuni elder, who insisted that the story he was sharing was not myth at all but certain history. Is the recent Nasa expression of affinity with these stones and places a mythical invention—an "invented tradition," in 1980s nomenclature—or a reconnection to place channeled by remembering deep time? The difference is between reducing Nasa experiences to politics and myth and recognizing an ontology that fosters sudden reconnections to the land and the ancient past. As Howard Morphy (1995) has said, Australian Aborigines traveling through ancestral landscapes do not reinterpret the land but engage in a process of spiritual revelation in which the ancestral presence is immutable. With a deeper understanding of the phenomenology of place, hardly unique to Aborigines (Basso 1996; Bradley 2000; Ferguson and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2006), anthropologists must guard against the assumption that they are uniquely privileged to identify myths. History is often mythical, and myths are often historical (Whiteley 2002). Using "myth" imprecisely has its own political implications, denying indigenous peoples deeper spiritual and chronological relationships to ancestral places.

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Gnecco and Hernández's text includes archaeology in the long-term process of colonialism and directs it towards decolonization. It provides both a detailed case study and a broad contextualization in a general account, both a disciplinary perspective and a critical view of disciplinary assumptions, both a rewriting of otherness and a merging of the knowledge interests of self and other. The inherent instability of the field its authors survey contributes to its potency. The story of the stone statues is a metaphor for the efforts—both physical and metaphysical in the Popayán case—of the archaeological discipline to write the unwritten world. And the consequent effort—again

physical and metaphysical—to return the "archaeological object" to the local world of life is part of the path traced in this article—a path to be traveled, a distance to be crossed. The timely contextualization of archaeology as a colonial text is one of its many strengths. Colonial writing is foundational in more than one sense; it is not simply an inscription of the world but the creation of the world anew. The distance from the gods to the objects in a museum is a measure of the—colonialist—task of archaeological language; the stoniness of the statue is an indication of the historical conditioning of the metaphysics implied in the discipline: matter is what matters. Ignoring the communicative agency of the stone is the way archaeology duplicates the cultural repression of former colonizers, who actively fought against communication between the people and their gods. Gnecco and Hernandez see in the transference of the relationship with the ancients to the realm of healing a remaining mark of that repression, but it should also be acknowledged that it was because the relationship was called other-than-religion that the transference could be enacted. It is colonial cultural repression that provides the means of its subversion. And because local culture is subversive regarding both church- and archaeology-originated repression, discarding local subversions as "colonial" (rather than building from them) could imply the next repression (a "decolonizing" one in this case) instead of a de-colonization. Because a subversive standpoint implies a communicative and not merely a descriptive disposition of academic practice, the academic self should be walking the same paths toward decolonization. While depicting the changes and elaborations of the relationships between Nasa people and the stone statues, this article raises the question of changes in the relationships to them elaborated by the university, the discipline, and other state institutions. How would the dialogue with "lay" knowledge subvert the institutional assumptions of the university? How would a focus on subjectivities subvert the objectivist assumptions of the archaeological discipline? In other words, what should our job be if we are to localize universal projects and institutions? Finally, what would be the communicative significations of the local beyond the locality if alternatives to its inscription in a no-less-universal account of colonialism were to be sought? Gnecco and Hernández's text is an excellent piece of archaeological theory and practice in a postcolonial context, but what I enjoy most about it is the spaces in between, the unresolved tensions, the many ways in which this text destabilizes disciplinary assumptions and challenges the rigid stoniness of archaeology's place in the world. This text, beyond itself, invites new small voices into the ongoing positioned conversation about our local histories.

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Gnecco and Hernández offer a fascinating account of Nasa identity politics over the past two decades and make an important contribution to our understanding of the complex and varied practices of "indigenous archaeologies" (Holt 1983; Watkins 2000). But while their account of the present is compelling, I am less convinced by their arguments about the history of indigenous interpretations of archaeological remains.

They argue that the contemporary claiming of archaeological remains as ancestral by indigenous people is in fact an act of *reclamation*—that is, that before the arrival of Europeans, indigenous people in what is now Colombia understood that archaeological remains were the remains of their own ancestors. With the coming of "the colonial apparatus," this feeling of connection, of "historical continuity," was "ruptured." A new interpretation was imposed in which archaeological remains were viewed with fear as the works of dangerous nonhuman beings, the *pijaos*.

In order to demonstrate "how colonialism transformed the history of an indigenous society," two basic kinds of information would be needed: how pre-Hispanic indigenous societies thought about ruins and how these ruins were then (literally) demonized by colonial practices. Unfortunately, neither source of information is available for Tierradentro. Complex narratives about the meaning of archaeological remains for people in pre-Hispanic Colombia do not exist; sources on the initial impact of European colonization are lacking as well: "Tierradentro remained outside Spanish control well into the seventeenth century . . . no direct and detailed chronicles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are known from the area." Gnecco and Hernández therefore have to build an argument about historical transformation based on conjectural assumptions (drawing on analogies mostly from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) about what "must" have gone on before and after the conquest. I want to offer my own conjectural history here and suggest that the disconnectedness that the Nasa once felt toward archaeological remains is, in fact, a pre-Hispanic legacy and not the product of colonization.

There is a curious and significant lacuna in this essay. The Nasa appropriation of stone statues at La Candelaria as "our forebears" seems central to current identity formation in the Juan Tama *resguardo*. However, the authors never tell us when these statues were carved. They were not carved in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—the time of initial European contact and then conquest. They were carved in the centuries between 600 BC and AD 1100 (Rojas de Perdomo 1985, 364; Londoño Restrepo 1998, 285–86). In other words, they and the form of social organization that made them necessary date to some 500 years before colonization. When the Spaniards gained control of Tierradentro, they were already ancient, ruined things, no longer being made. It is possible that seventeenth-century indigenous people viewed these statues as the works of their ancestors from five centuries before. Given what we know about the indigenous archaeologies of other groups in the Americas, however, it is more

likely that the people living in Tierradentro ca. 1600 *already* viewed these ruins as the product of nonancestral nonhumans.

Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas have repeatedly interpreted ruined sites as the products of vanished beings—beings from a previous creation who lacked agriculture and other marks of civilization (Allen 1988, 54–59; Holt 1983; Tedlock 1996, 66–74; Graulich 1997). Most of these accounts date from the sixteenth century or later. One might therefore argue that these pan-American interpretations of ruins are the result not of a shared cosmology with pre-Hispanic roots but of the hemispheric impact of colonization on the worldviews of Native Americans—what Serge Gruzinski (1988) called the "colonisation de l'imaginaire." However, pre-Hispanic books from what is now the Mexican state of Oaxaca reveal that these basic interpretations of ruins—in at least one part of the Americas—predate the arrival of Europeans. Sites already abandoned at the time these books were being painted in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were depicted as remains of a previous age of creation, a time when a different sun burned in the sky—places tied to nonhuman beings and the origins of agriculture (Hamann 2002, 2008). In other words, "othered" interpretations of archaeological remains have a pre-Hispanic genealogy and are not necessarily products of colonization.

Indeed, there may be a certain irony in current interpretations of ruins by the indigenous people of Colombia. Gnecco and Hernández repeatedly state that the appropriation of ruins represents "the native resignification of material referents long ignored"—that until the present the Nasa "made no effort to infuse the pre-Hispanic material culture found in their territory with local historical meaning" and viewed ruins with "marked lack of interest." But this is not strictly true. These archaeological remains *were* attributed to ancient events (but not ancestral ones) and viewed as powerful and dangerous. They were "ignored" only in the sense that they were used to think about histories that did not involve Nasa ancestors. In other words, the current appropriation of ruins as ancestral sites may represent not a return to a severed "historical continuity" but the "postcolonization of the imagination," in which interpretive schemas which have survived from pre-Hispanic times are now, finally, being cast aside. This is not to say that claiming ruins as ancestral is not a powerful or productive political move (Heckenberger 2004, 36). Rather, this move should be understood as an innovation, a creative act of appropriation (or "the invention of tradition"), and not confused with the restoration of a lost—Edenic—form of prelapsarian knowledge.

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In this insightful article, Gnecco and Hernández address two questions that are at the center of the ongoing discourse on decolonizing archaeology (e.g., Atalay 2006; Smith and Wobst 2005). First, what is the nature of the archaeological record, and how is it contextualized or embedded in the colonial/postcolonial experience? Second, what role does archaeology have for descendant communities? Archaeologists worldwide are grappling with these issues, most explicitly in the context of indigenous archaeology (see Nicholas 2007) and most often relating to English-speaking North America and Australia. The literature pertaining to indigenous archaeology has broadened in the past few years, but contributions from South America have been underrepresented. This is a welcome addition.

The value of Gnecco and Hernández's historically particularistic approach is that it avoids generalizing about colonialism's impact upon indigenous peoples. That there is often a more varied response than expected is evident in the diverse colonial histories of the Nasa, Kongi, and Uwa. Each of these groups has developed its own type of relations with the "archaeological record" (clearly a problematic term when material culture is perceived as living or still powerful). Too often such significant differences are obscured by absence of adequate and unbiased ethnohistorical data but also by the surprising reluctance of archaeologists to engage directly with community members.

A second concern is with archaeology's role in making history meaningful. For the Nasa and others, apparently archaeology not only contributes very little but the archaeological culture histories imposed on them have largely served to alienate them from their own historical beliefs. There may also be substantial political, social, or economic consequences of attributing or failing to attribute particular contemporary peoples to archaeological sites or traditions. Furthermore, what is the local relevance of the "universal narratives" of more processually oriented interpretations of ancient settlement and subsistence patterns? Archaeology can become more relevant and responsible by making the process of archaeology more inclusive and collaborative, and this requires making the local communities true partners (see Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2007*a*).

Here I concur fully with Gnecco and Hernández's statement that "public outreach is becoming ethically mandatory and strategically neccssary." This is certainly well reflected in the literature. Yet achieving truly collaborative archaeology will remain a significant challenge for archaeologists, even those most sympathetic to indigenous needs, because it requires giving up at least some degree of control. A case in point was the 2006 Chacmool Archaeology Conference "Decolonizing Archaeology," where the majority of papers focused on "working together" rather than on what I see as the most essential task of decolonization—addressing the significant power imbalance that exists between archaeologist and descendant communities. I believe that few at that conference were willing to consider giving up any significant amount of control over the processes and products of archaeology. Yet unless this is done the practice of archaeology will remain unilateral and

self-centered and have very little to offer to groups like the Nasa.

The relation between indigenous communities, the material remains of earlier times, and archaeological knowledge in southwestern Colombia appears full of tension. The Nasa, Kongi, and Uwa (and undoubtedly many others) have received little from traditional archaeology, for example, but benefit much from what some elements of the archaeological record contribute to their worldview, ethnicity, and social identity. Ancient stone statues embody, activate, and centralize local history, yet the roles of these and other manifestations of the ancient past are constantly being renegotiated. In particular, while the Nasa have a "tense and difficult relationship" with the cultural remains of the past (which include "natural" features [e.g., waterfalls] and "archaeological" features [statues, carvings, buildings]—all fraught with spirit and power), they nonetheless have a strong interest in repatriating the La Candelaria statues.

Gnecco and Hernández are correct that some archaeologists are very uncomfortable with scenarios like these, whether because of an actual or anticipated lack of control or simply an uncertainty as to what a postcolonial archaeology might look like (Nicholas and Hollowell 2007). Yet there is much room here for an archaeology that is community-informed and -directed, as exemplified by the type of reciprocal, integrative "applied archaeology" that explicitly addresses local objectives and needs (see Ferguson 2003; Ferguson and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2006). It will be very interesting to follow the Nasa's evolving discourse between their worldview and local archaeological materials, as well as with the discipline of archaeology itself and with the local, regional, and national polities of the postcolonial era.

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Colombian social science has for decades engaged in collaborative research methodologies in support of social movements. Such collaborations began in Cauca in the early 1970s with the use of participatory action research (Fals Borda 1991) as a tool for recovering Nasa cultural forms and institutions so that they could be resignified in the political practice of the indigenous movement (Bonilla et al. 1972). Collaborative approaches were expanded in the 1980s with Luis Guillermo Vasco's attempt at developing theoretical vehicles in collaboration with the Guambiano history committee (Dagua, Aranda, and Vasco 1998; Vasco 2002; Vasco, Dagua, and Aranda 1993), which Gnecco and Hernández describe in this article. Significantly fewer Colombian archaeologists have ventured to explore such methodologies, Martha Urdaneta (1988; Tróchez, Camayo, and Urdaneta 1992) being almost unique in this respect. Her work with the Guambianos—which Gnecco

and Hernández cite with respect to Vasco's oral history project while omitting its archaeological dimension and Urdaneta's contribution—established chronologies that drew upon Guambiano notions of time and space instead of the archaeological master narratives predominant in the academic literature.

While most sociocultural anthropologists working in Colombia have embraced Vasco's methodology as valid and innovative—albeit difficult to adopt, given how labor-intensive it proves to be in comparison with standard participant-observation—many Colombian archaeologists fault Urdaneta for relying uncritically on indigenous mythic models as conceptual tools for analyzing archaeological materials, an approach that they see as unscientific. In this sense, Gnecco and Hernández's work in Juan Tama is a very welcome development in Colombian archaeology, particularly in its potential for opening a more serious discussion of what it means to be a "citizen-archaeologist" in Colombia (cf. Jimeno 2000 on the "citizen-anthropologist").

Gnecco and Hernández make a cogent and persuasive argument for the construction of a public archaeology in Colombia that transcends the conventional archaeological narrative, whose appeals to scientific legitimacy mask national discourses of exclusion. However, their project is still incipient in terms of how collaborative archaeology is to be achieved and needs to come to terms with the nature of the collaborative process if it is to be at once useful for the people of Juan Tama and acceptable to Colombian archaeologists. The article points to the need for close dialogue with local intellectuals, particularly with shamans. Gnecco and Hernández were fortunate to find an interlocutor in Ángel María Yoinó, whose insights into Nasa history have frequently coincided with those of anthropologists and historians, but this will not always be the case. Some local intellectuals' contributions to an interpretive dialogue may be entirely at odds with those of archaeologists, emerging not as simple disagreements of the sort we might have with an academic colleague but as divergences of an epistemological nature or as distinct interpretations with profound political consequences. How would a collaborative interpretation of the Nasa past negotiate differences that cannot be bridged by political goodwill? Do we privilege their explanations over ours and risk criticism from archaeologists or reject them and sustain the critique of our indigenous counterparts? Do we simply accept Nasa explanations as equally valid and proceed to frame them as "ethnographic"—which is the way anthropologists have traditionally dealt with local knowledge? Or do we recognize them as frames of reference with which we do not entirely agree but which we are willing to accept as points of departure for further dialogue? In other words, it is imperative that we recognize that collaboration does not necessarily imply agreement but requires that we engage our critical faculties, recognizing both the strengths and weaknesses of our intellectual traditions and the possibility that we can learn from each other.

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Gnecco and Hernández argue that archaeology in Colombia
has acted to widen the gulf between the nation's indigenous
populations and their past. They draw attention to the use
of a form of "catastrophism" whereby "archaeological subjects
(societies, cultures, even sherds) do not change but disappear."
In this, archaeology in Colombia is similar to that in the
United States and probably most of the other "civilized" coun-
tries in its relationship with indigenous populations and their
precolonial pasts.

Gnecco and Hernández write that in Colombia "the 'more
advanced' pre-Hispanic societies—those with metallurgy, stat-
ues, and large public works—were eliminated from the his-
torical scene with catastrophic explanations and replaced by
'backward' societies." In the early history of archaeology in
the United States, the Moundbuilders served a similar pur-
pose: they were believed to have been a non-Indian race (at
various times of Danish, Viking, Hindu, or prehistoric Mex-
ican heritage) that had either withdrawn from eastern North
America or been exterminated by the "newly arrived" Indians.
The controversy was not just a scholarly debate but served
to justify governmental policies aimed at exterminating the
contemporary "barbarians" who stood in the way of progress.
Willey and Sabloff (1993, 22) note that the Moundbuilder
myth allowed the young America to create "a heroic past,"
but it was not just the creation of a new past that affected
indigenous populations. Randall McGuire (1992, 820) argues
that the Moundbuilder myth also removed the Indian's an-
cestors from the history of the United States: "By routing the
red savages, the new, civilized, White American race inherited
the mantle, the heritage, of the old civilization."

North American archaeologists may look at the Colombian
examples and shake their heads about the misuse of archaeology
as a means of removing indigenous ties to the past, perhaps
thinking with some smugness that American archaeology went
through and survived that phase in its infancy. But this is not
necessarily the case. Six American anthropologists brought suit
to block the repatriation of a set of human remains (known
as Kennewick Man) more than 9,000 years old and to obtain
the right to study those remains. Some American Indians see
the Kennewick case (as it played out in district court) as a
further attempt to remove or cloud indigenous ties to the past.
Magistrate John Jelderks of the Ninth Circuit Court held that
the Kennewick human remains did not meet the definition of
"Native American" under the Native American Graves Protec-
tion and Repatriation Act, arguing that "Congress intended the
term 'Native American' to require some relationship between
remains or other cultural items and an existing tribe, people,
or culture" (2002, 27) indigenous to the United States. If Amer-
ican Indians could not "prove" their relationship to past cul-

tures to the satisfaction of the court, how long will it be before
that past is lost, taken away, or used as a political weapon against
contemporary indigenous groups? The right-wing columnist
Lowell Ponte (1999) has argued that Kennewick Man (by virtue
of his "Caucasoid" skull, non-Indian characteristics, and great
antiquity) might prove "that the true Native Americans were
white, victims of murderous genocide by the ancestors of to-
day's Indians who seized their land, " and that "the European
invasion of the past five centuries . . . merely reclaimed land
stolen 9,000 years earlier from their murdered kin." Thus, the
Kennewick Man situation has many of the hallmarks (and im-
plications) of the nineteenth-century Moundbuilder contro-
versy, and archaeology has once again become enmeshed in a
political agenda with dire consequences.

Archaeology misused in such a manner can further weaken
indigenous ties to national pasts. If, as Gnecco and Hernández
note, the "relationship between archaeologists and the groups
whose voices they have never heard . . . is now marked by
the struggle for self-determination, decision-making power,
and control," at what point will archaeology stop being a
colonial tool and enter into a collaborative relationship with
the world's indigenous populations?

Reply

The comments on our paper, which we welcome for the op-
portunity they give us to discuss issues we barely touched on
or entirely neglected, deal mostly with the events and con-
sequences of colonialism in history and with their represen-
tation by archaeology, especially as a new disciplinary practice
that is unfolding worldwide. A central issue for some of them
is *collaboration,* a scenario nowadays much discussed by ar-
chaeologists but with different concerns and agendas—so
many, indeed, that the meanings attributed to the term are
multiple and emerge from the various ways in which ar-
chaeologists engage with local communities. (By "local" we
mean nonacademic—uninterested in the universal narratives
cherished by scientific archaeology.) Rappaport reminds us
that collaboration has a long tradition in anthropology, at
least as it was practiced in nonhegemonic disciplinary centers;
one of its known antecedents is participatory-action research,
a left-wing, politically committed approach adopted by some
social disciplines since the '60s. Yet neither this nor any other
form of collaborative research has been regularly pursued in
archaeology. For one thing, it demands concerted agendas (at
least between scholars and local actors)—something that most
archaeologists are unwilling to accept, accustomed as they are
to a previously unchallenged monopoly. For another, it im-
plies sharing control not just of things but of narratives. Col-
laborative approaches are no longer rare, but they still are a
minority of academic pursuits.

Rappaport anticipates possible outcomes of our collabo-

rative research with the Juan Tama Nasa. All of them are as plausible as any other. The fact that this kind of research is case-sensitive and inconsistent with the presumed universality of scientific archaeology and has to be negotiated, carried out, and appropriated by various parties that are sometimes at odds with each other in worldviews and interests makes the outcomes outlined by Rappaport likely. We must, however, keep in mind (1) that collaboration and dialogue may be based not just on agreement but also on dissent (epistemological and otherwise), the management of which, along with the conflict that may ensue, is a function of compromise and commitment not only to the agendas of social movements but also to the responsibility of disciplinary practice and (2) that politics is always involved. Our collaborative research consciously avoids being naive, paternalistic, and nostalgic; instead, it seeks to contribute to a decolonialized and negotiated archaeology, one which is relevant to *other* histories and *other* social projects and not just to the long affiliation of the discipline with elite interests. Nicholas sees achieving "truly collaborative archaeology" as a major challenge, one which will require archaeologists to relinquish control (both physical and rhetorical). But what is *truly* collaborative archaeology? For most archaeologists "collaboration" is polysemic, more a way of alleviating their guilt (and getting on with their work) than a way of embarking on the path of a different practice. Native societies do not necessarily require nonnative archaeologists to work with, for they already have their own people working on the fringes in the discipline and in this instance "collaboration" is meaningless. In the face of the increasing scope of university training for indigenous peoples, collaboration may become a necessity more for academics (urged to go public) than for native societies. Although Colwell-Chanthaphonh argues that "resistance and collaboration are two sides of the same coin," more often than not the collaboration that archaeologists have in mind is a way of mitigating the discipline's colonialism by passing along to the lay public what they have found. This is what one of us (Gnecco n.d.) has called "multicultural archaeology," a disciplinary practice interested in reaching out to wider audiences (generally by making archaeological knowledge more widely available through museums, booklets, videos, and the like), training locals in archaeological research, and using nonacademic views of history in its interpretations. In this form archaeology accommodates the mandates of multicultural logic without giving up its privileges.

Colwell-Chanthaphonh questions what he considers our "loose" use of the word "myth." We surely need to reflect on the power of language (disregarded as insignificant by the "neutral" scientific approach), but we do not agree with him about the differences between myth and history and between invention and cultural continuity. Asserting that myths are historical or that history is mythical is less important than recognizing the historical condition we are referring to. Scientific archaeology has long considered myths historical only to the extent that they contain useful (and testable) historical information in Western terms (that is, history as a real account of real facts). Likewise, historians have accepted that history is mythical to the extent that it recounts the deeds and lives of cultural heroes, using them as models for a positive morality. While we could safely say that the latter position could help to blur the political (often colonial) frontier between myth and history, the former certainly does not. So, what are we to make of the fact that a Zuni elder calls his story not mythical but historical? At the least we can say that this assertion furthers and deepens a colonial dichotomy instead of helping to overcome it. We do not care whether the Zuni story is historical or mythical because we reject the colonial overtones of the dichotomy and because the very assessment of this is a positivist act. We care about how historical narratives work (whether they claim universal or local scope, how they deploy their truths, and how they can help create social fabrics [see Trouillot 1995]). Implicit in Colwell-Chanthaphonh's comment is a distinction between invention (and it hardly takes much imagination to suggest that he despises the term as a colonialist academic tool) and authenticity, grounded in cultural continuity. "Invention" may be an insulting term for alternative social projects striving to build strong bonds despite their rejection and exclusion by postnational hegemonies, but it also shows how situational cultural constructions are. At any rate, we are not claiming the right (much less the privileged position) to interpret and identify myths, nor are we reducing the potency of Nasa history to mere instrumentality. The creation (yes, the invention) of a dichotomy on one side of which lies indigenous authenticity and on the other academic spuriousness is not a contribution to overcoming colonialism but a move toward blurring its functioning; it also contributes to the alienation of parties that otherwise might join forces in the imagination of other worlds.

One final point regarding Colwell-Chanthaphonh's comments: Metadisciplinary reflection certainly calls for archaeological ethnographies. All too often the theoretical lookouts that archaeologists build to have a better view of (and sometimes to take exception to) their own work are remote from practice, as if reflection on general concerns would protect them from the processes (whether intended or not) that they have set in motion. Genealogies of particular archaeological trajectories constructed around their relationship with nationalism have proved their utility for uncovering the social, contextual nature of the discipline. Yet they miss the key ingredient of archaeological ethnographies: the ethnographic present in which we are all locked, which forces us to confront our work in real time rather than as a consequence of the unavoidable legacy of distant forebears. More than anything else, archaeological ethnographies are mirrors in which to contemplate our (sometimes distorted) faces.

Nicholas points out something that addresses the way we think colonialism works. He argues that the histories imposed by archaeology upon native societies "have largely served to alienate them from their own historical beliefs." We hold,

instead, that these histories, less imposed than woven into daily life, are an integral (and sometimes important) part of their beliefs, and the question is whether those beliefs contribute to new social projects. This is why colonialism is so hard to identify and to confront: it creates more than it destroys; it weaves symbolic networks rather than just removing and replacing one with another. Outright domination and subjection can be confronted more thoroughly (though certainly not more easily) than cultural creations originating in semiotic encounters. The term "own" (widely used to refer to the authenticity of indigenous cultures as they existed before and may exist after their relationship with colonialism) loses its meaning; at any rate, the only possibility of knowing the real "own" is by ignoring intercultural semiosis.

We are aware that this kind of reflection is the trademark of constructivist conceptions of culture at odds with the agendas of many social movements. Therefore we want to qualify our position in this regard by replying to Hamann, whose comments raise an issue that we are especially concerned with: how academia views native histories before and after colonialism. Contrary to what Hamann states, we do not contend that the historical narrative that can be constructed by the Nasa from "archaeological" materials, with or without the collaboration of nonnative archaeologists, is a sort of history *as it was* before colonial intervention. Some native communities (and many politically committed archaeologists) may well seek the "recovery" of an indigenous history, a sort of rhetorical excavation of a lost, proper, authentic, essential history cleansed of colonial contamination and restored to purity. We reject this idea and concur with Hamann in that the historical narrative arising from a resignification of things archaeological by indigenous people is not the resurrection of hidden accounts but the construction of new versions. What cultural continuity implies is not contiguity but affinity. (By the way, the confusion of one with the other has created turmoil around NAGPRA and NAGPRA-Iike provisions worldwide.) Yet, considering that essentialisms (of many kinds) are powerful tools in the configuration and mobilization of social movements (ethnic and otherwise) worldwide, are we to despise them, as some constructivist anthropologists do? Are we to accept them just as "ethnographic" realities, to use Rappaport's terms? As one of us (Gnecco n.d.) has pointed out, archaeology can learn from the conflict and opportunities arising from the broadening of historical representations. One of the central issues it should be prepared to discuss is essentialisms. Although essentialisms may not be negotiable in some ethnic platforms (as is exemplified by the debate between Jean-Paul Sartre [1965] and Frantz Fanon [1967] regarding the strategic or structural role of radicalism and polarization in the Pan-African movement) historical essentialism misses the chance to understand what Walter Mignolo (1995) called "colonial semiosis." Self-contained analyses such as those performed by essentialisms fail to account for the wide range of semiotic interactions that take place in colonial contexts; they cannot argue, as we do throughout the paper, that native histories were not eliminated or negated but

transformed in their encounter with the colonial apparatus. To accept this argument implies a change in the point of departure: understanding colonial semiosis allows confronting and subverting (with arguments) the colonial order that produced local histories. Essentialism "retrieves" histories (conceived as buried, silenced, or made invisible) instead of showing how they are constituted in their relationship with colonialism. Historical "recovery" does not confront colonialism because it does not expose how it works. By ignoring colonialism, the essentialism of historical "recovery" helps to surround it with an aura of mystery, an analytical impermeability.

Archaeology can contribute analytical elements for understanding the way alterity (as a relation) has been constructed, the scenarios for its contemporary display (including essentialism), and its view of the future. It can also strive to restore the historicity of local histories so as to subvert their colonial ontology instead of searching for essential alterities as a way out of their modern-colonial domination—what Castro (1996) has called a "contra-modernity of alterization." Although this kind of archaeology (decolonialized, reverse, applied) implies a political commitment to change the current (asymmetric, exclusionary) social order, it cannot avoid reflecting on a topic that its practitioners often take for granted: What is the meaning, if any, of addressing "local objectives and needs" (using Nicholas's words)? This conundrum cannot be avoided simply by wholeheartedly supporting local histories, even against academic versions, as if mere support would solve the political questions it creates. Isolationism is condemned and rejected by both the right and the left, to the point that its promotion appears as a double reaction whose results its supporters have not stopped to gauge. It is therefore more productive (realistic?) to understand this type of archaeology not as an instrument of isolation but as tool for empowering local communities in the global arena. In this regard, Gustavo Lins Ribeiro (2003, 216) has noted that cyberspace (the ultimate locus of global experiences) "can also be a place to exercise counter-hegemony and to broaden the public visibility of acts of power." We echo the concern voiced by Haber: "What would be the communicative significations of the local beyond the locality if alternatives to its inscription in a no-less-universal account of colonialism were to be sought?" The tension arising from the relationship between the local and the global in archaeological agendas that drift away from scientific universality is certainly one of the most heated topics we have to deal with.

Hamann provides a different interpretation of our account. Instead of arguing, as we do, that the rejection of archaeological materials by the Nasa and other indigenous groups stems from colonial practices, he claims that "it is more likely that the people living in Tierradentro ca. 1600 *already* viewed these ruins as the product of nonancestral nonhumans." We could undermine his interpretation using the same phrase he uses to weaken ours: it is also an "argument about historical transformation based on conjectural assumptions." To be sure, the most we can advance on the matter is conjectures,

and our interpretation is not the only possible one (in n. 25 we entertain other possibilities); what we are showing is that it withstands even ethnographic considerations. Different interpretations may flower, but their social and political relevance must be assessed by other informed and interested parties rather than by a guild of experts alone.

Benavides and Watkins argue that archaeology is a colonial enterprise no matter what. If that is the case, all our efforts, commitments, and expectations are just illusions, drowning in the waves of historical irreversibility. For them colonialism is an original sin that we all have to bear forever. We take exception to this judgment not because a simple act of goodwill would change the course of the long-lived Western project of domination but because if archaeology does not strive to become political action against discrimination and subordination its chances of being socially responsible in the current situation are meager. Instead of throwing the baby out with the bath water, we would better serve the world (and the discipline) if we were to persuade ourselves that the colonial ethos of archaeology could be overcome by a responsible, open, reflexive, and committed practice. This stance would require a thorough examination of archaeology's metaphysical apparatus for expunging its colonial devices; such an endeavor can be more productively carried out, as Haber implies, by exposing our agendas and their philosophical underpinnings to those of others. In saying this, however, we have to admit that, as Benavides and Haber point out, the risks of rearticulating subversions into the established archaeological canon are not overrated. Instead of being the product of minds obfuscated by pervasive conspiracies, the threat is real and is already gaining momentum: alternative histories may just be fodder for the patronizing and all-devouring gaze of academic archaeology. Happily, archaeologists are not the sole guardians of the gates of decolonialized heaven. Local communities are sufficiently empowered to fight for their own agendas, some of which may be able to use archaeology to support their historical claims.

—Cristóbal Gnecco and Carolina Hernández

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