

I Foreword

For a very long time, historical archaeology has been the archaeology of the European expansion in the former British colonies (USA, Caribbean, Canada and Australia) and its consequences: the Atlantic trade, the fur trade, slave plantations, colonial conflicts, creolization, urbanization and industrialization. Iberia has played rather a secondary role in the narratives of historical archaeology, except in those areas of the USA that were once part of the Spanish Empire (such as Florida, California or Texas). During the last couple of decades, however, historical archaeology has grown vigorously in many Latin American countries, most notably Argentina and Brazil, and has expanded to other regions where pre-Columbian archaeology used to ring the tune, as in Ecuador or Colombia. This can be noticed in the growing presence of Latin American contributions to international journals and books.

However, a monographic volume like the present one was much needed. First, it was necessary to display the richness and diversity of the archaeologies of Iberian colonialism. With the inclusion of Scandinavia, Africa and Latin America, historical archaeology is becoming truly global and, therefore, more balanced in geographical and cultural terms. It would be wrong, however, to consider that including Latin America in the wider picture is just an issue of increasing diversity: in fact, the second reason why a volume like this is crucial for the development of historical archaeology is that there can be no archaeological understanding of modernity and capitalism (whatever these concepts mean) without Latin America. As decolonial thinkers, such as Aníbal Quijano and Enrique Dussel, have made abundantly clear, the regions conquered by Spain and Portugal are not just another area colonized by Europe; they are the cradle of coloniality. The place where all began: from racism to predatory capitalism and also novel forms of challenging or evading colonial power.

Decolonial thinkers insist—and this is of paramount importance for archaeologists—that the imperial practices developed by Spain and Portugal (genocide, slavery, concubinage, racism or economic depredation) are not independent of the development of modernity, but actually an essential part of the modern episteme itself. While archaeologists may have a hard time identifying the philosophical categories of modernity as such in the archaeological record, they are excellent at locating politico-economic and cultural practices, which are so vital in the decolonial definition of colonial modernity. The coloniality of power is strongly material as the

contributors to this volume eloquently show. It has to do with political economy, including trade, technology, markets, anti-market strategies and tribute, the body, which materializes racial hierarchies and performs gender, ethnic and class differences and controlling the land and the sea through seafaring, ports, forts and outposts. The present volume covers all these issues.

These issues are in turn related to another phenomenon in which archaeology excels: documenting the creation of cultural diversity through *mestizaje*, creolization, transculturation or hybridity—terms that have been all developed outside archaeology but to which archaeology has much to contribute. The case studies presented in this book help disrupt the grand narrative of colonialism, which is another product of the colonality of power. They do so by scrutinizing the manifold local interactions made possible by the colonial encounter/conflict, from the fisheries of Canada to the Spanish settlements in Patagonia. In these local contexts, myriad histories and a wealth of cultural practices developed which have often passed unnoticed to conventional historiography—more concerned with cities, revolutions, large industrial centres and global missionary projects.

Archaeology thrives in “small things” as James Deetz famously put it: minimal things that have been neglected by history, often because they were ephemeral, like Fort San José in Florida, or because they were a failure, like the sugar and gold industries in Concepción de la Vega, or the settlement of Floridablanca. Of all ephemeral times, perhaps that of the early contact is the most fascinating. Some of the chapters contained in this volume open a window into the short but eventful time of the first encounter, and there is something uncanny, and at the same time, deeply archaeological in it. Perhaps because this ephemeral time is so flimsy and fragile, but had such extremely solid, material consequences. Or perhaps because it is an infinite time of possibility. Failed things are equally irresistible. In small, failed things, we can grasp the nature of history and, perhaps more poignantly, the history of modernity, which tends to portray itself as grand, progressive and successful. In local interactions between the colonizers and the colonized, we see asymmetries and violence, and also the contradictions and weaknesses of imperial power, whose attempts at fully mastering reality were often thwarted, or at least had unforeseen outcomes. Much of the hybridity that we can detect in the archaeological record is witness to this failure of colonial regimentation.

Archaeology is of course not limited to the ephemeral and unsuccessful. It also has an unrivalled ability to document the long term and the remote past. In the case of the colonization of the Americas, this ability is of enormous relevance: many of the historical trajectories and cultural practices that we document during the colonization are impossible to understand without a look at the deep history of the continent. Several of the chapters of this book take a long-term perspective in order to reclaim indigenous agencies and reveal the ways in which colonial power imposed itself in a foreign land, often in a very physical way. If failed outposts speak of the inconsistencies of imperial power, the long-term resilience of indigenous practices, which several of the contributors tackle in their chapters, speaks of success—the secret victory of the subaltern.

During the last decades, archaeologists have been more and more concerned with recent times and with the effects of the past in the present—not the least through the concept of cultural heritage. The effects of the colonial past in contemporary societies are perhaps nowhere clearer than in Latin America. In Cuba and Brazil, slavery left a vibrant cultural heritage and a bitter legacy of social asymmetry. From the deep past to the very present, this book shows the strengths and potentialities of archaeology to unravel the colonial experience of the Americas under Iberian rule.

For a long time, theoretically guided research has been regarded as the preserve of Anglo-Saxon academia. This overlooks the fact that Latin American archaeologists have consistently developed theoretical approaches to their rich material, both prehistoric and historical. The present volume, by bringing together scholars from Latin America, Iberia and the USA, goes a long way in redressing another epistemic imbalance of coloniality—in this case, regarding the geography of knowledge production on coloniality itself. The volume offers a unique opportunity to have a glimpse of the varied and sophisticated interpretations of Iberian colonialism that have been put forward in recent years in the North as well as in the South. Hopefully, colleagues from other countries and intellectual traditions will pay heed and engage with the many dialogues that this book now opens.

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II Foreword

At a time when grand narratives of all kinds are being discarded, this volume, archaeology of culture contact and colonialism in Spanish and Portuguese America, both skillfully deconstructs the triumphalist myth of European colonization in the western hemisphere and builds a firm, empirical foundation for an emerging twenty-first century alternative. Readers of this volume will see precisely how the tide is turning: from binary cultural oppositions to cultural interactions. In the physical and psychic violence of the European arrival and colonization of the Americas, all participants were profoundly changed. Beyond the overt acts of domination and resistance, more subtle changes took place in the everyday life and working landscapes of all peoples involved. And as the material culture and archival materials show, those changes—so incremental that they were almost invisible to the participants—were far more influential than theological and territorial claims in determining the historical evolution of the Americas.

Indeed one of the great values of this volume lies in its sheer geographical scope. In framing the great transformation through the lenses of archaeology, material culture studies, anthropology and political economy, the contributors to this volume have together presented the commonalities as well as the regional specificities of Euro-American culture contact in an area stretching all the way from the Basque fishing stations of Eastern Canada to the Spanish Enlightenment-inspired utopian colony of Floridablanca in Patagonia. In place of the timeworn binary oppositions of Europeans and native peoples, the essays in this volume show how profound were the local, improvised and creative responses to alien understandings of gender, faith, race, and social hierarchy. Moreover, the authors' empirical evidence from the contact period clearly contradicts the belief that history proceeded in only one direction with the Europeans' arrival. In the colonial encounter, all peoples were shaped by, and participated in the profound reshaping of landscapes and social environments.

In contrast to the traditional historiography of Spanish and Portuguese colonization, whose interpretive goal was the othering of the native peoples, and the more recent narratives of victimhood and resistance of the native peoples to European colonization, this volume presents the more complex process of *Mestizaje* in both a genealogical and cultural sense. Though the violence, enslavement, and genocide

performed on native peoples by the European colonizers have been extensively discussed, the unconscious assumption of the essential separateness between the colonizers and the colonized has only recently been challenged effectively. This volume certainly makes an important contribution to that discussion, in moving beyond essentialist distinctions of “us” vs. “them”—even in an ideologically projected Saidian “orientalist” sense. Cultural purity and segregation have always been ideological objectives attempted but never fully realized, in the period of euro-American cultural contact and colonization no less than in the current era of neoliberal globalization.

Indeed, because of this contemporary relevance, this volume should be of great interest to heritage professionals as well as archaeologists and social historians, for it provides the outlines of a new framework for public heritage interpretation in which actions and behaviours sometimes (often) differ sharply from what is being said. Ethnic essentialism has been and continues to be an ideology that promotes inequality and justifies structural violence. Yet this essentialism is a chimera as the empirical evidence presented here clearly shows. Though it still serves as a basis for the selective preservation of certain historical and archaeological sites by national governments and UNESCO World Heritage list nominations, the new perspectives presented here have the potential of more deeply engaging the culturally diverse public and raising the significance of cultural diversity in the public’s historical consciousness.

The construction of an inclusive public discourse about the past—in the Americas, as elsewhere—is arguably of equal importance to the academic interests in collecting data to fill gaps in specialist knowledge and the refinement or discarding of theoretical paradigms. This volume represents a generational turn in the understanding of contact period archaeology in the Americas. More than that, it is deeply relevant to the wider field of contemporary public heritage and identity making in the western hemisphere.

The contributors and editors of this volume are to be congratulated for their collection, compilation and analysis of a vast body of data from the contact and initial colonization eras that offers new insights into the entangled relations of globalization, nationalism, scholarship, gender, race, and, ultimately, contemporary cultural heritage policies in the Americas. The link between past and present in former Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the “New World” remains unbroken. Yet this volume powerfully rearticulates that trans-historical connection by challenging traditional narratives of binary opposition and replacing them with a more sophisticated understanding of how complex processes of cultural interaction and hybridization are still deeply felt in the evolving culture and consciousness of the region in the twenty-first century.

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