

## II

# Social and Physical Landscapes of Contact

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The study of culture contact and colonialism holds a unique place in North American archaeology. History and prehistory collide in this realm. I do not mean the crashing of Western history onto imaginary pristine shores of ahistorical, homogeneous, indigenous cultures. As other chapters in this volume attest, precontact societies and lifeways on the North American continent were as varied and full of history as any; they just did not record their histories in written words. By collision, I mean the presumed incompatible intersections of “prehistorians” and “historical archaeologists.” The former tend to see their realm of study, Native American cultures, not extending beyond the arrival of European colonists with any resemblance to their “traditional” forms. The latter tend to restrict their studies to North American contexts with documentary evidence, meaning that they frequently focus on European colonial places and institutions. As a result, Native American people struggling and surviving in colonial worlds of North America after 1492 can slip through these artificial research cracks (Lightfoot 1995). Fortunately, many archaeologists have been working on the elusive interface between precontact and post-contact history, and this chapter summarizes a few highlights and revelations of the past few decades.

The archaeology of culture contact is unique for yet another reason: it is one of the few research domains in North American archaeology that can take a comparative, continental approach. The topic of culture contact and colonialism, terms that I hesitantly interchange throughout the chapter, can be broadly construed since diverse Native American peoples encountered assorted versions of Western expansion, colonialism, capitalism, and worldviews in many places across North America. Certainly, the colonial fronts varied greatly, as did the numerous and distinct Native American groups that they encountered. However, only in the context of colonialism can one discuss some of the real commonalities of experience between Native societies in New England and California or the Southwest and Florida. Otherwise, precontact North American indigenous cultural practices were highly diverse

despite regional connections, and individuals did not consider themselves “Native American” but rather, for example, Kashaya Pomo (northern California), Apalachee (northern Florida), or Wampanoag (eastern Massachusetts). Moreover, in the context of colonial contact, Native American people across the continent began combating the shared experience of weighty politics of assimilation, acculturation, and proclaimed disappearance.

Because of the links forged in the context of colonialism, I organize this chapter by issue rather than region. I engage with aspects of social theory, but I refrain from referencing that literature to keep the chapter manageable and focused on North American contexts. The notion of “landscape” is a useful metaphor to organize the issues because it combines the physical and social, local and global, setting and outcome, and spatiality and materiality. I recognize that one cannot begin to fathom the intricacies of culture contact experiences without a detailed understanding of the local histories that anchored Native American groups. Similarly, one cannot track the complex effects of colonialism without acknowledging the depth and difference of its multiple fronts – for example, Spanish Catholic missions, Dutch settlements, Russian fur-trade outposts, or British forts. Yet, I must collapse the subtleties of both precontact and colonial variability to make my points. My focus on archaeological issues provides a guide to traversing the multifaceted landscapes of colonialism and culture contact, and I select cases from well-researched regions like the Southeast, Northeast, and West Coast to illustrate. To provide any semblance of the richness of contact archaeology in a chapter of this length requires that I minimize some regions in place of more detail in others. My choices partly reflect personal research interests and partly mirror the publication visibility of certain regions, but they never mean to deny the variety of approaches and regions participating in the broad project of North American post-contact archaeology.

### **Physical and Biological Landscapes**

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Students of North American culture contact agree that the arrival of Europeans marked the beginning of significant changes in physical and biological landscapes. From the expansion of European plants and animals into North American habitats to European over-harvesting of indigenous species, and from the deadly spread of pathogens and epidemics to the substantial impacts of colonialism on the health and diet of the indigenous population, issues involving the physical and biological landscape have taken a leading role in contact-period studies.

Archaeologists have become major players in the debates surrounding environmental change, disease, health, diet, and their impacts on Native American bodies and cultures during this tumultuous period. To organize these topics, I divide physical and biological landscapes into environmental change, disease and demography, and health and diet. All three topics interrelate since they concern changes in the plant, animal, and disease environment during the settlement of North America by Europeans, but they differ in scale. Environmental change is a regional phenomenon, disease and demography often operate on populations, and health and diet

relate very much to individuals. Of course, individuals experience disease and make up larger demographic patterns, but this analytical distinction serves to clarify the archaeological studies.

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### *Environmental change*

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Any discussion of environmental change in the contact period engages with the conclusions put forward in the landmark book, *Ecological Imperialism* (Crosby 1986). Crosby argues that North America transformed into a physical landscape of remarkable similarity to Europe by the intentional and accidental introduction of European crops and weeds, livestock and commensal species, and diseases into the New World. Significantly, this ecological expansion often occurred well in advance of the colonists themselves. The importance of this ecological transformation was not that this was the first time Native Americans had witnessed or had a hand in the alteration of the physical environment. One must recall the precontact changes wrought by agricultural fields of the eastern Woodlands, irrigation systems of the Southwest, and fire-management tactics by West Coast hunter-gatherers. The problem was that this post-Columbian transformation was rapid, immense, and pan-regional.

Although environmental change was widespread, it did not immediately usher in radical changes in North American ecological settings. For instance, many expected that the Spanish colonization of *La Florida* would have resulted in livestock overrunning indigenous species, but zooarchaeological work in mission, town, and Native village sites has demonstrated that local animal species found their way into Native American and Spanish kitchens (Reitz 1990, 1993). This suggests that cattle may not have been as abundant as an overextended “ecological imperialism” might predict. On the other hand, introduced plants made rapid time across the continent. Plant specialists have found European species in great abundance in the earliest bricks of 18th-century Spanish California missions.

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### *Disease and demography*

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In addition to tackling evidence for environmental change, students of the contact period face the daunting task of evaluating the impacts of European diseases on Native Americans. Contrary to some scholars’ notions of North Americans as “disease-free,” Native America had its share of infectious diseases and maladies. However, these did not prepare the biological population for a host of novel pathogens to which they had no immunity. Questions of what Old World diseases affected which people, how much, how often, and when are essential ones for this time period for two reasons. First, historical documents, oral histories, and skeletal evidence tell of the horrendous casualties suffered by Native American people exposed to European diseases such as smallpox, influenza, measles, and diphtheria (Crosby 1986; Dobyns 1983). Many of these diseases took on epidemic if not pandemic proportions, spreading rapidly and destructively into many regions. Some

have argued that the disease toll was so severe and ubiquitous that all Native American groups experienced a demographic collapse.

The second reason is a related one. If the disease toll was as great as projected by some scholars, such as Dobyns's (1983) estimates approaching 90–95 percent mortality across North America in the early 1500s, then anthropologists must entertain the possibility that historical observations made about Native Americans in the two or three centuries after these pandemics are about people greatly changed from precontact periods (Dunnell 1991). As such, ethnohistorical or ethnographic documents may not serve as appropriate analogs for interpreting the "prehistory" of Native America. The extreme position has been characterized as the "new demographic paradigm," epitomized by Dobyns's assertion that "aboriginal lifeways for the native peoples of North America clearly terminated with the large-scale depopulation caused by the initial smallpox epidemic in 1520–25" (Dobyns 1983:25).

Controversy has mobilized numerous archaeologists to critically evaluate the notion of a widespread demographic collapse of Native American populations (Kealhofer and Baker 1996; Larsen 1994; Larsen et al. 2001; Ramenofsky 1987). Their findings suggest that a more nuanced view is required, one that takes into account the timing of contact and disease, type of society (e.g., mobile versus sedentary, hierarchical versus egalitarian) involved, amount of European–Native interaction, and susceptibility of Native American populations as a result of malnutrition, parasites, crowding, labor exploitation, and pre-existing diseases. A call for contextual studies does not deny the possibility that protohistoric demographic collapse may have occurred in some regions. However, growing evidence suggests that demographic decline may have been more a consequence of sustained, rather than first, contact with Europeans (Kealhofer and Baker 1996) and that historic rather than protohistoric epidemics were often the more deadly (Walker and Johnson 1992).

A continental and uniform demographic collapse simply seems unwarranted in the face of recent research, as does the position held by Dunnell that Native Americans in the post-Columbian era were effectively shut off from their heritage and cultural practices. A more reasonable stance is that the colonial period was just one point on the trajectory linking precontact and contemporary Native communities (Lightfoot 1995) and that the impact of disease was highly variable and regionally specific (Kealhofer and Baker 1996; Ramenofsky 1987; Verano and Ubelaker 1992). Certainly, anthropologists recognize that a massive, disease-induced decline in Native American populations occurred and that such a demographic diminution resulted in considerable loss of cultural knowledge and practices, but historic, and by extension contemporary, Native American groups were not completely severed from their past social, political, economic, and religious practices.

Archaeologists approach the topic of North American disease and demography in a number of ways. A primary entry relies on ethnohistorians' use of archival sources that document population sizes or particular cases of diseases. These are excellent sources of information, but they do little to clarify the impact of diseases on groups outside the purview of European writers. This fingers a serious problem with Dobyns's model of demographic collapse: how can we extrapolate the waves

of deadly epidemics in areas undocumented by Europeans without the careful use of archaeological data? Doing otherwise simply assumes rather than tests what we propose to explain. Archaeologists have taken their cue and entered the debate with interesting and diverse data.

One such dataset involves comparing demography and settlement patterns before and after European contact. Archaeologists have demonstrated that some regions, such as the Southeast, show a major shift in settlement pattern before contact, one that may have helped buffer later European intrusions (Johnson and Lehmann 1996). However, not all areas survived early disease in the Southeast, such as riverine but not rural Caddoan populations who succumbed to 16th-century epidemics as evidenced by changes in mound construction, cemeteries, and settlement patterns (Perttula 1991). Some groups, such as the eastern Pueblo of the Southwest, had pre-existing strategies of “demographic and organizational flexibility” for dealing with environmental fluctuations that may have adapted them to better handle disruptions caused by epidemic disease (Palkovich 1996:192). Other areas, such as the Midwest, showed abandonment during late precontact times, perhaps as chiefdoms established buffer zones between competing polities (Milner 1992). Still other studies seem to indicate a rise in protohistoric populations following initial contact until actual European colonization, such as in California (Kealhofer 1996).

The best method for evaluating demographic collapse involves examining sites that span the precontact, protohistoric, and historic periods with tight chronologies. Ramenofsky (1987) offers one of the most detailed studies for the Southeast, New York, and the middle Missouri River areas. Using sophisticated seriation and population computation techniques, Ramenofsky tracked the “disease centuries” for the three regions and offered critical evaluations of Dobyns’s pandemics. She found parts of the Southeast ravaged by disease in the 16th century following de Soto’s *entrada*, but she concluded that middle Missouri and central New York populations avoided decimation until the 17th century (Ramenofsky 1987; see also Chilton, Henning, this volume). Additional research has revealed that Iroquois survival had much to do with migration, group absorption, and the political power of the Five Nations Confederacy (Snow 1992). Ramenofsky (1987:170–171) concluded that Dobyns’s initial smallpox pandemic seemed likely, but that his projected waves of other pathogens require serious reconsideration.

A seemingly clearer assessment of demographic collapse is the analysis of human skeletal remains, but these offer ambiguous data. Skeletal remains reveal what individuals suffered and often how they died, but in and of themselves, they do not tell anything about demographic collapse. Only with large sample sizes and relatively complete demographic life tables does this become possible. Moreover, while multiple burials may be the result of post-epidemic mass interment, the ability to distinguish these from pre-existing cultural practices of multiple interment, accretional burials, or other factors remains elusive. The many historical observations of greater numbers of dead than living Native Americans could bury suggest that cemeteries may not offer the final resolution to this issue. Finally, the largest problem in contact-period bioarchaeology is one that plagues all studies: “The epidemics so

frequently documented in narrative accounts are almost never identifiable in skeletal series” (Larsen 1994:113). Conditions that do leave skeletal signatures are (1) bouts of anemia or growth disruption that frequently result from malnutrition, diarrhea, parasites, or infection, or (2) skeletal lesions that result from trauma or infection. As such, the skeletal features can serve as a proxy measure of disease loads and overall health despite their non-specificity. Since the skeletal pathologies record events primarily during childhood, they attest more to the biological state of *survivors* than to particular conditions as clear agents of death (Larsen 1994; Larsen et al. 2001).

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### *Health and diet*

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Native American health and diet intimately connect to the parameters of ecological change, disease, and demography. Health and diet are the on-the-ground, microscale, and almost biographical level where the regional and macroscale factors have their impact and often their very origin. Stated differently, amidst the alterations in the plant, animal, and disease environments are individuals living and dying, making choices, struggling for biological and cultural survival, and adapting to novel circumstances. Physical bodies and food refuse frequently record these actions, and archaeologists have made noteworthy advances using these lines of evidence. Bioarchaeological studies have provided rich evidence of Native American health and diet during contact and colonial periods, as have zooarchaeological and paleoethnobotanical analyses.

Native American health during colonial periods has received considerable attention in the context of studying Old World diseases in North America. As they have in other archaeological contexts, bioarchaeological studies have focused on the identification of disease, physiological deficiency, trauma, and repetitive activity in human skeletons. To make sense of osteological data requires careful comparisons between skeletons from before and those from after European contact; only with the “baseline” of precontact patterns can archaeologists assess the *relative* changes in health. Currently, the most thorough bioarchaeological projects have focused on the Spanish borderlands in the Southeast region during the 16th through 18th centuries.

In the colonial-period Southeast, Larsen and his colleagues have isolated a number of biological consequences of contact for Native American health. Their studies of coastal Georgia and coastal/inland Florida have shown a number of patterns, which they recently synthesized and expanded (Larsen et al. 2001). First, the frequency of microscopic (Retzius lines) and macroscopic (hypoplasia) tooth defects, which indicate metabolic stress in childhood, increased between the precontact and mission periods. Second, similar studies of the mission period revealed an increase in infectious disease through periosteal lesions on bones and an increase in iron deficiency through lesions on the cranium (porotic hyperostosis) and in the eye orbits (cribra orbitalia). Third, they discovered an increase in skeletal robusticity and an elevation in osteoarthritis, particularly in the late mission period, indi-



cating that individuals did more repetitive, heavy, physical work as part of Spanish labor requirements. Males showed a more marked increase in osteoarthritis over women from precontact to colonial periods as a likely consequence of enforced work activities, but all showed an earlier onset of osteoarthritis (Larsen et al. 1996:115–117). Fourth, studies of bone biomechanical properties reveal reduced overall mobility, despite a few males demonstrating remarkably high mobility as a result of hauling heavy loads over long distances. Fifth, very little evidence of trauma appears on the contact-period skeletons from the Southeast (Larsen 1994:130), suggesting that general living conditions in the colonial world, rather than outright physical conflict, took a greater biological toll on Native Americans. In sum, these patterns suggest a decline in Native American health in and around the Spanish missions because of increased infections, poor living conditions, alterations in diet, and strenuous colonial labor. Many of these patterns of declining health occurred in other regions, such as Texas (Miller 1996), the Southwest (Stodder and Martin 1992), and California (Walker et al. 1989; Walker and Johnson 1994), but with significant variability.

The issue of Native American health ties directly to diet. How did the colonial period affect Native American diets and what impacts did this have on nutrition and cultural practices? The previous discussions regarding anemia and growth arrest due to malnutrition offer some insights into the quality of Native diet and its general decline in colonial contexts, but I turn here to specific assessments of the composition of contact-period diets. Bioarchaeology provides one entry through the analysis of skeletal isotopes and the frequency of dental caries. Zooarchaeological and paleoethnobotanical research provides a more common way, one that can detail the diversity of plants and animals in past diets while respecting Native American preferences for leaving skeletal remains undisturbed and unstudied. Sitting at the forefront of studies of diet are questions about which introduced plants and animals entered the Native American menu. The answers are far from simple since they vary from region to region, group to group, and colonial front to colonial front.

To sample the diversity, it is worthwhile to discuss again the Spanish borderlands region of the Southeast, Southwest, and California. A combination of biological and environmental studies indicate that Native groups in the Southeast shifted their precontact subsistence balanced between marine foods, maize agriculture, and terrestrial plants and animals strongly toward a focus on maize and a regional homogenization of diet during Spanish colonization. The conclusion relies on skeletal isotope data from precontact and mission burials (Larsen et al. 2001); increased frequencies of mission-period dental caries, meaning the consumption of starchier foods (Larsen et al. 2001); and the prevalence of maize and decline of marine foods in the faunal and floral records (Reitz 1990; Ruhl 1993). The particular mixture varied somewhat by environmental region, and often the early Spanish diets differed little from the Native American ones (Reitz 1993; Scarry 1993). These indicate an adaptation of Spanish residents to local food resources, undoubtedly provided in part by Native peoples through colonial tribute requirements.

In California, archaeologists have investigated a variety of contact-period and colonial sites for information on Native American diet. The 19th-century Russian

colony of Ross on the northern California coast reveals an intriguing mixture of foods that combined the maritime focus of the Native Alaskans transported there as workers, the terrestrial focus of the local Native American groups, and the livestock and crop emphasis of the resident Russians (Wake 1997). The combination appears to comprise part of the negotiation of gender and identity between Native Americans and Native Alaskans in the shadow of the Russian stockade (Lightfoot et al. 1998). In addition, the Spanish California mission contexts dating between 1769 and 1834 look remarkably similar to those in the Southeast: a strong focus on cattle as the main source of animal food accompanying a noticeable reliance on wild fauna. The same pattern held in the plant foods, with introduced wheat and barley taking a primary role in Native diets (Walker and Johnson 1992), but only with continued use of locally gathered plants (Allen 1998). On Mexican-Californian ranchos that followed the 1834 dissolution of the Spanish missions, Native American laborers, at least in northern California, appear to have followed a similar pattern of relying heavily on the cattle, sheep, wheat, and barley provisioned by the rancho owner while also drawing on numerous wild resources such as fish, waterfowl, acorns, and grass seeds (Silliman 2004).

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### Social Landscapes

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Archaeologists cannot begin to interpret contact and colonial periods, even in the realm of environmental change and diet, without attention to the social landscapes of colonial North America. These landscapes include the relationships between people that structured the use of the biological environment, the ways that disease spread, the biocultural context for health, and the choices surrounding diet. They are also the realms for considering questions of exchange, identity, labor, and gender that frequently form the anthropological center of colonial studies. Because the social landscape varied highly depending on the Native Americans and Europeans involved and the colonial context of the interaction or exchange, I opt again to focus on broad issues that drive archaeological research and that illuminate Native American responses to colonialism.

Many would agree that the hallmark of North American studies of culture contact and colonialism is the attention to cultural change and persistence. Terminology has shifted considerably over the past six decades, as have the related theoretical frameworks, but the goal has always been to make the combination of material culture and historical documents speak to cultural and social issues. The persistent quest is to ascertain whether Native Americans held tightly to their own cultural traditions, adopted Europeans customs and material culture, or created something new. Regardless of one's stated position, this has *never* been a neutral question because politics – national, local, ethnic, historical, disciplinary, and personal – are wrapped up tightly with issues of cultural change and persistence. To explore the issues of the social landscape of colonialism, I focus on two primary topics: choices and traditions. These are non-traditional ways to group the following studies, and I take a few liberties in revisiting archaeological works to chase



down the lines that connect distant and disparate Native American communities in the throes of colonialism.

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### Choices

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Studying culture contact and colonialism in North America means studying Native American choices. Choice is a deceptively simple word, and I want to clarify my use of the term. By choice, I mean the ability of an individual to act in the face of alternatives and in ways congruent with past practices and future expectations. In simplest of terms, individuals as social agents make choices that are both intentional and thought out and those that are routine and comfortable. By emphasizing choice, I do not imply that everyone has the ability to choose based on autonomous free will or volition. This is not a theoretically viable position given the variety of constraints and opportunities that surround social action. Besides, to make that claim for Native Americans embroiled in the oppressive regimes of colonialism denies historical reality. As Milliken (1995) put it, many Native Americans were in “a time of little choice” during the colonial period, but this does not deny the possibilities of *some* choice and the necessity of looking at decisions, strategies, or even habits deployed by indigenous people as they encountered Europeans (see Silliman 2001a). The recognition of Native choice goes a long way toward undercutting arguments that privilege European motivations, goals, or desires as fully determining the course of colonialism and history.

### *Trade and exchange*

From intermittent first encounters to the extensive fur and hide trade, exchange formed the basis of many Native American and European relationships. Trade relationships served to introduce European material culture into Native American communities and into pre-existing trade networks across vast regions. Since introductions do not happen passively, these can reveal key embodiments of Native American choice – what to trade for and with, whom to interact with, and when to invest in trading alliances.

Whether De Soto's *entrada* into the Southeast in 1539–43 or Sir Francis Drake's landing on the coast of California in 1575, the nature of “first encounters” across North America hinged on exchange relationships. For better or worse, many archaeologists view the appearance of trade goods, particularly 16th-century items, at sites as a marker for the protohistoric period – the time before full-fledged, sustained, or in some regions even actual contact between Indians and Europeans. Early exchanges resulted in the transfer of more than material goods; they just as frequently meant unintentional trafficking in genes and germs. Early exchange relationships laid the groundwork for the colonial fur trade. Spanning the continent from New England across the Great Lakes and Canada to the shores of the West Coast, the fur trade involved a complex field with many players. Wolf offered one of the most detailed treatments of this phenomenon in *Europe and the People without History* (Wolf 1982), and this work has greatly influenced the ways that archaeolo-

gists think about episodes of contact. Wolf made it clear that the fur trade resulted in over-harvesting, economic reorientation, inter-tribal conflict, and resettlement, and that local processes relate, in part, to the broader European economic system.

The fur trade certainly served as a stage for international colonial politics, such as the tensions between France and England over America's fur harvest. One might characterize it as a manifestation of Immanuel Wallerstein's "World Economy," where Native people served as periphery suppliers of raw materials, goods, and labor that translated into wealth in core European nations. Yet, however global the reach of its supply and demand, the fur trade is important for studies of contact because of the on-the-ground relationships forged between Europeans and Native people, men and women, and traders and trappers. Careful analyses have shown that Native Americans were active players in the fur trade and not pawns in an otherwise global economy (Kardulias 1990; Turnbaugh 1993). Native men and women often forged fictive kin ties with European trappers to bring them into *indigenous* social relations, and groups like the Dakota sought to participate in the enterprise on their own terms, which frequently did not conform to the profit motive of the fur company (Whelan 1993). That is, Native choices partially directed the flow of goods.

The politics of Native choices in European trade relations are similarly visible in the Southeast deerskin trade. Primarily involving British traders in Charlestown, South Carolina and interior Native groups, the 18th-century deerskin trade provided a context in which some Native Americans opted to reorient their social and economic worlds. The competing geopolitics of English settlers on the eastern side of the greater Southeast, and French settlers on the southern and western perimeters, served as colonial parameters for Native American social action. They provided points of contention and opportunity, but they cannot be considered sole *causes* of cultural change. For instance, research has shown that the Chickasaw, centered in northern Mississippi, altered their stone tool production and quarrying activities to emphasize thumbnail scrapers, which they sought for efficient deerskin-processing (Johnson 1997, 2000). The intensification of stone tool production may reflect their trading relations with the English, who seem to have undersupplied them with metal and firearms.

### *Material culture*

Successfully tracking the role of Native choice in trade and exchange hinges, in part, on identifying the range of *possible* choices. Archaeologists must ascertain what items were available to Native Americans through exchange, barter, provisioning, or payment-in-kind and what material objects individuals actually selected from that range. This is easier said than done, especially when one has very few colonial inventory lists or orders specifically designed to secure items for Native American consumption. Yet, archaeologists are uniquely blessed with access to the material culture chosen and used by Native Americans. This empirical information helps counteract the tendency to assume the parameters of Native choices. We have all heard the well-worn, and frequently incorrect, presumption that Native Americans dropped stone tool technology as soon as they could get their hands on metal. This should be an empirical, historical, and contextual question rather than an *a priori*,

uniform assumption. Archaeologists have recently documented not only the context-dependent strategies involving stone tool use, but also the possibility of continued use of stone tools well into the colonial period (Cobb 2003). In addition, archaeologists must continue striving to see beyond just the material things themselves to the activities or meanings that they supported to see if cultural practices or simply the implements for doing them changed (see Rogers 1993 for an example).

At a general level, archaeologists can assess material culture choices through broad categories of recovered artifacts. Archaeologists can address whether Native Americans sought “practical” or “functional” items or ones devoted to bodily decoration and ritual. For instance, did Native consumers prefer utilitarian items such as iron knives or hoes, or did they focus their efforts on securing less “functional” items like beads, bells, or other decorative items? Waselkov and Smith (2000) found that the Creek sought ornamental objects first. For the Creek, the adoption of European goods had much less to do with technological superiority than with social necessity as these commodities contributed to the breakdown of once restricted prestige goods (Wesson 2001). These studies, and many more like them, contradict the notion that Native Americans made their material culture choices based solely on Western notions of technology and economy.

At a specific level, one can compare particular artifact patterns to assemblage-wide patterns to see how Native choices played out. It is frequently possible to determine if individuals adopted European items for particular purposes or if they actually refused otherwise available European goods in favor of indigenous ones. In southern California, the Chumash in the late 18th century selectively adopted metal tools from the nearby Spanish mission colonies (Bamforth 1993). Native individuals selected metal implements for labor-intensive tasks such as drilling shell for beads or woodworking, but they retained lithic raw material for fishing and for projectile points, even though both might have been “better” served with metal tools. These patterns, Bamforth (1993) argues, undermine any attempt to offer explanations based on technological superiority or efficiency (cf. Ames, this volume). In a rather different case in northern California, Native Americans working on Rancho Petaluma in the mid-1800s opted to make and use stone tools for many, although not all, of their tasks, despite the availability of metal tools and the distance to lithic raw material sources (Figure 11.1; Silliman 2003). This continuity was an active choice in the face of alternatives and not a vestigial pastime. Stone tool production and acquisition may have served to connect rancho workers to the broader indigenous social landscape and may have become an active identity marker.

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### *Traditions*

Cultural traditions are not passed down blindly or passively from the past but are active negotiations by people in the present (Pauketat 2001). They are made and remade each time an individual enacts them, uses them for their own benefit, or questions their efficacy and appropriateness. This process involves elements of



**Figure 11.1** View of Petaluma Adobe, Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park, California

choice, both conscious and habitual. In the realm of colonial North America, a focus on traditions tends to mean an emphasis on identities and the ways that Native Americans held to a past identity or forged a new one. Some have seen cultural traditions as passive entities passed down through individuals and reflected in material culture, whereas others have underscored the vigor with which individuals revisit their traditions and recast them in novel situations and the active role of material culture in constituting those traditions. I chart the terrain between these two poles, where most North American archaeologists work, in three subsections: (1) acculturation, (2) accommodation, resistance, and identity, and (3) difference.

### *Acculturation*

The earliest unified approach to traditions in North American culture contact was the acculturation approach of the 1930s. This program adhered to an implicit version of tradition, one that stressed bounded cultural groups adopting or rejecting cultural traits of other groups, as epitomized in Redfield et al. (1936). Far from being a politically neutral academic quest, early acculturation studies evaluated the amount of culture change that had taken place in Native American groups to explain why Indian peoples had not completely assimilated to mainstream United States culture, or melted into the pot, so to speak. In theory, acculturation meant any exchange of cultural traits between groups that resulted in their adoption by a

“recipient” culture. Contrary to recent opinion, the acculturation approach could accommodate active social agents, resisting or adopting cultural traits for a variety of political, religious, or personal reasons. In practice, however, acculturation came to mean primarily the shift in Native American groups toward Euroamerican lifestyles and material culture (Cusick 1998; Rubertone 2000). Acculturation became a shopping-list way of measuring cultural change where Native Americans could only passively screen but not actively resist cultural change. Unfortunately and unexpectedly, archaeology had a minimal role to play in these early acculturation studies.

Archaeology, or at least material culture studies, joined the acculturation program in the 1950s. The now classic study by Quimby and Spoehr (1951) took the lead by developing a classification scheme to handle the variety of traditional, introduced, novel, and modified items found in Native American sites and museum collections dating to the postcontact period. Their goal was to categorize form, material, use, and technology; they saw no clear way to address meaning or, for that matter, cultural tradition. Archaeologists in the 1960s and 1970s picked up this classification scheme and began to modify and apply it to archaeological contexts. The acculturation approach experienced a revival in the 1980s with the innovative work of Farnsworth (1989, 1992) in California at Mission Nuestra Señora de la Soledad, and his comparisons to other missions. In his approach, Farnsworth added a number of artifact categories to try to capture more subtlety in Native American use and adoption of European items, and he devised mathematical ratios to measure the rates and effects of acculturation in the Spanish mission environment. These he applied to different excavated contexts in the mission quadrangle of Mission Soledad, hoping to link the acculturation process to the broader world economy.

Farnsworth met with some success when deciphering trends in mission economy, but the methodology did not attract many followers. Currently, the method of utilizing quantifiable artifact ratios as an index of cultural change is regarded by many as ill-suited to handling the true subtleties and ambiguities of material culture made meaningful by its makers and users (Lightfoot 1995). The largest deficiency seems to be the passive role that it affords material culture. Artifacts are portrayed as reflecting cultural or social patterns presumed to be independent of, or ontologically prior to, them rather than as active elements in the construction of those cultural or social realms.

#### *Accommodation, resistance, and identity*

Instead of relying on artifact ratios as the method and acculturation as the theoretical framework, other archaeologists of colonial North America have leaned toward contextual methods of artifact analysis, models that incorporate the use of space, and theoretical approaches that deal more with accommodation, resistance, and cultural practices. In these approaches, cultural traditions take on more salience and more visibility. Some archaeologists approach identity – individual negotiations of tradition – through particular classes of artifacts, whereas others seek a broader picture of daily practices in cultural spaces (see Loren 2000, this volume).

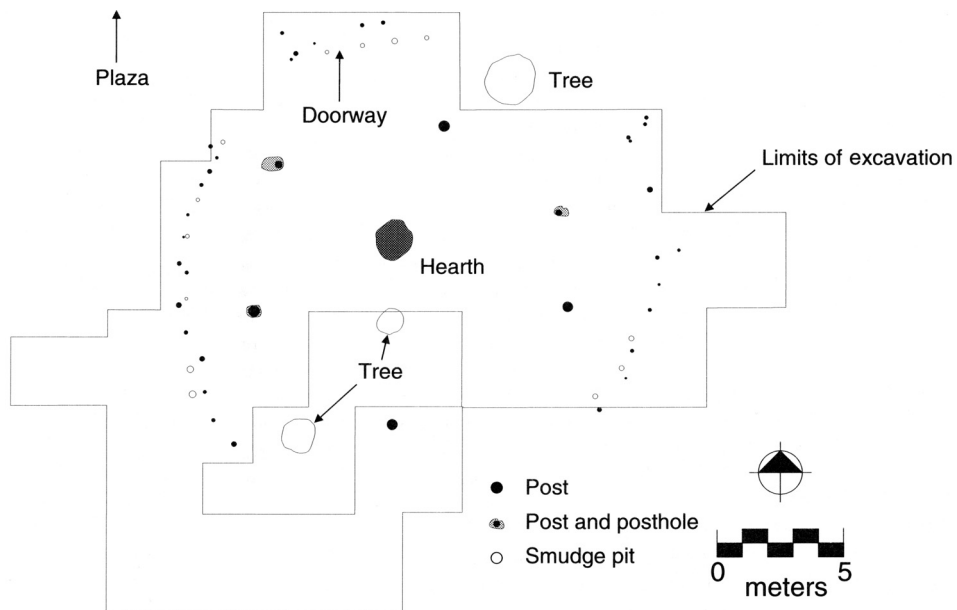


For the Southeast specifically and North America generally, Deagan led the charge with her groundbreaking work on 16th- through 18th-century Spanish St. Augustine (Deagan 1983). As a colonial settlement founded by Spanish settlers, St. Augustine contained interethnic marriages between Spanish or *criollo* (New World-born) men and Native American women. Deagan interpreted artifact collections and spatial arrangements of known interethnic households to reveal male, Spanish expression in household organization and public appearance and female, Native American expression in the realm of private household ceramic use and food preparation. The dichotomy allowed Deagan to trace the role of Native women in colonial households and their maintenance of identity (Deagan 1996). Rather than acculturation, with its often one-way flow of cultural change, this perspective led to models of transculturation with complex, multidirectional exchanges of cultural practices (Deagan 1998).

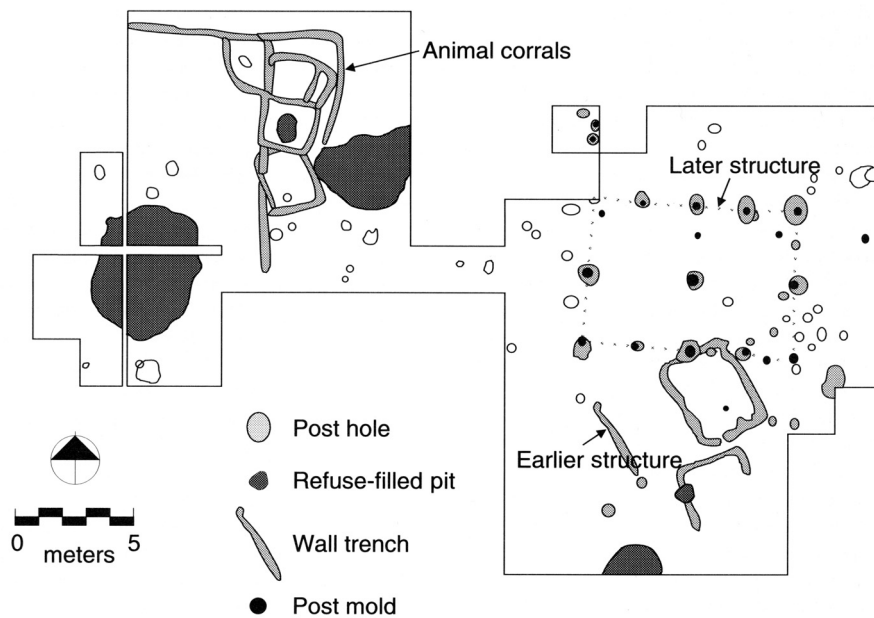
In addition to the secular settlement of St. Augustine, the Southeast offers other cases of Native American identity politics in the Spanish mission system. One of the best cases derives from the Apalachee mission of San Luis de Talimali in north-west Florida. Mission San Luis was founded in 1656 at the request of Apalachee leaders following years of conflict on the frontier of Spanish *La Florida*. Like many other Spanish mission sites, San Luis served both the Spanish purpose of Catholic conversion and the Native agenda of political alliance in a volatile colonial region. One of the most interesting discoveries is that, despite the consistent Spanish attempts to alter Native American cultural practices, the Apalachee at San Luis maintained many of their precontact traditions (McEwan 2000). For example, the San Luis settlement was laid out on a Spanish-style plaza with the church and friary on one side and a large Apalachee council house on the other (Figure 11.2). The Native council house occupied a prominent place at the site as a center for political and cultural activities (Scarry and McEwan 1995). At the same time, the Apalachee buried their dead, like other mission populations, with clear nods to Catholicism, a set of religious practices that they may have adopted for the purposes of indigenous power and political struggles (McEwan 2001). The Apalachee held on to many aspects of architecture, leadership, subsistence, and material culture that predated Spanish entry into the New World, not as a passive retention but as an active manipulation of tradition.

On the other side of the continent, the Russian settlement of Colony Ross in northern California offers a compelling case of the negotiation of tradition (Figure 11.3). Founded in 1812 as a fur trade outpost for the procurement of sea otter pelts, Colony Ross served an economic and administrative function. Unlike the Spanish missions not far from its doorstep, the Russian residents directed little effort to converting Native peoples to the Russian Orthodox faith or to altering their cultural practices. Until its 1841 abandonment, the colony was one of the earliest multiethnic communities in the region, with Russian managers and their families living in a redwood stockade, Creoles of Russian and Native descent residing outside the walls, Native Alaskan men and local Native Californian women co-residing on the ocean terrace near the Russian "fort," and California Indian people living nearby (Lightfoot et al. 1993). Native Alaskan men had left their Arctic





**Elite Apalachee residential structure**



**Spanish domestic structures**

**Figure 11.2** Plan view of elite Apalachee house and Spanish residences excavated at Mission San Luis de Talimali, Florida (reproduced by permission of the Society for American Archaeology from *American Antiquity* 60(3), Scarry and McEwan [1995:figs 4 and 5])



**Figure 11.3** View of Native Alaskan Village Site outside the Russian stockade at Colony Ross, Fort Ross State Historic Park, California (reproduced by permission of the photographer, Daniel F. Murley)

homelands more than a thousand miles away, frequently under coercion and force, to work for the Russian enterprise.

Many seasons of fieldwork by Lightfoot and his colleagues have revealed poignant features of the material culture, foodways, and living spaces of the Native people associated with this community (Lightfoot et al. 1998; Martinez 1997; Wake 1997). Results indicate that interethnic unions between Native Alaskan men and California Indian women comprised key points of cultural negotiation and expression, an aspect not at all unlike that noted by Deagan for *La Florida*. The key difference here was that these marriages bound together different Native groups. Research at Colony Ross revealed that Native people living in the shadow of the Russian outpost had not created a creolized identity, despite their intimate and daily intercourse with Russians and other Native groups. Instead, Native Alaskan men and California Indian women expressed their identities differently yet simultaneously in daily practices, in the instantiation of cultural traditions. For example, the site layout and location on the windswept coastal terrace revealed a distinctly Alaskan character, while the cooking practices, material culture, except for marine mammal-hunting gear, and refuse patterns exhibited a markedly Californian flavor

(Lightfoot et al. 1998). Although adopting “Western” material culture such as ceramics, glass, and metal into their material repertoire, the Native groups showed no inclination toward a Russian or non-Native identity.

Shifting to yet another corner of North America, southern New England hosts different issues with regard to archaeological studies of cultural tradition. Colonialism in New England involved a complex interaction of trade, conversion attempts, military conflict, and slow dispossession of lands and resources by a growing colonial population. The study of tradition in these colonial contexts can be illustrated with a case example: the late 17th-century Narragansett cemetery in Rhode Island known as RI-1000. A rich site containing almost 50 graves of men, women, and children with a wide variety of Native- and European-derived mortuary goods, the RI-1000 locality has been the source of academic disputes about what the burials and material culture patterns meant for Native American traditions and struggles in the colonial world. Nassaney took the position that the burial data indicated Native Americans forging new identities, ones that merged aspects of traditional practices with introduced material and cultural features of colonial settlers (Nassaney 1989). In a sense, he envisioned individuals strategically positioning themselves in the novel material and political context of colonialism as a way to survive. Turnbaugh (1993) offered a corollary position that the variations in quantity and type of burial goods denoted individuals with different levels of access to material goods and an increase in sociopolitical ranking. He envisioned the graves as attempts to blend old traditions with new (Turnbaugh 1993:147).

On the other hand, Robinson and Rubertone saw the burials and associated material goods as an indication of Narragansett resistance to colonization, as maintenance of their traditions in the face of difficult times (Robinson et al. 1985; Rubertone 1989). The conclusion was that the RI-1000 cemetery revealed an intensification of burial ritualism. The one element on which all contending authors seem to agree is the prominent role played by the *mockatassuit*, or Narragansett mortician, in the layout and preparation of the large cemetery. Recently, Rubertone has expanded her perspective with a nuanced study of RI-1000, hovering close to the data to explore the intricacies and possibilities of every person buried in the cemetery (Rubertone 2001). Rubertone’s approach garners remarkable insight into the cultural, gender, and even age-specific identities, to “reveal people in different dimensions than simply those of politics and entrepreneurship” as they maintained community identity and kinship (Rubertone 2001:164).

What the foregoing approaches offer to the study of postcontact Native American groups that the earlier approaches to acculturation did not is a portrayal of active indigenous social actors and their material culture. The Native players in this drama are more real, more vested in their experiences, and correspondingly more difficult to label in unequivocal terms. Although these studies have better illuminated the active role played by individuals and material culture, other archaeologists have taken such perspectives further to argue for individuals that are even more active. In addition to being tied to past practices, tradition in this formulation is more about situational and strategic use of material culture to express, if not

also make, identity. This move tends to foreground identities that individuals forge in opposition to others, in the face of novel alternatives, or in a self-conscious attempt at group affiliation.

The Southeast again offers a key example of how such an approach to ethno-genesis has illuminated Native American lives in the colonial period. The Guale on the southern Atlantic coast had a deep cultural tradition prior to Spanish contact, but they did not appear to share anything that could be defined as an ethnic identity (Saunders 2001). On the other hand, by 1663 the Yamassee had formed as an ethnic group composed of refugees from the Georgia piedmont. Both groups have been interpreted through archaeological classifications and studies of Altamaha pottery, thought to be a “negotiated tradition” between the Guale and the Spanish that the Yamassee adopted to indicate colonial allegiance (Saunders 2001). At the same time, the Yamassee displayed diets much more like their precontact antecedents than their contemporaries in Spanish mission contexts (Larsen et al. 2001:107–108).

Native Americans negotiated cultural traditions whenever they incorporated particular European items to fashion an ethnic identity. Individuals may have made, used, traded, or displayed items as a way of materializing their identities, of making them visible. For the Seminole case in Florida, Weisman (2000) argued that ethno-genesis in the early 1800s was marked materially by the wearing of European military clothing and the explicit rejection of Western ceramics. The former served as a source of symbolic power when confronting Euroamerican troops; the latter denoted an explicit rejection of key symbols of the dominant society. The lack of non-Native ceramics is quite notable, given the prevalence of them in Southeastern Native communities at this time and the presence of glass and metal goods in Seminole site assemblages (Weisman 2000).

### *Difference*

Most discussions of tradition relate to groups, cultures, or societies, but the archaeology of colonial North America has also investigated difference. By difference, I mean distinction within a Native group depending on one’s gender, age, status, class, labor role, or political allegiance. These studies take up the recent challenge “to understand the different experiences of those who survived not only European contact but also proclamations about acculturation, assimilation, hybridization, and resistance” (Rubertone 2000:439, emphasis mine).

Gender research in colonial North America is very much about tradition and about difference. Gender relations have distinct and powerful histories in Native American groups, and gender expectations, roles, and identities underwent significant change and often attack in colonial periods. As a result, indigenous people crafted new traditions of intermarriage, new ways of coping with forced gendered divisions of labor, and new strategies for dealing with sexual violence and control. The studies of Spanish St. Augustine (Deagan 1983, 1996) and Russian Colony Ross (Lightfoot et al. 1998) described above epitomize the insight that a gender focus can offer to archaeology. They foreground the relations between men and women who came from different cultural traditions but retained their distinctive-

ness while combining their practices in new households. In this way, gender sits at the core of new and negotiated traditions that involve Native Americans in the post-Columbian era. In addition, Voss (2000) has tackled gender issues in the colonial period, but in a unique way. For Spanish colonial California, Voss revealed that sexual relations – particularly violence – partly account for the spatial arrangements of California Indian villages during the Spanish reign. Native individuals, particularly women, also struggled with restrictive and overbearing modes of sexual and gender control in the confines of Spanish mission dormitories (Voss 2000).

Another window into difference is labor and its corresponding relations and occupations. Many indigenous people in North America joined the economic world of colonialism as laborers – trappers, hunters, miners, ranch hands, agricultural workers, builders, whalers, and translators, for example. Although individuals may have made the choice in the context of diminished resources and opportunities, labor provides a way of looking at Native control over their engagement with colonialism. On the other hand, colonial labor also established contexts in which Native people had little choice over their participation in work tasks. Yet, archaeologists can still discern the outlines of Native American social agency in the midst of forced labor (Silliman 2001b, 2004). For example, my own work has shown that Native American residents at Mission San Antonio in central California may have affiliated with some labor tasks and not with others (Silliman 2001b). Affiliation means choosing to use and display tools of colonial labor activities in the household as a way to materially express and maintain novel identities. More clearly than the mission case, the archaeological study of Rancho Petaluma in 19th-century northern California reveals the role of colonial labor in Native American experiences (Silliman 2004). Native women introduced sewing items into their households, which stemmed in part from their daily required activities on the rancho. In contrast, Native men did *not* bring home tools associated with their required duties of livestock herding, cattle butchery, or farming (Silliman 2004). The discrepancy suggests the gendered nature of social and household strategies for coping with labor regimes and for materializing their identities.

An additional line of difference is political affiliation. Historically and realistically, archaeologists know that not everyone in Native groups agreed on trade alliances, political decisions, or even the everyday choices of contending with colonialism and Europeans. Despite the difficulties of recognizing intragroup differences, archaeologists of the colonial era have demonstrated the potential to address these divergences using material remains. For instance, Waselkov identified political factions in Alabama Creek groups with differing allegiances to English or French (Waselkov 1993). In the late 17th and early 18th centuries, the Creek incorporated refugees from outlying groups, formed a confederation for mutual protection, and tolerated internal factions. After 1715, those factions vied for trade with the French and English. Using grave goods from Creek burials, Waselkov determined that both factions could be seen in graves dating between 1720 and 1760 in the region, and, more importantly, that both factions were present at a single town (Waselkov 1993).



## Final Thoughts

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The studies reviewed in this chapter should underscore the ability of archaeological research to explore the specifics of colonialism and culture contact and to illuminate the finer details of Native Americans maneuvering the complex colonial world in North America. The examples presented herein are only a sampling, as I regretfully had to exclude work in regions such as the Arctic, Northwest Coast, Midwest, and Plains. Contrary to the recent statement by one of archaeology's pre-eminent spokespersons that "archaeology is an anonymous discipline, concerned with the generalities of human culture rather than the deeds of individuals, providing relatively little information on European contact" (Fagan 1997:34), this chapter has demonstrated that archaeology has much to offer the topic of Native American – and other indigenous – responses to European colonialism. I would go so far as to argue that archaeology frequently offers *more* information on contact and colonialism than the overprivileged historical record alone because it illuminates the Native American side of colonialism and culture contact and the material aspects of everyday life.

This chapter has traced the contours of what that illumination would look like as archaeology brings indigenous choices, traditions, bodies, and experiences out of the shadows cast by colonialism. Obviously, archaeology can be plagued with the ambiguities of whether or not particular artifacts or patterns represent worldviews, practices, identities, genders, adaptations, or political economies, but a similar ambiguity probably surrounded individuals' interaction with those same items of material culture when they were first used and discarded. Our confrontation of the ambiguity and, at the same time, the possibility is what makes this realm of North American archaeology so vital and invigorating. The archaeology of North American colonial encounters provides the vital link between the deep, rooted history of Native Americans on the continent and their contemporary cultures and struggles in today's world in the legacy of colonialism. While reclaiming Native American history in the aftermath of European contact, the archaeological study of colonialism also serves as the disciplinary hinge that keeps the door between "prehistory" and "history" always swinging so that archaeologists may move back and forth through it, drawing on each other's insights and methods and recognizing that, more times than not, they are studying the same kinds of issues.

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