Truth, Commensurability, and Conflict Narratives: Incorporating Indigenous Studies Theory into Archaeological Research

Recent discussions regarding the presentation of archaeological research, in light of the discipline’s effort to incorporate Indigenous perspectives, have turned to Indigenous and Native studies theory. The goal, of these discussions, is to further decolonize archaeological narratives and show how indigenous peoples maintain their inter-relationships with the world through processes of colonization. Detrimental archaeological narratives still persist through the development of Indigenous and collaborative archaeological projects. Gobernador Polychrome Pottery is entangled in just this kind of academic narrative. Its production in the Dinétah Region of New Mexico, during and after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, place it in a time of pan-Native resistance to Spanish colonization and what must have been a very dynamic social landscape. This fluorescence of painted pottery among the Dine’ has been robbed of its indigenous meaning, and a colonial narrative of rapid acculturation and recent transcontinental migration have been applied to it. Indigenous understandings of place and identity contradict these hypotheses. As a part of this wider discussion this paper engages with the subject through concepts that are found in Indigenous studies literature, such as Gerald Vizenor’s concept of survivance, Kim Tallbear’s concept of articulation, and recent works that confront Euro-American versions of history.

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