

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY, PRACTICE AND MEMORY: NATIVE AMERICAN PERSISTENCE IN COLONIAL NEW ENGLAND

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The archaeological study of Native Americans during colonial periods in North America has centered largely on assessing the nature of cultural change and continuity through material culture. Although a valuable approach, it has been hindered by focusing too much on the dichotomies of change and continuity, rather than on their interrelationship, by relying on uncritical cultural categories of artifacts and by not recognizing the role of practice and memory in identity and cultural persistence. Ongoing archaeological research on the Eastern Pequot reservation in Connecticut, which was created in 1683 and has been inhabited continuously since then by Eastern Pequot community members, permits a different view of the nature of change and continuity. Three reservation sites spanning the period between ca. 1740 and 1840 accentuate the scale and temporality of social memory and the relationships between practice and materiality. Although the reservation sites show change when compared to the “precontact baseline,” they show remarkable continuity during the reservation period. The resulting interpretation provides not only more grounded and appropriately scaled renderings of past cultural practices but also critical engagements with analytical categories that carry significant political weight well outside of archaeological circles.

El estudio arqueológico de comunidades indígenas durante distintos periodos coloniales en Norte America se ha centrado principalmente en evaluar la naturaleza del cambio cultural y la continuidad a través de la cultura material. A pesar de su valor, estos acercamientos han sido obstruidos por los enfoques excesivos en la dicotomía de cambio y continuidad en vez de en el entendimiento de su interrelación. Esto se debe por depender en categorías acriticas sobre los artefactos, y no reconer el rol de la práctica y la memoria en la identidad y la perpetuación de la cultura. Estudios arqueológicos en la reservación de Eastern Pequot en Connecticut, creada en 1683 y habitada desde entonces por los miembros de la misma comunidad, han permitido ver la naturaleza del cambio y la continuidad de este grupo desde punto de vista alterno. Tres diferentes sitios arqueológicos localizados en la reservación y con periodos de población entre 1740 y 1840 acentúan la escala y temporalidad de la memoria social y la relación entre la práctica y la materialidad. A pesar de que estos sitios de la reservación muestran cambios al ser comparados con el período precontacto (“precontact baseline”), estos también muestran una notable continuidad durante el período de la reservación. El resultado de ésta interpretación no solo provee una representación más apropiada y arraigada en las prácticas culturales pasadas, sino que también provee un compromiso crítico con categorías analíticas llenas de sentido político que se extienden y tiene repercusiones fuera de los círculos arqueológicos.

Most archaeologies of colonialism have the question of cultural continuity and change as the centerpiece of their studies. How did the interaction of cultural groups prompt changes in one or the other? What kinds of traits or practices were adopted, enforced, resisted, or transformed? Usually, researchers ask these questions primarily, and perhaps unfairly, of Indigenous groups as a way to track the elements of change and continuity that weave throughout their histories of entanglement with European colonialism in its various guises. These questions have been with anthropology and history since the early twentieth century, and they still provide a basis for inquiries in the twenty-first century, albeit with significant new nuances now given to the answers because of the last 20 years of conceptual and empirical work. The assumption by archaeologists has been that change and continuity comprise two different outcomes that are recognizable, if not measurable, through material remains and applicable to cultural groups or to components of them. I am no longer convinced of this assumption, owing in large part to my ongoing long-term collaborative archaeological project with the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation of Connecticut (Figure 1) to study

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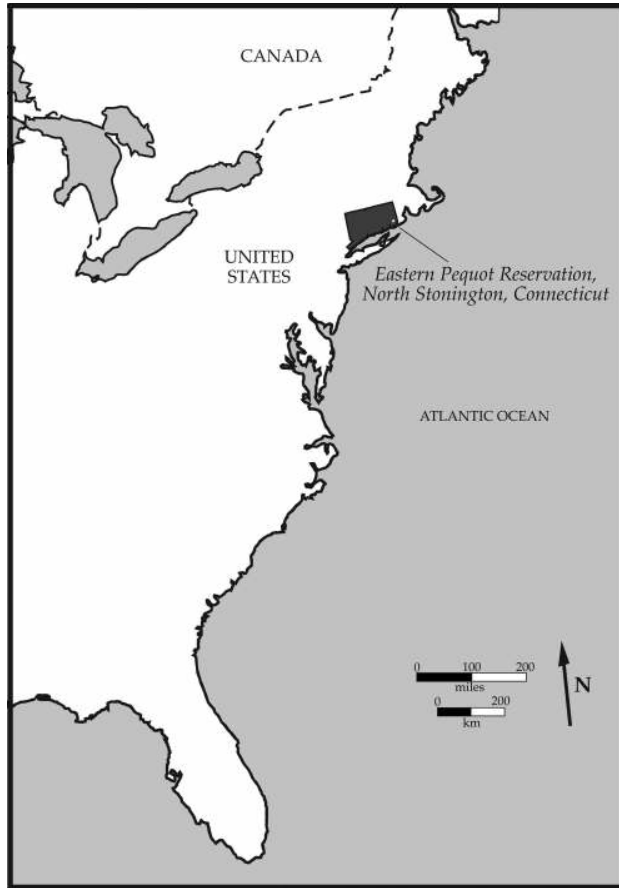


Figure 1. Map of Eastern North America, showing location of the Eastern Pequot reservation in North Stonington, Connecticut.

their community's responses to colonialism and reservation life through a variety of postcolonial lenses.

By losing confidence in that assumption, I do not mean that I question archaeology's capabilities to interpret history, its abilities to apply scientific and humanistic perspectives to better understand colonialism, or its necessary interventions in a world permeated by such historical legacies. It is well suited for all of these (e.g., Cusick 1998; Gosden 2004; Hall 1999; Lightfoot 2004; Lightfoot et al. 1998; Lilley 2000; Loren 2008; Lyons and Papadopoulos 2002; Murray 2004; Rubertone 2000, 2001; Schrire 1995; Stein 2005; van Dommelen 2005, 2006). Instead, I question the ways that we apply the dichotomous notions of change and continuity to colonial situations without enough regard to materiality, memory, and practice, much

of which in North America and Australia is caused by a deeply entrenched view of colonialism as culture contact (Silliman 2005). This questioning leads to others. Certainly, some archaeologists have shown how different cultural elements may reveal change while others reveal continuity, but who or what is ultimately being evaluated: cultures, ethnicities, communities, households, individual agents, social practices, or something else? How is this tracked or manifested over time through material objects, and how do we regularly assign these items a kind of cultural identity? In fact, *why* do we assign objects cultural identities? Also, what is the basis for comparison? When studying Indigenous groups in the context of European colonialism, is it always appropriate to use their immediate precontact cultural practices as the baseline? How do we make those comparisons, and for how long

after that baseline threshold has been crossed? These questions are certainly useful for improving historical and archaeological interpretations, but they are not esoteric or academic concerns disconnected from the contemporary world. Native American communities continue to be judged by private citizens, government officials, anthropologists, and the media based on how much they have changed or not changed, and these judgments directly impact issues of authenticity, sovereignty, land, and other aspects of their everyday lives. Archaeologists are not innocent bystanders.

In this article, I take up these questions and offer a series of exploratory answers through theoretical reflections on colonialism, materiality, memory, and identity as applied to several years of empirical research on colonial-period Native American archaeological sites in southern New England. Building on Lightfoot's (1995) and Tveskov's (2007) emphasis on multiscalar and diachronic dimensions in colonial research, the applications of postcolonial theory to historical archaeology and anthropology (Loren 2008; Thomas 1991, 1994; van Dommelen 2006), the growing richness of "memory work" in archaeology (Alcock 2002; Jones 2007; Mills and Walker 2008; Van Dyke and Alcock 2002), and my earlier attempts to remove contact-period terminology from colonial studies (Silliman 2005), I offer perspectives on social memory and material practices that may help reframe anthropological research questions about colonialism and indigeneity to avoid the trap potentially inherent in the change–continuity dichotomy. These perspectives have thus far revealed complex processes of making and maintaining community, tradition, and culture for the Eastern Pequot.

Change, Continuity, and Categories of Analysis

As noted at the outset of this article, a question that archaeologists or others commonly ask of Native American sites in the colonial world of North America is: In what ways did Indigenous communities or people change, and in what ways did they stay the same? This question is not foreign to other contexts either, whether in Africa, Australia, South America, or elsewhere. To answer this question, the tradition in archaeology has been to assign artifacts recovered from sites that evidence Native Ameri-

can and European colonial interaction into three main categories: Native/Indigenous, European/colonist, and hybridized forms. These are used in training students, in filling out field and laboratory forms, in conducting analyses, and simply put, in *thinking*.¹ In North American contexts, European artifacts include objects such as glass bottles, metal tools, wheel-thrown and kiln-fired ceramics, nails, copper and iron kettles, and glass window panes, among other things. Native American artifacts include chipped stone tools, shell ornaments, and other so-called "traditional" items (e.g., baskets, low-fired ceramics, certain house styles) depending on the cultural region in question. The hybrid forms include such things as bottle glass flaked into cutting tools or projectile points, copper objects cut and reformed into ornaments or arrow tips, and gunflints reworked into other implements, just to name the more famous examples. Some artifacts have slipped through these categories, though. Glass beads, although European in origin, have been consistently categorized as Native American artifacts. This origin–identity transgression is a rarity in archaeology and one likely to have happened because archaeologists believe these beads to have some exclusivity as Indian objects. Otherwise, this tripartite categorization does not handle well the *sharing* of object types across cultural/ethnic boundaries (Silliman 2010).

Analyses using these categories have moved far beyond the acculturation models that produced them (e.g., Quimby and Spoehr 1951), thanks to postcolonial notions of hybridity and the abandonment of attempts to use them to quantitatively measure acculturation, but the basic premise seems to remain: Cultural identities of these artifacts are a given. These categories have taken on ontological status—they are always already there before analysis begins. They set up an either/or scenario that pulls material evidence to one side or the other of the dichotomy, tugged by predefined categories of what is Native American and what is European and permitting hybrids only when modifications or transformations are materially evident. These categories of "what is" draw heavily on a legacy of understanding colonialism not as a complex entanglement of histories, identities, and power struggles but as cultures in contact with the only options being to change or to stay the same (Silliman 2005). This unnecessary rigidity in material categories

tends to discourage shifting scales of temporal and spatial analysis and to neglect practice and memory, both of which would permit more multiscalar and diachronic views of real historical situations.

Similarly, this categorization also virtually guarantees that Native American groups will be considered, first and foremost, as having changed significantly (because they have more “European” goods than before) and as having changed more than neighboring colonists and settlers. These reflect powerful themes in the U.S. national narrative, despite evidence that *everyone* with cultural and biological heritages deeply rooted on the North American continent has changed over the last 250 years. Public and national understandings seem plagued perhaps no longer as much by the idea that Native American cultures are static and unable to change but by the idea that any changes in Native American societies during colonial periods must have compromised their identities, core values, demographic resiliency, and, by extension, their rights to self-identify authentically as Indigenous people. For example, most North American schoolchildren have heard how British colonists survived and persisted in the Northeast by using Native American corn (such as with the Pilgrim story), but probably have never had anyone suggest that British colonists became more Native American by adopting their foods.

Such dichotomous thinking erases cultural creativity and effaces postcolonial hybridity with the attribution of generalized ethnic identity through the use of rigid material categories. The categories resonate with commonsense notions of what European and Indian artifacts look like, not only in the public eye but also in the everyday thinking of archaeologists themselves. Closer examination would reveal that these categories, quite doxic (per Bourdieu 1990) at this point and therefore seemingly natural and obvious, are legacies of colonialism and draw on much more than consensual academic classification schemes based on some kind of supposedly objective criteria. Instead, they are based on *cultural* categories that have designated “Western” from “Indian” for centuries in North America and that easily migrated into the discipline of anthropology and archaeology at a tender age. The problem lies not in the existence of these general categories for they may well be useful and appropriate in quite a few cases, but in the

almost blanket application of them from the outset without a consideration of the social context of practice and memory in which they were produced, used, discarded, and given meaning.

Some postcolonial interpretive work to unpack these assumptions in archaeology has been accomplished already (e.g., van Dommelen 2002, 2006), drawing in part on work in broader historical anthropology that complicates simplistic and quite colonial views of material culture used by Indigenous people (Thomas 1991, 1994). A key concept has been the intersection of practices and materialities, not in ways that privilege one or the other, but that look at their intersections and coengagements. The difference lies in seeing material objects as constituents of practices and as challenges to practices, but not as meaningful or functional in their own right without this social context (Jones 2007).

Diana Loren’s (2001b, 2003, 2008) research on the interaction of Spanish, French, and Native Americans in the colonial southeast of North America has demonstrated how dress and bodily ornamentation offer active sites for the negotiation and redefinition of artifact meaning. Preexisting object categories of Native American and European matter very little when it is the practices of using those objects that deserve analysis (Loren 2001a:67). Laurier Turgeon’s (1997) study of the social biographies of copper kettles in North America provides another pertinent example. Here, the analysis of the social lives of these so-called European artifacts through their distribution and use in Native American societies begins to chip away at the notion that these can be easily identified at the outset, or even further along in analysis, as simply Native American or European. In a sense, they are neither, and they are both. Making a similar point, Paul Prince’s (2002) work with the Bella Coola on the Northwest Coast of North America has revealed that their adoption of “European goods” in above-ground mortuary contexts, which might be called changing by some researchers, was actually done to open new avenues for *staying the same* with respect to enduring cultural principles of family, identity, and rank.

Christina Hodge’s (2005) analysis of an eighteenth-century Wampanoag cemetery context in Massachusetts has demonstrated how a Native American cemetery can look like an Anglo (par-

ticularly Quaker) cemetery—no mortuary goods or clothing, use of shrouds and shroud pins, use of headstone and footstone markers, and highly variable grave shaft orientation. As she outlines, the “looking like” cannot be taken at face value, however, for it evidences hybridity, mimicry, and appropriation to lay claim to community, rather than serving as a simple index of culture change and subsequent material invisibility. Finally, my own work has discussed the ways that these material categories privilege cultural origins, whether presumed or real, rather than emphasizing the ways that objects were used in everyday practices and ongoing social engagements (Silliman 2010). My concern has been the invisibility of Native Americans in colonial settings, typically where they worked as laborers, because the labeling of objects by their origins in production has obscured the everyday activities, such as handling dishes and glassware, that brought these into others’ hands and, likely, others’ meanings. Archaeologists consider those items, such as ceramic tableware, to be always fundamentally and categorically European/Euro-American artifacts in European/Euro-American households, regardless of who handled them during the day.

Memory and Practice

A theme in these critiques and a way out of the conundrum are practice and memory, both of which frame the social context in which these artifacts took on their meanings and became useful, symbolic, or culturally worthy. Rending intelligible what these materials signified and enacted in Native American cultural contexts (and archaeological sites) affected by European colonialism, is knowing not as much *where* these items originated, as though this offers pre-given cultural meanings, but *who* used them and *how* (Silliman 2010). In this realm of “who” and “how,” social agents, material objects, meanings, subjectivities, and identities all intertwine and take form through practice. People may well summon proximate, ultimate, or invented object origins in these practices, from either individual or collective memory stores, but histories—whether of objects, individuals, or groups of people—must be performed in social practice for them to have salience in the present (Jones 2007). Sometimes the summoning takes place through

bodily memory such as in the dispositions of habitus (Bourdieu 1977, 1990), sometimes through individual memories that guide decision making and evaluative capabilities, and sometimes through collective memories that become resources for social agents seeking to “go on” in the world and for those seeking to confront that world. Following Paul Connerton (1989), these may involve inscribed memories, such as those captured in texts or in commemorative monuments, or embodied memories, such as those involving ritual or behavior within and between human bodies.

The type of memory involved in daily practices cannot be assumed a priori because these may vary by individual, by context, and by space, just as the temporal scale of that memory cannot be predicted ahead of time. Yet, these types and scales are crucial for understanding how to evaluate notions of change and continuity. Fortunately, archaeologists have begun to explore ways of accessing such social memories or uses of the past in the past (Alcock 2002; Cipolla 2008; Jones 2007; Mills and Walker 2008; Olivier 2004; Van Dyke 2004; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003; Yoffee 2007). Most archaeologists gravitate toward the monumental side of commemorative memory, particularly when looking at the ways that extensive societies—such as Chaco (Mills 2008; Van Dyke 2004), the ancient Maya (Joyce 2003, 2008), New Kingdom Egypt (Meskell 2003, 2004), or various ancient states around the Mediterranean (Alcock 2002; Yoffee 2007)—transmitted and manipulated information in the greater context of social power. Fewer look at the more embodied aspects of memory in the archaeological record, although archaeologists like Rosemary Joyce (2003, 2008) and Timothy Pauketat and Susan Alt (2003) deftly move between the commemorative and everyday. Fewer still look at societies organized at smaller scales or encapsulated within larger colonial or national projects, a context that might help researchers move beyond a notion of social memory as “collective memory” to a notion of social memory as a contested and negotiated resource for agents and practices. The potential for this kind of small-scale archaeological memory study exists, not because embodied memory’s fleeting presence is as visible or “concrete” as the commemorative kind but because its *effects* can be seen through the process of social reproduction in very concrete and material ways.

Native American communities forming and reforming in the wake of European colonialism offer just such examples (e.g., Cipolla 2008).

Because individuals make and remake history and memory in their practices, it is important to look at the scales at which they do so and at which the effects manifest. Archaeologists tend to want to look at historical changes and continuities over the very long term, but we cannot necessarily impose our scale on the everyday lives of people in past without just cause. Those social agents may not have known those scales in the ways that archaeologists can now reconstruct through the material record, or they may have known them quite well through oral history and stories embedded in the landscape and in material objects but chose not to mobilize or discuss them. As unperformed memories, they would have had little impact in the social world. What is perhaps not appreciated is that social agents often draw on memories more proximate to them—personal, family, or generational—that may be individually recalled or accessible through social narratives as a context for action and meaning making. These are human, lifecycle scales (e.g., Van Dyke 2008), and they have profound impacts on how tradition is transmitted and reformed in colonized areas with Indigenous persistence (Tveskov 2007). Patricia Rubertone's (2001) work on a seventeenth-century Narragansett cemetery in Rhode Island illuminates just such a context. She interprets the burial practices, mortuary goods, spatial aspects, and bodies in this Native American cemetery, some of which involved "introduced European" items, as the materialization of cultural lifecycles rather than as a gauge of change against the standard baseline less than a century before. That is, these agents would have been using those objects to negotiate, mark, and perhaps contest cultural traditions that led them to that particular moment in time.

Practice offers the vital link between history and memory, as the mechanism of creating and recreating those ties, of performing tradition, and of developing new ways of living in the world (Joyce 2008; Pauketat 2001b). Practice is the materially embodied, active point of articulation and recontextualization—and most importantly, *performed existence*—of these social vectors. Objects are constituents and proxies of practice, not obvious symbols or meanings without them. As John

Barrett (2001) argues in his discussions of the British Neolithic, practice theory helps archaeologists to think about what was made possible in certain material contexts for social agents. Shifting analytical focus to practices permits more fluidity in artifact interpretation because these materialities frame social practices and agency—sometimes making things possible, sometimes making them impossible, but not always accentuating cultural identities even if facilitating their persistence. Historical archaeological studies of colonialism have revealed that these possibilities can be quite numerous for the artifacts commonly termed Native American and European. For instance, so-called "European" items in New World colonial contexts can be used in a multitude of ways: to make European colonists feel more at home, to serve as vehicles of enforced assimilation, to represent European hegemony, to offer ways for Indigenous people to survive in colonial contexts, to provide raw materials for Indigenous technologies, to substantiate trade between different peoples, to represent gender or class across otherwise ethnic lines, to replace some Native American technologies, to serve industrial labor interests, to feed families, and so on. Acknowledging these multiple permutations shifts the focus back to the practices that these materialities supported or excluded and the ways that practices imbued objects with social meanings. Herein lies a more nuanced question about the genealogy of communities, households, and practices than one framed by object-driven cultural change and continuity.

Rodney Harrison's (2002:72) studies in Australia have underscored our need to rethink artifact categorization in the context of social memory. Coupling archaeological studies with oral histories and collaboration with Indigenous Australians produced the startling revelation that Aboriginal people consider metal match tins on Aboriginal sites to be Aboriginal artifacts. These objects do not fit into an archaeological view of long-term Aboriginal history as having anything but the most recent appearance and the most European of origins, which tends to relegate them in the academic world to the less significant. However, Aboriginal people in the late twentieth century viewed these match tins as part of their cultural history, as their artifacts, and as evidence of cultural continuity from past to present. This does not mean that these indi-

viduals did not draw on much deeper social memories in other contexts and with other objects, but it does mean that these items and the practices they supported have currency in their contemporary practice.

Mayan people living near the archaeological sites of Chichén Itzá and Chunchucmil in Mexico offer another example (Breglia 2006, 2009). Mayan workers feel connection to the region and to the archaeological site itself as a function of their connection to the *henequen* industry, their agricultural activities on twentieth-century *ejidos*, their employment as excavators during summer field seasons, and their status as *los antiguos* who once lived in the archaeological site zone in the twentieth century, but not explicitly or routinely as a function of being the descendants of the ancient Maya. This runs counter to the expectations that archaeologists have of Indigenous people—that they will actively cultivate their social memory connections to the periods that archaeologists have decided are the most relevant. Instead, this case shows that the Maya of the Yucatan, or at least some communities of them, draw on much more recent social, but no less authentic, memories to ground their connections to the land and to their history.

Neither of these instances indicates that contemporary Aboriginal or Mayan people are severed from their ancient ancestors or have no legitimate connections to their deep heritage. Rather, they reveal that the individual links in the long chain of history may sometimes be shorter than once anticipated or than might be the case in other Indigenous groups who more readily mobilize their connections to millennia-old cultural practices. As a result, archaeologists cannot assume that the cultural practices of Native Americans immediately before Europeans arrived on the scene in any given area are necessarily the “baseline” against which to measure all subsequent periods. Using such a baseline makes sense for looking at immediate postcontact changes, but perhaps not for those two or three centuries later, as is possible in the areas of early British colonization in Eastern North America or Spanish colonization in Florida, the Southwest, and Latin America. As a result, we should not carelessly employ classification schemes about “European” and “Native American” artifacts as though that baseline for comparison does not move forward in time, contextually, as

these cultural groups do. I cannot imagine anyone viewing the last point of comparison for Euro-Americans today who have been in North America for many generations to be their first encounters with Native Americans 200–500 years ago or even to the American Revolution in the 1770s.

Eastern Pequot Historical Context

These ideas have arisen in part from broader engagements with postcolonial and practice theories, but also from the specific interpretive challenges of a research project underway since 2003 through the venue of the Eastern Pequot Archaeological Field School. The project is a collaborative venture between the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation and the University of Massachusetts Boston to study Eastern Pequot community history, to examine the nature of reservation life in colonial periods, and to train students and tribal members in the methods, theories, practices, and politics of contemporary archaeology (Silliman and Sebastian Dring 2008). A major community goal was to expand the historical knowledge already held by the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation and captured in their petition for Federal Acknowledgment by the U.S. federal government (Bragdon and Simmons 1998; Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation 2001).² The project focuses on the 225-acre reservation in North Stonington, Connecticut, that members of the Eastern Pequot community have occupied for the last 325 years since its founding in 1683 by the Colony of Connecticut (Figure 2). Materialized on this landscape are cultural sites that accentuate the ways that materiality, memory, and practice can better reveal colonial processes and Indigenous survivals.

The establishment of the reservation occurred in the volatile seventeenth century in southern New England. Within 15 years of Adriaen Block’s reconnaissance of the Connecticut River in 1613–1614, the Pequot—a large group that had leaders (sachems), seasonal rounds, a mixed-subsistence economy of horticulture and hunting and gathering, and a settlement pattern of large riverine and coastal villages and smaller sites in upland and some coastal environs (McBride 1994)—had established an exclusive wampum (shell-bead) trading relationship with the Dutch and had begun to exercise political and territorial control over a large area (McBride 1994:13). Relations between Native

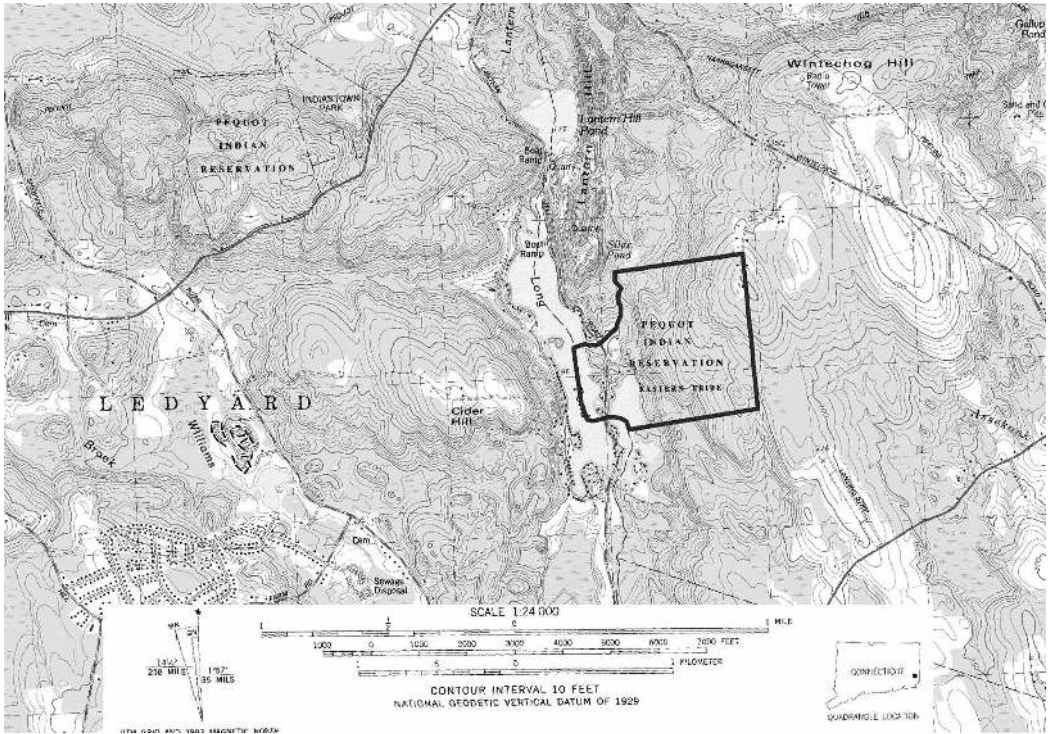


Figure 2. Location of the Eastern Pequot reservation on a U.S. Geological Survey topographic map. Note the proximity to the Western (Mashantucket) Pequot Reservation to the northwest.

American groups and the Dutch and expanding population of English settlers were tense by the 1630s (Cave 1996; Hauptman 1990; Salisbury 1982). A series of deaths and retaliations on colonial and Pequot sides of the interaction and the buildup of British aggression led to the Pequot War of 1636–1637 in which the British launched what many feel to be the first true attempt at colonial genocide on North American soil.

The 1638 Treaty of Hartford following the Pequot War led to the distribution of surviving Pequot families to Mohegan and Narragansett communities, the selling of many survivors into slavery in the Caribbean, and the execution of others (Cave 1996; Salisbury 1982:222). The treaty stipulated that the Pequot not return to their previous homelands or speak their tribal name again. After several decades and the growing autonomy of Pequot groups that had reconstituted in the region, the Colony of Connecticut placed the remaining Pequot on two reservations—Western (or Mashantucket) in 1666 and Eastern (or Pawcatuck) in 1683—as a way of spatially and symbolically segregating a

“conquered people” amid a growing colonial presence in southern Connecticut (Campisi 1990; Den Ouden 2005). This was the colonial solidification of a divide within this once-united Pequot group, although intermarriage and cross-residence occurred frequently in the following centuries.

The original 280-acre Eastern Pequot reservation, later reduced to approximately 225 acres, was a mixed blessing. At one level, it provided a land base in a colonial landscape, albeit one that had some of the worst land for cultivation because of the rocky landscape filled with glacial till and shallow soils. It had to be constantly defended against settler encroachment from the late seventeenth century onward by Eastern Pequot community members (Den Ouden 2005). At another level, the reservation served as a locale of spatial confinement away from their previous coastal territories and of oversight by European colonists and, later, Euro-Americans. It symbolized their marginalization in the economic world of colonial New England and their status as a supposedly conquered people. However, as Den Ouden (2005) argues, conquest

in a military sense was not a cultural conquest or a final blow to either Pequot group.

Thus far, historical and archaeological research suggests that the mid-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were a time when many Native Americans in southern New England incorporated some features of European/colonial lifeways such as Christianity, farming practices, livestock husbandry, and industrially produced material goods, while continuing other “traditional” practices or doing “European” things in often distinctly “Native American” ways (Bragdon 1988; Cipolla 2008; McBride 1990, 1993, 2005; Mrozowski et al. 2005; Silverman 2005). The eighteenth century witnessed shifts in housing from wigwams to framed structures for the Eastern Pequot reservation, although the latter remained a viable house form at the turn of the nineteenth century (Dwight 1969 [1822]:14). Reasons behind these changes in practices and the full diversity and timing of responses are not yet fully understood, although growing confinement to reservation lands may have prompted the shifts as a means of survival, as was the case at the nearby Mashantucket (Western) Pequot reservation that has been heavily researched by archaeologists for more than 25 years (McBride 1990, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2005). We might expect some similar patterns between the two reservations given the overlap in shared cultural backgrounds, colonial experiences, access to markets, reservation politics, and intermarriage.

Eastern Pequot Archaeology: A Summary

The Eastern Pequot reservation in North Stonington, Connecticut, provides an ideal setting for studying colonialism as one of the first and longest occupied reservations in what is now the United States. The property has seen almost exclusive residence by Eastern Pequot community members, whether through birth or marriage, with the only European/Euro-American infiltration happening mainly through pasturage and border-fence dismantling. This pattern sidesteps the cultural attribution problem facing many archaeological sites because virtually all reservation sites from the 1680s onward were occupied and used by Eastern Pequot community members. As a result, the reservation offers an unprecedented window into long-term processes of colonialism and survival, not of

static ethnicity but of negotiated community and culture.

Although not large, the 225-acre reservation remains remarkably undisturbed with secondary forest, few dirt roads and trails, and twentieth-century residences confined to the perimeter away from the majority of known archaeological sites. Better still, as an active cultural and historical space for the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation, the reservation offers a unique space for collaborative research between archaeologists and Indigenous people (Silliman and Sebastian Dring 2008). The reservation, much like its Mashantucket Pequot neighbor to the west, contains several thousands of years of Native American occupation well before the reservation period, but the primary goal of the research project has been to document the spatial and temporal variability of Eastern Pequot households from the late seventeenth century to the turn of the twentieth century, using a variety of surface and subsurface surveys and full-scale excavation. Thus far, the combined research strategies have permitted research on several sites and nonsite contexts that span the period from ca. 1740 to 1860.

Significant details are not necessary here, and specific site locations are being withheld to respect the privacy of the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation and their interests in protecting and preserving these cultural resources on their ancestral lands. Instead, I offer a brief summary, in chronological order, of three extensively excavated sites that address the interpretive and theoretical issues raised in this article. They supply a rich view of Eastern Pequot cultural practices on ancestral land and amid struggles to survive in colonial New England, but uniquely set within architectural, artifactual, and food parameters marked largely by European/Euro-American-derived materials and technologies. These permit me the opportunity to further develop the issues of scale and materiality vis-à-vis the change-continuity conundrum.

Site 102-124

Excavated in 2007, this site represents a small (~200 m²) residential area discovered entirely through subsurface sampling. Ceramic data currently place the site occupation between 1740 and 1760. Artifact analysis is ongoing, but field observations and preliminary results indicate that the residential structure may have been a wigwam with



Figure 3. View of Site 102–123, excavated in 2005 and 2006. The rock pile in the foreground is the collapsed chimney stack for a framed house, and the slight depression to the right is the filled-in cellar that sat beneath that house. The stacked rocks in the background compose the small stone-wall enclosure that may have served as the base for a granary. Photograph by the author, 2008.

some nailed elements and at least one glass window pane or, alternatively, a small wooden framed structure with no foundation, no cellar or crawl-space, and no chimney. Excavation revealed three pits of varying size within a space of no more than 30 m² that contained a variety of domestic debris. Ceramic vessels and wares included basic redware, Astbury-type ware, Staffordshire slipware, white salt-glazed stoneware, and Brown Reserve porcelain (Silliman and Witt 2009). Iron kettle fragments and a hook were also recovered, as were a musket ball, numerous straight pins, glass beads, and white ball clay pipe fragments. Some glass bottle fragments were present, but not in great numbers. Architectural materials included forged iron nails, a small quantity of window glass, and some post-holes. Food remains include domestic livestock, fish, shellfish, and other foods (Fedore 2008).

Site 102–123

Located less than 100 m from Site 102–124, Site 102–123 was excavated in 2005 and 2006 (Figure 3). Ceramic and other material culture data point strongly toward an occupation between the 1760s

and 1800. Unlike the earlier household, this site revealed significant surface and subsurface components as well as prominent alterations to the surrounding landscape. The main household area covers approximately 2,500 m² and includes two chimney collapses and associated hearths, one full cellar, a rock and shell midden, a small trash deposit, a partially filled depression in the shape of a root cellar, and a small circular stone enclosure that may have served as a base for aboveground storage. Nearby are two larger stone enclosures that possibly served as gardens or animal pens.

Ceramics range from mid-eighteenth-century styles such as white salt-glazed stoneware, slipware, and agateware to wares more common in the latter quarter of the century, such as creamware, early pearlware, English brown stoneware, and Chinese porcelain (Silliman and Witt 2009; Witt 2007). Redware was very common, as were white ball clay pipe stem and bowl fragments, bottle glass, and iron kettle fragments. Window glass, a multitude of primarily cut nail forms, sill stones, and collapsed chimney stacks reveal the presence of at least one framed wooden-plank house. Numerous



Figure 4. View of Site 102–113, excavated in 2004. The large rock pile represents a collapsed chimney stack, and the cavity framed and partially filled by these rocks represents the crawlspace that once existed beneath the house. The trash pit noted in the text was found just outside the photograph frame on the left. Photograph by the author, 2004.

metal artifacts were recovered as well, including forks, knives, buckles, finger rings, a key, and several buttons (see Patton 2007). One stone projectile point fragment of indeterminate date, a handful of chert/flint flakes, and two unambiguous pieces of worked window glass represent the lithic technologies used by site residents. Faunal remains reveal the presence of livestock (such as cattle and pigs), the use of marine resources (such as clams, mussels, oysters, and fish), and small numbers of other local fauna (Fedore 2008).

Site 102–113

This site was partially excavated in 2004 (Figure 4). Ceramic and other material culture objects point toward an occupation in the first 30–40 years of the nineteenth century. The site consists of the remains of a large collapsed stone chimney stack for a framed house that had a small crawlspace beneath it and a rich trash pit outside. The artifact collection from the house, refuse pit, and general artifact scatter around them both produced a range of materials. Ceramics included redware, creamware, pearlware, English Brown stoneware, and porce-

lain. Pipe stems and bowls fragments made a regular appearance in the excavation units, as did window glass, bottle glass shards, and nails. Miscellaneous objects included oxen shoes, a handful of glass beads, a glass bottle stopper, a faux paste glass gem, a coin with a punched hole and a cut edge, two scissor bows, a thimble, and a variety of buttons, buckles, and other clothing-related objects (see Patton 2007). Lithic materials included some chert/flint flakes, a soapstone bowl fragment, a celt, and an argillite point. Faunal remains in the trash pit and subfloor house spaces include cattle, pig, caprines, rabbit, cat, rodents, fish, large birds (e.g., chicken, turkey), turtle, and shellfish (Cipolla 2005, 2008; Cipolla et al. 2010).

Memory and Practice on the Eastern Pequot Reservation

One way to interpret the Eastern Pequot archaeological information to date would be to examine it for evidence of cultural change and continuity. It would be much too easy to claim that the greater numbers of “European” artifacts in Eastern Pequot

households in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, compared to that known about their sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cultural practices (e.g., lithic use, local ceramic production, shell-bead use), indicate that they had undergone significant culture change. However, for reasons outlined above, this broad generalization runs the risk of swamping the complexity of the context and the historicity of material practices and misrepresenting the nature of cultural traditions, persistence, and survival. Instead, closer examination of the sites and associated material culture in their diachronic contexts, with their mutable cultural meanings, and at the scales of memory likely in play within households and across the reservation community accentuated the problems with the change–continuity dilemma and offered potential exit points.

Diachronic Study

Any assessment of change or continuity in Eastern Pequot households on the reservation must be set within an appropriate temporal framework, a point well argued by Lightfoot (1995) and Tveskov (2007) for their studies on the West Coast of North America. Establishing a baseline of Pequot cultural practices for the immediate precontact and early colonial periods provides a necessary link in the historical chain, but it should not serve that baseline function for all periods on the reservation. Comparing sites sequentially to the baseline—that is, comparing each one excavated to the baseline without comparing them to one another—would generate a running interpretation that these sites all represented cultural change. Such a comparison would be (and actually was) tempting, particularly in the early stages of the research project when only one or two sites had been excavated. For instance, prior to 2005, most studied sites had dated from the early to mid-nineteenth century, and these did seem to represent elements of change from the seventeenth century. This is not an uncommon interpretive leap in such archaeological studies.

The diachronic perspective of the project revealed the flaws in this type of comparison. Subsequent discoveries and excavations of intervening sites between the “baseline” and the nineteenth century have supplied necessary links in the chain and offer opportunities for shifting scales of comparison. Juxtaposing the nineteenth-century site of

102–113 with the “baseline” snapshot might suggest considerable change with the disappearance of Native American ceramic traditions and shell-bead manufacture and the diminution of lithic practices and traditional hunting and gathering activities that supplemented horticulture. However, placing the same site alongside one from the last few decades of the eighteenth century (such as 102–123) suggested continuity. In fact, looking at the three sites summarized above indicates considerable continuity over 100 years on the reservation, particularly with the crucial aspect of maintaining residence on the land itself. I can offer no viable justification to discount the latter pattern in favor of the former, and in fact I would argue that the latter pattern operates more in tune with the scale of community and household social memories. The evidence points to strategies and practices of community persistence, or at least cultural trajectories, rather than to any easily rendered case of simple change or continuity.

Scales of Memory

Scales of social memory play a significant role in the reformulation or deployment of cultural practices. On what resources do social agents draw for their actions, and where are they situated in time and place? This is partly a question of tradition and habitus, but not ones that can be easily defined ahead of time (e.g., Pauketat 2001a; Tveskov 2007). Working only on the notion of a precontact baseline assumes that all social agents—young or old, male or female, economically stable or impoverished—draw from the same suite of knowledges, practices, and memories regardless of the passage of time. This would assume that Eastern Pequot community members living on the reservation in 1690 would draw on their practices from the early to mid-1600s to frame their actions and that Eastern Pequot inhabiting the reservation 150 years later in 1840 would do the same. But is this reasonable?

If Eastern Pequot people transmitted many of their cultural traditions and practices in the context of households and intergenerational socialization, as do most other human societies, then this scale of cultural practice and memory needs to be appreciated rather than masked by a reliance on an ever-lengthening amount of time to the “ethnographic present” baseline. This does not mean that Indige-

nous social agents in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ignored or knew nothing of these pre-colonial or early colonial worlds, but that they may have articulated with different scales of history and knowledge. Certainly, Eastern Pequot history from the seventeenth century onward had critical moments when individuals or households shifted the material dimensions of their lives, sometimes adopting European-produced goods from the market, sometimes dropping materials that their forebears had regularly used. The tempo and extent of these changes deserve careful attention, particularly because the documentary and archaeological records for the reservation suggest quite variable times for these shifts in material culture and architecture.

But these moments of what we might call change did not repeat with each and every generation. That is, each successive generation of children did not have their parents *adopting* these market goods, such as ceramics and metal implements. Instead, these already comprised part of household practices and perhaps even family or community traditions, and they could be inherited, so to speak, through basic socialization and everyday use. In some sense, they were grounded in household experience and in the land itself, and they became part of what it meant to be Eastern Pequot, although perhaps not in any emblematic way. Some individuals may have questioned their relatives or friends living on or near the reservation when they first began purchasing goods from colonial markets, but it is hard to imagine that they continued doing so for generations thereafter, particularly if they, too, began using similar objects.

These materials could have been absorbed, perhaps routinely and not completely consciously, into habitus (sensu Bourdieu 1977, 1990). What once was heterodoxy may have shifted more (although likely not completely) into the realm of doxa, the new way things are done. These material objects became elements in social reproduction, both in their continued use and in the propagation of practices supported by them. This neither means that the apparent continuity for 100 years on the reservation represented passivity in action or intention nor suggests a diminution of “practical politics” (Silliman 2001) negotiated by social agents; rather, it signals active memory work and persisting materialities to maintain those more temporally proximate

practices. Or, as Joyce (2008; see also Jones 2007) describes it, continuity means repetitive practice designed to maintain the material and social connections between human agents and objects.

Perhaps the cultivation of these particular social memories also signaled the reverse of memory work—social forgetting—of more ancient material practices as a strategy of moving forward in complex colonial worlds. As Connerton (2006), Forty (1999), Mills (2008), and others note, forgetting should be recognized as a key component of social memory, and we should be cognizant of the ways that it is an active process. The process of social forgetting can happen, however, in ways less enmeshed in national, formal, or ritual acts. No longer displaying or using certain objects—such as handcrafted pottery or wampum (shell beads)—in an Eastern Pequot household in the eighteenth and nineteenth century offers a poignant vehicle for just that kind of active forgetting, whether intentional or not, across generations and in very bodily and practical ways. It must be remembered, though, that a forgetting of material practice does not translate into the forgetting of history or community once welded by those practices or those materials that compose them. One cannot use everything available, just as one cannot remember everything that has passed. However, the shorter scale of collective memory involved in the social reproduction discussed here for the historic Eastern Pequot does not mean that deeper heritage connections could not be or were not forged. That is, the interplay of remembering and forgetting was not so straightforward, as illustrated by stone tools.

Lithic artifacts tend to be considered emblematic of Native American material culture and identity in the colonial period, their appearance signaling continuity and their absence, a sign of culture change (see Cobb 2003). Yet the Eastern Pequot reservation sites to date suggest something more complex and perhaps unexpected. The earliest site excavated thus far on the reservation, 102–124 estimated to date between 1740 and 1760, revealed only a handful of lithic artifacts, primarily in the form of flakes. The next oldest site, 102–123 dating to the latter half of the eighteenth century and likely falling out of residential use at the beginning of the nineteenth century, produced very few flakes, one arrow point fragment of unknown age, and two unequivocal pieces of

worked window glass. The most recent site excavated, 102–113 dating in the first few decades of the nineteenth century, produced no worked glass and very few pieces of lithic material—although butchery analysis suggests the likely use of stone implements despite their elusiveness in the material record (Cipolla 2008)—except for a surprising discovery. Embedded in a trash pit dug and filled during the site occupation with debris such as cattle and pig bones, glass bottle shards, pearlware, redware, and metal objects was a stone celt, a soapstone bowl fragment, and an argillite projectile point that, stylistically and materially, signal a different era. One other piece of soapstone also occurred in the crawlspace that once existed beneath the nearby house. Taken alone, this triple co-occurrence and the point formed in the Fox Creek Lanceloate style suggest a date between the Terminal/Transitional Archaic and Middle Woodland periods, spanning 3700–1000 B.P. The context of deposition, however, unambiguously situates these objects sometime close to the 1830s.

Therefore, in an unexpected twist, the youngest excavated household on the reservation—the one that postdated the use of window glass as a raw material for lithic technology and had fewer lithic flakes than earlier sites—produced the most formal lithic tools, albeit ones likely thousands of years old. Having determined that their incorporation into household refuse was not an accident of site residents digging the crawlspace of that framed wooden house into a preexisting Early Woodland or Terminal Archaic site and finding it next to impossible that these could represent curated objects passed down for 100 generations, I can argue that someone in this reservation household must have found these ancient items (perhaps on a walk or while plowing a nearby field), brought them home, and ultimately discarded them into the trash. His or her specific intentions may never be known, but the insertion of ancient material items into lived spaces in the nineteenth century subverts any simple notion of change and continuity. Was this cultural continuity because Native Americans had been using lithic technologies for millennia in New England although not recently in reservation households, or is it cultural change because the reincorporation of this technology (if not primarily just a few ancient objects) happened after several generations when stone tool use had

diminished, if not disappeared, in Eastern Pequot households on the reservation? As much as archaeologists frequently portray stone tools as straightforward indications of unchanging Native American cultural patterns, they deserve closer attention (e.g., Silliman 2001, 2003).

I suggest that these items were reincorporated into Eastern Pequot practices that summoned deeper social memories and that brought them back into discourse and visibility. They drew out a material heritage connection for Native American people who resided on a reservation not that different than their parents, but very different than their not-too-distant ancestors. Maybe they recalled stories passed down for generations of a time when Pequot people hunted with stone-tipped arrows and spears or cooked in steatite bowls. Maybe they symbolized a nostalgic past truncated by colonial intervention and helped household residents tell and retell narratives about their origins and their identities. Maybe some longed for that past while others welcomed the technologies that now replaced stone tools. We will probably never know. However, these material symbols did not disrupt the more proximate connections that people had with market goods and with the community and practices they supported, and they ultimately found their way into everyday refuse discarded outside of a wooden framed house. Perhaps this discard in a trash pit rather than elsewhere outside the house resulted from internal household debates over their meaning and appropriateness; perhaps they were caught up yet again in the material and social struggles over remembering and forgetting.

Cultural Objects

The Eastern Pequot case further unravels the uncritical identification of cultural objects that represent change–continuity and European–Native American, particularly when these are inappropriately anchored to an early seventeenth-century baseline. To illustrate, I use redware, which is a relatively coarse, lead-glazed, wheel-thrown, red-bodied earthenware commercially produced in Europe and imported into the British colonies and, later, made locally by regional potters. This artifact is part and parcel of almost every colonial site in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries in New England (e.g., Noël Hume 2001; Turnbaugh 1983). The question is: How can redware in

an 1830s Eastern Pequot household remain a European/Euro-American artifact (and one that supposedly evidences culture change)³ when it had been in use on the reservation and possibly in households ancestral to this one for a century? Whereas redware, a common artifact found on Eastern Pequot sites from the early eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, was once a European/Euro-American artifact, newly introduced and adopted into Native American material practices, it could not remain so. Eastern Pequot children raised in households with redware who then purchased and used it themselves as adults in households with their own children transformed these into objects that transmitted their own meanings and cultural practices. They would have likely bought, sold, traded, gifted, and discarded these ceramic vessels in social settings that composed the fundamental elements of community life on and near the reservation. The same could be said about clothing items such as buckles and buttons, as Patton (2007) outlines in his analysis of reservation clothing, or about ceramics and community, as discussed by McNeil (2005). When used on the reservation and in Native American community life, *these items became Eastern Pequot objects*. They did not become so passively, inherently, universally, unambiguously, or on their own by default; instead, they did so through the contextual social agency of individuals who integrated them with existing and new practices, shifting their originally colonial meanings to function and convey meaning in Eastern Pequot cultural traditions and material worlds.

At this stage of the multiyear project, I am not yet ready to claim when this happened for any given material culture item, in large part because this composed a process rather than a single event and because it clearly had considerable spatial and temporal variability across the reservation. The reservation served as a historical and contemporary repository of social memory and cultural materialities on which community members could draw in their daily practices. Some material objects met these purposes well, some likely sufficed, and others were undoubtedly less appropriate or less useful. Similarly, some dated from an individual's parent's generation, whereas others may have drawn on centuries or even millennia of cultural practices. If Eastern Pequot used redware, nails,

metal knives, and glassware to facilitate the raising of children, cooking food and feeding families, securing the household economy, redistributing social labor, or networking of the reservation community—and the archaeological evidence to date suggests that they did—then we should not call these European/Euro-American artifacts (and indicators of cultural change) when individuals clearly made this material culture function in cultural registers important to the Eastern Pequot community. As Simmons (1986:261) noted, “the survivors [of colonial watersheds] buoyed themselves up by means of social and cultural constructions that drew upon the new as well as the old.”

None of this precludes the potential meanings that might have accompanied such market objects for their users and their observers, but these must be established in real historical contexts. In the case of the Eastern Pequot, these contexts involved considerable adaptability at the margins of the colonial economy in the context of racism, land dispossession, and a simultaneous confinement to and defense of their reservation (Silliman and Witt 2009; Witt 2007). Similarly, none of this necessitates that archaeologists interpret a creamware bowl potentially passed down from Native American grandparents to their children's offspring or given as a gift between cousins as having *equivalent* cultural value or memory potential as something like a woodsplint basket or bead necklace that might have also been passed down.⁴ These remain contextual questions, and one can easily envision cases in which hand-crafted objects or those that can be tied to different (or deeper) social memories might summon different cultural meanings. Still, virtually every artifact found on an Eastern Pequot site should be considered, first and foremost, an Eastern Pequot artifact, not as a badge of ethnicity or emblem of style but as a constituent of social practice that fostered cultural production and reproduction. Perhaps one could go so far as to claim them to be Native American artifacts as well, if simply to shake up the assumptions that many people have about assumed linkages between culture, identity, and things. The more important point, though, is to situate these interpretations and categories in culturally and historically specific contexts.

If we do not reconsider these conceptual categories and also pay careful attention to the documentary and oral history evidence, we run the risk

of misidentifying many Native American or other Indigenous sites after the full force of colonialism has been felt. For example, following the logic of a founding father of historical archaeology who defined sites as “nonaboriginal” when they had “artifact assemblages ... wholly or almost wholly non-Indian” (Fontana 1965), one might try to suggest that the three sites discussed in this article belonged to colonist or settler households because they had very similar material profiles to European/Euro-American homes. This risk would be even greater if these sites had been found off the reservation, where many Eastern Pequot lived while otherwise staying connected to their histories and families on the reservation proper. In fact, I suspect that they have gone unrecognized and that this mislabeling is widespread across North America and elsewhere. For all the reasons outlined in this article thus far, this conclusion would be deeply flawed, not only for the way it would neglect the documentary and archaeological evidence for who resided on the reservation but also because it would prioritize (fetishize?) artifacts, rather than the materialities incorporating, agents using, and practices framed by them. Therefore, I implore other archaeologists who work on ambiguous domestic sites in colonized areas to be very careful with their cultural attributions of houses and things.

Conclusion

A long-term view of diachronic and variable responses of a Native American community to colonialism and reservation life has provided the opportunity to do more than apply theory. It has offered a context in which to rethink it, not only to sharpen the interpretation of this community’s unique experiences but also to reframe archaeological approaches to materiality, practice, and memory. Long-standing cultural labels for artifact classes have given way to more-grounded attributions based on their role in daily practice and the process of social remembering on reservation land. Parallels can be found in archaeological projects as far away as the ancient Mediterranean (Dietler 2005; van Dommelen 2002, 2005) and Australia (Harrison 2002, 2004), or closer by in the postcolonial approaches to North American archaeology, some of which were referenced earlier (e.g., Hodge 2005; Lightfoot et al. 1998; Loren 2001b, 2008; Tveskov

2007; Wilcox 2002). Ideas about culture change and continuity have lost their polar opposition and seem less suited to a multiscalar study based on social memory and practice. Perhaps a dialectical approach to change and community can develop in this space that recognizes that change and continuity are one and the same thing or at least particular dimensions of the same phenomenon (e.g., Silliman 2005:66). That is to say, for social agents, communities, or households to move forward, they must change *and* remain the same. But to have moved forward means to have carried on. Therefore, the incorporation of so-called “European/Euro-American” objects into Indigenous cultural practices in ways that insure their survival as individuals, families, and communities should not lead us to interpret them in terms of loss or passive acquiescence. Rather, they represent additions and actions set within social remembering and forgetting. They represent what Joyce (2008:39) calls “patterned materialities”—“the likeliest remaining pieces of past networks of knowledge and memory, intentionality and action, personhood and embodied dispositions.”

An example from the archaeological process itself, rather than just the archaeological past, might reveal a further dimension of the argument developed in this article. The Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation requested the archaeological project that has developed into the Eastern Pequot Archaeological Field School, but not without having it reframed in ways that meshed with cultural sensibilities about the reservation and its ancestral land (Silliman and Sebastian Dring 2008). Here, the new practices and objects of archaeological research were admitted onto the land and into the cultural realms of the Eastern Pequot community, but this introduction of a discipline with colonial and Western roots did not mean that the community became any less Eastern Pequot. Instead, these “tools” were placed into community service, and the designated tribal historic preservation officers ameliorated the disruptions to the land brought about by excavation by placing tobacco offerings in every opened unit and ritually smudging all participants (Silliman and Sebastian Dring 2008). Mirroring perhaps the negotiation of new materials and practices in previous centuries, social memory and connections to the land found new expression in the context of archaeology itself.

In conclusion, the implications of this reconceptualization extend far beyond the academy and those interested in North American history. They have important political ramifications. Archaeologists and the general public have tended to see increasing reliance by Native Americans on market goods over the course of the nineteenth century as evidence of cultural change or, more perniciously, as signs of acculturation—that is, becoming less Indian and more European or White. They are judged culturally, regardless of the roles played by economics, labor, accessibility, marginalization, family support, or any other factor in their choices. The Eastern Pequot case has revealed the limits of that judgment, particularly when so-called “European” goods serve the practices of Native American communities and households. Our interpretations need to be sensitive to the social memory of those past actors rather than to the commonsense notions of mainstream U.S. social memory that “remembers”—selectively, politically—what an Indian should and should not look like or act like.

These same cultural judgments have not been applied to European and Euro-American households in North America. Where are the archaeological and historical interpretations that consider Euro-Americans in the early decades of U.S. nationhood as becoming more Chinese because they had Cantonese or Nanking porcelain in their houses? The same standards applied to Native American culture change and continuity are clearly not directed to non-Native American households and for good reason. Most see these European/Euro-American households as using the increasingly global market as a resource for persisting. What should be apparent is that the Eastern Pequot case discussed here reveals the same outcome. Similarly, where are the studies that sample twenty-first-century U.S. homes to see how Cambodian or Guatemalan its many residents have become because their clothes are tagged as having been produced there? These interpretations do not happen because everyone knows that the question is not properly framed (and would probably be considered absurd) and attributes too much meaning to object origins in everyday practices.⁵ So, why do we persist in applying these standards to Native Americans historically and even today? Political awareness and more rigorous analytical frameworks are necessary to address this discrepancy.

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Notes

1. Hart (2004) shows similar tendencies in how artifacts are classified as either historic or prehistoric, a pattern that tends to rely on a combination of this view of artifact cultural identities plus an assumption about directions of material change.

2. As a point of reference, the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation federal acknowledgment petition was given a positive finding in 2002 by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, entered a long appeals period thereafter, and was ultimately rescinded in 2005 by that same agency following a politically motivated reevaluation of the evidence. The archaeological project began in 2003 as the result of Eastern Pequot community members proactively initiating a historic and cultural preservation program as part of their impending federal recognition, and it has continued to contribute in positive ways despite the devastating loss of the anticipated federal standing (Silliman and Sebastian Dring 2008).

3. Of course, the objects are European/Euro-American artifacts when part of the practices of colonist or settler households, provided of course that these artifacts are not also handled by servants of Native American or African ancestry, which further complicates the relationship between cultural identity, manufacturing origin, and practical use (see Silliman 2010).

4. I appreciate very much the insightful discussion that I had with Edith Thomas about this matter when she worked on the reservation with me in 2006. Her own experience as an Akimel O'otham/San Carlos Apache woman and archaeologist from Arizona offered some clarity to my thinking about this.

5. I do not argue that we need to ignore origins altogether, a point made earlier in the article, for this would deny the very real ways that people often attribute meaning to objects. Rather, I am juxtaposing interpretive options that are and are not used to assess cultural identities and authenticities. In addition, ignoring origins would also serve dangerous political agendas in the globalized world of the twenty-first century by further alienating people (consumers) from the goods that they purchase. The world's citizens need to have more awareness of where their products come from—sweatshops, factory farms, fair trade plantations, organic gardens—rather than less. However, that is a different argument for a different context.

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