

## FORUM

### ARCHAEOLOGY AND ORAL TRADITION: THE SCIENTIFIC IMPORTANCE OF DIALOGUE

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*Scientific archaeology and indigenous oral traditions have long been estranged. While there appears to be something of a thaw in recent years, the terms of epistemological engagement are unclear. Are these different modes of constituting the past heuristically compatible at all? Or should they, as the postmodernists would avow, simply be treated as alternative narratives in the intractable culture wars, where the privileged truth-claims of science are dismissed as a spurious arrogance? Focusing on an example from Hopi oral tradition, this paper argues that objective archaeological explanation can gain a great deal, without any loss of analytical rigor, by treating oral traditions not as scientifically unassimilable myths but as a primary source of evidence and interpretation of past social formations. The need for dialogue, then, is important not just as a matter of multicultural diplomacy, but for the enhancement of scientific explanation itself.*

*Hace mucho tiempo que se apartan la arqueología científica de las tradiciones orales indígenas. No obstante que recientemente ha aparecido algo de mejoramiento, todavía falta aclarar las condiciones de empeño epistemológico. ¿Son en modo alguno heurísticamente compatibles estos modos diferentes de constituir el pasado? ¿O, como mantienen los postmodernistas, se deben tratar como narrativas alternativas en las peleas culturales intractables, en que se rechazan las pretensiones de verdad privilegiadas de la ciencia como una arrogancia espuria? Enfocado en un ejemplo de la tradición oral hopi, este artículo razona que la explicación arqueológica objetiva puede aprovechar mucho—sin ningún daño de rigor analítico—por tratar las tradiciones orales no como mitos no asimilables a la ciencia, pero como una fuente primaria de evidencia y interpretación de las formaciones sociales pasadas. Así, la necesidad del diálogo es importante no sólo como un asunto de diplomacia multicultural, sino también para el enriquecimiento de la explicación científica misma.*

Recent discussions in *American Antiquity* (Echo-Hawk 2000; Mason 2000) focus on the compatibility (or “commensurability”) of different cultural measures for understanding the past. Ronald Mason, who argues for archaeology as a science, insists that if the oral traditions/histories of indigenous societies are not testable in the manner of archeological hypotheses, they should be rejected. Roger Echo-Hawk favors a more humanities-like archaeology as culture history and argues for the inclusion of indigenous accounts of the past, even when this produces multiple, even antithetical, accounts of the same phenomena. While both cited authors offer measured conclusions and share a good deal in common regarding the aims of explanation, their positions reflect a broader schism that is often less measured, both within the discipline of anthropology and more generally in the academy, as evidenced by the so-called “science wars” and “culture wars.” One side of the schism sees an unproblematically

objectively presumed knowable via epistemologically transparent schemes of explanation; the other side foregrounds social interest in any process of interpretation. The latter suggests that disinterested interpretation is impossible, and the more radical versions suggest there is no such thing as objective truth, only positional perspectives.

A major archaeological battleground for these questions lies in studies of the Native American past, though similar situations exist worldwide. At the extremes stand Vine Deloria, Jr. (1995), who claims scientific explanations of the Native American past are “mythical,” on the one hand, and those archaeologists who argue for hypothetico-deductive schemes of explanation based only on environmental and other material variables, on the other. Between these two extremes there appears no possibility at all for dialogue. Among the more thoughtful positions, however, is a middle ground that retains epistemological rigor and the capacity for analytical judgment,

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while being open to enhancement by legitimate oral tradition, considered as a fund of additional evidence and explanation. Over-emphasis on hard science risks neglecting vital evidence that might greatly enhance explanation of the past. But free-for-all relativism, where each account is as good as any other and is only accountable to criteria of judgment (“my grandfather told me, so it must be true”) unsusceptible of evaluation means an interpretive Tower of Babel. Philosophically speaking, differing accounts of the past must intersect in certain important respects, or they are not accounts of the past, but of something else. Historical consciousness in some form I take to be a human universal, even though its schemes and contexts of expression vary significantly. My view is that a great deal of human experience, pertaining for instance to production and reproduction, is cross-culturally similar, and the ways of describing it therefore commensurable, if we but seek hard enough (Whiteley 1998:14–15). Languages—yes, even “timeless” Hopi—are intertranslatable, and while translation may, because of differences in cultural emphasis (say, of worldview), be difficult, I reject the idea that it is a priori impossible. For you and I to think that, we would already have to have made a tacit (interpretive) agreement on the basic premises of our difference.

In order to substantiate my claim that oral traditions have significant archaeological value, let me first examine the problem of “history” in anthropological discourse. I will then turn to a fairly detailed example of a clan-migration narrative from Hopi oral tradition, recorded in the 1880s, in order to evaluate its historicity.

#### **Paradigms of Knowledge: Science and “The People without History”**

In 1963, Lévi-Strauss (1966:233–234) sorted human societies into two types, “cold” and “hot.” “Cold” societies have “myth,” while “hot” societies have “history.” “Mythic thought,” in Lévi-Strauss’s view, deploys a sense of the past that is inflexible, absorbing historical events as they occur into a “timeless,” unchanging set of cultural ideas and values (“to annul the possible effects of historical factors on their equilibrium and continuity” [1966:234]). Myth—or, to use a current substitute, “traditional history”—is markedly sacred narrative and includes magical events and supernatural causes that often metaphorically condense historical consciousness of the past.

“Hot” societies, by contrast, emphasize discontinuities: history as differentiation of the present from the past, or “progress,” in a word, rather than persistence (“resolutely internalizing the historical process and making it the moving power of their development” [1966:234]). “History” (of which prehistoric archaeology is a branch, for my present purpose) seeks patterned accounts of past events involving human agents in causal processes.

Lévi-Strauss had sought to improve on the Western prejudice that genuine “history” exists only in the West, whereas the “Rest” are “peoples without history.” But his analysis in effect reconfirmed the great divide, merely giving greater theoretical sophistication to a position that had been normative since the Enlightenment (cf. Gates 1986:11). Still, in 1987, for example, historian Calvin Martin reaffirmed the dichotomy between Western academic and Native American accounts of the past, on the grounds that the worldviews of both are radically incommensurable: “The appeal of American Indians for many of us scholars . . . has precisely to do with their astounding ability to annul time, their remarkable capacity to repudiate systematically time and history” (1987:16). Such scholarly judgments effectively deny objectivity to any Native American histories, consigning them to a cognitive dump without explanatory value in relation to the past. Indeed, reflecting such a prejudice, both Robert Lowie (1915) and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (1952:3), in two famous denunciations of indigenous history, effectively obviated their inclusion in anthropological explanation for much of the twentieth century.

Scholarly denial of validity to oral histories has effaced them, producing a sense that they really do not exist—they are, again, just “myth.” The result is that, in anthropological discourse, oral tradition is for the most part ruled out as a historical source; if it’s not written down, or if it’s not manifestly encoded in the material record, it’s not history (or archaeology). Yet in spite of this prejudice against the oral, ever since the first records of indigenous explanatory discourse, the “native” has been speaking historically, as it were. The “earliest Indian autobiography” (Krupat 1989:149), that of Black Hawk (Jackson 1990 [originally 1833]), is a case in point.<sup>1</sup> The opening page begins with the “Tradition of His Nation” (Jackson 1990:41–46), an account of an inherited Sauk narrative of migration from the vicinity of Montreal to Wisconsin. Contrary to the

anthropological prejudice against the historical value of oral tradition, historians regard Black Hawk's account as a "sketchy but basically accurate account of Sauk and Fox history as we know it" (Jackson 1990:46). Like Black Hawk's, other indigenous migration narratives that dwell on named places form a substantial portion of many oral traditions, and anthropologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (like Fewkes, Gatschet, and Swanton) treated them a good deal more seriously than the scientific anthropologists and archaeologists of more recent times.

### Myth vs. History

Some salutary strides have been made in recent years toward treating indigenous histories as genuinely historical. A rapprochement between the disciplines of anthropology and history provides some models for transcending the great divide of "myth" and "history."<sup>2</sup> If we are to move closer to historical understanding, we must first reject the great scholastic fiction of "mythic" vs. "historic" societies. Myth discernibly includes empirical descriptions of objectively historical events and practices (cf. Bloch 1989). The bible, for example, is a classic case of a mythological text, with historical elements embedded in it (e.g., Leach and Aycock 1983). Notwithstanding its originally oral basis, the bible's very textuality enables it to be conceptualized as including history more easily than is the case with oral mythology, owing to engrained—though largely unexamined—ideas about the supposed instability and unreliability of oral narratives in the Western cult of the written word. And, while anthropologists from Malinowski on have sometimes characterized myth as a legitimating charter of present interests (e.g., Malinowski 1948), as a form of consciousness that projects the social values of the present onto the past, any critical perspective on Western historiography worth its salt similarly identifies presentist ideological interests in even the most apparently straightforward historical narratives.

All narratives of the past are coded (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1966:257)—they must correspond to a structuring principle for the identification of significance. Like many historians more recently, Lévi-Strauss's skepticism that any history is value-neutral is clear: "history," he says, is "never history, but always history-for." Similarly, Sahlins's very definition of history—as "value in a temporal mode" (1981:5)—

foregrounds the cultural determination of any historical narrative. In this light, the accounts of prehistoric archaeology are just one kind of "history-for" and are as attached to forms of social interest, that are indeed often ideological, as others (cf. Kohl 1998).

Scientific archaeologists may protest that their explanations are distinguished from oral traditions by criteria of testability or falsifiability.<sup>3</sup> But in my own experience, Pueblo oral historiography clearly attends to its own canons for evaluating truth-claims and appraising the plausibility of particular accounts of the past. For example, in Hopi clan histories, there is no disagreement that the Snake clan came from the archaeologically known site of Tokdonavi (near Navajo Mountain), or the Water clan from Homol'ovi (near Winslow, Arizona). These are entrenched features of a corpus of Hopi narratives (serially recorded since the late nineteenth century), and anyone who, say, were to make the reverse claims would be dismissed as a know-nothing: in other words, the account would be subjected to critical standards of historical judgment and invalidated. The logic linking secondary statements to such traditional authorities (such as a statement that the Snake clan has eagle-collecting rights in the Tokdonavi vicinity, because that is its ancestral area) is thus not dissimilar to secondary elaborations attached to "basic premises" in scientific-archaeological hypotheses.

In short, the prejudice lingers that myth, as in everyday usage, is false whereas history is true. We must insist that mythological and historical consciousness appear in all societies' accounts of the past (cf. Connerton 1989; Fentress and Wickham 1992). If the two categories continue to have value, they are more appropriately considered *aspects* of how the past is accounted for in *all* societies. Mythological aspects include magical events, supernatural agencies, condensed metaphors, and culturally located causes. Historical aspects address discontinuous events with human agents as a primary causal force, including conflicts, movements, and locatable occasions and positions of specific social actions. Moreover, wherever specific actions cannot be directly accounted for, they are frequently subsumed under a structured explanatory category that embraces known cases perceived as isomorphous. Such conceptual schemes are not unlike hypotheses. As a Hopi elder put it when visiting one of his clan's ruins at Navajo National Monument, "all these cliff-dwellings

were built for defense," suggesting an explanatory generalization from the oral tradition of specific sites that was premised upon an organized structure of significance.

### The Politics of Truth

All accounts of the past (including both mythological and historical aspects) involve a politics, and this may be the most difficult stumbling block against intercultural consensus. Both mythological and historical accounts underwrite present social interests, and those often reflect conflict and competition. Archaeologists frequently claim (implicitly or explicitly) that their knowledge is not just different from indigenous knowledge, it is fundamentally better (indeed within their academic framework, this claim to authority is a vital part of their ongoing survivability). Indigenous oral historians, conversely, often claim a parallel privilege for their knowledge on the basis of its ritual contexts and its authorization by religious beliefs. Both claims to authority involve a politics of those who get to define what is truth in a particular social system, and such truth underwrites claims to power (cf. Foucault 1980). But some of these privileged claims must be at least partly suspended if we are to gain useful common ground. While according full epistemological respect to differently constituted histories, we need to assess the exact *terms* of difference, the grounds of similarity, what may be proposed as a conjoint perspective, and what must remain as difference.

### A Hopi Example

The attention in Hopi histories to specific, named village sites as ancestral homes of particular clans has been documented by anthropologists for more than a century. Migration traditions of other contemporary Pueblos similarly identify specific ruins, often in very specific terms, as ancestral villages. There was early anthropological interest, notably by Victor Mindeleff (e.g., 1891) and Jesse Walter Fewkes (e.g., 1900), in Hopi clan histories to explain the ruins around Hopi country. But for the most part, such traditions have been rejected since the 1920s as unworthy of serious attention by prehistoric archaeologists (cf. Thomas 2000:91–101).<sup>4</sup> Long antipathy to the perils of "ethnographic analogy," i.e., from present Pueblo life to the past, has had the practical effect of precluding archaeological use of and inquiry into indigenous oral traditions. In general texts on

Southwestern archaeology, the nod to Pueblo descendance is quickly overridden by an exogenous paradigm of archaeological "cultures" ("Paleoindians," "Basketmakers," "Anasazi," etc.) that have little or nothing to do with how descendants of those cultures describe their pasts. While there is some shift from "Anasazi" to "Ancestral Pueblo" in recent archaeological discourse, and while there is nascent attention to tracing historical forms archeologically (e.g., Adams 1991; Crown 2000; Schaafsma 2000; Ware and Blinman 2000), archaeological methodologies are typically not designed to pose questions in terms, say, of Hopi, Zuni, or Keresan origins and migrations. One does not see discussions organized into such categories as "ancestral Hopis," "ancestral Keresans," or "ancestral Zunis."

By contrast, in a text of classical archaeology—that other discipline that appears somehow estranged from its prehistoric cousin—the fact that a particular group of ancestral Greeks or Trojans built a particular site is of paramount importance, and its appropriate explanation and interpretation would be unthinkable without subsequent contemporary textual references and other archived information about Greek or Trojan cultural history. The difference again is the prejudice in favor of textualized pasts, written records, rather than the often densely coded historical reports of oral narratives. But simply because oral traditions are densely coded and do speak simultaneously in a variety of cultural registers (cognitive, natural-historical, psychological, religious) as well as the directly historical, this is no grounds for simply ignoring their historical value. And written records, such as diaries, journals, even official reports, are certainly no less interpretively problematic, as historians currently recognize. Yet Southwestern archaeologists have often been willing to take literally Spanish exploratory or colonial records without problematizing their textuality.

Following emergence into the present world, the Hopi separated into groups that migrated through different areas. Each group became a separate clan and built several villages along its path back to Hopi. As they left a village, marks like petroglyphs and potsherds were considered memorials of their presence and guarantors of their ancestral interest: the ruins, Hopis say, are the footprints of their migrations. Eventually the migrants neared their destiny, Tuuwanasavi, the earth's center.

For example, in the 1880s, the chief of First

Mesa's Water clan (probably Aanawita) recounted the following:

In the long ago, the Snake, Horn and Eagle people lived here [at Walpi on First Mesa], but their corn grew only a span high, and when they sang for rain the cloud god sent only a thin mist. My people then lived in the distant Pa-lát Kwá-bi [Palatkwapi] in the South. There was a very bad old man there, who, when he met any one, would spit in his face, blow his nose upon him, and rub ordure upon him. He ravished the girls and did all manner of evil. Baholikonga [Paalölöqangw, the Plumed Water Serpent deity] got angry at this and turned the world upside down, and water spouted up through the kivas and through the fireplaces in the houses. The earth was rent in great chasms, and water covered everything except one narrow ridge of mud; and across this the serpent deity told all the people to travel. As they journeyed across the feet of the bad slipped and they fell into the dark water, but the good after many days, reached dry land. While the water was rising around the village the old people got on the tops of the houses, for they thought they could not struggle across with the younger people; but Baholikonga clothed them with the skins of turkeys, and they spread their wings out and floated in the air just above the surface of the water, and in this way they got across. There were saved of our people Water, Corn, Lizard, Horned Toad, Sand, two families of Rabbit, and Tobacco. The turkey tail dragged in the water—hence the white on the turkey tail now. Wearing these turkey skins is the reason why old people have dewlaps under the chin like a turkey; it is also the reason why old people use turkey-feathers at the religious ceremonies [Mindeleff 1891:31].

The narrator next mentions several villages in the south after Palatkwapi, where the Water clan lived subsequently. Of these, Fewkes notes:

From Kuñchalpi, the most ancient pueblo of the Patki, probably in the Palatkwabi region, they went in turn to Utevacá, Kwíiapa, Jettipehika (the Navaho name of Tcúbkwitalobi or Chaves Pass), Homolobi (near Winslow), Sibabi (near Comar Spring), and Pakatcomo (4 miles from Walpi). The last four ruins have been identified, and extensive archaeological investigations have been conducted at the fourth and fifth [Fewkes 1900:597].

Mindeleff continues the story:

It occupied 4 years to cross the disrupted country. The kwakwanti [= *kwaakwant*, the One-Horn society] (a warrior order) went ahead of

the people and carried seed of corn, beans, melons, squashes, and cotton. They would plant corn in the mud at early morning and by noon it was ripe and thus people were fed. When they reached solid ground they rested, and then they built houses. The kwakwanti were always out exploring—sometimes they were gone as long as four years. Again we would follow them on long journeys, and halt and build houses and plant. While we were traveling if a woman became heavy with child we would build her a house and put plenty of food in it and leave her there, and from these women sprang the Pima, Maricopa, and other Indians in the South.

Away in the South, before we crossed the mountains (south of the Apache country) we built large houses and lived there a long while. Near these houses is a large rock on which was painted the rain clouds of the water phratry, also a man carrying corn in his arms; and the other phratries also painted the Lizard and the Rabbit upon it. While they were living there the kwakwanti made an expedition far to the north and came in conflict with a hostile people. They fought day after day, for days and days—they fought by day only and when night came they separated, each party retiring to its own ground to rest. One night the cranes came and each crane took a kwakwanti on his back and brought them back to their people in the South.

Again all the people traveled north until they came to the Little Colorado, near [sic] San Francisco Mountains, and there they built houses up and down the river. They also made long ditches to carry the water from the river to their gardens. After living there a long while they began to be plagued with swarms of a kind of gnat called the sand-fly, which bit the children causing them to swell up and die. The place becoming unendurable, they were forced again to resume their travels. . . . They reached a spring southeast of Kaibitho (Kumas spring) and there they built a house and lived for some time. Our people had plenty of rain and cultivated much corn and some of the Walpi people came to visit us. They told us that their rain only came here and there in fine misty sprays, and a basketful of corn was regarded as a large crop. So they asked us to come to their land and live with them and finally we consented [Mindeleff 1891:31–32].

#### Explication de "Texte"

What of this account is "mythological" and what "historical"? Can firm lines be drawn? On the mythological side, palpably magical events, like cranes carrying people on their backs, or legends, like turkey

tails and old people's dewlaps, require interpretation as primarily metaphorical. But the flood and abandonment of Palatkwapi includes both mythological features (such as the Serpent Deity, and the depraved old man—a classic figure of liminal disorder) and historically plausible features, including possibly the southern flood itself.<sup>5</sup> The collapsing of important periods (four days, four years, one morning to ripen the corn) condenses time.<sup>6</sup> The question of how matrilineal clans occupy villages and migrate independently (whom did they marry?) also raises problems of explanation. But many of these problems are abundant with cultural and social-structural information and might be readily addressed as symbolic encapsulations of historical and social processes. "Clans" may not have become matrilineal, exogamous entities until they reached the Hopi Mesas and were incorporated into the clan-based system. What may have once been a differentiated village is transformed into an exogamous, corporate matriclan integrated into Hopi social structure. The "clan" itself is then both a metaphorical concentration of a historically salient social group on the landscape and simultaneously a historical record of that group, its actual empirical locations, and its distinctive practices (like irrigation—see below) in the landscape. In Lévi-Strauss's (1964–72) treatment of North and South American myths, social paradoxes surround intersecting rules of incest and exogamy, kinship and affinity, and descent and alliance. Similarly, in many Hopi traditions, matrilocality vs. exogamy rules form a frequent theme of conflict, sometimes leading to the destruction of a village (see Malotki 1993; cf. Lévi-Strauss 1967). In this instance, oral traditions (interpreted within a Lévi-Straussian frame) in combination with known long-term social-structural patterns might thus provide a different perspective on Pueblo IV settlements, away from formalist description and toward interpretation of them as direct structural antecedents of ethnohistorically known social formations.

On the historical side of this Hopi narrative, directly historical features include the named village sites themselves. Surely, as Fewkes suggests, many of these are directly identifiable and verifiable with Hopi clan histories:

We thus have the names of three pueblos occupied by the Patki [Water clan] during their migration from Palatkwabi, before they arrived at Chaves pass, which have not yet been identi-

fied. These are Kwiñapa, Utcevaca, and Kuñchalpi. The determination of the sites of these villages, and a study of their archaeology, would prove to be an important contribution to the knowledge of the origin of the Patki clans. Anawita, chief of the Patki, a very reliable man, can point them out to any archeologist who has the means to prosecute these studies in Arizona [Fewkes 1900:597].

Further, more obvious features of the directly historical include sequences of migrations, acts of social production and reproduction (like crop systems and irrigation ditches from the Little Colorado River), elements of historic social forms (warfare, even specific battles, the One-Horn society), relations with other tribes (Pimas, Maricopas), and so on. Even such elements as the presence of sand-flies—causing what, malaria, or other epidemic disease?—might potentially yield fruit for an archaeological explanation of the site. The identification of this event with the name of a Second Mesa village, Supawlavi ("place of the mosquitoes"), and the association of some Homol'ovi clans with that village, provides another example of social memory encoded within a Hopi archival genre (i.e., place-names). All these aspects thus speak either directly or indirectly to potentially "testable" historical and cultural realities: they occur against the background of a structured set of practices and ideas that can be enlisted to aid in archaeological explanation. In short, such narratives evidence both mythological and historical consciousness.

### Disembedding

A fundamental difference in forms of past knowledge is between what we might call the genealogical and the analogical. Prehistoric-archaeological explanations largely conform to the latter type—seeking analogical processes of material causation, from comparatist models and hypothetico-deductive postulates. "Genealogical" (and I am partly following Foucault's sense [e.g., 1978] here) histories reflect continuities, strings of associations through linear sequences, and in this respect do conform to a property Lévi-Strauss identifies (as a "paradigmatic series") for mythic thought. When Hopis speak of a clan occupying a former village like Homol'ovi and trace the introduction of ceremonies into the present Hopi villages by specific clans from those villages, they trace the same set of features—social and ceremonial—in a continuous line of continuity

between places marked in the landscape and their current location. As well as serving an explicitly religious purpose, rituals systematically retrace migration sequences from particular places. Gradual processions into the village (as at the Flute ceremony), iconic shrines on the village outskirts named for particular ruins at a distance (e.g., Eggan 1994), and pilgrimages to those ruins to collect items used in the ceremonies (water from a spring, spruce branches, etc.) all serve to dramatically re-present a historical process of specific migrations and arrivals, and are often accompanied by mandatory recitation of accompanying traditional narratives. As noted, migration histories are the typical stuff of many oral and written historiographies globally and are increasingly the subject of archaeological interest elsewhere (e.g., Beach 1998; Schmidt and Patterson 1996; Schoenberg 1998). As assemblages of symbolic meaning, ritual performances and their accompanying mythological narratives are *texts* that encode aspects of the historically lived past (cf. Nabokov 1996). While it may be embedded in such contexts, the historical value can, with care, be distinguished from the narratives' other characteristics—as collective representations of social solidarity (Durkheim 1961), charters legitimating land claims (Malinowski 1948), projections of psychological and emotional values (Turner 1967), etc.

Clearly, ritual dramas and associated mythological narratives are in part teleological: they trace back from present interests and places to past ones. But especially through uses and references to the landscape, they also encode focal points of historical consciousness. In many respects the Hopi landscape itself also serves as a historical repository, indeed another form of “text,” and a reminder of valued events. Like any text it requires interpretation, but it comes structured according to the temporally sedimented schemata of Hopi knowledge. Such knowledge and its interpretations are well-anchored and do not configure a limitless “free play” of meaning. As in Keith Basso's (1996) masterly analysis of Western Apache place-name usages, Hopis locate historical significance in named places—Tokdonavi (Navajo Mountain), Salapa (Mesa Verde), Kawestima (Tsegi Canyon vicinity), and so on. A good part of that historical significance discernibly speaks to events any historian would see as empirically based. The accounts of Hopi clan migrations that depict centripetal migrations in from progressively less dis-

tant points correlate well with the archaeological record of concentration of Western Pueblo sites in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries A.D.

#### Agency and Historical Consciousness

In Hopi historical consciousness, events often depend on the intentional thoughts and actions of conscious agents (Whiteley 1988)—especially human beings conceiving plans and carrying them out. It is precisely such features that Terence Turner (1988) identifies as distinctive of a genuine historical (as opposed to mythological) consciousness: a narrative emphasis on human agency as the cause of historical events, indeed associated in Greece with the rise of the polis (a sociopolitical form that Hopi towns clearly echo in some respects [cf. Thompson 1950]). If we examine more recent Hopi narratives of events for which there are other ethnohistorical sources that provide close matches or even direct support, the identification of human agency is paramount. For example, Hopi accounts of the destruction of Awat'ovi (in A.D. 1700) and the Orayvi split (in 1906) focus on named and/or titled leaders who plot these events: human agency is foregrounded as causal. A named leader, Matsito of the Bear clan, is similarly the human agent that causes the founding of Orayvi (A.D. 500?). Hopi historical consciousness thus includes both the cosmically ordained and the pragmatically determined.

Versions of clan histories (e.g., Voth 1905) similarly portray a mixture of the mythological and the historical, with the latter anchored in named places of former villages. Named Hopi ruins and other places materially objectify oral history in the tangible, inspectable landscape. Ceremonial performances that reference (or even revisit) such sites are like rereading or reprinting historical texts, or producing new history books that extend on canonically accepted accounts. Ritual performances reaffirm official histories, rememorizing the sites and their objective capacity to remind the living of their ancestral value.

#### Standards of Judgment in Oral Accounts

Archaeologists cannot be expected to accept accounts of travel on cranes' backs literally. Similarly, oral historians cannot be expected to provide accounts that conform exactly to scientific models of falsifiability. But that does not mean the latter are thus by definition unrigorous, or are not held accountable to social standards of truth evaluation. In scientific experi-

ments themselves, multiplicity and reproducibility add major sources of corroboration to a proposed explanation. If, as Bahr (Bahr et al. 1994) has shown for some Pima narratives, oral accounts recorded at different junctures (over a two-hundred-year period) match in form and content, this may help strengthen their cumulative narrative authority. The specific Water clan narrative (recorded in the 1880s) discussed above is just one version of many recorded subsequently that conform to the same pattern of both structure and content (and I have experienced the same with several other clans). On the other hand, accounts only subscribed to by single individuals (lacking recognized authority as experts in their communities, and who may change their telling substantially from one occasion to the next) should properly be rejected as failing to conform with indigenous canons of the truly historical. "Indigenous canons" include the social checks and balances on much individual variation in tight-knit, conservative, traditional communities. Where narratives occur in ritual contexts, often those contexts themselves prescribe honesty and truthfulness as a religious imperative. Violations of truth—this is the case at Hopi, and among the other Pueblos, for example—imperil the individual narrator with the possibility of supernatural sanctions (illness or death, for him/herself or a family member). Such social characteristics in themselves constrain the free invention of traditions: indeed, the very fact that clan histories partly legitimate contemporary interests *requires* that they be consistent and be judged so by others. Individuals who retell these must adhere to those canons or risk dismissal as cranks (see, e.g., Geertz [1983] on the interpretations of clan narratives in *Book of the Hopi* [Waters 1963]). Consistency is not a sufficient condition of historical accuracy by itself, of course: there are many consistently told fantasies. But insofar as it speaks to a structured sense of the past simultaneously anchored by other social and epistemological criteria of verisimilitude, consistency is a necessary criterion of an account's historicity.

Additionally, archaeologists may well profit from examining analyses of oral history that have sought to establish criteria of validity and repeatability. In Native American oral traditions and history, these questions have often been "tested" in the Indian Claims Commission and other aboriginal land-claims cases since the 1950s. Such claims require testimony resting principally on oral traditions of land use and past social practices (e.g., the Garland

Press Ethnohistory series). Wherever possible, anthropologists, who served as the expert witnesses, attempted to correlate indigenous oral accounts of the past with European or Euromerican documentary records (BIA agents' records, the journals of explorers or travelers, etc.)—indeed, this is the genesis of the field of "ethnohistory." The Zuni land claim, for example, generated some salient critical scrutiny of claims presented on the basis of oral history. In that case, folklore analyst Andrew Wiget (1995) presented three criteria for assessing Zuni oral testimony: validity, reliability, and consistency. Wiget was restricted from assessing the Zuni accounts against the documentary record but successfully demonstrated to the court that the internal consistency of various narrators and their narratives was at a very high level. Utilizing Alice Hoffman's (1984) criteria for reliability and validity in oral-history interviews,<sup>7</sup> Wiget examined several hundred pages of depositions and testimony by Zuni witnesses and demonstrated strongly consistent narrative patterns over time and on different occasions. Over two decades of research on historic Hopi land use (including two protracted legal cases), I have experienced the same measure of consistency in narratives by Hopi elders recounting events as long ago as 85 years earlier in their lifetimes. Documentary records of Hopi land use (e.g., clan eagle-gathering territories) produced a very high level of corroboration across more than a century. In general, the fit between Hopi oral accounts and documentary records (where the latter exist) is often quite clear: for example, regarding the first Hopi meeting with the Spanish (1540), the Pueblo Revolt (1680), and the destruction of Awat'ovi (1700). My conclusion is that, with care, Wiget's and Hoffman's standards for evaluating oral-history can be extended to the discernibly historical elements of Pueblo oral traditions, as these speak to pre-Columbian times.

In short, despite the persistent influence of Lowie and Radcliffe-Brown's antipathies, ethnohistorians have now long realized that oral traditions contain a great deal of consistently reported information, with strong internal standards of verifiability. That message, apparently, has not yet fully crossed over the divide from sociocultural anthropology to archaeology.

### Conclusion

Oral traditions and other forms of encoded cultural representations, like ritual dramas and place-names,

contain genuinely historical components that are readily usable in interpreting the past, as well as containing more strictly mythological elements. My focus has been on the Pueblo Southwest in Native North America, but this is the conclusion of other anthropological studies of oral tradition and cultural practices that speak of the past in other parts of the world as well.

In its approach to history, scientific archaeology contrasts sharply with that other university discipline, classical archaeology—hardly a field lacking analytical rigor. If it is seriously concerned to deepen explanation, prehistoric archaeology of native North America (for one) might well learn from the approaches of its classical sibling.<sup>8</sup> In such a light, the very possibility of examining a ruin without consulting the archived histories in oral traditions and other cultural modes of encoding the past would be inconceivable. It would be like excavating prehistoric Roman ruins without consulting any Latin sources. And oral traditions, if treated seriously, may yield whole new areas of inquiry. For example, Hopis say part of the area north of Black Mesa known as Kawestima was inhabited by Keresan speakers (who are currently concentrated on the Rio Grande, and at Acoma and Laguna), and that the Antelope Mesa town of Kawayka'a too was Keres-speaking (e.g., Yava 1978). Apart from a brief early attempt by Elsie Clews Parsons, no anthropologist took this claim seriously for a long time (very recently, some archaeologists have begun to do so [Linda Cordell, personal communication, 2002; T. J. Ferguson, personal communication, 2002]). And yet, Kawayka'a is a Keresan term for Laguna Pueblo; etymologically, its origin is not Hopi (syllable-initial *ka-*, in contrast to *qa-*, only appears in loan words [Malotki 1990]). Kawestima is very probably a Keresan place-name originally: it is identical with the Keresan term for the sacred mountain of the north (Whiteley 1988:328). Likewise, the Hopi site Weenima, to the east of the Hopi Mesas, is identical with the (Rio Grande) Keresan term for a western sacred mountain. And one account of Hopi Snake society songs (again originally from north of the Hopi Mesas) is that they are in Keres. So, here, information from several branches of oral history/tradition, supported by known ethnographic facts, could be the impetus for a different kind of culturally focused archeological research in the Southwest—tracking this Keresan identification and migration, from Hopi, Keresan,

and archeological perspectives—akin to the modes of investigation in classical archaeology.

Clearly, taking such a new direction in inquiry requires proactive cooperation between archaeologists and indigenous peoples. Given the distrust native people typically have for anthropologists and archaeologists, it is incumbent upon university departments to reach out to include indigenous histories: to cultural or historic preservation departments of the tribes, or other identified local historians. It will not be easy, socially or epistemologically: but in the process, entirely new, and explanatorily rich lines of archaeological research may emerge.

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### Notes

1. The authenticity of Black Hawk's account has been periodically subjected to skepticism, but the charge does not hold (see Jackson 1990).

2. See Bahr et al. 1994; Basso 1996; Cohn 1980; Collins 1998; Faubion 1993; Fowler 1987; Geertz 1980; Hastrup 1992; Hill 1988; Layton 2000; Price 1983, 1990; Rosaldo 1980; Sahlins 1981, 1985, 1995; Shryock 1997; Stahl 2001; Vansina 1985; Whiteley 1988. For an excellent discussion of varieties of Native American history, historiography, and historical consciousness, see Nabokov 1996, which includes a useful bibliographic essay.

3. Post-processualists, if I understand what it is that they are claiming, may be more open-minded, but the terms of their conceptual relativism are largely defined in the metropolitan space of the university rather than the cosmopolitan space of plural cultural reality.

4. Some key exceptions are the work of Harold Colton throughout northern Arizona; work by Charles Adams and colleagues at Homol'ovi (e.g., Adams 1991); and various projects sponsored by the Hopi Tribe's Cultural Preservation Office, e.g., at Grand Canyon and Glen Canyon (including T. J. Ferguson, Kurt Dongoske, and others: see Ferguson 1998; Ferguson et al. 1997). See also Swidler et al. (1997).

5. Bahr's rendering of Piman accounts of Hohokam history (Bahr et al. 1994), for example, may well contain parallels; see also Teague (1993).

6. The emergence from evil and destruction via a narrow mud ridge off which slip the evil folk, clearly resembles the vertical emergence narratives among other clans, but here transposed to a horizontal axis (a transformation which fits nicely with some of Lévi-Strauss's [1967, 1970] observed mythological patterns).

7. "Reliability can be defined as the consistency with which an individual will tell the same story about the same events on a number of different occasions. Validity refers to the degree of conformity between the reports of the event and the event itself as recorded by other primary source material such as documents, photographs, diaries, and letters" (Hoffman 1984:69). Wiget defines consistency intersubjectively: "Consistency may be defined as the degree to which the form or content of one testimony conforms with other testimonies. It differs from reliability by being a measure of conformity between, rather than within, traditions" (Wiget 1995:179).

8. Should the question arise from my earlier point about biblical textuality, I do not intend to associate classical archaeology here with "biblical archaeology," although judicious use of indigenous traditions might well learn from the flaws and foibles of that venture.

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