

Archaeology
and the
Postcolonial
Critique

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ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE
POSTCOLONIAL CRITIQUE

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ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE POSTCOLONIAL CRITIQUE



MATTHEW LIEBMANN AND UZMA Z. RIZVI



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Toward the Liberation of Archaeological Praxis in a “Postcolonial Colony”: The Case of Puerto Rico

JAIME R. PAGÁN JIMÉNEZ AND RENIEL RODRÍGUEZ RAMOS



The Puerto Rican paradox reflects the contradictions of maintaining a colony in postcolonial times. In the age of colonialism, the contradictions of cultural ethnocentrism, racial discrimination and segregation, second-class citizenship, economic inequality, and military occupation, would have been rationalized by oxymoronic logic such as that encapsulated in the doctrine of “foreign in a domestic sense.”

—EMILIO PANTOJAS GARCÍA, 2005:175

Setting the Place and Sense of Our Inquiry

IN THIS CHAPTER WE FOCUS ON the pragmatic and theoretical problems of archaeological praxis within one of the Caribbean islands, Puerto Rico. The inhabitants of the Caribbean islands were the first “New World” peoples to suffer from the irruption of Europeans and their colonial projects in the late fifteenth century. As a result, contemporary Puerto Rican society emerged out of, and currently lives in, a colonial situation. This analysis will emphasize the differences in the ways archaeology is carried out and is conceptualized in “eccentric” (i.e., marginalized) contexts, in contrast to the skewed perspective that is usually presented in the centers of theory production, which are also typically located in some of those countries that created and contributed to the current socioeconomic conditions and cultural realities of Puerto Rico and other Caribbean islands.

We will first examine some of the basic assumptions of postcolonial theories in an attempt to recontextualize them in response to criticisms

postulated from different areas, particularly Latin America. This sets the stage for presenting the atypical sociopolitical situation of Puerto Rico—a “postcolonial colony,” as some scholars have suggested (Duany 2005; Flores 2000). This condition contrasts starkly with discourses postulated from contemporary centers of theory production (e.g., that “all archaeology today is postcolonial” and we live in a postcolonial world) that portray themselves as global and thus as a natural discourse within the discipline (Gosden 2001). In fact, not everyone today lives in a postcolonial world and all archaeology at present is not postcolonial (Pagán Jiménez 2004). Current postcolonial projects are increasingly less concerned with analyses of the power relations between the binary oppositions of center–periphery or colonizer–colonized (Nagy-Zekmi 2003) and more concerned with the assessment of the new phenomena that resulted from postcoloniality (e.g., the recognition of heterogeneity and hybrid conditions). In contrast, we think that it is not possible to conceive of new approaches, theories, or postcolonial expressions in places where power relations continue to be subsumed inside the antinomies that are still lived, produced, and reproduced within typical environments of political and intellectual colonialism.¹

Postcolonial theories were developed in (and by) different processes and phases of decolonization during and after the end of political colonialism mainly in India but also in Africa and the Middle East. However, in the case of the archaeologies practiced in Puerto Rico, in order to rise out of colonialism, we must follow our own historical and cultural rhythms, although this obviously does not imply isolation from the world’s sociocultural and academic dynamics. This is one of the ways we propose to build our own postcoloniality, if it is possible to continue using this concept. Therefore, an epistemological leap to a “postcolonial present” based on the archaeologies of other colonized countries (in political, economic, and/or intellectual terms) that has not been configured with our quotidian and intellectual experiences should not be expected. For us as Puerto Rican archaeologists, it is one thing to know and understand the conditions of the emergence of postcolonial theories but it is a very different thing to simply adopt those theories that are recommended to us as a new paradigmatic condition. This runs the danger of disregarding our particular political and intellectual experiences in favor of the acceptance of a product that was generated externally and under different conditions.

In contrast to traditional Latin American social archaeology (Lumbreras 1974; see Pagán Jiménez 2004:207), the archaeologies of liberation that we endorse here are a collection of tools that can be utilized as instruments of

consciousness, easily accessible to the *pueblos* (i.e., peoples plus places) we work with in Puerto Rico and in other colonized places, not only for the archaeological community. Our aspiration is that these archaeologies can be an effective revolutionary media to confront long-lived colonial problems in order to begin the decolonization of not only the archaeology of Puerto Rico but also the archaeology produced in “the center,” which continues asymmetrical relations of power with its nonacademic surroundings. We focus on the pragmatic aspects of the unidirectional power relations that exist between the centers of theory production and the peripheries, using Puerto Rico as a case study. Our purpose is to expose the ways in which the discipline reproduces attitudes that promote the continued subordination of archaeological traditions from eccentric contexts.

Despite the fact that new (and not so new) postcolonial discourses have had some positive outcomes (e.g., multivocality, coauthored construction of cultural representations), they also are currently dictated from the centers of theoretical production. In many cases they have been offered as commodities in the manner of a catalog sale through the big universities and other editorial apparatuses for the resolution of historical conflicts between the researcher and the researched, the colonizer and the colonized. Although we think that the procedures and negotiations suggested from the centers are not all negative, we also think that such postcolonial discourses should not become another intellectual fashion applied homogeneously, as the histories with which they deal are varied and concern social groups that currently live in disadvantaged conditions. As a result, we are engaged with the development of a contingent project concerned with the accessibility and exposition of all of those elements that constitute the empirical, philosophical, and interpretive foundations of our archaeological work. This proposed action can be used by Puerto Ricans and peoples from other neocolonial contexts in order to decide how to understand and integrate their (our) particular ancestral histories according to their (our) own needs.

Puerto Rico is an interesting case because the colonial history of the island (it was colonized first by Spanish and then by United States forces) allows us to see how archaeology—and its produced knowledge—has influenced the sociopolitical realities experienced by Puerto Ricans. Archaeology as practiced in Puerto Rico makes evident the long ways that we still need to go to rise out of colonialism and make the desired postcolonial, multivocal, multitangential, and/or polycentric conditions possible in eccentric contexts with respect to the centers of theoretical production (Gnecco 1999; Gnecco and Zambrano 2000; Restrepo and Escobar 2005).

Postcolonial Theories in Archaeology: A Latin American Perspective

Postcolonial has been used as a chronological marker of the colonization–decolonization process. The consensus among scholars is that the trigger for postcolonial praxis was the construction of colonialist historical narratives of the Other by the Western world (Chakrabarty 1999). Thus, the intention of many postcolonialists has been to unveil the asymmetrical relations between colonizer and colonized and to reveal the colonizing subtexts that exist in written histories from eccentric countries such as those in Asia and Africa (Guha 1982; Spivak 1985). Postcolonial theory as we know it today draws on perspectives derived mainly from Marxism, postmodernism, and poststructuralism (e.g., Toro 1997; Dube 1999; Nagy-Zekmi 2003; Mignolo 1997).

But what do we, as Latin Americans, understand postcolonialism or postcoloniality to mean when the uses of such terms have been adopted so arbitrarily in recent archaeological literature? Some critics, such as the Argentinean Alfonso de Toro (1997:28), understand postcolonialism as the “reanimation of the actual state between the peripheral and the center . . . [as] the beginning of a dialogue between the peripheral and the central.” Toro also prefers to use the term postcoloniality because of the difficulties imposed by the concept of postcolonialism and its many definitions. Postcoloniality is, then, “an intellectual, social and cultural attitude [which is] plural and internationalist; it is a dialogic link between the peripheral and the center” (Toro 1995, 1997).

However, Argentinean scholar Walter Mignolo (1997:51, emphasis original) shows the complexity of the term:

The postcolonial or postcoloniality . . . is an ambiguous, sometimes dangerous, other times confusing expression that is generally limited and unconsciously applied . . . It is ambiguous when it is used to make reference to socio-historical situations that are connected to colonial expansion and decolonization through time and space . . . The danger of this term is when it is used as yet another “post” theoretical direction in academic practice and it becomes the principal tool against practices of opposition for the “people of color,” “third world intellectuals,” or “ethnic groups” within the academy . . . It is confusing when expressions such as “hybridity,” “mestizaje,” or “inner space” and other equivalent expressions are turned into the object of reflection and critique of postcolonial theories, because they suggest a discontinuity between the *colonial configuration* of the subject and the *postcolonial position* of the place of the theory . . . It is inconsistently employed when it is emancipated from the conditions of its manifestation

(e.g., in certain cases as a substitute for the “literature of the Commonwealth” and as power in the “third world literature,” among others) . . . [Therefore] it is not the historical postcolonial condition that should attract our attention, but rather the enunciation loci of the postcolonial.

The ambiguity to which Mignolo refers in his work, the same that we reaffirm here, is exemplified in various forms in the growing archaeological literature on postcolonialism (see also Liebmann, Chapter 1). In some cases, the use of the word postcolonial is inconsistent when it is used to propose delimitations of the universal and generalizing geopolitics after the colonial period (Falck 2003; Gosden 2001; Lilley 2000), or when the idea of globalization of postcolonial discourse is proposed (in a mimetic sense) (Shepherd 2002).²

From another perspective, the desired dynamics of postcoloniality have not been met by mainstream theoretical currents, from the so-called critical archaeology to post-processual perspectives, whose roots diffused from the center to the not-so-central (e.g., Earle and Preucel 1987; Gosden 2001; Hodder 1985, 1986, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1999; Leone et al. 1987; Patterson 1990, 1995; Shanks 1992; Shanks and Tilley 1987; Tilley 1993; Trigger 1980, 1984, 1995). Other critical and reflexive approaches that were produced simultaneously, or even earlier, from marginalized places like Ibero America (e.g., Bate, 1977; Fonseca 1988; Gándara 1980, 1982; Gnecco 1999; Gnecco and Zambrano 2000; López 1980; Lorenzo 1976; Lumbreras 1974; Moscoso 1991; Politis 1992; Vargas Arenas 1990; Vasco Uribe 1992; Vázquez, 1996) have been overlooked by theoreticians writing from “the center.” Thus, it could be said that, to some extent, the adoption and use of postcolonial theories in central archaeologies have reproduced a colonial trope by disregarding the voices of the Other, especially when those voices are written in languages that are not English.

Among the recent topics addressed in archaeology from a postcolonial perspective, Gosden (2001) assesses the manner in which complex identity processes are reconfigured, examining disputed topics such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in the United States and Australian Aborigines’ complaints (see also Murray 1993 and Fine-Dare 2005). In these contexts, the new voices arising around corresponding new forms of archaeology reflect the conditions of subordination under which contemporary societies of indigenous peoples exist. As noted by Gnecco (1999) and Zimmerman (1989), among others, this situation unveils the power relations existing in the past when archaeology was the only legitimate tool used to construct ancient histories, as evidenced by

its portrayal in museums of both countries. From this perspective, we can infer that decolonization first arose in the archaeology of the United States and Australia for the resolution of a complex conflict arising out of asymmetric power relations (see also Rizvi Chapter 7).

Today it seems that the discipline of archaeology, as well as the State, has recognized, not at first without certain discomfort (Tsosie 1997), that close collaboration between the academy and native peoples is important when the task is to “reconstruct” the ancient histories of those peoples or manage their ancestral cultural resources (see also Borgstede and Yaeger Chapter 6; Seneviratne Chapter 11). Ironically, although archaeology has lived up to some of its responsibilities, it maintains a hegemonic role when dealing with the aforementioned resources by maintaining control over the manufacture, spread, and consumption of goods (textual, discursive) that are generated in such contexts. Therefore, the desired dialogic relationship between archaeologists and other interested parties has been subsumed when it comes to the production of knowledge about the ancient histories of the Other, which is still monopolized by archaeologists.

Mignolo interprets the origins of postmodern and postcolonial traditions based on the work of West (1989):

it could be said that postmodernity is the discourse of counter-modernity that emerged from the *settler colonies* (e.g., USA, Australia, New Zealand, etc.), while postcoloniality is the discourse of counter-modernity manifested by *deep settlement colonies* (e.g., Algeria, India, Kenya, Jamaica, Indonesia, etc.), where colonial power was maintained with particular brutality. (Mignolo 1997:54, emphasis original)

For Mignolo, postcoloniality and postmodernity are discourses that derive from different types of colonial heritages. Thus, it is not surprising that postmodern archaeology deriving from the centers of theory production, such as those from the United States (with its condition of disciplinary supremacy), were in dialogue with those from other settler societies but not with the archaeologies written in languages other than English.

Postcolonial dialogues in contemporary Puerto Rico and other eccentric contexts have recently focused on discussions of heterogeneity (in identity, culture, society, sexuality, gender) and hybridization (cultural, national, transnational, etc.) (San Miguel 2004). While this examination of the “new rough edges” of Puertoricanness (Duany 2005) is undoubtedly a fascinating task, our aim here is to explore the role that archaeology has played in the construction of national identities in Puerto Rico. We will also examine how the sociopolitical contexts of the island have permeated

the development of archaeological practice. Relevant to our analysis is the fact that Puerto Rico is a classic “deep settlement” colony or, as some scholars suggest, a “postcolonial colony” (see Flores 2000; Duany 2005).

On the Structure of Archaeological Praxis in Puerto Rico: The Institutionalization of Colonial Tropes

In the application of postcolonial theories to archaeology, primary importance has been placed on the need to deflate the impact of those discourses that reproduce colonialism and subjugate the Other. Conversely, the way in which the structures that regulate archaeology serve to maintain the status quo by promoting the reproduction of such discourses has not received enough attention. The case of Puerto Rico is particularly interesting, because most of the structures that regulate archaeology were modeled after those of our colonizing entity (the United States), resulting in the entanglement of colonialism in the daily practice of the discipline and in the production and consumption of the historical narratives produced. The many vectors of colonialism that emanate from these structures have thus restricted the rise of alternative archaeologies from within the island and, as a result, have also arrested the development of our own perspectives of our precolonial pasts.

The practice of professional archaeology in Puerto Rico has been tied to the colonial relationship of the island to the United States, which started with the Spanish-American War of 1898. Following the defeat of Spain (our former colonist), Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines were ceded to the United States as spoils of war. From that moment on, Puerto Rican interaction with the United States brought with it changes on practically every sociocultural level, and these changes were often political strategies for easing the colonization of the island. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the civic-military government of the United States in Puerto Rico, in conjunction with research programs from several U.S. universities and institutions (e.g., the Bureau of American Ethnology and New York Academy of Sciences), started to conduct extensive multidisciplinary studies that included, among other things, anthropological investigations of the population of Puerto Rico and its traditions, as well as intensive archaeological studies (Aitken 1918; Fewkes 1907; Haeberline 1917; Mason 1917). Those studies were intended to inform the colonial government about structural aspects of Puerto Rican society in order to facilitate the administration of their new colony (López 1980).

Upon the arrival of this wave of North American archaeologists to the island, the archaeological and ethnohistoric work that was being done locally (Brau 1894; Coll y Toste 1907; Stahl 1889) was almost totally arrested, thus putting an end to the rise of an autonomous archaeological perspective of the indigenous inhabitants of the island. The studies that were conducted by U.S. anthropologists were based on the particularist culture-historical models that were in vogue at the time, which resulted in the creation of a cultural chronology of the pre-Columbian societies of the island (Rainey 1940). Puerto Rico, as well as the rest of the Caribbean, became a laboratory on which models of migration and cultural evolution were developed and tested. For example, this is clearly noted in Osgood's (1942:6-7) statement that such archaeological works were to be done in an "attempt to improve the methodology of archaeology through intensive research in a particular area, as well as to resolve the Historic problems of the aboriginal populations of the West Indies." Thus, not only was the North American archaeologists' aim to use the islands for testing archaeological methods but also to write our precolonial history. One of the methods developed in the Caribbean was the modal analysis of lithics and pottery fashioned by Rouse (1952), which led to the development of the culture-historical framework that still remains as the primary guideline for understanding the rise and spread of cultures (i.e., pottery styles) in Puerto Rico as well as in the rest of the West Indies. The ordering of our precolonial past using a taxonomic framework (derived primarily from botany) not only resulted in the treatment of our history as an object but also divorced those cultures that were supposedly being uncovered and ordered from the construction of a national identity in Puerto Rico (see also Rizvi Chapter 12).

Almost all archaeological work from the time of the U.S. invasion until the 1940s was done by archaeologists from the United States, until Ricardo Alegría became the first Puerto Rican to obtain a formal degree in anthropology (from a United States university). The studies conducted by Alegría generally followed the same theoretical and methodological approaches established by his U.S. predecessors, with whom he maintained a tight investigative relationship. There was one major difference in his approach, however; he was a professional Puerto Rican archaeologist who viewed his object of study through a different lens than that of the Americans. He did not study the precolonial history of "those" Indians from the island but, rather, that of "our" Indians, "our" ancestors (Alegría 1984 [1969]).

During the 1950s, the political panorama of Puerto Rico changed dramatically, resulting in a series of transformations that had repercussions on

the practice of archaeology on the island and on the treatment of our pre-colonial remains. In 1952, as a result of pressure from the United States, the constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico was created, resulting in the *Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico* (ELA). This new political formulation allowed the United States to mitigate the international criticisms that were being raised against them because of their colonial relationship to Puerto Rico. With this *contract* between the Puerto Rican elite and the U.S. government, Puerto Rico was excluded from the United Nations list of colonies, although it was quite evident that in pragmatic terms the island continued (and still continues) to be a colony.

Within this political context, Alegría, together with other members of the island cultural and political elite, founded the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (ICP) to lead the cultural programs of the newly instated government in 1955. It was in the hands of the ICP to articulate the *official* history of the island, using folklore that extolled and validated the cultural past of Puerto Ricans. However, a further analysis reveals that the ICP served to facilitate the Commonwealth status to an extent as well; it allowed the perpetuation of a cultural nationalism that appeased the political nationalism that jeopardized the colonial political status (Duany 2000). The ICP promoted several cultural and research activities directed at molding the historic consciousness of the island's inhabitants through the prism of the foundational myth of the mixture between three "races"—the Taíno, Spaniard, and African—although subtly excluding certain historical processes that were not necessarily adequate for the construction of the new national consciousness (see Dávila 1997 for a critical analysis of this issue). The ICP put into practice the ideals of the past by printing them in the history books that were used in our schools, by reconstructing some sites that reflected our indigenous past (such as the Caguana site), and through the restoration of the Spanish component of Old San Juan. Unfortunately, our African past was often left on the margins of Puerto Rican history, and it has remained so until this day. It was during this time that the Taíno were institutionalized as a symbol of our precolonial past, based primarily on the ethnohistoric information provided in the Spanish chronicles and on the work that had previously been conducted by Alegría and the aforementioned North American archaeologists.

Although the importance of studying the Taíno was promoted from that time on, there was no infrastructure on the island to educate a new generation of Puerto Rican archaeologists; thus, most work continued to be conducted by archaeologists from the United States. It was not until 1971 that a baccalaureate program in anthropology was created at the University of

Puerto Rico. Unfortunately, this program was modeled upon most programs in anthropology in the United States, in which students are simply introduced to the discipline and it is expected that they develop their specialization through graduate education. Due to this fact, those Puerto Ricans who wish to engage in graduate studies in archaeology still have to emigrate to other areas, mostly to those located in the countries that have shared the treat of colonizing the Caribbean: the United States and Spain. Although graduate courses in archaeology are offered at the Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe (CEAPRC) (created in 1976 by Alegría), the lack of an anthropology program in this institution has limited the integral development of those interested in furthering their understanding of the discipline. The absence of a graduate program in archaeology on the island has thus limited the potential development of an autochthonous professional archaeology, in contrast to what has been observed in other Antilles such as Cuba and the Dominican Republic (see also Rizvi Chapter 12).

Concomitant with the development of the academic structures related to archaeology in the 1970s, laws adopted from the metropole were directly related to the treatment of historical remains on the island. The most significant regulation regarding archaeological resources was Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which required an archaeological assessment of any federally funded project conducted on the island that might have an adverse effect over a potentially “significant” historical property. (Interestingly enough, the State Historic Preservation Office was originally ascribed to the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, making Ricardo Alegría the first SHPO of the island.) This law not only defined the ways in which archaeology should be conducted (e.g., sampling methods, analytical practices) but also established certain criteria for determining the “significance” of historical properties that are based on elements that were (and are) not necessarily sensitive to our value system for determining the value of a resource.

In addition to this federal regulation, archaeological practices on the island were regulated through the creation of State Law 112 of 1988, which gave rise to the *Consejo para la Protección del Patrimonio Arqueológico Terrestre de Puerto Rico*. Interestingly, the protocols and requirements for conducting archaeology under this law were modeled after the laws of New York State. The implementation of these two legislative tools (Section 106 and Law 112) led to a new era in the practice of archaeological investigations in Puerto Rico. Since their onset, 99 percent of the archaeological work on the island is conducted in order to comply with these regulations. There-

fore, the modern practice of archaeology developed out of structures imported from the United States by local governmental agencies and began to be adopted by Puerto Rican practitioners as *the* professional research model.

As a result of the aforementioned legislation, archaeological investigations on the island began to change from the utilization of basically descriptive, normative, culture-historical models toward perspectives more aligned with functional-processual archaeology from the United States. Although there were some important discoveries (Ayes 1989; Rodríguez López 1989, 1997) and new theoretical-methodological proposals (Curet 1992; Oliver 1992) within this context, public input was basically nonexistent and did not result in significant changes from the models that were (and are) still dominant on the island since the 1950s (Rouse 1992). The perception of the precolonial history that was prevalent in Puerto Rico prior to such laws—that the Taínos were the only representatives of the ancient history of the island—did not change either.

Although minimal in quantity, the archaeological investigations generated by scholars working in academic institutions on the island have been highly valuable. The primary example is the research program carried out by the Centro de Investigaciones Arqueológicas from the Universidad de Puerto Rico that began in the 1970s. This research resulted in the documentation of the existence of a new archaeological culture on the island (the Huecoid culture), which led these scholars to propose a new model of cultural interaction and population dynamics within the island that contrasted with those previously proposed (see Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde 1983). Unfortunately, their findings have not been employed by those who regulate the official historical narrative of the island and thus have remained at the margins of the construction of our ancient history.

At this point, it is reasonable to suggest that there are at least four institutional vectors of colonialism that have limited the potential development of an autochthonous archaeological practice on the island: 1) the creation of a cultural agency (the ICP) that originally eased the way for the institutionalization of colonial narratives in the construction of our precolonial history, 2) the lack of academic spaces that allow the preparation of archaeological researchers beyond the undergraduate level, 3) the almost total absence of academic or governmental spaces for conducting research and the lack of adequate and sufficient resources to generate investigative programs, and 4) the current regulations for cultural resource management to which practitioners are required to adhere (Section 106) or that were originally based on a U.S. template (Law 112). In this sense, we understand

that the situation of “hybridity” in the discipline of archaeology in Puerto Rico (Pagán Jiménez 2000) continues to deepen because of the colonial situation in which the island exists. Therefore, the colonial condition continues to make the imposition of academic models and legal structures generated in the metropole viable while, simultaneously, the colonial mentality continues to be produced and reproduced and its derivative effects (economic and psychological dependency) continue to be felt in practically every level of social and political action.

By positioning the Puerto Rican case within the larger context of Latin America, we note that, on one side, the island shares with the rest of Latin America an assemblage of cultural traits that are the product of the colonialist politics of Spain and Portugal that were implemented during the period between the end of the fifteenth century until the nineteenth century. In this context, Puerto Rico should be a country of deeply eccentric roots, because it was first a Spanish colony (for four centuries) and is now a United States colony (for more than one century). On the other hand, the Puerto Rico of today is markedly different from other Latin American countries because it continues to be a deep settlement colony of the United States. Based on this fact, we might expect that archaeological praxis in Puerto Rico would be eccentric if we consider that practices are generated both from the periphery as well as the centers of academic production. On the contrary, as we will show below, the theoretical and pragmatic component of archaeology in Puerto Rico is mostly exogenous (“centric”) and the archaeological advances on the island continue to be subordinate (by both local and nonlocal archaeologists) to the theoretical and methodological models generated by archaeologists from the United States more than half a century ago. One effect of this situation is that the archaeological practices in Puerto Rico continue to be conducted in an environment characterized by a mosaic of discourses charged with colonial narratives.

Indian Narratives: The Naturalization of Coloniality in Puerto Rico

The institutionalized domestication of the production of knowledge regarding the precolonial past(s) of Puerto Ricans is nowhere more patent than in its translation to the public. The structures that gave rise to and currently regulate archaeological praxis in Puerto Rico have produced a version depicting our indigenous history as extinct, which fits perfectly with an agenda of naturalizing a colonial condition as part of our identity.

The primary notion about the precolonial past that has been sold to Puerto Ricans concerns the Taíno, the first people(s) to suffer the effects of the European expansion to the Western Hemisphere. In fact, most people in Puerto Rico think that the only indigenous culture that inhabited the island prior to the invasion of Europeans was the Taíno, whose ethnogenesis was registered only a couple of centuries before Columbus's arrival. The supposed short time span in which the Taíno existed is one of the reasons why it is said that Puerto Ricans have 500 years of history, thus erasing from the construction of our historical legacy the more than 5,000 years of indigenous occupation of our island that led to the development of those people who encountered Columbus. Also due to the strong influence of Spanish chronicles from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (Pané 1990; Las Casas 1909; Fernández de Oviedo 1851) in the archaeological and ethnohistorical literature, official versions of Puerto Rico's precolonial past have been highly Eurocentric. Furthermore, this creation of the Taíno has also served to homogenize the distinct cultural manifestations that were in operation in the islands at the time of the conquest, thus suggesting a monocultural indigenous landscape for which no clear evidence is available at present (in fact, a culturally plural context seems to characterize the Caribbean since its initial occupation; Rodríguez Ramos 2005a; Wilson 1993). Current notions about the Taíno are primarily based on interpretations of the early Spanish chronicles by scholars who represented the imperial academy (e.g., Rainey 1940; Rouse 1952), and by those of the ICP, which was created in conjunction with the Commonwealth.

The Taíno people were depicted in both American and Puerto Rican narratives of the middle of the last century as a peaceful, submissive people who were at the mercy of the Caribs, a group of "cannibals" from the Lesser Antilles who constantly raided their villages, killed their men, and sequestered their women. The Taíno, on the one hand, and the Caribs, on the other, were the two dichotomous entities created by early Spanish colonizers (in the fifteenth century) to classify the "behavior" of those Indian cultures in the Caribbean. Thus, as San Miguel (2004) suggested, the dichotomy between the Taíno and the Carib peoples was the earliest expression in the American lands of the opposition between the "Noble Savage" and the "Barbarian Savage." In this narrative, the passive nature of the Taíno drove them later to "greet" (Rouse 1992) the European colonizers, until their quick demise (without a fight) shortly after the onset of the conquest. This narrative about the inhabitants of the island embracing the arrival of colonizers does not differ much in its structure from that which tells the story of Americans

invading Puerto Rico in 1898; we were a submissive, “noble” people who were eagerly awaiting another colonial power to rescue us from the socio-economic backwardness inflicted upon us by the Spaniards. And it does not stop there, as the case for the Spaniards was not much different from the previous two; they *lost* their battle to the United States in the Spanish-American War and thus also fell prey to a more powerful entity. Therefore, two of the main constituents of Puerto Rican identity—the Taíno and the Spaniards—succumbed to more powerful colonizers, while the third ingredient of Puertorricanness—the Africans—is commonly simply described as alphabet slaves, who only contributed some of their culinary flavors and *boom boom* music to our identity.

Going even deeper into our past, the archaeological narratives produced by North American archaeologists about the early precolonial history of the island have imposed and translated this unidirectional relationship (between the colonizer and the colonized) onto those who were actual discoverers of Puerto Rico: the “Archaic” people. In Rouse’s (1992) model, these Archaic people were “simple” cave-dwelling people who moved from place to place as food intake required them. The mention in the Spanish chronicles of groups that fit such description inhabiting western Cuba and southwest Haiti (known as the Guanahatabey or Ciboney), as well as the import of Phillips and Willey’s (1953) model of sociocultural evolution, were used in order to legitimize such an imagery about the first inhabitants of the island (Rodríguez Ramos, 2008). As the story goes, these “Archaic” folks, described sometimes as “sitting ducks” (Rouse, 1992:70), were either eliminated or displaced by the later Arawak (archaeologically known as the Cedrosan Saladoid) conquerors from South America, resulting in the first documented colonization of one people over another in the islands. Since the establishment of this model, it is almost invariably assumed that those “Archaic” people “contributed little to the subsequent peoples and cultures of the Greater Antilles” (Rouse and Alegría, 1990:80) and that the Cedrosan Saladoid peoples represent the “ancestors of the Taínos” (Rouse 1992:37). As was the case with the Taíno and with the Puerto Rican people who lived through the invasion of the United States, the “Archaic” were at the mercy of an external, more powerful colonizing entity, which brought the necessary tools (agriculture and pottery production) for the evolution of the Taíno, again showing another instance in which our colonial condition is naturalized though our indigenous past.

Even though an alternative model that provides a more active role to the Archaic peoples in the development of the Taíno has been proposed by local archaeologists (Chanlatte Baik and Narganes Storde 1990), it has not

been widely accepted either in Puerto Rico or by scholars from outside the island. Although both technological (Rodríguez Ramos 2005a,b) and microbotanical (Pagán Jiménez et al. 2005) data have conclusively shown that those “Archaic” people were much more diverse than originally thought and that there were marked similarities between some of their traditions and those of the Taíno (suggesting perhaps some level of historical continuity), the Taíno narrative that is consumed by the public is still based on the primitive axiom that we need people from the outside in order for us to evolve. In that sense, the many millennia that the earliest cultures of Puerto Rico inhabited the area are basically erased from our historical legacy, and the books that are still being given to our children in school recreate the original Taíno imagery that was formed in the middle of the past century (Pagán Jiménez 2001). This arrest in the development of a new perspective of our indigenous past is driven not only by trying to fit our data to the archaeological models that have been created from outside the island, mirroring those of the United States, but also by the imposition of laws forcing us to “comply” with the way in which archaeology is supposed to be done.

Both the image of the Taíno as synonym for our indigenous past and the lack of emphasis on the long history of occupation of the island have been reproduced in the Puerto Rican diaspora, particularly in New York, Connecticut, and Florida. Interestingly enough, even though there is a constant “fluid” evolution in the construction and performance of Puer-toricanness between the inhabitants of Puerto Rico and those from diasporic communities (Duany 2000), the notion about our indigenous past adopted by diasporic communities was the monolithic one created by the ICP during the middle of the past century: that our precolonial history can be summarized in the features defined for the Taíno. In contrast to the way in which the Taíno are commonly perceived in Puerto Rico, diasporic neo-indigenous groups in the United States were organized with an administrative structure that mirrors that of Native North American tribes, but with a Caribbean taste. Thus, there are different “tribal councils” such as the Jatibonicu Taíno Tribal Nation of New Jersey, the Tekesta Taíno Tribe of Florida, and the Taíno Timikua Tribe of Tampa, among others, which are organized “officially” under the United Confederation of Taíno People (similar to other Native American tribes such as the Blackfoot Nation of Montana, organized into the Blackfoot Confederacy). They gained legitimacy by seeking (and receiving) approval from the United States Census Bureau to be recognized as a discrete ethnic group for purposes of the U.S. census. On the other hand, each of these has its own *nyTaíno* (an

Arawak term for a king or sub-chief) leader, who is in charge of each tribal council, and a *cacique*, who is the chief of the Nation of Taínos (who actually lives in New Jersey). In this sense, such hybrid organizations on one side replicate a colonial trope by being based on models that are exogenous to what is traditionally considered to be our indigenous reality on the island, but they try to adhere internally to the supposed social organization described for the Taíno in order to legitimize their “Taínoness.”

Even though we acknowledge that the voices of such diasporic indigenous communities need to be heard, their recent aim to impose their agenda on the island has been a problem, based as it is on the aforementioned colonial tropes. This was particularly evident in the recent invasion of the Caguana ceremonial center in Puerto Rico, where a group of neo-Taíno Indians, grouped under the umbrella the United Confederation of Taíno People, called for the enforcement of the NAGPRA in the protection of “their” ancestral burial and ceremonial grounds (Barreiro 2005). The call for the enactment of this law in Puerto Rico is primarily based on the fact that “Since the Taíno—like Native Nation’s citizens, Native Hawaiians, and Alaskan Natives—are indigenous people under the colonial control of the U.S. plenary authority, Taíno have a right to the same protective provisions created for these people” (Rivera 2003:445). Therefore, these people took advantage of the colonial situation of Puerto Rico to argue for the “repatriation” of the bones of native Puerto Ricans and that no more work should be done over any other “Taíno” interment without their consent, thus reproducing a colonial structure on the island by imposing another federal regulation over the treatment of our indigenous past. Their stance had little resonance, if any, on the island, however, perhaps due to the general perception that these people were trying to be more Taíno than the rest of us without recognizing that, in Puerto Rico, most of us consider the Taíno to be part of our cultural stratigraphy (and now we have the mtDNA evidence to prove it!) (Martínez Cruzado et al. 2005). The support of the actions of those people on the basis of a law devised for the protection of Native American heritage in the United States could be viewed as an instance that also reproduces colonialism and, thus, is an interesting form of diasporic colonization.

Moving Forward: Toward Archaeologies of Liberation

The situation of Puerto Rico is unique, and perhaps it cannot be used to model other colonial situations in the world. However, it can serve to

demonstrate the fact that in what has been termed a “postcolonial” condition, there are still multiple vectors of colonialism in operation that serve to reproduce the colonial tropes that continue to subjugate archaeological praxis in eccentric contexts. If we fall into the postcolonial fallacy of thinking that we are past coloniality and such vectors are not unmasked, the reproduction of colonial structures will continue to be embedded in the ways various archaeologies are constructed, performed, and reproduced in different contexts. As our proposed archaeologies of liberation contend, the diverse themes discussed here are at least the initial steps toward overcoming intellectual and political colonialism.

Our intention with this chapter is to step ahead highlighting those aspects of tension that we believe exist in the archaeology of a colonized country like Puerto Rico. Among them, one of the most relevant and critical elements is the practice of archaeology in Puerto Rico, which is constrained by the American metropole’s rules related to historical preservation. But there is neither a governmental program nor academic projects beyond this that can be effective and consistent in the preservation and promulgation of our archaeological resources.

Another relevant aspect of tension is the lack of consolidation of a truly autochthonous Puerto Rican archaeology, resulting from the absence of an academic structure that facilitates such development. This is exacerbated by the fact that the pragmatic and theoretical structures of Puerto Rican archaeology continue to exhibit high doses of imported traits that, in most cases, are used uncritically by local and metropolitan archaeologists to conduct their research. Although the archaeology produced by Puerto Ricans has certainly resulted in the generation of valuable information that has influenced the rethinking of the traditional models of our precolonial past, unfortunately we have not been able to organize a disciplinary body that makes feasible the gestation of a true Puerto Rican archaeology emanating from within the island using such information. Although we believe that simply nationalizing our archaeology through a perspective based on the confrontation or negation of the knowledge generated by metropolitan archaeologists would be highly unproductive and damaging, the existing national archaeologies are highly varied, to say the least.

We understand that the flux of information and knowledge generated by “world archaeologies” must coincide dialogically, not only on the international academic scene but also in other spheres of action within our respective countries. Therefore, we subscribe to the proposal formulated by Restrepo and Escobar (2005) regarding “world anthropologies.” We understand that our archaeologies of liberation should be understood not only

in the context of our own colonial problem, but also within the context of the “terms, conditions, and places of worldwide anthropological [archaeological] conversations and exchanges” (Restrepo and Escobar 2005:118). Within this perspective, we want to emphasize the colonial nature of most treatments of postcolonialism by “central” archaeologists, which have reproduced a colonial relationship with noncentral archaeologies by focusing almost exclusively on what has been said in their own language and within their own academic and editorial apparatuses, thus alienating the voices of others who are contributing to the understanding of postcoloniality, most of whom write their dialogues from eccentric contexts. If a concerted effort is not made by central archaeologists to hear what others are saying, they will continue to float in their own colonially infested swimming pools.

With this said, our interest has been to analyze, as a first step, archaeological praxis in Puerto Rico in order to demonstrate some of the qualities of the power relations that are still embedded in the different contexts of archaeological production, particularly those of the eccentric. We did not want to delve into other relevant issues of epistemological character without first establishing a scenario with which we can start this undertaking. We suggest that the themes touched upon in this chapter need to be further scrutinized and demonstrate the positive elements as well as the points of stagnation that result from considering postcolonialism to be an all-encompassing condition. We believe that the assumption of a global postcolonial context in which archaeological practices have recently been situated will remain problematic until we are able to adequately acknowledge the colonial situation in which diverse archaeological practices are embedded, not only in countries such as Puerto Rico but elsewhere as well. During this deep analysis of archaeological practices, centric and eccentric, there will be coincidences with the different postcolonial projects that have been developed. But, as we know, even with such coincidences, the final aim of such distinct projects will be divergent in the sense that archaeology, as well as other sociocultural and political entities, is embedded in the porous context of identity building and reproduction.

The space remains open to deepen our discussions of many of the lines of thought that we have brought to bear in this chapter. Our main point has been to show that archaeology has been articulated in certain instances as a tool for the reproduction of colonialism and that, in some cases, it has served to maintain asymmetrical power relations between the center and the periphery. It is our hope that the vortex of archaeological work that is being conducted in Puerto Rico serves to shake the governmental struc-

tures that regulate, maintain, and circulate the same narrative products produced decades ago primarily from outside the island. In that same light, it is hoped that it also shakes those of us who practice archaeology in Puerto Rico—both Puerto Ricans and non-Puerto Ricans—because at the end it is us who give continuity or change to our professional and social world through our deliberate actions.

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Notes

1. It is clear to us that archaeology was initially a discipline created out of Euro-American modernity, but its current expressions should vary as they are performed in different regional, national, and societal settings (e.g., inside and outside academic contexts). The eccentric, peripheral, and hybrid archaeologies in our region (Pagán Jiménez 2000) have been the target of persistent practices of subordination (in different degrees). Even though the analysis of this fact is not the main focus of this chapter, it is important to establish that the archaeology practiced in Puerto Rico has historically alienated and estranged the individual as an active agent either in the “reconstruction” or interpretation of the past (see Pagán Jiménez 2001).

2. For an important statement relative to this problem, see the objectives of the journal *Archaeologies* from the World Archaeological Congress.