Decolonizing Archaeological Thought in South America

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Abstract

Decolonizing archaeological thought in South America happens through three paths: (*a*) a critical approach to the ways archaeology contributes to coloniality, (*b*) a criticism of the mechanisms by which coloniality informs archaeology, and (*c*) a varied exposure of archaeology to subaltern (that is, non-hegemonic and counter-hegemonic) knowledge. These three paths are sometimes taken together and sometimes alone, and the diverse pieces of thought reviewed herein provide examples of each. South America as a locus for the enunciation of archaeological theory opens the epistemic range of the discipline to include indigenous and African-descendant communities' theories of history and materiality. Ongoing research prefigures future trends in decolonizing archaeological thought around issues of land, memory, and knowledge.

SOUTH AMERICAN SUBJECTIVITIES

Two main features of the idea of coloniality (Quijano 1992, 2000; Schiwy & Maldonado-Torres 2006) are that the colonial experience, first, was not superseded by political independence, and second, is constitutive of subjectivity. South American historical experience is marked by a very early colonization by Iberian empires, followed by comparatively early political decolonization processes that lead to the formation of national states. Renaissance assimilationist Christianizing ideologies forged colonial societies during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; then, natural history–inspired segregationist ideologies began to reshape colonial societies during the late eighteenth century and influenced social engineering in the independent national states during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The political independence of former Spanish and Portuguese colonies in South America recycled colonial relations both internationally—through economic, cultural, and academic links—and internally (what might be called endocolonialism; see González Casanova 1965, 2006).

Duplicity is one of the main features of colonial subjectivities (Bhabha 2002, Mignolo 2003). This means that the colonizer and the colonized subjective positions are at the same time antagonistic and simultaneous. Hegemonic cultural and social discourse at the same time includes and excludes subjective identities and experiences. This has been called "coloniality of being" (Maldonado-Torres 2007). Coloniality of being is not an optional feature one can add to one's identity, but an immanent constituency of the self, an inescapable condition of coloniality. Besides the coloniality of being, the "coloniality of knowledge" (Lander 2000a) is the epistemic differential between supposedly superior, universal, scientific, rational, and other forms of true knowledge on the one hand, and inferior, local, superstitious, and otherwise false knowledge on the other hand. Coloniality of knowledge is of paramount relevance here given that this is a review of academic thought. Thus, the notion of decolonizing thought should be understood as a movement counteracting the coloniality of knowledge and, from there, the coloniality of being. However, archaeological thought is already firmly inscribed within the academic, scientific, and hence hegemonic knowledge. Thus, to decolonize archaeological thought should not be understood as the inception of a new school of academic theory (as has become usual within postcolonial archaeology; for examples, see van Dommelen 2011) or a new vanguard, but rather as a movement toward the abandonment of the hegemonic standpoint of archaeological knowledge (Gnecco 1999). Thus, this is not a review of the literature on a particular theoretical trend within South American archaeology, one that would be called decolonial: a trend that does not, and should not, exist as such. On one hand, the so-called postcolonial debate in South America has evolved quite (but not absolutely) independently from the broader debate in the metropolitan Anglo academy, drawing instead from South American intellectual backgrounds and social experiences. Its relevance for archaeological thought should not be minimized as an automatic derivation from metropolitan (and thus canonic) reference texts (as in Lydon & Rizvi 2010). On the other hand, because decoloniality implies counteracting colonial violence, and within academic thought this should imply counteracting the hegemonic position of academic thought amid other forms of knowledge, no trend enclosed within academy could be really decolonial, notwithstanding how much decoloniality it claims to embrace. Movements toward decolonizing archaeological thought are those engaging the transformation of archaeological thought in counter-hegemonic orientations, undergoing diverse kinds of exposure to counter-hegemonic nonacademic thought (indigenous, African-descendant, environmental, and inspired by social movements). This article reviews some relevant pieces of thought that, in my particular opinion and knowledge, imply movements toward decolonizing.

In other words, (post)coloniality is more a pretheoretical condition than a theoretical framework, that is, more a condition of thought and knowledge than a particular approach to knowledge about a delimited field. At the same time, however, once it informs theory, that postcolonial pretheoretical condition turns into metatheory, that is, knowledge about theory and its conditions. Moreover, as knowledge about the conditions of knowledge, it leads toward overcoming or transforming the very conditions of coloniality. Such development of knowledge on the coloniality of knowledge heads toward decoloniality (Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel 2007, Maldonado-Torres 2006). Decolonizing archaeological thought in South America is being fostered through three simultaneous paths: (*a*) a critical approach to the ways archaeology contributes to coloniality, (*b*) a criticism of the mechanisms by which coloniality informs archaeology, and (*c*) a varied exposure of archaeology to subaltern (that is, non-hegemonic and counter-hegemonic) knowledge. These paths are sometimes taken together and sometimes alone, and each one of them can be found in the diverse pieces of thought reviewed herein.

The differential constitution of being and knowledge is one of the main issues analyzed by postcolonial thought. The existence of South America as a place of enunciation of a theoretical perspective on archaeology is closely linked to the self-awareness of South American archaeologists of their differential designation, that is, of the constitution of the discipline in the difference from colonial powers (Mignolo 2007). Within archaeological discipline, this self-consciousness has not been based on any postcolonial perspective named as such, but on the so-called Arqueología Social Latinoamericana (ASL; Latin American Social Archaeology) developed during the 1960s and 1970s (Benavídes 2001, Fuentes & Soto 2009, Politis & Pérez Gollán 2004, Tantaléan & Aguilar 2012). This approach, explicitly inspired by historical materialism (Bate 1977, Benavídes 2001, Lorenzo 1976, Lumbreras 1974, Sanoja & Vargas 1983), has been the first to emerge, more or less unified, with both a theoretical inspiration and an explicit political orientation (hence it is *social*, beyond what this means in political terms) and a place from where to establish a new perspective (thus it is *Latin American*). Although ASL continues to be a theoretical reference in Latin America (Tantaleán & Aguilar 2012), as well as in Spain (Castillo et al. 2008) and other countries (McGuire 1992), toward the mid-1990s its momentum was already diluted. This was due to the growing hegemony of processual archaeology of North American origin and the anti-Marxism of academia in some countries of South America (particularly in the Southern Cone, as a long-lasting effect of the military dictatorships of overt anti-Communist orientation and counterinsurgency action; see Politis 1992b, Politis & Pérez Gollán 2004). Also, the notion of a common South American belonging was not present anymore as an inspiration for theoretical reflection.

It was at that time that three unrelated contributions from Brazil, Bolivia, and Colombia exerted a relevant influence on the development of decolonial archaeological thought. Pedro Funari explored the differential conditions of (Brazilian or) peripheral archaeology in comparison to central or metropolitan archaeology. His approach contrasted sharply with common visions according to which the central archaeologies are models to the peripheral archaeologies. Funari (1989, 1992) provided a dislocation between the scope of peripheral knowledge and the way in which that knowledge is valued by agents (both peripheral and central). The main contribution here is the introduction of a politically and theoretically informed view for thinking of South America as a *locus enuntiationis*, that is, as a place from where relevant theory is possible, not just on South American matters but, as his own work on Classic Rome (Funari 1997) and capitalism showed, on broader issues and global matters. South America and peripheral archaeology shifted from being the preferred areas where metropolitan archaeology mined its data for building up (its)

theories to a place from where theoretically informed perspectives on global archaeology could be developed.

Mamani Condori (1989, 1992) provided an independent and more radical view. Unlike Funari, who relocated the subjectivity of archaeology within a (third-world) national context, Mamani watched archaeology from his Aymara location, peripheralized within the already peripheralized national Bolivian identity (for the intellectual context of Aymara decolonial theorizing, see Stephenson 2011). Mamani's text had several other serious implications. His gaze on archaeological discipline was based on Aymara understandings of the world, time, history, and being. From that epistemic standpoint, he was able to provide a perspective on archaeological epistemic assumptions and even to provide a historic and political interpretation of the difference between Aymara and archaeological perspectives. Mamani himself was one of the leaders of the Taller de Historia Oral Andina (THOA; Andean Oral History Workshop), a research collective based in La Paz that captured the rich intellectual and social effervescence of the Aymara indigenous people from the Bolivian *altiplano* (Mamani Condori 1991), while at the same time processing broader historical and social currents of thought—for instance, through contacts with the Indian Subaltern Studies group (Rivera Cusicanqui & Barragán 1997).

In the meantime, Colombian anthropologist Luis Guillermo Vasco Uribe engaged in an ongoing research by the Historical Committee of the Cabildo de Guambía, a Misak indigenous organization in Cauca, Colombia, which was trying to research the history of Misak people from a Misak perspective. Vasco Uribe, inspired by Marxism and Maoism, but more importantly, learning from the specific conditions of that particular research, developed through that collective research experience a theoretical and practical approach sometimes called anti-anthropology. This implied reversing the colonialist orientations of anthropology to align it with indigenous interests. Also, the research on Misak history implied the adoption of Misak concepts of history and knowledge, thus transforming academic assumptions and methods to develop research on Misak people that is also from Misak people (Dagua Hurtado et al. 1998; Vasco Uribe 1992, 2002). Concepts as the snail shape of knowledge are sometimes used by Vasco Uribe as examples of the methodology he calls "to gather the concepts in life" (Dagua Hurtado et al. 1998, p. 7). Misak history has the shape of a snail, but a snail in movement. History is embedded in the Misak territory, and one has to walk around the territory to know history. But it is not simply that the snail is a metaphor for history: The snail is history. Snail-shaped petroglyph designs are called history by Vasco Uribe's Misak coresearchers Avelino Dagua and Misael Aranda (Dagua Hurtado et al. 1998). Aymara intellectuals have also noted the spiral shape of time (not linear nor circular), composed by cycles that never return to the same point in time (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010b).

These papers from Brazil, Bolivia, and Colombia, though unrelated, affected South American archaeological thought in multiple ways. Coming from different contexts, with diverse blends of academic and local/indigenous interests, these papers implied that assuming a South American local standpoint for archaeological thought meant a thorough transformation of the discipline and its assumptions (Salerno 2012). Nevertheless, their influence on South American archaeology was much more restricted than their theoretical implications would suggest. Among the diverse causes for this, one of the most important is the disperse and unconnected character of South American archaeology and archaeological theory at the end of the twentieth century (Politis 2003).

In the mid-1990s, South American archaeology was so dispersed that archaeologists from different South American countries read each other in European and/or North American publications. Moreover, the discipline then seemed to assume the banality of local or regional perspectives. In reaction to this, a series of meetings on archaeological theory in South America, later known as Teoría Arqueológica en América del Sur (TAAS; Archaeological Theory in South America) (Funari et al. 1999), and several regional publications—among them the *Arqueología Suramericana/*

Arqueologia Sul-Americana bilingual journal (Gnecco & Haber 2005)—were developed. Thus, the beginning of the twenty-first century sees the recovery of the notion that South America can be a place from which an archaeological perspective can be enunciated. Indeed, the TAAS meetings and the South American publications have been appropriate venues for discussions about whether or not South America is a singular place from which knowledge about archaeology can be generated. The theoretical and decolonial implications of this question have turned those venues into unprecedented forums for debate and the sharing of experiences and ideas on a continental scale (Salerno 2012).

The observations offered by archaeology about precolonial history are, inevitably, still guided by a postcolonial gaze. The subjectivities of both the historic and the precolonial archaeologist are constituted by the same colonial experience. The *constituent* aspect of the colonial experience in relation to archaeology is codified in its disciplinary demarcation and framework; additionally, it is also interesting to explore its *constitutive* aspect, that is, the way in which coloniality implicitly constitutes or shapes the facts of experience and thus the scientific understandings of history. To the first constituent direct relationship, a constitutive or recursive relationship is added: "Once the matrices that define and frame scientific disciplines are established, and are put into motion, the knowledge of objects is already mediated by this division of labor, although its origins are unnoticed, thus facilitating its reproduction with all the appearance of naturalness" (Haber 1999, p. 129). The way in which coloniality acts upon archaeology can be seen in the theoretical-methodological canon for the interpretation of the colonial archaeology of northwestern Argentina. The question is not merely about the facts but also about those deep, extrascientific, and immanent conditions for the creation of the facts of experience. In his classic report on the early colonial site of Caspinchango, Salvador Debenedetti defined the cultural features of the period of time, marked by a century-and-a-half-long war, that was called "contact" or "Hispanic-Indigenous period" by archaeologists (Debenedetti 1921). Debenedetti included in his report the drawings of a couple of tombs showing the superposition of Santa María (local, indigenous, precolonial) pots over contact-period Caspinchango burials; however, he was unable to depart from an account of historical change as moving from an indigenous, local, precolonial culture to a European-influenced mestizo, criollo, or acculturated culture. Even though such blindness was pointed out by Debenedetti's contemporary scholar Félix Outes (1923), archaeology adopted the narrative of historical change from indigenous to Hispanic-Indigenous culture during all the rest of the twentieth century. In other words, Caspinchango, the very site that materially showed the survival of local indigenous ways of relating with the ancestors even after the European colonial invasion, ended being canonized by archaeological discipline in the twentieth century as the type site for the definitive demise of indigenous cultural knowledge. Even the hard facts were neglected, because of an even harder understanding of the self (the discipline, the science, the university, and, most importantly, the Argentinian as well as Western, European, and white identity) and the other (local peasants, dwellers of archaeological sites, laborers working for the archaeologists) as different from the indigenous. The demise of the indigenous, and consequently of indigenous knowledge, was a condition of possibility for archaeological discipline (Haber & Scribano 1993), which adopted the voice about indigenous culture and history on the condition of silencing indigenous vocality. A rupture between the indigenous (other) and the historic (self) was at the same time a rupture between lost knowledge/popular lore (other) and scientific archaeological knowledge (self). This rupture was assumed even beyond the facts, and for this reason it has been called the "metaphysical rupture" (Haber 1999). If the interpretation of the history-object follows an interpretative canon that goes beyond the facts, it is because the conditions by which those facts are facts do not correspond exclusively to the materiality of things nor to the objectivity of the record, but rather to a particular cultural assumption, an epistemic understanding of historical

time as (*a*) founded on an event (the Conquest) that at the same time founds a differential of knowledge, a rupture or gap that, being beyond facts, is metaphysical; and (*b*) oriented toward Europe and the West. The metaphysical rupture on which the colonial understanding of history is based becomes thus encoded within the disciplinary frames of archaeology, that is, its demarcation of object and method. In this way, being a disciplined archaeologist (in other words, exercising knowledge within the boundaries defined by the disciplinary framework) means exercising a knowledge founded in metaphysical rupture, in the cultural form that colonial difference adopts in history (knowledge of the past) when history is written according to the canon of the national state. The past (even precolonial) comes to be what is known through the particular (postcolonial) way of knowing the past, and thus the colonial condition of knowledge of the past shapes the facts (what happened) of the past. But if archaeological discipline is a vehicle of coloniality, even inadvertently in its most basic internal structure, there is no alternative for archaeology than to reproduce and expand those very colonial conditions of knowledge, unless it questions its own disciplinarity (Haber 2012).

OBJECTIVITIES: HISTORY

In 1999, Cristóbal Gnecco published *Historical Multivocality: Towards a Postcolonial Cartography of Archaeology*, a volume that would become the primary reference in the introduction of the discipline to the postcolonial debate. Perhaps the most significant contribution of this work resides in the sharpness with which Gnecco exposes the colonial sense, or better the endocolonialism, of the scientific program of the archaeological discipline. Clearly, for Gnecco (1999) it is not just that archaeology should recognize the inheritances of the colonialist past to get rid of them, nor does he suggest that archaeology can deviate from those formerly unacknowledged negative features simply by recognizing its colonialist origins. Gnecco's program is critical enough to expose the mechanisms through which archaeology is part of the arsenal of Western knowledge for subordinating other knowledges.

What he calls a "multivocal meeting" is a field of political struggle in which archaeology can enter honestly only by renouncing its hegemony and being open to self-transformation (Gnecco 1999). It is not possible for archaeology (or the Western disciplining of time, in general) to recognize itself in a locus vis-à-vis other times without abandoning, in the first place, the universalism that is characteristic of Western time, and second, the allochronism (i.e., keeping the other at a distance in time) with which it subordinates other times. Gnecco's text, written at the end of the millennium, was a programmatic statement much more than an already transited intellectual path. Both a theoretical landmark and a programmatic manifesto, Gnecco's volume was extensively cited, though not always in accord with the original orientation of the book. Even though it included a very deep analytical critique of scientism in archaeological discipline and it drew extensively on the most radical aspects of Vasco Uribe's work, Gnecco's multivocal meeting was quite often read as a voluntary form of dialogue and exchange of knowledge, often within the field of heritage education and other lines of public archaeology (Gnecco 2012; Montenegro 2014; Rivolta et al. 2011, 2014). Some of those readings tamed the decolonial potential within a multicultural framework, which implied recognizing diversity (and even compensating inequalities, as in affirmative discrimination schemes) while at the same time maintaining the same hegemonic groundings (Ayala Rocabado 2014, Curtoni 2015, Gnecco 2011, 2015). The subsequent writings of Gnecco showed a particular concern with the ways indigenous archaeology was often instrumental in the domestication of the decolonial potential of multivocality (Gnecco 2014, Gnecco & Ayala Rocabado 2010).

OBJECTIVITIES: THINGS

A parallel movement in the decolonization of archaeological thought consists of considering indigenous ontologies not only when researching indigenous histories and cultures but also as a theoretical standpoint from which Western ontologies can be critically addressed. The vast and varied, and at the same time unique and unified, Andean world provides several examples of alternative ontologies, such as Aymara theories of time and history, Andean concepts of landscape as a living and powerful being, Nasa theories of ancestors embodied in statues and lagoons, and Andean-based indigenous categories on animal domestication and pastoralism. Instead of embracing the idea of linear time and progressive history, research can be guided by Aymara concepts of the past as being ahead (Mamani Condori 1991) and of time as spiral-shaped, as in the concept of *pachacuti* (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010b). Following Argentinian philosopher Rodolfo Kusch's works on thinking from South America (Kusch 1962, 1976), Mario Vilca's understanding of landscape as an alive, powerful, and dangerous being that is to be approached through appropriate actions to obtain food and avoid illness implies a whole set of relations that are completely different from those implied in landscape research (Vilca 2012). Luis Gerardo Franco Arce's research on the Caldera Nasa community in Cauca, Colombia, put him in contact with theories of ancestrality and materiality that see stone statues as grandparents and highland lagoons as ancestors, again challenging disciplinary assumptions about the way beings relate with each other in the world (Franco Arce 2012).

Instead of following the Western idea of increasing domination of nature by humans as the basis for understanding domestication as well as technology, Haber focused on local and regional theories of the relations between beings (Haber 2011). Thus, *uywaña*, an Aymara word for raising, caring, and nurturing, evokes a whole set of ideas and possible relationships through which the archaeological record can be seen. *Uywaña* is not a thing nor just a relation, but an embodied and practical theory of relatedness (relations among relations). It is not just an ethnic science that is different from mainstream or general science, but rather a subaltern metaknowledge (i.e., knowledge on knowledge, an episteme) that includes a view of hegemonic knowledge (Haber 2015a). This is not a knowledge one can record intellectually as the other's culture, but a knowledge one has to relate to through meaningful practice or semiopraxis (Grosso 2012). For instance, to pour some alcohol and coca leaves at an archaeological site before proceeding to excavate it may be understood as a friendly attitude Andeanist archaeologists usually adopt toward locals and their beliefs; at the same time, however, such practice implies an immediate and practical relationship toward a certain being (a powerful, alive, dangerous, nonhuman agent; in other words, a god) that happens to be the same thing as the archaeological site. If taken seriously, the very fact of being oneself in a ritual exchange with an archaeological site produces a whole range of meanings with diverse theoretical, epistemological, and epistemic consequences. In this sense, a whole theoretical plexus, while remaining unuttered, may be conveyed through practice. Practical (not necessarily linguistically mediated) discursive interaction and its theoretical content is particularly relevant for archaeology. An elegant case for a nonhegemonical theoretical semiopractical knowledge was made by Tom Dillehay (2007) regarding the poetics and politics of the Mapuche *kuel* (mound) landscape, which elaborates meanings about identity, group, land, and power.

THOA scholars have highlighted the complexity of the Aymara theory of history. Mamani noted the forwardness of the past—i.e., the past is in front of one's eyes—and the cyclical shape of time. The concept of *pacha* (space-time or world) admits different simultaneous *pacha*, including the *pacha* of the alive and the *pacha* of the dead. The last one, being past, is by no means gone; it is not perfect in a grammatical sense. The past still exists and as such has diverse relations, including relations of creation and destruction, with the alive present world (Mamani Condori

1991, 1992). Thus, the past is simultaneous to the present. Moreover, the past can also be the future, and history, or *ñawpaj mampuni*, looks backward while also moving forward (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010b). The cyclical character of history is described as the juxtaposition of a long collective memory (the colonial experience) and short collective memories (historical horizons) (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010b). Mamani's notion of *nayrapacha* as old times that can also be future times is articulated by Rivera Cusicanqui through the idea of *pachacuti*, a reversal and renovation of the space-time or world. Providing a localized notion of decoloniality, "the notion of *ch'ixi*... means the parallel coexistence of multiple cultural differences that don't fuse one in the other, but remain as antagonists or complementary. Each one reproduces itself from the deepness of the past and is related contentiously with the other" (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010a, p. 71). Thus, a whole sociopolitical ontology is articulated differently from Western academic disciplines, and it encompasses Bolivia's history, present diversity, and future.

The Western ideas of time and history as they are codified and reproduced in the archaeological discipline are not the only ones to have been scrutinized and contrasted against indigenous epistemes. Vilca (2010, 2012) has focused on space/landscape and dead/ancestors in several papers. Drawing from the knowledge of people from the highlands of northwestern Argentina and the broader south-central Andes, he understands space not as an extension nor as a container, neither as a provider of available resources nor as landscape, but as a radical other, a monstrous, dangerous, and powerful being who demands being fed by humans (Vilca 2009, 2010). Space, thus, is not a dimension in any conceivable way, but a divine being with which humans develop simultaneously sacred and profane relations. The ancestors and the dead live enclosed in their own space-time, which communicates with the space-time of the alive once per year in ritualized form (Vilca 2012). Thus, living beings, space, landscape, the dead, and the ancestors are related not just through the extraction of knowledge—as within academic disciplines—but through a whole set of ongoing relations.

The godlike nature of space or territory is found in other contexts, as in the Calderas *resguardo* of Tierradentro, in southwestern Colombia. Luis Gerardo Franco shows the impossibility of thinking of stone statues as archaeological objects because they are already grandparents of the Nasa people; ancestrality is also embodied in particular places, as in highland *páramo* lagoons. In Franco's description of the ceremony of refreshment of the symbols of communal power in the Juan Tama lagoon, the interaction with the ancestor himself after the peregrination to the lagoon meant the renewal of communal, territorial, and political power, while at the same time reaffirming Nasa knowledge in the shaping of collective subjectivities (Franco Arce & Mantilla Oliveros 2011, Piñacué Achicué 2009).

These cases are not simple introductions of native concepts to interpret local archaeology, but situations of research in which Western theories as coded in archaeological discipline are put in tension with local theories. Instead of reducing local concepts to a distinction between emic and etic, which would be a recapitulation of the privilege of Western scientific knowledge, these examples consider local knowledge seriously (i.e., as true knowledge) and build their research by moving the founding concepts from the disciplinary assumptions to local knowledge, thus transforming the research, the researchers, and archaeological thought. Some of these issues have been discussed in contexts other than South America (Atalay 2006, Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2010, Smith 1999).

Once certain and particular indigenous ontological categories are forwarded, they appear to be just the tip of a broader and deeper iceberg: Indigenous ontological categories are related to other beings and with the world in ways that are entirely different from those envisioned by the archaeological discipline and modern Western science. Research on relationalities and animistic ontologies following indigenous ways of knowledge has been integrated in South American

archaeology (Alberti 2013, Haber 2009, Laguens 2013, Laguens & Gastaldi 2008, Lema 2014, Troncoso 2014) and ethnography (Blaser 2013, de Castro 2004a, Descola 2012). Such approaches may be considered helpful for interpretation, and surely they are; moreover, indigenous categories are often incorporated within the interpretative framework of many studies, and this is notewor-thy within indigenous archaeology (Gnecco & Ayala Rocabado 2010, Silva 2012). In most cases, the incorporation of indigenous categories is useful for expanding the interpretative potential of the archaeological discipline, but the discipline retains its basic understandings about the past, materiality, and knowledge that define its framework and place it within Western academic (hege-monic) knowledge (Gnecco & Ayala Rocabado 2010). It is much rarer to find an acknowledgment of the fundamental consequences of this approach for the politics of knowledge (Blaser 2013; de Castro 2004a,b; de la Cadena 2010; Escobar 2013; Haber 2009). These intercultural works afford an abandonment of the hegemonic standpoint of the discipline and a transformation of its on-tological/cultural assumptions, which in itself works against the orientation of colonial epistemic violence. Local subaltern peoples are often the subject of intervention, their practices forbidden, their resources expropriated, because of the very assumption of the normality of hegemonic knowl-edge and the allochronization of their own knowledge (put under the banner of culture, custom, belief, folklore, and so on). The decolonial potential of indigenous knowledge does not lie merely in the fact of being indigenous or authentic (which would imply an essentialization of ethnicity or race), but in the fact of being elaborated over time in subaltern and nonhegemonic relational situations. This is probably the reason that the most visible pieces of decolonial theorizing in archaeology are related to Misak, Nasa, Aymara, and Mapuche peoples, known for their highly visible political and theoretical activism.

A relational (and not essential) context for nonhegemonic knowledge (and a similar decolonial potential) seems to be found in other subaltern nonindigenous settings too. A similar approach can be seen in African/Maroon descendant communities, as shown in the ongoing research of Caterina Mantilla and colleagues (Franco Arce & Mantilla Oliveros 2011, Mantilla Oliveros 2007) in San Basilio, Colombia, and of Caroline Murta Lemos in Chacrinha dos Pretos, Brazil (Lemos 2013, 2014). Both researchers have pointed out the seriousness and gravity of local knowledge and its ability to challenge their taken-for-granted archaeological knowledge. Moving away from the hegemonic position changes the politics of knowledge both in theory and in practice. In other words, to decolonize archaeological thought has turned to imply its open exposure to indigenous and African-descendant knowledge, not with the aim of mining data or interpretive models, but with a serious consideration of indigenous and local knowledge as knowledge on its own. At the same time, this has proved to be helpful to show the epistemic limitations and political sidedness of Western academic knowledge. An avenue for transitions and moves remains open.

TRANSITIONS: LAND

Laura Roda's archaeological ethnography of Antofagasta de la Sierra (Catamarca, Argentina) begins with a questioning of the meanings of a picture made by a local dweller with ceramic sherds and projectile points glued on a slab, where he also drew the couple of volcanoes that dominate the local landscape (Roda 2008). This picture was hung at the door of the room this same person rented to an archaeological team conducting excavations in his lands in the late 1980s. Whereas archaeologists considered this as a provocation, Roda preferred to engage with the author of the slab, other local dwellers, and other apparently unrelated processes that happened at the time, mainly the wire-fencing of lands as a government land-property regularization scheme allocated the parcels to each individual dweller. According to Roda (2008), the slab picture could be an epistemic statement of the authorial capacity for knowledge vis-à-vis the intervention of

experts (and their expert knowledge) on local history and local lands. Archaeological objects, land, and dwellings are related in ways of knowledge that are subordinated to the hegemony of scientific disciplines as archaeology. In a sense, the slab really was a provocative interjection, but an understanding of the many implications of that piece of knowledge in that particular context of colonial intervention was possible only by opening archaeological practice and thought to a transformative conversation with local knowledge (Haber et al. 2007, 2010).

In recent research on the implications of the designation of the Inca Road (Qhapaq Ñan) as a World Heritage site following a joint application of several South American states, Marcela Díaz (2015) delves in different and apparently unconnected facts: the decade-long process of negotiation among the different provinces and states to prepare the application to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and the role that archaeologists, local communities, and states had in that process; the parallel development of open-pit mega-mining corporate interventions in the Catamarca province, Argentina, and the social unrest and environmental liabilities implied, as well as the corporate support of research on the Inca Road and the preparation of the UNESCO application; the transnational design of an Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA) and its role in the renewal of neocolonialist ties in the context of extractive capitalism along the continent; and her own personal and familial history in relation to heritage, archaeology, and the Inca Road. Díaz finds how coherently interlinked the supporting theories of these diverse processes can be (heritage and tourism development, corporate mega-mining, transnational infrastructure integration, and archaeological disciplining), and she develops an undisciplined archaeological research aligned with local interests (Díaz 2015).

In the same vein, Daniela Fernández (quoted in Haber 2015d) questions central concepts of the archaeological discipline and its reconversion in contract archaeology. Being an inhabitant of Andalgalá, Catamarca (epicenter of major mega-mining developments in northwestern Argentina), she questions the meaning of contract archaeology for the mitigation of the impact of mega-mining projects on archaeological heritage. Her simple but powerful statement is that to protect the heritage in the context of an intervention that threatens the survival of the heirs makes no sense at all from the standpoint of the inhabitants of the affected place, especially as the very project of intervention is made possible through those same acts of heritage protection. Fernández places the value of life before the value of knowledge of the past, or even the value of cultural heritage, demanding a transformation of several central ideas of archaeological discipline (Haber 2015d). Research by Roda, Díaz, and Fernández implies territorializations of the perspective, the knitting of constitutive and solidarity links with local communities and their interests, and the consequent transformation of basic assumptions and positions of archaeology.

Archaeologists working for the demarcation of present-day community territories (de Oliveira & Pereira 2009, Endere & Curtoni 2007, Manasse & Arenas 2009, Silva 2002), by reconverting archaeology into an aid in the historical and juridical foundation of indigenous land claims, illustrate ways of reconnecting land and archaeological remains that are closer to Western assumptions but nonetheless helpful for indigenous and African-descendant political processes. To be aligned with local interests may be a very apt step toward the decolonization of archaeological thought, provided that the research remains open to being transformed in the conversation with local knowledge and follows the ultimate theoretical (and political) consequences of that conversation (Jofré & Molina Otarola 2009), including the ontological implications of land (Piñacué Achicué 2009).

TRANSITIONS: MEMORY

The involvement of archaeology in the excavation of the human remains of the victims of human rights violation by the 1970s dictatorships in the Southern Cone is well known, and it has been

replicated in many other areas of the world (Bernardi et al. 1992, Somigliana 2012). Archaeology
has also been increasingly involved in the research on former imprisonment places and the creation
of places of memory (Funari & Zarankin 2006, Zarankin et al. 2012). Usually (but not always)
made within the framework of judicial processes, the recuperation of the human remains of the
victims of state (and para-state) repression implied the presence of the interests of the families of
the victims; in research on clandestine jails, groups of former inmates also claimed participation.
As happened during the research in El Pozo (Jefatura de Gobierno de Rosario, Argentina), the
participation of survivors of torture and reclusion centers introduced interests and perspectives
that were not always compatible with those of the families of their dead comrades. The question-
ing of victimization was central in this research, and the recuperation of political vocalities and
identities ended up being fundamental in the process (Bianchi 2008). Soledad Biasatti and Gonzalo
Compañy explored the mutual transformation of the research and the researcher's subjectivity;
the researcher's conversation with the materialities, the descendants, and the silences and invisi-
bilities constitutes a transformative experience of openness to the other's knowledge (Biasatti &
Compañy 2015, Compañy & Biasatti 2015). These and other pieces of research are transforming
the ways we understand the relations between materiality, memory, and subjectivity (Angelo 2015,
Compañy & Biasatti 2015, Franco Arce 2015, Galimberti 2015, Jofré et al. 2010a, Molina Otarola
2015, Roda 2012).

Another fertile line of research on memory, materiality, and subjectivity has focused on mu-
seums. Critical analyses of museum narratives are common in South American archaeology (e.g.,
Delfino & Rodríguez 1997; Londoño Díaz 2012a on the National Museum, Bogotá; Quesada et al.
2007 on the Quiroga Museum, Catamarca; Roca 2008 on the Ethnographic Museum, Buenos
Aires). A series of critical vignettes on the Museo del Oro, Bogotá, has been recently published
(Field & Gnecco 2013).

TRANSITIONS: KNOWLEDGE

Localizing archaeology—that is, understanding the local and provincial context of its theory and
practice—is a fundamental task in decolonizing archaeological thought. Research on the transi-
tion from disciplinary to postdisciplinary archaeology, and its consequent broadening of interests
and applications, remains a central focus in the task of anatomizing archaeology. The technolog-
ical reconversion of archaeology into contract archaeology, tourism-oriented archaeology, and
multicultural archaeologies has also implied the recapitulation of former disciplinary assumptions
regarding time, materiality, and knowledge (Haber 2011). Although the interest for postdisci-
plinary archaeology as a new theme of research is not the sole patrimony of South American
researchers, the need to insubordinate from disciplinary assumptions seems to be most visible in
this continent. Such an insubordination (or undisciplining; Haber 2011) implies expanded (in-
terepistemic) conversations with local, indigenous, and social movements' knowledge (Gnecco
& Ayala Rocabado 2010, Haber 2011, Jofré 2010, Londoño Díaz 2012b). Cristóbal Gnecco and
Adriana Dias have promoted the debate on contract archaeology in the continent through focused
meetings, symposia, and publications (Gnecco & Dias 2015). Although the relative importance of
contract archaeology varies greatly throughout South America, from virtual nonexistence to cap-
turing almost all the interest of archaeologists—as in Brazil and Chile—it is only recently that such
a radical transformation of archaeological practice has been the subject of reflection and theoretical
debate (Jofré et al. 2010b). Even as questions of ethics and good practice are addressed in meetings
here and there, these issues seem to accompany the growing and dramatic professionalization of
archaeology, which remains neglected as matter of research as if its consequences did not deserve
theoretical consideration. What are the consequences when a discipline of knowledge on the past

grows dependent on the market economy in times of increasing capital-plus-state intervention in local contexts? What are the roles archaeology plays in the clash of interests and the politics of knowledge mobilized in such contexts (Haber 2015c)? Whereas the usual multicultural answers to these questions tend to navigate issues of dialogue and mutual respect, they usually dismiss the sharp one-sidedness and imbalance of power implied in neocolonial interventions. Moreover, the growing debate tends to show that, notwithstanding the political and social intentions of the researchers involved, archaeology as a discipline of knowledge and a technology of intervention is already on the side of capital and state and against the local communities and social movements resisting interventions (Haber & Shepherd 2015). The reasons of this alignment are to be found in the structure of the politics of knowledge that shapes archaeology and which archaeology contributes to shape, and in the epistemic complicities between Western/capitalist/developmentalist ideologies and the epistemic assumptions incorporated within archaeology (and other disciplines) (Haber 2015b). As Wilhelm Londoño's research in the Puna de Atacama has showed, ideas about economic and technological development are hegemonic on a broad scale, but local people also have their own readings of hegemonic discourses and material interventions (Londoño Díaz 2012b). If this idea of local readings is expanded to consider archaeological interventions as integral to the hegemonic arsenal, a diverse set of previously unacknowledged local situations regarding archaeology may be envisaged [see, for instance, Herrera Wassilowsky's (2011) survey on the recuperation of indigenous agricultural technologies]. Rather than the object of heritage interventions (as in archaeological tourism, contract archaeology, or heritage education, for instance), local communities are active knowledge agents that have their own subaltern epistemic understandings and their positioned readings of hegemonic discourse, knowledge, and intervention. Whether they overtly resist or actively ignore hegemonic knowledge (or whatever intermediate position), these are active attitudes in reaction to archaeology (Londoño 2012b). To consider archaeology as a field of study or as a technology of heritage intervention neglects such a fundamental contextualization of archaeology in intercultural postcolonial contexts, a blindness that reinforces the hegemonic status of archaeology (Haber & Shepherd 2015, Herrera Wassilowsky 2013). To enter in mutually transformative conversations, including the objectivities and subjectivities implied in archaeology, seems to be an open avenue for decolonizing archaeological thought, at least as it is advanced in a diversity of research experiences in South America.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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