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# **INTIMATE ENCOUNTERS**

# An Archaeology of Sexualities within Colonial Worlds

Eleanor Conlin Casella and Barbara L. Voss

Although archaeological studies of the historic past have long explored the dynamics of European colonialism, broader issues of sexuality, embodiment, commemoration, reproduction, and sensuality have only recently become acknowledged as essential components of the "imperial project." How can we better appreciate the material implications of human sexuality when we come to interpret these complex colonial worlds? Ranging from anticipated and pleasurable, to strategic and even involuntary, these intimate encounters are not merely by-products of colonial projects but are fundamental structures of colonization. This volume offers a unique exploration of this sensitive topic by presenting a series of comparative and contrasting archaeological case studies on the multifaceted intersections of colonialism and sexuality.

#### **DEFINITIONS AND THE POLITICS OF COMPARISON**

To appreciate the complexities of this thematic conjuncture, very broad definitions of the key subjects were adopted. Diverse forms of *colonialism* – loosely identified as the process of expansionist settlement and sociocultural replication adopted by various cultural groups through human (pre)history – were contrasted with practices of *imperialism* – which is more often understood as referring to centralized, appropriative, militaristic, and often violent projects of conquest and dispossession. Both colonialism and imperialism can be found in prehistoric and classical examples, as well as in the political, economic, and administrative expansion of Western nation-states over the Early Modern era.

Similarly, our approach to sexuality encompasses the many "tense and tender ties" (Stoler 2001) that bind together political, institutional, economic, emotive, affectionate, and familial aspects of the social lives that unfolded in both metropole and colony. Contributions to this volume have approached *sexuality* as a broad assemblage of socialities and affects – a constellation of embodied and expressive human intimacies – that range from the seductive, pleasurable, and erotic, through



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the familial, parental, nonnormative and homosocial, and into the involuntary, strategic, and exploitative. Ultimately, we seek to illuminate the *sexual effects*, in their many and diverse material forms, wrought throughout past colonial worlds.

The shift to this focus on sexual effects in colonial contexts is at the core of the comparative project undertaken in this volume. As discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2 (Voss), the historical contingency of both colonialism and sexuality poses theoretical and methodological conundrums for comparative study of empire. Yet despite these challenges, recent comparative archaeological research on colonialism has generated new and important perspectives on empire. Significantly, in the 2000s, archaeologists have forged new comparative analyses among prehistoric, classical, and modern empires through projects such as Hall's (2000) Archaeology and the Modern World and Gosden's (2004) Archaeology and Colonialism, along with multiauthor volumes such as Alcock et al.'s (2001) *Empires* and Stein's (2005) *The Archaeology* of Colonial Encounters. Other archaeologists have turned to the comparative study of modern empires, as in Rothschild's (2003) and Lightfoot's (2005) investigations of the variable impacts of Spanish colonialism versus Dutch and Russian mercantilism, respectively, in North America. Likewise, the multiauthor volume The Archaeology of Contact in Settler Societies (Murray 2004) traces the specific material dynamics of settler societies and their effects on indigenous communities in North America, Africa, Australia, and New Zealand.

There are three consistent themes that emerge from these diachronic and synchronic archaeological comparisons of empire. First, archaeology's strength as a discipline is its fine-grained attention to the "on-the-ground" consequences and negotiations of empire, particularly among those who are subject to colonial rule. It is largely through the archaeological record of frontier settlements, mission and military outposts, and mercantile ventures that scholars have been able to trace the ways in which imperial objectives were enacted in practice. Second, archaeological research reveals an internal variability of empire that belies overt, structural conditions. The "differences" that mark colonization are located not only between the colonized and colonizer but also lie within the conflicting interests and differing commitments of those involved in colonial projects. The third finding, which is inseparable from the second, is that indigenous and subaltern responses to colonialism are equally variable: those subject to empire create new social and political worlds that are in negotiation with colonial powers but are far from being determined by them. Similar to Fernando Coronil's (2007) formulation of "imperial effects," these archaeological findings point toward the importance of situated and contextual analysis of empire - in other words, a methodological perspective in which empire is investigated through the experiences of those entangled with colonial projects.

In this volume, we extend this emphasis on the effects of colonialism to ask new questions about sexuality itself. What were the sexual and sensual dynamics of colonial encounters? How can archaeology's interrogation of materiality illuminate the embodied, objectified, spatial, reproductive, and sensual components of the new interactions generated by colonialism? How does colonial use and control of sensuality render sexuality as a strategic marker of social differences within imperial projects? How is it that different, and sometimes contrasting, experiences of

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sexuality can be generated through colonial encounters – with new sexualities ranging from exotic pleasures, creative expressions, and hybrid cultures, to oppressive, ambivalent, and coerced transactions? Finally, how can diachronic and transregional comparisons expand our analysis of the logics and hierarchies of sexuality within colonial contexts?

#### IMPERIAL INTIMACIES AND COLONIAL ENTANGLEMENTS

The origins of this volume can be traced back to a dedicated symposium theme delivered as part of the Sixth World Archaeology Congress (WAC-6), held in Dublin, Ireland, in July 2008. The symposium theme, "Intimate Encounters, Postcolonial Engagements: Archaeologies of Empire and Sexuality," arose out of our concern that archaeologists have tended to minimize sexuality in their studies of colonial, colonized, and postcolonial societies. Accordingly, we invited participating scholars to reexamine and reimagine archaeological research in ways that confront sexual silences in the archaeology of the colonial past and present. In particular, we challenged researchers to consider what archaeology's methodological emphases on place, material culture, and representation could uniquely bring to studies of sexuality and colonialism.

The international dialogue fostered by the WAC-6 symposium both demonstrated the promise of this inquiry and brought to light the challenges facing archaeologists investigating colonial sexualities. We came to realize that this project required a strong cross-disciplinary connection between the archaeology of colonialism and postcolonial studies of gender and sexuality, two bodies of scholarship that have until now only been weakly linked. Compounding this difficultly is the relatively late development of sexuality studies within archaeology, a factor attributed as much to recalcitrant attitudes within the discipline as to the methodological challenges involved (Voss 2008).

To develop more fully our interdisciplinary dialogue into this book, we convened a research project that combined web-based collaboration with a two-day intensive working session at Stanford University in the spring of 2009. The contributing authors were recruited from those present at the WAC-6 symposium as well as other scholars whose research interests and experience could uniquely contribute to the project. Dialogues among contributors before and during the Stanford working session began to transform conventional archaeological approaches to colonial sexualities.

Contributions to this edited volume explore an important array of new interpretive directions by reassessing and expanding our material appreciations of sexuality and colonization. By emphasizing the unique contributions that an archaeological approach delivers to our broader scholarly understandings of colonial and sexual encounters, the collected chapters all fundamentally consider how an interrogation of *materiality* itself illuminates the embodied, objectified, spatial, reproductive, and sensual dynamics of these new social interactions. Moreover, the sustained dialogue among the authors contributing to this volume has allowed the specific colonial situations under study to be situated within the broader context of diachronic and transregional imperial patterns.



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Further, the studies presented here question how different, if sometimes contrasting, experiences of sexuality became generated through the experience of colonial encounter. A central node of investigation is the tense relationship between the oppressive sexual regimes generated by colonial projects and the newer exotic pleasures, creative subjectivities, and affective relationships that are forged within and alongside ambivalent and coerced sexual transactions.

Finally, to better articulate specific case studies within a comparative framework, contributions have considered how a range of other pivotal structural changes classically associated with colonialism – the development of capitalism, the commodification of bodies, the politics of reproduction, the consolidation of state infrastructures, and the emergence of modernity – shaped historically specific vectors of sexual encounters throughout imperial worlds. Ultimately, by adopting this broad comparative approach, contributions to this volume demonstrate how our unique *archaeological* approach expands wider scholarly debates over methodological and epistemological approaches to understanding human sexualities.

#### TOWARD AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF MATERIAL INTIMACIES

Together, the sixteen case studies published in this volume extend our understanding of how human sexuality – in its many profound and mundane, subtle and explicit, situated and diverse expressions – powerfully shaped both the internal dynamics and the enduring legacy of the imperial project. These case studies are preceded by this introductory chapter and by Chapter 2, "Sexual Effects: Postcolonial and Queer Perspectives on the Archaeology of Sexuality and Empire" (Voss), which outlines the theoretical debates that inform this project.

Although a web of connections and contrasts exist throughout the book, the chapters presented here have been loosely clustered into four overlapping themes: Pleasures and Prohibitions, Engaged Bodies, Commemorations, and Showing and Telling. We have deliberately resisted the tendency to organize the chapters according to region or time period, for we have found that it is precisely the juxtaposition of unfamiliar imperial contexts that can sharply reveal the commonalities and diversities inherent to colonialisms.

The book concludes with a chapter contributed by Martin Hall. Widely recognized as a pioneering scholar in comparative research on colonization, Hall also was among the first archaeologists to directly consider sexuality as a core component of imperial projects (Hall 1995, 2000). Here, he reflects on the particular methodological challenges involved in the archaeology of colonial sexualities and identifies directions for continued development of this area of research.

#### Pleasures and Prohibitions

Chapters within this initial section explore the contrasting effects of sexual encounters by considering the political, economic, and societal constraints that govern the expression and consequences of sexuality within colonial worlds. They examine how nonnormative sexual relationships were navigated and what types of intimacy, affect, labor, (re)production, and domesticity were maintained through these sexual



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connections. Together, the chapters within this first cluster illuminate how material culture actively participated in the creation of new sexual relations within past colonial worlds.

"Pleasures and Prohibitions" opens with Chapter 3, contributed by coeditor Eleanor Conlin Casella. By exploring the materiality of Nursery Wards within the female-convict prisons of nineteenth-century colonial Australia, Casella illuminates the painful disruptions of maternal affect within the context of British imperialism. By similarly challenging our traditional models of colonial domestic settlement, Casella's study examines childhood, mothering, and involuntary labor as an embodied "sexual effect" of Britain's policy of imperial transportation and penal servitude. Combining archaeological and archival sources, Casella exposes the profound material dynamics of sexual objectification and maternal idealization that infused these exiled carceral worlds.

In Chapter 4, Lindsay Weiss develops this critique of the heteronormative domestic through her study of intimate masculine household relations in the latenineteenth-century Diamond Fields of South Africa. Exploring the dynamics of sexual and marriage relations among these African mine workers, Weiss considers the materiality of same-sex domestic space and matrimonial enactments within the segregated space of African worker housing. By considering the material circulations of the intimate male couple, Weiss demonstrates the subversive role of these sexual households within the British colonial context.

Further challenging our traditional perceptions of heterosexual relations, Sarah K. Croucher's study of the clove plantations of nineteenth-century coastal East Africa (Chapter 5) explores the material dynamics of sexual relations within the daily domestic practices of colonial Islamic plantation households. Through her archaeological interpretation of a specific excavation region of the site as the house of an enslaved concubine, Croucher questions our normative assumptions of household constitution, sexual connections, and underlying material relations of exploitation, identity, well-being, and strategic freedom.

The section concludes with Mireia López-Bertran's analysis (Chapter 6) of Punic clay figurines from the Spanish Baleric Islands created over the sixth to second centuries BCE. Her investigation specifically illuminates the diverse gender and sexual identities that may be interpreted from the physical attributes depicted on these anthropomorphic shapes. Drawing from queer theory as a means for transcending the traditional dualities of masculine versus feminine identity, López-Bertran suggests that these clay figurines can be understood as an active ritualization of sexual activities and pleasurable sensations, thereby incorporating a far wider array of intimate encounters and gendered identities than is typically embraced.

#### **Engaged Bodies**

The five chapters clustered in the section "Engaged Bodies" focus on the material consequences of demography, reproduction, domestic labor, desire, and the "making" of gender. By considering the dynamics of sexual encounters through an intersection of biological and sociocultural practices, these chapters investigate the embodied aspects of sexuality within colonial contexts. How do these pivotal



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sexual effects demonstrate the complex relationship between projects of empire and colonized bodies? What corporeal aspects of colonial sexualities can archaeology illuminate?

Chapter 7, contributed by Diana DiPaolo Loren, begins these inquiries through a close analysis of material culture related to the body, especially artifacts of bodily adornment, that were excavated from the Grand Village of Natchez, an eighteenth-century Native American mound and village complex. She argues that differing ideologies of the body between Natchez Indian and French colonists resulted in both the construction of new specific identities and sensory miscommunications. What, Loren asks, is the relationship between desire and fear in colonial sexualities? How do the participants in colonial encounters negotiate the novel choices available to them in clothing and adorning their bodies?

With Kathleen L. Hull's contribution, "Death and Sex" (Chapter 8), the discussion turns to a more explicitly biological concern with the relationship between birth rates and death rates in colonial contexts. Epidemic diseases introduced through colonial projects frequently resulted in catastrophic mortality among indigenous populations; these demographic consequences often preceded the face-to-face colonial encounters that are usually the subject of archaeological inquiry. Hull postulates that survivors of colonial-era epidemics likely engaged in a critical reexamination of sexual taboos and marriage practices as communities sought to rebuild demographically viable populations. Through a long-term diachronic investigation of archaeological and ethnohistoric data from Yosemite Valley, California, Hull finds that sexual choices made by epidemic survivors include population aggregation and a willingness to enter into unions with outsiders. This finding may shed light on the frequent patterns of sexual involvement between native women and male colonists in imperial contexts.

In Chapter 9, Kay Tarble de Scaramelli extends Hull's consideration of the bodily impacts of imperialism through an investigation of the long-term consequences of colonial Jesuit missions in the Middle Orinoco region of northern South America. Evidence of settlement patterns, rock art, and ceramic remains from former residential sites of indigenous people offer a revealing glimpse of their lives as they struggled to confront the challenges of colonialism. Like Hull, Tarble de Scaramelli is concerned with reproduction, particularly the changing relations between indigenous men and women as they enter the Catholic missionary system. Under the colonial regime, some indigenous women were empowered by their productive capacities, both biological and agricultural, and negotiated social mobility through conversion to Catholicism, commodity production, and, in some circumstances, marriage outside their birth community.

Russell N. Sheptak, Kira Blaisdell-Sloan, and Rosemary A. Joyce turn toward the labeling of bodies in their investigation of the Honduran pre-Columbian and colonial town of Ticamaya (Chapter 10). Ticamaya was one important site in the complex development of the "casta system," a Spanish-colonial legal taxonomy that classified bodies according to an ideology of cross-racial reproduction. Through recursive analysis of archaeological and documentary evidence, Sheptak, Blaisdell-Sloan, and Joyce show that that the supposedly immaterial domain of sexuality is indeed material, in both the substantive and the theoretical senses.

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The "Engaged Bodies" section concludes with coeditor Barbara L. Voss's study of imperial policies and sexual practices in San Francisco, California (Chapter 11). Voss juxtaposes two historical contexts that are rarely considered together: the Spanish "discovery" and subsequent settlement of the San Francisco Bay region in the late eighteenth century and, 150 years later, the influx of Chinese immigrants to the same region in the mid-nineteenth century following the United States' annexation of California. Through close attention to the spatial organization of bodies, particularly the bodies of male laborers, Voss reveals structural consistencies that bridge colonial and postcolonial historical contexts. In both eras, the intersection of racial segregation with sexual regulation profoundly disrupted heterosexual domesticity and generated new homosocial contexts in which relationships among men became increasingly central to daily life.

#### **Commemorations**

This section interrogates the material dynamics between colonial sexualities and memory, demonstrating how ideas of kinship, lineage, affiliation, and belonging are invoked to sustain both families and communities within colonial worlds. Exploring how commemorations provide a material focus for both ancient and contemporary groups, chapters within this section consider the deployment of sexual heritage to acknowledge strategic ancestry, kinships, and public identities.

"Commemorations" begins with Ana Delgado and Meritxell Ferrer's comparative analysis of household deposits and burial practices in Phoenician and Punic diaspora communities in Iberia and Sicily during the eighth and sixth centuries BCE (Chapter 12). Material culture from domestic and funerary contexts of these two colonial settings reveals an everyday life marked by the cohabitation of people of different origins. Delgado and Ferrer's investigation exposes the tensions between the different sexual politics that surrounded the legitimation of colonial power in living practice and in commemoration of the dead.

The concern for commemoration of the dead in colonial contexts continues in Chapter 13, in which Renata S. Garraffoni offers a nuanced reading of the epitaphs found on gladiators' tombstones in the Roman Empire. Comparing epigraphic evidence from Rome and Cordoba, Garraffoni traces the nuanced differences in the commemorative practices used by the gladiators' lovers and spouses to memorialize their deceased loved ones in the colonial metropole and on the frontier. The material culture of the monument prompts a rethinking of violence, sexuality, and Roman identity and brings the voices of mourning women to the forefront in tracing subaltern negotiations of empire.

Chapter 14, by Patricia E. Rubertone, similarly explores the tensions that arise through the sexual politics of monuments in her research on colonialist monuments in the New England region of the United States. There, colonialist monuments and commemorations underrepresented and misrepresented Native women and imposed alien notions of space that discouraged indigenous movement across the commemorative landscape. By attending to Native people's memories and experiences of place, Rubertone reveals how Native women reappropriated colonialist monuments as theaters of action and memory where public performances critiqued

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colonialism, affirmed cultural knowledge, and challenged their own and their communities' invisibility. Here, Rubertone demonstrates how archaeology, as a hybrid practice, is crucial to decolonizing European Americans' narratives about indigenous gender and sexuality.

The section "Commemorations" concludes with Pedro Paulo A. Funari and Aline Vieira de Carvalho's investigation of the memorialization of *maroon* communities in present-day Brazil (Chapter 15). Populated by escaped slaves, indigenous peoples, foreigners, and other refugees from imperial settlements, *maroons* were communities that formed under colonial conditions yet actively challenged colonial rule. Today, *maroons* have become touchstones for theorizing resistance to colonial structures of power and for rhetorical arguments about pluralism in present-day Brazilian society. Funari and Carvalho pay special attention to the political consequences of interpretations of *maroon* polyandry in this exploration of archaeology and memory.

### Showing and Telling

How do we articulate the intimate encounters of colonial sexuality? The chapters in this final section explore both public and private experiences of sexual expressions, erotic materiality, and commodified desires. Emphasizing variations in sociosexual hierarchies, these case studies engage with the material flexibilities of identity, ethnicity, gender, nationalism, and taboo. Questions of ethics infuse these chapters, as the authors consider the politics of exposing the necessary silences of the past. How do colonial objects, spaces, and people become sexualized? What does it mean when we satisfy *our* yearnings for these hidden, yet ever present, subjects?

This section opens with Shannon Lee Dawdy's genealogy of Storyville, New Orleans's early-twentieth-century red light district (Chapter 16). Dawdy traces the link between twenty-first-century tourist desires, twentieth-century legalized prostitution, and New Orleans's colonial past through archaeological case studies of two female-owned hospitality sites (The Rising Sun Hotel and Madame John's Legacy). She demonstrates that from the earliest French-colonial days, the city was gendered in a quite literal fashion. Both white women and women of color possessed the land, the buildings, and the goods that serviced male travelers – soldiers, sailors, hunters, traders, and merchants. Following the Louisiana Purchase, which included New Orleans in the newly annexed territory, to the United States, male adventurers and business travelers built on this history as they imagined themselves taking pleasures from an exotic, feminine city. The contemporary tourist gaze builds on the historic desires of colonial and postcolonial male travelers.

In Chapter 17, Nick Shepherd turns our attention toward the intimacy that arises in relation between an archaeologist and his or her materials – the intimacy involved in the act of knowledge construction. Focusing on two early-twentieth-century encounters involving the South African archaeologist John Goodwin and the indigenous people of the Cape – one group living, the other deceased – Shepherd uncovers the centrality of imagination and desire in the making of archaeological knowledge. His analysis traces the subtle and overt forms of violence that shadow archaeological practice. How do the intimacies of knowledge production create categories of the unshowable, unspeakable, and unthinkable?



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The final case study in this volume, Chapter 18, presents Mary Weismantel's engagements with "Obstinate Things," notably the Moche "sex pots" produced on the North Coast of Peru during the first millennium. Despite the overwhelming impact of colonialism and neo-colonialism, these objects obstinately refuse to be completely silenced. Weismantel challenges archaeologists to pay greater attention to sensual and bodily interactions between the archaeologist and the artifacts they study. Moving beyond ahistorical and phenomenological approaches, Weismantel demonstrates the possibilities for embodied archaeological methodologies that are grounded in the political-economic conditions that motivated production of particular objects. Attending to the sensuality of archaeology decolonizes archaeological thinking by decentering logocentric forms of analyses that are themselves a product of Western colonizing processes.

## SEXUAL EFFECTS, MATERIALITY, AND COLONIAL WORLDS

Together, these case studies demonstrate that intimate encounters, particularly when viewed through the prism of the colonial past, are far from being by-products, or mere accidents, of the imperial project. Instead, profound social, political, ethical, and economic dynamics shaped, and continue to shape, these sexual expressions. The material legacy and sexual effects of these intimate encounters created powerful signatures within the archaeological record – hidden transcripts we are only now starting to recognize, appreciate, and interpret. Ultimately, by providing an explicitly comparative multiperiod and transregional approach, this edited volume significantly expands our traditional understandings of social archaeology to illuminate the material dynamics of intimacies, of sensualities and bodily experiences, of affects and emotions, and – ultimately – of *sexualities* within past colonial worlds.

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