

WHAT'S NEW? RETHINKING ETHNOGENESIS IN THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF COLONIALISM

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Many archaeological researchers studying colonialism are critiquing theories of cultural change (e.g., hybridity, creolization) in favor of interpretive models that emphasize cultural persistence and continuity. Ethnogenesis, the emergence of new cultural identities, has been put forward as a consensus model: what is “new”—the “genesis” in ethnogenesis—is increasingly interpreted as an authentic remaking of communal identities to foster persistence and survival. This somewhat utopic emphasis on continuity in ethnogenesis theory broadens the concept of ethnogenesis to the point that its value as a theory of identity transformation is being lost. Overall, the archaeological emphasis on ethnogenesis as a tactic of resistance among subaltern communities has led to a general neglect of how ethnic identity practices are deployed in the exercise of power. The increasing use of bioarchaeological evidence in ethnogenesis research also raises pressing ethical and epistemological issues about the relationship between the body and identity. A more focused and restricted application of ethnogenesis theory is necessary to identify and investigate those situations in which colonialism and its consequences resulted in ruptures and structural transformations of identity practices.

Muchos de los investigadores en arqueología que estudian temas como el colonialismo, critican las teorías de cambio cultural (p. ej. hibridez y creolización) a favor de modelos interpretativos que enfatizan la persistencia y la continuidad cultural. La etnogénesis, o la emergencia de nuevas identidades, se ha propuesto como un modelo de consenso: lo que es “nuevo”—la “génesis” en etnogénesis—se interpreta cada vez más como una auténtica reinención de las identidades comunales, para fomentar su persistencia y supervivencia. El énfasis de la etnogénesis en la continuidad es un tanto utópico, y ha ampliado el concepto de la etnogénesis a tal punto que pierde valor como teoría sobre la transformación de la identidad. En general, el énfasis de la arqueología en la etnogénesis como una táctica de resistencia en comunidades subalternas, ignora cómo se utiliza la identidad étnica en el ejercicio del poder. El creciente uso de evidencia bioarqueológica en las investigaciones sobre etnogénesis, ha generado cuestionamientos éticos y epistemológicos acerca de la relación entre cuerpo e identidad. Es necesario utilizar la teoría de la etnogénesis de forma más enfocada y restringida para identificar e investigar aquellas situaciones en las que el colonialismo y sus consecuencias ocasionaron rupturas y transformaciones estructurales en las prácticas identitarias.

Debates in the archaeology of colonialism recently have turned to questions of new and old. For decades, the discussion was dominated by questions of “what’s new”: how peoples, cultures, and communities were transformed through colonial encounters and entanglements. Various models of culture change—for example, acculturation, assimilation, bricolage, creolization, culture contact, diaspora, hybridity, invented tradition, mestizaje, syncretism, transculturation, and transnationalism—foreground the dynamic and at times creative ways that colonized, captive, and subordinate populations engaged with newly imposed political systems and

cultural influences. Although there has been considerable debate about the relative strengths and weaknesses of particular models, all of these approaches emphasize change and novelty as a defining characteristic of colonial and postcolonial societies.

The earlier emphasis on “what’s new” under colonialism is now roundly critiqued by new scholarship that emphasizes cultural continuity among subaltern communities throughout colonization and its aftermath, especially indigenous and African diaspora communities. Persistence is demonstrated both through evidence of direct continuity of specific cultural practices and through

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arguments that adopting “new” cultural practices is a way that colonized peoples express enduring cultural principles and ways of being in the world (e.g., Atalay 2006; Ferris 2011; Hull 2009; Lightfoot 2005; Oland et al. 2012; Panich 2010, 2013; Peelo 2009; Rodríguez-Alegría 2008; Scheiber and Mitchell 2010; Silliman 2005, 2009, 2012; Wilcox 2009, 2010a, 2010b). These archaeologies of continuity and persistence are put forward as correctives to meta-narratives of disappearance and deculturation that have portrayed indigenous and African diaspora populations as passive victims of colonial and postcolonial events. As Panich (2013:106) writes, “While change has indeed been a large part of many indigenous histories since the onset of colonialism, archaeological approaches that equate change with loss have helped perpetuate the idea that the extinction of indigenous cultures was an inevitable outcome of colonialism.”

In the current swirl of debate between new and old, ethnogenesis has emerged as a “consensus” model that mediates between the two. There is no question that the archaeology of ethnogenesis is a booming concern: publications, conference symposia, and workshops on the topic have exploded in the past ten years, including two excellent review articles (Hu 2013; Weik 2014). During this process, the definition and application of ethnogenesis models have changed. Most nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars defined *ethnogenesis* as the emergence of new forms of identity, typically as a result of substantial historical and cultural change. More recently, ethnogenesis is presented as a dynamic model of identity formation that encompasses both change and continuity. In current parlance, what is “new”—the “genesis” in ethnogenesis—is itself an outcome of persistence and authenticity. However, this somewhat utopic definition of ethnogenesis is so broadly applied that the value of ethnogenesis as a theory of identity transformation is being lost.

This article is a call for a return to a more focused and restrained application of the concept of ethnogenesis in archaeological research. I begin by proposing that ethnicity can be viewed as a “serious game” involved in the formation and transformation of social life. I then turn to three critical topics that reveal fault lines in current ethnogenesis research: (1) identifying ethnogenesis in the archaeological record; (2) the rise of

bioarchaeological studies of ethnogenesis; and (3) the focus on subordinated communities. I conclude with suggestions for future research on ethnogenesis in colonial and postcolonial settings.

Invention vs. Authenticity: “Serious Games” in the Archaeology of Ethnogenesis

In both ancient and modern contexts, the formation, expansion, and collapse of states and empires often involve profound reworkings of identities, including ethnicities. Thus it is no coincidence that the vast majority of archaeological studies of ethnogenesis have arisen through research on colonization and its consequences (Curta 2005; Hu 2013; Voss 2015; Weik 2014). However, it is important not to mistakenly assume that empire and ethnogenesis are intrinsically linked. Models of ethnogenesis were initially formulated in the mid-nineteenth century as a response to European ideologies of national and racial purity. Ethnogenesis theories proposed instead that all modern nations arose from ongoing cultural interactions and waves of migration, each new ethnic form emerging from multiple predecessors (Moore 2004:3046).

Most archaeological and ethnohistorical studies of ethnogenesis during the early twentieth century sought to trace the antecedents of observed cultural groups, whether defined through social, linguistic, or archaeological criteria. The study of ethnogenesis was reanimated in the 1960s and 1970s through the publication of Barth’s (1969) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. Barth argued that all societies are polyethnic, all ethnic groups are internally heterogeneous, and ethnic groups develop not in isolation but through intense, ongoing interaction. This approach emphasizes ethnicity as a process of boundary-making defined through intergroup negotiation, an approach now widely adopted in archaeology (Hu 2013; Jones 1997; McGuire 1982; Stark 1998).

The emphasis on colonialism in current ethnogenesis research can be traced in great part to two key articles in North American ethnohistory: Singer’s (1962) “Ethnogenesis and Negro Americans Today” and Sturtevant’s (1971) “Creek into Seminole.” Both Singer and Sturtevant challenged the common premise that United States minority populations could be defined by race or shared ancestry. Instead, they argued that contemporary

United States ethnicities were produced through the same historical events involved in nation-building, governance, and economic development: imperialism, capitalism, military conflict, and domestic politics. Their paradigm-shifting research laid the foundation for several decades of ethno-historic and, eventually, archaeological scholarship aimed at reconstructing the historical development of “people without history” (Wolf 1982). Ethnogenesis, in this context, provides a model of how the experiences of colonization, enslavement, displacement, discrimination, and economic marginalization contributed to a sense of shared experience and interests “amongst groups and communities with, in fact, very different histories, traditions, and ethnic identities” (Hall 1989:27). While the majority of archaeological research on ethnogenesis focuses on postcolumbian indigenous and African diaspora communities in the Americas, there is also a growing application of ethnogenesis theory to precolumbian states and empires, as well as to empires in classical and medieval Europe and the Mediterranean.

In these colonial and postcolonial contexts, ethnogenesis can be understood as what anthropologists sometimes term a *serious game*: micropolitical practices undertaken by embedded social actors involved in the formations and transformations of social life (Ortner 2006). Studies of ethnogenesis highlight the fact that ethnicity is something people do, rather than something people are: ethnicity is an active, ongoing process, not a static category. Ethnicities are thus produced and maintained by bundling together symbols and practices from multiple (often divergent) antecedents and sources, along with new practices and symbols that emerge within current conditions. The recent turn towards emphasizing continuity and persistence in ethnogenesis research builds on this rhizotic model of identity formation. In particular, research that traces the historical antecedents of “new” ethnicities challenges the post-modern tendency to view identities as arbitrary signs mobilized for instrumental means. In contrast to “invented traditions” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and “imagined communities” (Anderson 1993), ethnogenesis is increasingly viewed as a process through which culture is “authentically remade” (Clifford 2004:20).

Thus in the archaeology of colonial and post-

colonial contexts, ethnogenesis research has emerged as a way to move beyond the dichotomy between change and continuity in the study of social life. In this perspective, what is made new through ethnogenesis is not, after all, so new: neo-ethnic identities can be “authenticated” by tracing the history of their formation. Many archaeologists have followed Hill’s (1996a) lead in conceptualizing ethnogenesis as “a synthesis of people’s cultural and political struggles to exist as well as their historical consciousness of these struggles,” which frames identity transformation itself as an act of persistence and resistance.

The increasing emphasis on cultural continuity in ethnogenesis research is undoubtedly connected to the serious ethnicity games currently in play. Today, laws and regulations in many countries require indigenous and minority groups to demonstrate authenticity and continuity in order to maintain their legal identities (Daehnke 2007; Lightfoot 2005; Panich 2013). In the global marketplace, ethnicity has also become a commodity (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). Historical evidence of change, including identity transformation, can be leveraged by political opponents and governments to disenfranchise indigenous and minority communities (Cipolla 2013a). Archaeological interpretations of historical identity change can pose real risks for present-day communities whose political, economic, and cultural standing is already precarious.

The heightened emphasis on continuity in most recent archaeological research on ethnogenesis is very understandable, but it also introduces some key conceptual problems. As noted above, ethnicity and other identities are practices that people do, rather than things that people are. As with all iterative social practices, both change and continuity are inherent to identities. Hu (2013:372) notes that ethnic identity formation involves not only ethnogenesis, but also ethnic maintenance and disappearance, a cycle she terms *ethnomorphosis*. Ethnicity maintenance requires continual reiteration, reinterpretation, and readjustment, a process as active as the formation of new ethnic identities. The current focus on ethnogenesis as tactic of resistance detracts from the struggles involved in *all* identity practices, blurring the analytical distinction between formation of new identities and the maintenance of existing ones.

Returning to a more narrow application of ethnogenesis theory will highlight those cases in which the emergence of new ethnicities signals breaks, ruptures, and other structural transformations of identity practices.

Investigate, Don't Assume: Is It Ethnogenesis?

For the past two decades, archaeologists have turned to the study of identity as an entry point into our research on the near and distant past (Diaz-Andreu et al. 2005; Insoll 2007; Meskell 2002). The increasing application of ethnogenesis theories to the interpretation of continuity and change in colonial contexts is without doubt related to this “massive identity discourse” (Terrance Weik, personal communication 2014). Yet researchers sometimes presume, rather than demonstrate, that ethnic identity practices are relevant to the community being studied. Whether and how ethnogenesis has occurred should be investigated, not assumed. There are two components that must be addressed: (1) whether ethnic identities were important in this context and (2) whether ethnic identities were substantively transformed.

Ethnicity itself is a slippery concept, but there are a few generally accepted guideposts: ethnicity is a “consciousness of difference” (Vermeulen and Govers 1994:4) that is negotiated both through external debates about differences between “us” and “them” and through internal contests over community self-definition. As such, ethnicities are both taxonomic (classificatory) and dialogic (interactive). Generally, ethnicities operate at scales greater than the individual or household and cut across nationality, race, class, occupation, gender, and sexuality. Typically, ethnicities reference ideologies of shared and divergent history, ancestry, and tradition. Ethnicity thus involves “a struggle to appropriate the past” (Barth 1994:13). Because beliefs about ancestry have a “sexual substructure,” “ethnic boundaries are also sexual boundaries—erotic intersections where people make intimate connections across ethnic, racial, or national borders” (Nagel 2000:109, 113).

To study ethnogenesis, it is necessary to show not only that ethnic identity practices have changed over time, but also that these changes are transformative beyond the normal fluctuations

and adaptations typical of ethnic identity maintenance. Hu (2013), Weik (2014), and Stojanowski (2010), among others, have identified several processes characteristic of ethnogenesis: (1) the emergence of well-defined ethnic practices and discourses in contexts where ethnicity was not previously a focus of social identity; (2) transformations of ethnic identity through new relations between a population and a newly dominant institution, as often occurs on colonial frontiers; (3) processes of fusion and aggregation in which diverse people are joined together in a shared ethnic identity; (4) processes of fission and disaggregation in which people with a former shared ethnicity separate into multiple new ethnic identities; (5) processes of migration and displacement through which place-based identities lose relevance and are supplanted by new ethnic identities; (6) the transformation of non-ethnic identities—religion, nationality, occupation, and so forth—into ethnic identities; (7) the development of a new ethnic identity through the shared experiences of oppression from or resistance to a dominant group or institution; and (8) the development of a new ethnic identity to legitimize or maintain unequal access to power or resources.

Although quite diverse, what these types of ethnogenesis share is a diachronic and structural transformation of ethnic identity practices. Cipolla's (2012, 2013a, 2013b) research on Brothertown Indian ethnogenesis provides an excellent example of how multiple processes can be intertwined. “Brothertown” was the name given to a multi-tribal settlement of English-speaking, Christian Indians from seven different New England settlements who relocated to upstate New York in 1773. By the early 1800s, a shift had been made from toponym to ethnonym: “the Indians residing at Brothertown” became “the Brothertown Indians” (Cipolla 2013a:59). Under pressure from Euro-American settlement, the Brothertown Indians relocated in 1831 to the Michigan Territory (now Wisconsin). In 1839, the Brothertown Indians negotiated for U.S. citizenship as a strategy to avoid further displacement under the Indian Removal Act—another transformation in identity. Material practices contributed significantly to Brothertown ethnogenesis. For example, during the first few decades of the New York Brothertown settlement, tribal ties diminished through changing

residential patterns. Burial mounds and hand-made markers were replaced by purchased and inscribed headstones, transforming mortuary practices from emphasizing tribal ancestors to honoring individual families. The 1839 negotiation for U.S. citizenship forced partition of community-owned Brothertown lands into family-owned plots, which further supported identity practices associated with nuclear families and led to geographic dispersal, as individual families were now able to sell their land. Military service by Brothertown men in the Civil War further contributed to the emergence of a second Brothertown community in Long Prairie, Minnesota. Today, these changes in identities and residential patterns have hampered the Brothertown Indian Nation's petition for Federal tribal recognition.

Many other recent archaeological studies of colonization trace the transformation of precolonial tribal identities into new ethnicities in relationship to the policies, practices, and classifications used by states and empires to manipulate and manage populations. For example, Reycraft (2005) and Nystrom (2009) have demonstrated that during the thirteenth–fifteenth centuries, Inka administrators amalgamated and merged formerly independent groups into new ethnic classifications. Scaramelli and Tarble de Scaramelli's (2005, 2014; Tarble de Scaramelli and Scaramelli 2011) studies of identity transformation during the Spanish colonization of the Middle Orinoco region of Venezuela have documented that the initial effect of colonization was to collapse specific tribal identities into a generic *indio* identity as a result of forced aggregation, missionization, debt peonage, and demographic stress. However, this initial pan-Indian identity was then fractured by labor practices, which separated *llaneros* (cattleworkers) from *indios* who hunted, foraged, and farmed. Over time, the *llaneros* became a separate ethnic group. Card (2013a), Klaus and Chang (2009), and Symanski and Gomes (2014) provide further archaeological examples of the ethnogenesis of regional and pan-Indian identities under Spanish and Portuguese colonization in Latin America.

These studies of ethnogenesis are compelling cases that involve structural transformations of social identity practices in relation to large-scale historical processes: colonialism, migration, aggregation, dispersion, and shifts in power relations

and distribution of resources. Through archaeology, researchers have traced specific changes in material and spatial relations that enabled and supported these identity transformations. In many cases, the application of ethnogenesis theories have illuminated hidden histories, restored lost genealogies, and challenged racial and ethnic essentialism by exposing the social construction of identity. Yet are all transformations of identity ethnogenesis? Are all cultural and historical changes about identity? Is ethnogenesis an inevitable result of the colonial process, or can communities resist ethnogenesis?

As Card (2013b), Silliman (2013), and Liebmann (2013) note, ethnogenesis often blurs with other models of social and cultural change, such as diaspora, hybridity, assimilation, bricolage, mestizaje, acculturation, syncretism, and creolization. All of these theories of social change concern “how new things come into being” (Liebmann 2013:27). Models of ethnogenesis apply best to those situations in which prior modes of identification are transformed and replaced by new identity practices. The San Francisco Bay area in Spanish-colonial California provides contrasting examples. There, military and secular colonists, originally classified according to the elaborate racial taxonomies of the *sistema de castas*, adopted a shared new ethnic identity as *Californios*. In this case, the adoption of the *Californio* ethnonym was the last stage of the process of ethnogenesis; it was preceded by both material and discursive practices that rejected racial designations, emphasized commonalities among colonial settlers, and accentuated the differences between colonists and Native Californians. The emergence of *Californio* identities was not simply a renaming; it signaled the transformation of identification practices from racial taxonomies to a new ethnic identity based on shared cultural practices, including those that reinforced a hierarchical distinction from local indigenous populations (Voss 2005, 2008a, 2008b).

In contrast, Native American communities indigenous to the San Francisco Bay area have been ascribed a range of new ethnonyms: *indios*, *gente sin razón*, *costaños*, Coastanoan, and Ohlone. Ohlone is the term most commonly used now; however, most Ohlones today describe themselves in ways that continue precolonial practices of identifying oneself with one's ancestral village:

Chochenyo Ohlone, Muwekma Ohlone, Rumsien Ohlone, and so forth. Although there have been enormous historical changes among San Francisco Bay area native communities from colonization to the present, the continued use of ancestral village identification is a signal of persistence, rather than transformation, in social identity practices across these centuries (Field et al. 1992; Leventhal et al. 1994; Medina 2014).

Recent research on historic African diaspora communities has also reexamined the relationship between ethnonyms and ethnogenesis. Weik's (2009, 2012) detailed research on ethnogenesis among the nineteenth-century African Seminole town of Pilaklikaha, Florida, focuses on community-building rather than ethnonyms. While African Seminoles have typically been studied as examples of creolization, Weik (2012:49) uses the concept of ethnogenesis to focus on the organizational factors necessary for collective life: "How did groups create coherency despite the potential divisions that arose from linguistic, religious, personal, cultural, and political distinctions between various African, European, and American-born participants?" The ethnonym "African Seminole" is thus a marker of cooperation, not homogeneity. Similarly, Fennell (2007) coins the term "ethnogenetic bricolage" to study the relationship between cosmology and ethnogenesis among African-descendant communities in the Americas. For Fennell (2007:9), ethnogenesis is "a creative process in which individuals raised in different cultures interact in new settings, often at the geographic crossroads of multiple diasporas... In time, these social relationships can solidify into new, cohesive culture groups that articulate their own shared meaning system." Cosmological symbols, rather than ethnonyms, feature prominently in Fennell's analysis: he demonstrates that core symbols, such as the Christian crucifix, are flexible signs that can be displayed in instrumental ways for individualized purposes, such as private worship, or in emblematic communications that present a cohesive group identity.

One of the most pointed critiques of ethnonym-based ethnogenesis research concerns culture-history taxonomies in archaeology. The culture-history approach, in which archaeologists define and assign names to "cultures" in the past based on assemblages of co-occurring artifacts or stylistic

elements, generates ethnonyms. Tautologically, changes in archaeologically defined cultures have then been studied as examples of ethnogenesis (Childe 1926), a practice that persists despite substantive critiques (Bowlus 2002; Brather 2002; Curta 2002; Fehr 2002; Gillett 2002a; Jones 1997; Murray 2002; Pohl 2002; Weik 2014:296). The application of ethnogenesis theory to archaeologically defined ethnonyms emphasizes discontinuities rather than continuities in the archaeological record. In colonial and postcolonial contexts, this can have the practical effect of obscuring ties between present-day indigenous communities and the lands and cultural products of their ancestors (Panich 2013; Silliman 2009, 2012; Zimmerman and Makes Strong Move 2008). However, others have argued that ethnogenesis theory is a tool for decolonizing culture-history archaeology precisely because it demonstrates that archaeologically defined ethnonyms result from dynamic historical processes (e.g., Denbow 2012; Erdosy 1995; Hornborg 2005).

The debate about the relationship of ethnogenesis models to culture-history taxonomies brings to the fore the second major concern about the current explosion in ethnogenesis research: are the historical and archaeological changes being studied actually related to social identity? Ethnogenesis, Bowlus (2002:241) writes, has become "the tyranny of a concept," foregrounding ethnicity at the expense of political, economic, military, and religious change. "We should ask," Gillett (2002b:18) notes, "whether this concern with recreating ethnic identities does not frame the wrong questions." The most pointed critiques of ethnogenesis research are emerging out of the archaeology of classical and early medieval Europe, where theories of ethnogenesis have been used to interpret the relationships between classical Greek and Roman empires and the diverse populations within their borders and along their frontiers. Building on European culture-history taxonomies, ethnogenesis researchers argue that the rise of ethnic identities in northern Europe occurred through processes that drew people of very heterogeneous backgrounds into new ethnic communities, where they adopted shared cultural practices and developed traditions of common origin. Along frontiers, this process of ethnogenesis provided an ideological cohesion that expanded the scope of political

leadership and military coalitions beyond communities sharing lineal descent (for summaries of this research, see Bowlus 2002; Brather 2002; Gillett 2002b; Murray 2002; Pohl 2002). Ethnogenesis, in this context, was an engine for the historical transformation of Europe: the rise and decline of the Roman Empire has been described as a history of “ethnicity being harnessed” (Enloe 1980:210, cited in Whittaker 2009:189).

Critics of ethnogenesis question whether ethnicity was actually a central and motivating political force during classical, late antiquity, and medieval Europe and the Mediterranean. For example, Brather (2005) suggests that Roman imports found in elite graves in first- and second-century Germania were likely evidence of diplomatic gifts or payments related to Roman political manipulation of Germanic leaders, rather than evidence of culture change among Germanic peoples. A parallel example from North America can be found in Saunders’s (2012) reevaluation of ceramics in Spanish-colonial Florida; she argues that changes in Native American ceramic forms and decorations during colonization were more likely a response to market forces rather than a reflection of changes in ethnic identities.

The former consensus that “empires produce and cultivate new ethnic communities, while denying, marginalizing, or even destroying existing ones” (Derks and Roymans 2009:4) is thus under increasing scrutiny. Further, a growing number of case studies document examples of communities resisting the adoption of ascribed ethnic identities or developing new identities that counter ethnic discourses. Restall’s (2004:82) study of the Spanish-colonial Yucatan documents “Maya” communities that have never fully embraced this ethnonym and in practice have a muted sense of ethnic identity: “In a sense, then, the Maya struggled for centuries in the face of steady opposition *against* their own ethnogenesis.” Hughes (2012) and Baram (2012) argue that social life in colonial and postcolonial Florida was characterized by cosmopolitanism, in which social actors held multiple citizenships and performed overlapping identities, rather than ethnogenesis. Both in the past and today, the shared communal identity of “local” among many Hawai’ian residents cuts across diverse racial and ethnic identities without muting or erasing these differences (Barna 2013; Kraus-

Friedberg 2008). Delle et al.’s (2011) research on the formation of Jamaican identity, reflected by the national slogan “out of many, one people,” is similarly an example of an identity discourse—in this case, national belonging—that celebrates poly-ethnicity rather than ethnogenesis.

These and other examples indicate that the archaeology of ethnogenesis is at a crossroads. Some studies of ethnogenesis increasingly foreground authenticity and continuity of identity, departing from the original objectives of ethnogenesis theory as a model of identity transformation. At the same time, a growing number of archaeologists are beginning to critically reassess whether the focus on ethnicity and ethnogenesis in colonial and postcolonial contexts is detracting from the study of economic, political, military, and religious dynamics. The recent introduction of bioarchaeological evidence to studies of ethnogenesis complicates the matter even further.

Whose Body Is This? Ancestry, Reproduction, Genetics, and Identity

The use of bioarchaeological evidence is the most rapid area of growth in ethnogenesis research in the past ten years. Mirroring the trend towards continuity and authenticity discussed above, the majority of bioarchaeological studies use skeletal evidence to demonstrate intergenerational population continuity in the midst of changing ethnic identities. Bioarchaeological research on ethnogenesis is especially drawing attention to the last stage of Hu’s (2013) cycle of ethnomorphosis (ethnogenesis, ethnic maintenance, and ethnic disappearance). Who, many bioarchaeological studies ask, are the populations that are biologically descended from members of vanished ethnicities? As van der Spek (2009:103) notes in his research on ancient Mesopotamia, “ethnic groups frequently disappear”; today, there are Greeks, Jews, and Egyptians, but there are no Sumerians, Babylonians, Chaldaeans, Thracians, or Batavians. But the cultural disappearance of these ethnic groups does not mean that they left no biological descendants. Recent bioarchaeological studies are drawing renewed attention to the power-laden political processes through which some ethnicities come to an end while others persist, especially under colonialism. The term *ethnocide* is increasingly used

to describe the intentional, and at times violent, suppression or erasure of an ethnic identity under colonial rule (Klaus and Chang 2009; Kurin 2012, 2014; Little 1994; Stojanowski 2009; Symanski and Gomes 2014). Stojanowski (2010) additionally suggests the term *nomocide* to describe how past ethnonyms have been irrevocably lost through historical invisibility. Thus one of the key concerns of bioarchaeological research on ethnogenesis, ethnocide, and nomocide is to demonstrate that the loss of an ethnicity does not mean the disappearance of the people or their descendants who were once associated with that ethnicity.

Stojanowski's (2005, 2009, 2010) research on Native American Seminole ethnogenesis provides an especially nuanced and comprehensive example. Since Sturtevant's (1971) "Creek into Seminole," Seminole identity formation is thought to have occurred through eighteenth-century migration of Georgia Creek Indians into Florida, replacing Florida's local indigenous populations. Using biodistance data derived from dental analysis, Stojanowski demonstrates biological continuity among Florida's indigenous population through a sequence of microevolutionary events related to colonization and its aftermath. During 1600–1650, early Spanish-colonial missionization resulted in a short-term decrease in biological integration as a result of the disintegration of intertribal networks. However, biological integration rapidly increased during 1650–1706, so that by the end of the mission period, the native communities of Florida comprised one biological population. Stojanowski interprets this as a liminal period of ethnogenesis, the formation of a new "pan-Spanish Indian." Small groups of "pan-Spanish Indians" then migrated to Georgia, taking refuge with diverse Creek communities. They shortly returned to old Florida mission lands in the mid-eighteenth century as Seminoles, an ethnonym derived from *cimarrones*, the Spanish-colonial term for runaways. The English, who seized control of Florida in 1821, treated the Seminoles as a newly arrived population, unaware of their ancestral connections to Florida. Stojanowski's findings have clear implications for present-day indigenous political and economic issues: "Seminole ethnogenesis should be viewed as a conscious return to ancestral lands by peoples whose identities were replaced in the colonial period but preserved in the physical remains of their

bodies ... As such, there is a direct biological *and* social connection between the Apalachees, Guales, and Timucuas of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and Creeks and Seminoles of the eighteenth century" (Stojanowski 2010:10–11).

Bioarchaeological research is also challenging prior interpretations that attribute indigenous culture change to colonialism and population replacement. Ortman (2010, 2011) integrates archaeological, linguistic, biological, and cultural heritage sources to reevaluate the history of Tewa ethnogenesis in Northern New Mexico. He concludes that Tewa ethnogenesis was not a result of migration or colonialism but of religious transformations that occurred prior to Spanish incursion. Seymour (2012) similarly uses archaeological and genetic data to examine the ethnogenesis of Navajo communities, arguing that an ongoing migration of small groups of Athapaskan-speaking peoples from Alaska and Western Canada to the U.S. southwest occurred for an extended period of time prior to Spanish colonization. For early medieval England, Härke (2011) combines archaeological data, stable isotope analysis, mtDNA analysis, and modern Y-chromosome DNA analysis to investigate the historic ethnogenesis of Anglo-Saxon identities, demonstrating that indigenous Britons persisted as a biological population despite dramatic cultural changes involving widespread adoption of introduced Germanic cultural traits.

Bioarchaeological research on ethnogenesis is especially prevalent in Peru, where the concept is used to study the survival of populations throughout the rise, expansion, and collapse of states and empires. Sutter (2009) uses dentally derived biodistance data to evaluate the ethnogenesis of the Ciribaya polity in the political vacuum created by the collapse of the region's Tiwanaku and Wari colonies. He argues that the Ciribaya were former Tiwanaku colonists who migrated to coastal areas, expressing a new ethnicity through ceramics and textiles. Nystrom (2009) uses evidence of genetic diversity to argue that Chachapoya ethnogenesis occurred through the amalgamation of a collection of previously semi-independent groups as a result of Inka conquest. Klaus and Chang's (2009; Klaus 2013) research at San Pedro de Mórrope in the Lambayeque Valley investigates how Mochica residents of the region negotiated identity under

Spanish colonization. The asymmetrical power relations introduced during the early Spanish-colonial era caused depopulation, decreased birthrates, chronic disease, and poor nutrition. They conclude that the Mochica survived through a rapid process of ethnogenesis that included microevolutionary changes resulting from new patterns of intermarriage, resulting in a biologically homogenous colonial-era Mochica population.

The introduction of bioarchaeological evidence to ethnogenesis research raises pressing questions about the relationship between the body and social identity. Nineteenth-century proponents of ethnogenesis theories argued *against* a biological basis for identity (Moore 2004). The increasing use of bioarchaeological analysis in ethnogenesis research unwittingly reinforces racialized models of identity that locate the “truth” of social identity in the body. Bioarchaeological research on ethnogenesis has also been, to date, especially tone-deaf in its engagement with issues of gender and sexuality. At its core, bioarchaeological studies of microevolution and population continuity are tracing the outcomes of sexual reproduction, often euphemistically referred to as “mate exchange” or “intermarriage.” Yet only a small subset of sexual acts result in conception and birth of new offspring (see Abelove [1989] and Weismantel [2004], among others, for further discussion of this point). Bioarchaeological studies of intergenerational genetic transmission simply cannot account for the full range of kinship structures and sexual and non-sexual relationships that contribute to communal identities (e.g., Brooks 2002). Additionally, adoption, godparenting, non-reproductive sexual relationships, friendships, and partnerships may be especially instrumental in the formation of new communal identities. However, because these relationships are not defined through biological reproduction, these important social connections are not visible in archaeological studies that use biological and genetic markers as a proxy for social communities.

Taking Stojanowski’s (2005, 2009, 2010) research on Seminole ethnogenesis in Spanish-colonial Florida as an example, it seems likely that the dramatic social transformations that Seminole ancestors endured—missionization and conversion to Christianity, demographic collapse due to introduced disease, fugitivism and remigration—all

likely had profound effects on gender and sexual dynamics in indigenous Florida communities. Was sexual violence one of the tactics of colonization used in La Florida to subdue and control indigenous populations, as it was in other areas of the Spanish Americas? Did Christianization at La Florida mission introduce new religious norms about sexuality, including monogamy, abstinence before marriage, and the sanctity of procreative intercourse, all of which would have reshaped biological reproduction? Did some members of the pan-Spanish Indians who relocated to Georgia have offspring with Georgia Creek Indians? These and related aspects of the sexual politics of colonialism (Voss and Casella 2012) have not been taken into account in bioarchaeological studies of ethnogenesis.

Another issue of concern is the potential “practical effects” (Cipolla 2013a) of foregrounding the biological body in research on ethnicity. With the advent of inexpensive and rapid genetic testing, public fascination with the genome as a source of truth about the self has rapidly increased. For-profit companies such as 23andMe and Ancestry.com now offer genetic “ancestry reports” for about \$100 per test. These reports allocate the test subject’s heritage, by percentage, to distinct geographic areas bearing national titles and ethnonyms. Popular television shows, such as Henry Louis Gates Jr.’s “Finding Your Roots,” feature celebrity genetic testing, promising that “[s]ecrets encoded in their genomes [will] challenge these guests’ ideas about their families’ histories and their identities today” (THIRTEEN Productions LLC 2014).

Because of my research on Spanish-colonial *Californio* ethnogenesis (Voss 2005, 2008a), in recent years I have been frequently contacted by present-day *Californios* who offer to share their DNA test results and sometimes ask for help in interpreting these results in relation to historical and archaeological sources. DNA ancestry testing has been especially appealing to some *Californios* because colonial records describing their ancestors’ *casta* are inconsistent. For example, one soldier at the Presidio of San Francisco was described in 1782 as *mulato* (mixed race, with African ancestry) and in 1790 as *mestizo* (mixed race, with Native American ancestry) (Voss 2008a:89–90). The fluidity in *casta* classification on the Spanish-colonial frontier is one of the conditions that enabled the colonial settlers to eventually reject the *sistema de*

castas altogether. For present-day descendants, however, this ambiguity can be frustrating. Today, *Californios* do not fit neatly into any of the major racial or ethnic categories commonly used in the United States. In oral history interviews, many *Californios* shared experiences of being challenged by others (friends, bosses, co-workers, doctors, or police) to explain, “What *are* you?”

It is ironic that today some *Californios* are turning to genetic testing to resolve questions about their identity more than 200 years after their ancestors successfully rejected the racially based *sistema de castas* in favor of a shared ethnicity. Both inside and outside of archaeology, the turn to the body as a site of “truth” about identity reinforces racialization—the projection of perceived cultural differences and social hierarchies onto the biological bodies of social subjects. As a recent article about celebrity DNA testing quipped, “Thanks to cheap mail order kits now available from dozens of labs, DNA ancestry testing is disrupting our pre-conceptions about what we consider race to be. A person who self-identifies as black, white, Asian, or Hispanic may not be” (Arogundade 2013)—in other words, identity is only a perception, but genetics are real.

Bioarchaeologists studying ethnogenesis are typically very careful in their writing to avoid racializing language. Yet the emphasis on population continuity in the midst of cultural change has the practical effect of reinscribing the nature/culture ontology that diminishes the “realness” of ethnicity. This research raises key epistemological and ethical questions for the archaeology of identity. What is the relationship between identity and ancestry, and between social reproduction and biological reproduction? To what degree are social identities shaped and formed through reproductive sex acts and through the relationships that result from those acts? Is a “people” with a shared communal identity the same as a biological population?

Beyond Ethnic Victims: A Call to “Study Up”

Overwhelmingly, archaeological studies of ethnogenesis focus on the subaltern: those communities and populations whose lives and cultures were disrupted by macroscale political

processes, including colonization, enslavement, displacement, forced migration, and economic deprivation. Ethnogenesis, in this view, is a weapon of the weak (Scott 1985), a way of authentically remaking culture under circumstances beyond a community’s control (Clifford 2004), and an outcome of the shared struggle to resist and survive the dehumanizing forces of domination (Baram 2012; Gobble 2014; Hill 1996b, 2013; Matthews et al. 2002; Weik 2009, 2012; Weisman 2007). Yet as Hu (2013) notes, ethnogenesis does not only occur as a struggle against institutionalized inequalities; it is also a strategy for legitimizing or maintaining unequal access to power or resources. This type of ethnogenesis “may unfortunately also be the most enduring. Because the ruling or dominant groups in unequal societies also are responsible for the political-legal framework, the categorizations produced by the dominant group have an overarching legitimacy” (Hu 2013:387). Since most archaeologists studying ethnogenesis in colonial contexts are investigating the relationship between power and identity formation, it is surprising how little research on dominant group identity formation has occurred. It is time to follow our ethnographer colleagues in *studying up* (Aguiar and Schneider 2012; Nader 1972): conducting research on those holding positions of structural and hegemonic power.

Deagan’s (1983, 1990, 1998) long-term research program on Spanish colonization in the circum-Caribbean is perhaps the first archaeological study to trace ethnogenesis among colonial settlers. Her research illuminates not only how colonizers exercised power, but also how Native American and African communities shaped colonial culture. “European invaders,” Deagan (1998:31) concludes, “did not necessarily control the outcomes of interaction and cultural formation.” Bawden’s (2005) study of ethnogenesis in the Late Moche (A.D. 600–750) town of Galindo, Peru, is also notable for tracing the relationship between changes in elite and commoner identities. Bowden demonstrates that, during this period, Moche leaders turned to pan-Andean Wari symbolism to express their identity. In response, commoners forged new identities through rearticulation of local spiritual practices within the domestic sphere. These new values and practices

widened the culture distance between elites and their subjects.

Bell's (2005) research on the ethnogenesis of racial "whiteness" in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Chesapeake region of Virginia provides another key example of the value of studying up. For planters, a shared identity of "white" emerged through the racialization of labor relations, naturalizing the planter's status as "free" in contrast to the enslaved African and African-American workers on their plantations. The development of white solidarity involved practices of social and economic interdependence, which stood in tension to capitalistic ideologies of private property and economic autonomy. Significantly, Bell's research provides an important window into a period of time in which the American racial category "white" was very much in flux. My research on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century *Californio* ethnogenesis (Voss 2005, 2008a) traces the transformation of formerly colonized people into colonists. While *Californio* ethnogenesis was fundamentally a rejection of racializing taxonomies in favor of a shared regional colonial identity, it was not an abandonment of hierarchy: *Californio* ethnogenesis also rationalized and legitimated colonial dominance over Native Californians. Both Bell and I conclude that the routinization of power in daily life is a key foundation in the ethnogenesis of dominant identities.

Looking Ahead: What Is the Future of Ethnogenesis Research in Archaeology?

Nassaney (1989:85), writing of Native American experiences under colonialism, stated, "I maintain that continuity and change are not mutually exclusive processes, but rather that they articulate in a dialectical relationship... a group need not maintain cultural isolation and biological purity to assert cultural autonomy and ethnic solidarity." The recent groundswell of research on continuity, authenticity, persistence, and endurance in ethnogenesis research is in many ways a renewed articulation of Nassaney's position. Ethnogenesis theory has become a particular problem for native communities today because the constructivist social science theory undergirding ethnogenesis research is at odds with governmental and dominant cultural expectations rooted in essentialism

(Cipolla 2013a:189–192). As Panich notes,

Thus while constructivist frameworks like ethnogenesis offer one way to understand the (re-)creation of indigenous social groups, often as an intentional strategy through which native peoples negotiated colonialism, the term *ethnogenesis* itself can in some instances suggest a break with the past ... persistence may help to mitigate the tensions between constructivist and essentialist understandings of identity for indigenous groups today that are seeking federal recognition and/or the repatriation of ancestral remains [Panich 2013:117–118].

Both Nassaney's argument about the dialectical relationship between change and continuity and Panich's proposal to shift from ethnogenesis (identity transformation) to persistence (cultural survival) raise important questions about whether models of ethnogenesis should continue to be applied to the archaeology of colonialism. My own position is that there is still considerable value in ethnogenesis studies as a "theoretical genre" (Weik 2014:292) but that it is also time to return to the question posted in the title of this article: "What's new?"

Theories of ethnogenesis engage with macroscale conditions and microscale social practices that lead to the emergence and formation of new identities. Since identity maintenance involves continual adjustments to new circumstances, changes in material, symbolic, spatial, and discursive practices alone are not themselves sufficient evidence of ethnogenesis. Similarly, simple shifts in ethnonyms, without other cultural changes, are not strong indications of ethnogenesis. This is especially true regarding the "ethnic" identities assigned by archaeologists through culture-history taxonomies and the ethnonyms recorded by colonial administrators: the relevance of these ascribed ethnicities to the communities under study needs to be demonstrated, not assumed. Researchers also need to be especially careful not to interpret holding multiple identities—for example, citizenship + nationality + ethnicity—as itself an indication of ethnogenesis, as such layering may serve to preserve, rather than transform, prior identity practices.

Models of ethnogenesis will be best applied to those historical circumstances in which practices

of identification are structurally transformed. As the examples presented throughout this article suggest, these transformations in social identity are often spurred by substantive demographic shifts—aggregation, disaggregation, displacement, and migration—combined with the emergence or imposition of new structures of power. Both of these conditions commonly occur within colonial and postcolonial societies. The conceptual move towards persistence and continuity in the archaeology of colonialism should not be used to obscure the actual ruptures and transformations in identity practices. Such transformations are especially evident among colonizing populations, and the relative lack of archaeological attention to ethnogenesis among elite and dominant communities has been a fault of much ethnogenesis research to date.

Overall, perhaps the question we should be asking is not just whether a certain case represents ethnogenesis, but how and when new claims of ethnic belonging emerge as important aspects of social subjectivity. Because ethnicity is a process through which insiders, outsiders, and institutions draw boundaries and classify people, ethnicity involves membership in a political community (Hu 2013:375). “This kind of self-consistent person,” Verdery (1994:37) writes, “who ‘has’ an ‘identity’ is a product of a specific historical process.” Hu (2013:373) has observed that ethnicity is part of “seeing like a state” (Scott 1999) because it makes social complexity more legible to outsiders. Comaroff and Comaroff (2009; Comaroff 1987, 1996) suggest that ethnic identities arise in reaction to threats against the integrity and self-determination of a community. They differentiate ethnicity from other meaningful forms of communal consciousness that express difference in non-hierarchical ways.

Asking the question “What’s new?” thus provides a means for archaeologists to begin to explore the relationship between persistence and continuity, on one hand, and rupture and transformation, on the other. At its core, ethnogenesis research investigates when and how particular practices of communal belonging become politicized and transformed in specific historical circumstances. The study of ethnogenesis lays bare the historical contingency of identities and, in doing so, invites investigation into the “serious games” through which people shape the outcomes of

macroscale historical phenomena such as colonialism and its aftermath.

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