PROLOGUE

Unaffiliating the Past to Affiliate with the Present

Recognition that the past is never dead, and that archaeological remains are deployed in the ongoing production of multiple and dynamic identities, will support the development of engaged and constructive relationships between archaeology and living communities. – Siân Jones, personal communication 2017

This is a study of ancestors and relationships, culture continuity and change among peoples without written histories and lacking clear connections with living descendants. The study is also a bit personal, as it investigates a region where I was born and raised, where my parents still reside, and where my great-grandparents settled, lived, and are buried. I was away from the region for more than a decade while becoming a professional anthropological archaeologist, and after returning I have spent much time looking anew at my native surroundings.

A major issue I have noticed as I have thought deeply about the region's past is that our contemporary anthropological understanding of culture composition and change has not been used to more fully understand the archaeology of the region. I suspect this is a problem that also pertains to many other archaeological contexts, and it is crucial to begin developing solutions as it limits not only our understanding of the past but also connections between it and living people. The present study is a step toward such a solution and an exploration of the inadequacy of some of our present archaeological constructs for more fully understanding the shifting composition of the populations we study. In essence, I explore how issues of archaeological complexity and affiliation ambiguity are related. I argue that we are in a very poor position to know to whom the past belongs because we do not adequately understand what the past was. This prologue sets the stage for the study by considering the importance of making such cultural connections and the sensitivity of the main issues involved.

I argue herein that only by reconstructing archaeological cultures and examining more clearly defined social contexts within a larger frame of

reference can we better understand their position vis-à-vis contemporary Native American cultures. This new frame of reference sets up a different way to assess descendant relationships with what I argue are more productive results. I conclude, in the case examined here, that it is not possible to link single contemporary tribes to single archaeological cultures. A more productive approach is to identify macro groupings of shared traditions that relate living descendants to archaeological villages. I refer to this method as the direct macrohistoric approach, which is effectively a broader interpretation of the well-known direct historical approach (for details of the direct historical approach, see Lyman and O'Brien 2001).

Unfortunately, much of the baggage of outdated approaches remains with us, including culture types, artifact types, and so on. It is nitpicky to eschew all such types, for, on some level, we need them to communicate (Spencer 1997), but some of these constructs are more damaging than others. This is particularly true for those that incorrectly categorize people into groups for which there are no living descendants, as if they no longer exist. The most obvious problem is the need to refrain from drawing cultural boundaries around archaeological entities that we are unsure whether or not were ever bounded, for the implications for continuing to do so are large indeed. I suggest that we need to start from a different place, one that examines small social units such as clans, moieties, and villages before trying to investigate larger social contexts such as polities or cultures, for it may well be in these smaller units that we find the most meaningful information to facilitate linkages between past and present peoples. While units such as clans, moieties, and villages are also types, they are less damaging because they do not imply ethnicity. Moreover, we know that in early historical contexts in the study region villages formed the limits of political integration and were the primary contexts in which ethnic relationships were forged (White 1991: xiv, 17).

This study demonstrates that, in at least a small portion of the Middle Ohio River Valley, there has been good reason for our inability to identify cultural affiliation according to a paradigm that seeks connections between singular archaeological cultures and historical tribes. The argument presented in this book is that this attempt does not work, for if it did, cultural connections would have been definitively made long ago. However, if we take a different approach, one that incorporates known variation and takes advantage of contemporary culture theory, we are left with a different solution. It is not a goal of the present study to make cultural affiliations, since such identifications are self-accomplished (Jones 1997), but I do think the present study provides new and useful information about potential connections between living descendants and ancient cultures that should assist with that goal (*sensu* the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act [NAGPRA]). In so doing I support the political

implications of archaeological research (Cobb 2014). I further feel that if such issues are not addressed in an intellectually responsible way, such as in the present study, then the worst case is that affiliations will be made that omit relevant groups (*sensu* Robb and Pauketat 2013), which would be an immense loss for rightful cultural heirs to archaeological pasts (Kintigh 2007).

Data obtained from human burials that were excavated long before the passage of NAGPRA form a key portion of the present study. Because these ancestral remains are understandably sensitive to many Native Americans, it is important to approach such matters with a good mind and a good heart, to "keep one's thoughts above the trees" (Jerry Wolf, quoted in Howe 2001), which I have strove for in these matters. Burials are no longer excavated in the study region by professional archaeologists, out of general respect to contemporary Native Americans, and in some instances state laws prohibit the disturbance of such remains. However, there are sizeable groups of previously excavated burials from some sites, which are currently housed in various museums. I have analyzed many of these burials for the present study with the primary goal being to fully investigate questions of cultural affiliation. This adheres well with the observations that the only justification for the study of human skeletal remains is that the information is useful to living people (Walker 2008; see also Larsen and Walker 2004). Such a justification is particularly important in this case, as research on Native American burials is often viewed by some contemporary descendants as being extremely harmful to them and the spirits of their ancestors (Sadongei and Cash Cash 2007). My intention is for the current study to facilitate affiliation, with no disrespect to Native Americans and their ancestors. If descendant cultures were known, I would not have undertaken such research without their approval and, preferably, direct involvement. However, and importantly, approval and research guidance was provided by a local Native American group (see discussion that follows).

I am sympathetic to the negative view some Native Americans have toward some archaeologists, particularly in those instances when the latter have treated the former "in a detached and somewhat pejorative fashion" (Trigger 1980: 662). Moreover, there have been several cases of archaeologists excavating Native American graves with known descendants who disapproved of the activity but had no means to halt it. But this behavior needs to be understood in its own cultural context, when researchers were often trying to show that Native Americans were the descendants of particular archaeological cultures. A key example of this problem is the Moundbuilder Myth that held that ancient mounds in the Eastern United States were often too large and complex to have been constructed by living Native Americans. Data obtained through excavation of ancient graves were used to correctly link these mounds with living Native Americans (Thomas 1894). What

would the outcome have been without such examinations? In my case, not examining extant human remains would similarly be leaving out a key piece of the puzzle with the resulting picture being much more equivocal as to cultural affiliation, which would work against the goal of facilitating connections to living descendants. Exploring this paradox is the bigger purpose in writing this book.

At the time of the passage of NAGPRA in 1990, a key observation was made that the divide between bioarchaeologists and Native Americans was not a debate of "science versus religion" or "right versus wrong," but one of competing cultural value systems (Goldstein and Kintigh 1990; Walker 2008: 13). The representatives of these competing cultural value systems hold very different views of resource use, definition, significance, and ownership (Winter 1980: 124; see also Goldstein and Kintigh 1990). Of most relevance to the present study are human burials. According to many Native Americans, individuals should remain interred, where they are integrated with the earth and have completed the circle of life (Bray 1995; Halfe 1989). However, NAGPRA is not just about reburial but about employing Native American concepts that can often involve that outcome, the results of which will be a fundamentally different way of perceiving the past than is the case in currently standard archaeological narratives. For example the past is often a powerful force in the present for Native Americans (Anyon 1991). As such, reburial can be seen as a major homecoming and corrective for colonial oppression (Murray and Allen 1995; Sadongei and Cash Cash 2007).

> We talk about people coming home. When the people came home from the museum and are buried at home, they all go and visit every house. This is where the joy comes in. They are home. They are here. They walk around through the village and become part of us again. That's all we are asking.
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> (Tallbull 1994, quoted in Walker 2008: 21)

In contrast to this Native American perspective, a strong scientific orientation, such as is associated with much contemporary professional archaeology, strives for objectivity and views the past as part of a singular humanity, the study of which benefits us all. Scientific archaeologists also have a strong preservation ethic so as to make it possible for future studies to replicate results, utilize new methods, and/or investigate new hypotheses. This ethic, however sensible it may seem from a scientific angle, often galvanizes major conflict over the disposition of human remains in contrast to the ethical principle that descendants should have the right to decide where an ancestor's remains are located and how they are treated (Walker 2008: 26).

This issue is obviously a complex and important one that I find myself deeply committed to on both sides, but I am not directly taking it on in the present study; however, it looms large in the background. It stays in the background at this point for the simple reason that connections have not been established between past

and present cultures. When this is accomplished in my study region and more broadly, and if there are then true collaborative efforts at investigating the past, I feel the best insights will come. At present, in my case and others like it, it is premature to speculate on which parts of the past are or are not appropriate to investigate or in what ways are best to go about doing so. Ultimately, we may learn far more by not investigating certain things or examining them in new ways. Such will be the nature of true cross-cultural learning, which is much needed in all forms in contemporary times.

The only case in the study region I am aware of where Native Americans and archaeologists have worked together is what is best considered to be a case of joint custody (see Walker 2008 for a similar example from another region). The following discussion is not meant to imply that this is the best way; however, in "culturally unaffiliated" regions (see Chapter 1) it seems to be a very responsible one. The case of joint custody refers to the SunWatch site, near Dayton, Ohio. Over the course of excavations in the 1970s and 1980s at this archaeological village, some Native Americans residing nearby understandably grew concerned about the disinterment and curation of human remains. In short, they wanted a different home for the remains, one that was more in line with their own traditions. This began the ongoing cooperative relationship between Native Americans and the Dayton Society of Natural History (DSNH). A formal relationship began in the 1980s (before NAGPRA), when an independent group formed that was known as the American Indian Advisory Council (AIAC). The group included a broad range of members comprised of interested Native Americans. The AIAC's concern was that they wanted the human remains to be reinterred in the earth in their original locations. The DSNH's concern was that they wanted the human remains to be preserved for future study and protected from vandalism, the latter being a long-standing problem at the site.

The solution to the SunWatch burial dilemma that resulted in the formation of the AIAC in relation to the DSNH met the concerns of both parties. A modern mound was constructed just outside of the archaeological village that housed a sealed, temperature-controlled vault that was secured with two locks, one owned by the AIAC and one owned by the DSNH (Figure P.1). Soil from the site was placed with each of the burials, which were arranged within the vault in a pattern similar to where they were originally located in the village. Access to the vault would occur only when both parties agreed, which could include regular cleaning and maintenance of the storage facility as well as analyses. Over the last few decades, there were several studies that focused on these burials, some of which were initiated by the AIAC. For example, one of the AIAC members suggested the strontium analysis with paired direct dates that was undertaken for the present study.

As the SunWatch site case of curated reburial demonstrates, there are ways to blend varying cultural views; it need not always be a choice between

FIGURE P.1 Photograph of SunWatch burial vault (used with permission from the Dayton Society of Natural History)

one or the other. We desperately need to continue to foster the development of such overlapping worlds where new systems of meaning/exchange can be created. Such middle grounds will factor heavily into my analysis of the cultural pattern expressed by Fort Ancient peoples and their descendants (see Chapter 7) but may also serve as a model for future collaborative study. With recent enforcement of NAGPRA concerning cases of "culturally unaffiliated" remains such as SunWatch, the AIAC is no longer in existence as consulting at a larger scale than that of locally interested Native American groups was deemed necessary. So the future of such collaborations that resulted in some of what follows in the present study is yet to be determined, but I am optimistic that the best is yet to come on this front.

To achieve the goals I have introduced here for the present study, I have organized the chapters as follows. Chapter 1 introduces the Fort Ancient culture and situates the problem of reckoning its composition and descendants in the broader context of a fundamentally flawed archaeological framework related to compartmentalizing past peoples in various guises of what has been referred to as the "savage slot" (Trouillot 1991). Chapter 2 critically evaluates Fort Ancient as a cultural construct. In doing so, key methodological issues are raised that require a smaller regional focus as well as more careful consideration of typological and temporal issues. Then the particular scope of the present project is defined. This is followed by Chapter 3 in which the general and specific concepts associated with contemporary understandings of cultural hybridity, migration, and memory are outlined and set within a macroevolutionary theoretical framework. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the cultural and natural landscape of the study region including sites used

in the analysis, along with a summary of their chronological sequence. The following chapters move chronologically through the data, beginning with Chapter 5, which explores the interplay of local Woodland populations and non-local Mississippian migrants as they relate to initial Fort Ancient cultural developments. The dissemination of this newly formed Fort Ancient culture to subsequently occupied villages is investigated in Chapter 6. The focus here is on the time when Fort Ancient culture became a clearly defined entity, with an overall hybrid village pattern. The general grammar of village layout was clear by this time and included the full importance of the central pole, clan and moiety organization, corporate household composition, and village authorities oriented to war and peace. In Chapter 7, the focus is on the end of the Fort Ancient archaeological culture in the study region when there were major changes in diet and material culture without a marked alteration in village layout. This chapter also discusses various push and pull factors that contributed to what may well have been multiple departures of Fort Ancient peoples from the study region in the mid-fifteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries. I argue that the basic village form was retained and continued to serve the main function for which it developed, to integrate peoples from varying backgrounds, but that persistence of this form of organization may also have led to the decision to leave rather than change this fundamental organizing principle of their culture. Finally, Chapter 8 briefly summarizes the main conclusions of the study regarding how multiple contemporary connections to Fort Ancient culture are valid, connecting present and past in a new and more productive way. The epilogue brings the volume to a close by coming full circle back to points raised here in the prologue, with a focus on how archaeology can indeed be a force for change in our contemporary cultural landscape, setting the stage for future collaborations to develop.