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*Secularism as Ideology*Exploring Assumptions
of Cultural Equivalence in
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The concepts *sacred* and *secular* are standard tools in contemporary social and cultural analysis. A *secularist* tendency that eschews overt pronouncements of religious faith is a particular hallmark of modern science, Marxism, multiculturalism, and most present-day archaeological analysis. Despite secularism's prevalence in the academy, it rarely has been analyzed as ideology. The concept of *ideology* is derived from the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1978); it links processes of consciousness production with the reproduction of social relations of domination. Ideology encourages persons to act based on taken-for-granted beliefs or assumptions that mislead them or mystify their conditions, in the process supporting the partisan agenda of others with different political-economic interests than their own. We draw on Talal Asad's (2003) critical assessment of secularism to offer an analysis of secularism as ideology in the context of the relationship between the United States mainstream and indigenous American Indian groups. Secularism can be shown to ideologically further the

project of settler colonialism, by (1) assuming that all groups "own" their culture to the same extent that mainstream states do; (2) obscuring cultural interconnection and political-economic domination and resistance; and (3) obscuring the degree of the mainstream's use of Native American culture and objects in its own self-fashioning. In classic social-science definitions of ideology, secularism therefore acts as both a *universalizing* and a *masking* ideology (see Eagleton 1991; and archaeological applications in Leone 1984, 2005 and Matthews, Leone, and Jordan 2002).

We wish to be quite explicit that by critiquing secularism, we do not advocate that archaeologists take up "religious" positions in their work, and in fact much of our analysis could be taken as an example of secular thinking. We instead encourage readers to distance themselves from their customary secularism, caution them that secularism should not be taken for granted, and alert them to some potential dangers associated with uncritical application of secularist thinking. We illustrate these points using two cases from the history of *repatriation*, or return, of indigenous artifacts from mainstream museums to American Indian communities in the United States. The first example is the decades-long historical battle over ownership of twelve shell-bead wampum belts held by the New York State Museum, a conflict that came to a head in the late 1960s. The debate provides an example of overt ideological positioning and strong rhetoric from anthropologists, which succeeded in keeping the wampum belts in the museum's property in the short term, but ultimately failed as the belts were returned to the Onondaga Iroquois Nation in 1989. Our second example is present-day American repatriation practices, as structured by the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA). Although these two instances seem on the surface to be quite different—anthropologists stonewalled repatriation using vitriolic language in the 1960s controversy, while in contemporary repatriation under NAGPRA anthropologists often facilitate the transfer of human remains and objects to indigenous groups—we find the structure of discourse to be remarkably similar, and equally ideological, in the two settings.

The Onondaga Wampum Repatriation Controversy

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, "belts" woven from thousands of small tubular marine-shell beads were employed by Iroquois and colonial leaders in elaborate and highly patterned diplomatic rituals (Fenton 1998: 224–239). The beads, widely called *wampum* based on a New England Algonquian term for them, came in white and purple varieties; the contrasting light and dark colors were used to create abstract designs and representational images within the rectangular belts. For Iroquois peoples, wampum belts served as mnemonic devices, emblems of the truthfulness of the reciprocal obligations pledged during treaty negotiations, and potent reminders of the content and solemnity of the talks. European and later American officials recognized the value of wampum belts in "forest diplomacy" and commissioned belts of their own which they brought to and used in negotiations (Fenton 1985: 17).

The degree of European influence on the wampum bead form and the use of belts has been a matter of some scholarly controversy for over a century (Beauchamp 1901; Becker 2002; Ceci 1989; Fenton 1971, 1998; Slotkin and Schmitt 1949). While the details of this debate need not concern us, well-contextualized short tubular shell beads and vertically strung arrangements of shell and brass beads have been found on Seneca Iroquois sites dating to circa 1500–1600 (Simpowski and Saunders 2001: 654–657; Wray et al. 1987: 52, 140, 240), before direct contact between Senecas and Europeans and well prior to the establishment of permanent European colonies in the Northeast. "Early wampum" beads from these and other sites (see, e.g., Wondetley 2006) are stone-drilled, and they moved inland from the coasts along trade routes established in pre-Columbian times (Bradley 2005). This evidence suggests that the origins of both the bead form and belt-manufacturing techniques are rooted in an indigenous dynamic, and further research may prove that their origins are significantly earlier (see Ceci 1989; Jordan 2009).

More pertinent to present purposes is the fact that wampum later was adopted within mainstream American culture as a symbol of northeastern Indians, and of the Six Nations Iroquois or Haudenosaunee Confederacy (consisting of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga,

Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora Nations) in particular. Acquisition of wampum belts was a central concern of late-nineteenth-century American museums seeking to collect signature examples of Iroquois material culture. Starting in the 1890s, private collectors and museum agents purchased wampum belts from Iroquois individuals, particularly members of the Onondaga Nation, which acted as "keeper of the wampum" for the Confederacy. Several of these acquisitions occurred under questionable circumstances. Onondaga Chief Thomas Webster sold four belts to U.S. census taker Henry Carrington in 1891, with the understanding that they were to be donated to the U.S. National Museum. Carrington instead sold the belts to another private collector; eventually they reached the hands of John Boyd Thacher, mayor of Albany, who arranged for them to be displayed at the 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago (Hill 2001: 134). In 1897, the Onondaga Nation deposed Thomas Webster for his part in the sale and (together with other parties) brought suit against Thacher to recover the belts. When this lawsuit did not result in the return of the belts, the Onondagas entered into an alliance with New York State to further their cause. In 1898, the Onondaga council named the University of the State of New York as "wampum keeper" (Fenton 1971: 452). In 1909 legislation, the state of New York then unilaterally appointed itself "wampum keeper" for all Iroquois wampum belts, in the process giving the state the authority to "secure" belts "by purchase, suit, or otherwise" to protect them (cited in Arnet 1970: 11). New York State ultimately received the Thacher belts in 1927 as a donation from his widow; it also acquired eight other belts from the Onondagas through the efforts of William Beauchamp and Harriet Maxwell Converse (Fenton 1971: 453).

Iroquois spokesmen made a series of unsuccessful requests for the return of the belts during the first half of the twentieth century. Repatriation efforts gathered both momentum and public support in the late 1960s (Fenton 1971: 439). Furor over the custody of the Onondaga belts led to the New York State Assembly's consideration of resolutions in favor of repatriation (these were ultimately unsuccessful), and to publication of several works by both Indian and non-Indian authors making the case for and against repatriation (Arnet 1970; Editorial Staff of *The Indian Historian* 1970; Fenton 1971; Henry 1970; Sturtevant et al. 1970). The crux of the arguments was whether

wampum should be considered a religious or civil artifact. Indians described the wampum belts as being "of sacred significance," referring to the various uses of wampum associated with the founding and operation of the Iroquois Confederacy, including recording political transactions and negotiations, symbolizing the political unity of the Confederacy, and for funerary rituals, repentance, prayer, and teaching (Editorial Staff of *The Indian Historian* 1970: 7-8).

On the other side, Euro-American scholars targeted the Onondaga invocation of religion. Five prominent scholars, writing as the American Anthropological Association's Committee on Anthropological Research in Museums, made their objections clear in a February 23, 1970, letter to New York governor Nelson Rockefeller (Sturtevant et al. 1970). The scholars, who included anthropologists William Fenton and William Sturtevant, first denied the continuing religious relevance of the Iroquois Confederacy by comparing it to the contemporary practice of the "longhouse" religion observed by followers of the eighteenth-century Seneca prophet Handsome Lake, centered on the Tonawanda reservation in western New York. The contrast between the Confederacy and what the scholars apparently considered to be a "legitimate" contemporary Iroquois religion led the scholars to assert that the Onondaga claims were based on "the illusion of religiosity." The scholars further declared that the Onondaga claimants were "acculturated." Thus, the natural home for "such mementos of culture" was a museum that could care for the artifacts and use them to present the story of "largely vanished primitive peoples" (Sturtevant et al. 1970: 14).

In a subsequent longer paper, Fenton claims that with the exception of two belts that contain Christian imagery, the Onondaga wampum belts are "political" in nature (Fenton 1971: 457-459), and that as such they are not even exclusively Indian, but instead a record of Indian-white relations (437). In this sense, Fenton rejects wampum as an "Iroquois" object at all; wampum is instead "a post-Columbian phenomenon . . . and as such it is as American as apple pie, the log cabin, and the splint basket" (437). He also challenges the Onondaga assertion that with the wampum they will be able to recapture ancient ways of learning (455). Due to cultural loss, Fenton argues, Onondagas forfeit the right to the belts since any use they make of them now would necessarily be inauthentic. He concludes that a far better use

for the belts is to display them to "thousands of school children and their parents—black, white, and red alike—annually" (459).

While these powerful scholars thwarted the 1960s effort to have the Onondaga belts returned, other Iroquois wampum-repatriation efforts proved successful, including return of several thousand wampum beads from the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society to the Onondaga Nation in 1975 (Hill 2001: 133) and the return of eleven belts from the Museum of the American Indian to members of the Six Nations Reserve in Canada during 1988 (Fenton 1989). In the 1980s, renewed negotiations between the Onondagas and New York State Museum director Martin Sullivan finally led to the return of the twelve belts (including the four Thatcher belts) to the Onondagas in 1989 (Barreiro 1990). Iroquois people continue to make reacquiring wampum from museums a priority, along with repatriation of human remains and medicine masks (Hill 2006: 7; Jemison 1995). However, the virulent 1960s controversy has contributed to persistent distrust of anthropologists by Iroquois people (Landsman 1997, 2006: 256). Moreover, the 1960s scholars' binary depiction of wampum as either sacred or secular but not both continues to be reproduced into the present. For example, non-Indian scholar Marshall Becker's (2002: 54) typology for wampum belts contains separate "secular" and "religious" categories, placing treaty belts in the "secular" category and both condolence belts (part of traditional Iroquois mourning practice) and belts with Christian imagery in the "religious" category. In contrast, Tuscarora repatriation activist Richard W. Hill Sr. writes (2001: 131) that all wampum is "sacred by virtue of the shell from which it is made and because it was chosen by the Creator as the medium through which the Iroquois would retain and transmit information from generation to generation."

Analysis of the Wampum Controversy

Without doubt the 1960s conflict over wampum was extremely politicized, and the texts produced during the conflict state their cases in highly charged symbolic frames of reference aimed to solicit partisan reactions. Still, if we reread the texts to identify their assumptions it becomes clear that the repatriation issue is a challenge to certain ide-

logical foundations of modernity at large, a discovery that leads us to question much of how normal archaeology functions. Our rereading involves identifying how modernism ideologically buries its assumptions about culture and difference and silences its alternatives (Trouillot 1995; Sider and Smith 1997). We organize our discussion by suggesting two (related) ways in which contemporary scholars might look on this conflict; we consider these approaches and then offer a third.

First, it would be relatively straightforward to argue that the conflict emerged from a misuse of Western categories. For Indian authors to assert wampum's sacred meaning and for Fenton to argue that wampum was a nonreligious, political artifact is to impose a firm distinction between the sacred and the secular that is not relevant for premodern and non-Western contexts. In both historical and present-day settings, there is no separation in Iroquois thought between the religious and political meanings of wampum-related activities; wampum blurs any sacred-secular boundary (Hill 2001; Jemison 1995). Both sides in the 1960s treated this boundary as real, and that assumption, despite its currency and efficacy at the time, led them to argue on grounds insufficient to the meanings of wampum in the past or the present. The rejection of the validity of such Western categories as *sacred* and *secular* in American Indian cultural contexts is a well-worn approach that we accept as pertinent but incomplete.

This leads us to the second approach, which we treat at more length. We grant that the position of the indigenous thinkers in the wampum controversy has more merit than that of the mainstream scholars, which we feel is completely wrong because it denies the spiritual component of Iroquois wampum use. But we are more interested in *why* both the Onondagas and non-Indian anthropologists would leap to positions that assume a hard and fast distinction between sacred and secular. Analysts today likely would identify this as an instance of the ideological use of the sacred. On both sides of the wampum debate there is an assumed relationship between the sacred and authenticity: the sacred is the essence of that belief and practice which defines an "authentic people," in this case the Iroquois. The assumption is that (1) a people truly exists by virtue of the practice of distinct sacred rites illustrative of core beliefs; and (2) these beliefs cannot be altered without challenging the authenticity of this group's existence as a people.

Indian writers, for example, use oral tradition to assert that Iroquois use of wampum predates European colonization. They tell of wampum's central role in the formation of the Iroquois Confederacy, and they assert that the continued existence of the Confederacy is the basis on which the Onondaga claim should be recognized. This argument is based on an assumption that being Iroquois is tied to the use of wampum, which demonstrates a consistency in the Iroquois way of life before, during, and after colonization and up to the present. While this type of appeal to the "timeless" and "traditional" has resonance in some quarters of Indian country, one senses the influence of federal policymakers' adoption of certain antiquated scholarly definitions of culture in order to define what is "truly" Indian (Deloria 1991; Sider 2003). It is uncertain whether the Onondagas and their allies adopted this position inadvertently, because they had internalized it, or strategically, because they suspected it would be efficacious among mainstream audiences (see Ranco 2007 for a discussion of strategic Indian use of the "ecological Indian" stereotype in bureaucratic negotiations). At any rate, they subscribed in print to the idea that sacred origins are necessary for the Iroquois as a group to exist at all.

Fenton similarly, yet even more forcefully, relies on this ideology of the sacred. Certainly, his construal of the operation of the Iroquois Confederacy as political rather than religious reveals a belief that Iroquois "politics" are a secular pursuit that can be severed from the realm of Iroquois religious or spiritual life. In fact, secular politics seem to taint the sacred origins of the Iroquois people, origins that themselves are required for Iroquois recognition in contemporary American culture. Ultimately, Fenton claims there is no evidence connecting the living Iroquois to the ancient Confederacy and that any "true reading" (1971: 459) of the belts is now impossible.

Reassessment of ideological uses of the sacred as a claim to authenticity or inauthenticity is the basis of much current anthropological criticism, and this area is in fact the focus of a widespread effort to reconsider cultural theory altogether (e.g., Bhabha 1994; Chakrabarty 2000; Clifford 1988), an effort to which we in large part subscribe. These critiques are so well rehearsed that many are likely to see this wampum conflict as a quaint struggle from a time before we knew better. Neither side needed to, nor should have, made the case for a

"real" Iroquois culture that existed independent of the impacts of colonialism and American state formation. The appeal to sacred origins is an adoption of a misleading notion of timelessness that underlies the idea of "a people without history" (Wolf 1982). Rather, it would have been better for each side to have accepted the contingency of the issues and the historicity of Iroquois cultural actions and identity claims both in the past and the present. This way Iroquois existence as a "culture" could be seen in more flexible terms, as a people that has struggled from the margins with inadequate resources and overdetermined identities.

But this is exactly what fails within this critique. By supposedly overcoming culture with history, it simply transforms the Iroquois in this case from a people of culture to a people of history. In our opinion, this means that they are transformed from being defined by the ideology of the sacred to the more potent and less obvious *ideology of the secular*, a program that situates the Iroquois in a position independent of the forces that actually created and continue to create them as a group within and against the colonial dynamics of modern America.

By contrast, considering the secular as an ideological construct offers a new and important way of rereading the wampum debate. Especially as cultural heritage and archaeology have become inextricably bound to the processes of repatriation, it is imperative to reconceptualize the production of archaeological and contemporary cultural groups in terms that recognize not just their historical contingencies but also their common reliance on acts of transformation and translation in order to be recognized. To explore this, we ask rhetorically: if any true reading of the museum's wampum belts was impossible, why would Fenton fight to keep them? Fenton's answer to this question is deceptively simple. The belts are tools for teaching; they represent other ways of living that are different because of culture and time. This seems straightforward, but that is only because of the familiarity of this conceptualization of difference to those raised in the modern West. Within this familiar anthropological "othering" (Fabian 1983) lurks a secularist ideology that sustains the settler colonialism that Indian activists have been fighting against and that repatriation was intended to address, but for the most part fails to in practice. We consider this failure to be the result of the uneven playing field where

repatriation is acted out, a playing field that is presented as fair and appropriate because of the acceptance that Indian and non-Indian cultures are relative and thus equivalent. To explain this sense of equivalence, we briefly consider the theoretical implications of secularism from a recent study by Talal Asad (2003).

The Ideology of Secularism: Suspension and (Dis)enchantment

The premise of the New York State Museum's use of wampum is that it allows visitors (read: non-Indians) to practice an act of transformation, or the translation of the other to the self, by presenting, in suspension, another reality (read: "extinct" Indian cultures). With *suspension* we propose a term to reflect the materialization of cultures in museums and similar settings through artifacts displayed as objects, both literally suspended from hooks in the walls and more figuratively suspended in the liminal space of representation. Cultures in museums are defined by a passivity enforced by the supposed absence of those who created them, a separation that shifts the development of and thus responsibility for enchantment from an artifact's source to the museum itself. Artifacts are presented and arranged to allow visitors to reconstruct past and other ways of life. The more successful the arrangement, the more successful or authentic the reconstruction seems.

Museum visitors rarely are consciously engaged with the cultures whose ways of life are embodied in the displays. We do not refer here to those past peoples whose artifacts lie before the visitor's eyes, but to the diverse historic and descendent communities whose very entanglement is the underlying premise of the museum display; for example, the entanglement between the United States and the Iroquois nations that we discuss in this paper. Inasmuch as most groups put "on display" in this way have historical relations with those who put them there, we mean to say that it is the legacy and impact of the history of these particular relations that enchants the objects that stand in now for past peoples and other ways of life.¹ It is through the fact of suspension that visitors transform such ongoing entanglements into relations that are distanced and formally secular, that is, rationalized,

by being contained and literally observed under glass. Suspension, therefore, serves multiple purposes: not only education and allowing public access to information about a nation's or the world's cultures, but also the greater purpose of defining the public as those who may feel truly engaged with their own and other cultures, despite the fact that their actual engagement is with cultures in suspension revealed for the most part in museum displays and other public representations. The intention of museums and similar settings, we argue, is to enable modern persons to cultivate and practice such secular relations with the other.

Following Asad (2003), cultural suspension illustrates the ideology of the secular, for it masks the political economy of secularism, which demands that, instead of enchantments and enchantments, a widely accessible and supposedly politically neutral rationality determine the "true" meaning of social life. Asad finds that the emergence of secularism as a coherent doctrine is surprisingly recent. The word *secularism* was first used in 1891 by British "freethinkers" hoping to broaden support for their reform ideas by distancing themselves from "the charge of their being 'atheists' and 'infidels,' terms that carried suggestions of immorality in a still largely Christian society" (Asad 2003: 23). Asad then shows that over time secularism regularly has served to define a political doctrine or to construct a position in a context defined by conflict. The principle of secularism is set in contrast to invocations of the sacred, in that it presupposes an existence independent of religious or otherwise irrational conviction. However, for Asad secularism is more than the separation of church and state; it also forces consideration of religion in an altogether new way: "[t]he secular . . . is neither continuous with the religious that supposedly preceded it (that is, it is not the latest phase of a sacred origin) nor a simple break from it (that is, it is not the opposite, an essence that excludes the sacred). I take the secular to be a concept that brings together certain behaviors, knowledges, and sensibilities in modern life" (25).

In fact, the Western notion of the sacred was redefined completely as the secular emerged: "nineteenth-century anthropological and theological thought . . . rendered a variety of overlapping social usages [of *sacral*] rooted in changing and heterogeneous forms of life

into a single immutable essence, and claimed it to be the object of a universal human experience called 'religious'" (Asad 2003: 30). The sacred-secular distinction became firmly rooted in some strands of Western social science, notably through Durkheim's (1976 [1912]) absolute separation of the sacred and the profane. Durkheim posited that "the idea of the sacred is always and everywhere separated from the idea of the profane in the thought of men . . . we picture a sort of logical chasm between the two" (40).

Secularism in practice essentially suggests that we can transcend religious and other limiting convictions (including especially our own "culture") and operate on a level that is presumably common to all. The basis of secularism is a notional process of *disenchantment* by which superficial layers of magic, myth, meaning, and understanding are stripped away to expose what really is reality. Disenchantment makes secularism unique; through disenchantment, secularism establishes that *it knows what an ideology is, and secularism itself is not an ideology*. This is the first ideological mask put up by secular thinking. The maneuver is crucial to what makes secularism appear reasonable, because, as any ideology does, secularism supports a way of living-in-the-world, as Asad (2003: 14) notes, "[r]epresentations of 'the secular' and 'the religious' in modern and modernizing states mediate people's identities, help shape their sensibilities, and *guarantee their experiences*" (emphasis added). With the secular as a force that penetrates enchantments, we as secular people are given the authority to know that we really know the world. All persons, despite the obvious differences that result from varied cultural perspectives and personal experiences, are accepted as culture-bearing and thus at root the same or equivalent.

Secularism succeeds as ideology because it is self-defined not as oppositional to alternatives but as a respectful consumer of them. Modernity sees its alternatives as possible and indeed practiced, but flawed by misconceptions that result from enchantments. Modern secularism is unique among dominant ideologies in that it accepts the idea of cultural equivalence, accepts that there are multiple, comparable ways of living-in-the-world. Notably, however, embracing equivalence is not embracing equality; it is just relativism: the notion that different cultures theoretically can coexist. Only with secular

modernity, so it is argued, can the plurality of cultures be appreciated and sustained. The process of disenchantment establishes a distinct plane of reality across from which all cultures hover in suspension, including that of the now-detached beholder.

Modernity, in particular, requires both distancing and othering to know itself. This is directly relevant to our case due to the experiences of the thousands of non-Indian school children and their parents that Fenton (1971: 459) claimed benefited from viewing wampum belts in the New York State Museum. Putting past and other cultures and their enchantments on display in museums mimics the discursive suspension of secularism. The museum display of objects *as artifacts* allows viewers to learn how to perform the acts of transformation and translation that allow any cultural existence, even their own, to be understood rationally. More to the point, it establishes that the distance created by the suspension of existence and belief is a necessary part of the way moderns come to know anything at all. The Western museum is particularly important to this process because museumgoers engage in processes of transformation and translation in a safe space, where there is little chance for contact or conflict with actual representatives of the exhibited cultures. Clearly, this is itself an enchantment, for this plane of safe, suspended universal existence does not exist, except as a component of secularist ideology.

Nevertheless, enchanted cultural alternatives are the fuel that allows the modern to exist. They provide not only the dialectical other but also the notion that the other may be understood despite the differences that are evident to all persons in their actual social relations. It is in fact not surprising that a human science based on cultural relativism did not emerge until the ideology of modern secularism was established within educated, elite circles in the nineteenth century. It is our belief that archaeology was incorporated into anthropology in the United States because it was among the best means for producing the objects that could be made into displays of cultures in suspension. In the conclusion we urge archaeologists to consider their relationship with this history as they engage in their work; for now we explore how examining secularism as an ideology offers insights into the problems involved in current American repatriation practices.

Repatriation in the Secular Mode: The Ongoing Costs of Secular Modernity

Contemporary repatriation practice in the United States is governed by NAGPRA, the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. The "graves protection" portion of the act created protections for Indian burials on federal lands and Indian reservations. The "repatriation" portion of the act required all federally funded entities (including almost all universities and large museums) to inventory their collections of Native American human remains, to inventory their collections of Native American human remains, grave goods, sacred objects, and "objects of cultural patrimony"; notably American Indian groups that were potentially culturally related to these skeletal remains and objects about their holdings; and repatriate any objects requested by Indian groups if adequate evidence for cultural connection could be mustered. NAGPRA built on pre-1990 efforts of Indian activists and their allies that had already resulted in repatriation of wampum belts, human remains, and other important cultural objects (see, e.g., Ferguson, Anyon, and Ladd 1996); it expanded the scale of the repatriation process to all federally funded entities, institutionalized the process, and enlisted the U.S. government to support it. The act correctly has been viewed as a triumph of Indian rights, and has provided a catalyst for the development of all sorts of productive connections and collaborations between Indians and anthropologists, archaeologists, and museum personnel (see articles in Bray 2001 and Kerber 2006). However, NAGPRA continues to be critiqued because a wide swath of its procedures remain under mainstream control (Bruning 2006; Fine-Dare 2002, 2004; Watkins 2004).

We emphasize that the transfer of physical possession of human remains and material culture to Indian nations reverses some of the ills of previous centuries of colonialism and is morally and ethically correct. However, we assert that examining repatriation as an example of ideological secularism, informed by our rereading of the texts on the 1960s wampum repatriation conflict, allows for a new and productive critique of the repatriation process.

One remarkable aspect of the 1960s wampum conflict was that both sides did not simply assert the sacred origins of difference, but

also spelled out the universal value of these differences to all human-kind. The differences in these claims are instructive. Indian writers argued that the fact that "the Iroquois were capable of handing down, from generation to generation, these liturgies of faith and desire for the peace . . . proves their greatness in understanding the need for a new code of human relations and behavior" (Editorial Staff of *The Indian Historian* 1970: 9). This claim indicates that an intact "Indian" culture survives and has valuable lessons to teach the mainstream Americans who have enveloped it. In contrast, Fenton's claim to universal value, based on the utility of knowing more about Iroquois knowledge and memory structures, is much weaker: "It would be an interesting experiment," he wrote, "to test under controlled conditions the ability of various Iroquois individuals to recognize and interpret symbols present on Iroquois wampum belts Conceivably such an investigation would contribute to an area of modern psychology that is concerned with similar ancient systems for improving memory" (1971: 456). In Fenton's scheme, Iroquois culture is enveloped within a universalized secular culture where the Iroquois way of knowing would be of value to moderns through its diverse sciences.

Discussion of how Indian artifacts, remains, and, most importantly, Indian persons and groups constitute part of modern America generally is cut off in recent repatriation debates. Part of the change in the debate is due to the fact that human remains, grave goods, "sacred objects," and items of "cultural patrimony" are now repatriated routinely. Rarely now do proponents on either side explicitly spell out the value of their perspective for humanity, modernity, or the nation, but this is not because of a lack of such concern. Rather, because the nature of the discourse has changed, these values are now implicit, that is, they are expressed in the way repatriation embodies popular notions of cultural diversity. We worry that the way Indian and American groups are conceived within the NAGPRA process as "cultures" may be setting up the participants for greater trouble in the future. The sides in the repatriation debate have become signs not of political conflict but of cultural alternatives (with, stereotypically, Indian on one side and non-Indian/Western/White/Academic on the other), and in this way speak about aspects of diversity rather than partisan politics. This seems to us a shortsighted solution entirely determined by the ideology of modern secularism.

Secularism as Universalizing Ideology: Separate but Equal Cultures

The modern, secular notion of cultural equivalence has become embedded in the way mainstream and Indian cultures now are perceived to exist; ideologically, this relationship has been taken as one of equality. Having a culture seems to establish Indians as separate-but-equal to whites. Here secularism acts as a *universalizing* ideology in that it assumes that each group "owns" its culture as much as mainstream states do. This position ignores the fact that Indian-white relations have constituted one of the most enduring and powerful projects of racism and colonialism ever known (McGuire 1989; Zimmerman 1989). Indians must constantly struggle to perpetuate their culture in the face of opposition and meddling by settler society. Fenton's apparent anger at Onondaga inability to maintain what he viewed as "authentic" tradition is paralleled in punitive NAGPRA procedures that require that Indians meet a standard of cultural continuity that is very difficult to achieve after the upheavals of over five hundred years of colonial impact. For example, any discontinuities in settlement patterns, subsistence practices, or material culture can be interpreted as "migration" and invalidate any possibility for repatriation of older human remains and objects (contrast Snow 1995 with Hill 2006):

Secularism as Masking Ideology: Obscuring the Inequalities of Cultural Interconnection

Secularism acts as a *masking* ideology in that it advances a model of cultural isolation in place of cultural interconnection. This happens in several ways, illustrated by both the 1960s wampum debate and current NAGPRA practices. The widespread success of Indian repatriation campaigns obscures the fact that repatriation procedures are not neutral inquiries that leave each party unaffected save for the physical transfer of human remains, grave goods, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony. Mainstream authorities and institutions demand that Indians "prove" their need for human remains and objects taken away by settlers to be returned to them, and the standards of evidence and procedures used are set by mainstream institutions, not

by Indian peoples. Merely by participating, Indian peoples have their actions channeled and torqued by mainstream expectations.

We can see this quite obviously in the Onondaga invocation of Western notions of sacred origins and in the scholarly labeling of wampum belts as "political" in the 1960s debates. However, similar categories are reproduced in NAGPPRA's distinction between "sacred objects" (defined in the law as "specific ceremonial objects... needed by Native American religious leaders") and "objects of cultural patrimony" (defined as objects "having ongoing historical, traditional, or cultural importance central to the Native American group or culture"). Despite consistent Iroquois efforts to define wampum as "sacred," the final regulations for NAGPPRA offer the wampum belt as a prime example of a secular "object of cultural patrimony." (*Federal Register* 1995: 62160), and the twelve official notices of the intent to repatriate wampum published in the *Federal Register* between 1994 and 2007 all categorize wampum either as an "object of cultural patrimony" or as grave goods. These definitions continue into the twenty-first century with the enforcement of the problematic Western sacred/secular categorization upon Indian objects and actions. While Indian manipulations of these categories undoubtedly have been strategic (Ranco 2007), and unquestionably have been effective, they reproduce dominant standards and conceptions of the "separateness" of cultures that may make future repatriation efforts all the more difficult.

Second, there are troubling aspects about the timing of the passage of NAGPPRA. Some scholars argue that the American political-economic system has come to permit the assertion of Indian cultural rights so as to facilitate economic exploitation and resource depletion. Since standard environmental-protection laws, bans on gambling, and the like often do not apply in "Indian country," Indian lands can be tapped for mainstream profit in ways impossible on the outside (Dombrowski 2001, 2004). Sider and Dombrowski write (in Dombrowski 2001: 203) that the "task of the dominant society is, in the emerging politics of indigenism, to 'recognize' and produce new and lingering images of native sovereignty in ways that harness native groups' existing sovereignty to corporate and state interests." From this perspective, the Indian cultural distinctiveness facilitated and reproduced by NAGPPRA validates and makes possible the political-

economic dissimilarities exploited by governments and corporations. Specifically, we note that NAGPPRA came on the heels of the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988 (IGRA). It is widely accepted that Indian gaming was promoted by the Reagan administration as a way to cut federal expenditures by allowing Indian communities to raise their own revenue (see, e.g., Wilkins 2002: 116). Individual states have used the IGRA gaming-compact procedure, which typically allocates a certain amount of Indian-gaming revenue to state and local coffers, to help their own fiscal problems (see, e.g., Light and Rand 2005: 64–65). In short, by 1988 it became valuable to both the U.S. federal government and individual states to have "Indians" available to establish gaming ventures, and in 1990 repatriation mechanisms were created that helped to produce Indian communities that looked both more "Indian" and more "traditional" due to the transfer of ancient relics. We assert that the close spacing between the passage of IGRA and NAGPPRA is not a coincidence.

Indian groups not now recognized by the U.S. government are clear-cut losers in this process. As cultural patrimony and sacred objects move from mainstream collections to federally recognized nations, the latter accumulate cultural capital that facilitates their self-presentation as "Indians" in a manner obvious to state authorities. Since unrecognized groups have less access to such traditional goods, the contrast between the recognized and unrecognized becomes greater, and even less likely to be surmounted in the future. Furthermore, participation by any Indian group in "economic development" and "self-government" ventures sponsored by settler governments and corporations binds them to mainstream expectations in ways that frequently backfire, with negative impacts on indigenous political autonomy and local economic, ecological, social, and cultural sustainability (Alfred 1999; Dombrowski 2001).

Secularism as Masking Ideology: Obscuring the Indian Role in Settler Self-Fashioning

Lastly, secularism ideologically masks the degree of mainstream use of Native American cultures and objects in its own self-fashioning. As Eric Wolf (1982) pointed out so elegantly over twenty-five years ago, a "billiard ball" model of radically separate cultures obscures the

fact that dominant and subaltern cultures are mutually constitutive. Indian cultures, sites, and objects play certain key roles in the formation of mainstream society, for instance by providing roles that mainstream people can play to alleviate "settler anxiety" (DeLoria 1998; Hinsley 2000), and, as illustrated here, by providing detached examples of otherness needed to construct a secular worldview. Fenton's position that wampum belts were as American as apple pie belies the fact that wampum diplomacy itself represented a significant "Indianization" of colonial diplomatic processes (Williams 1996).

Although indigenous resistance is widespread and frequently effective, control over this process of mutual constitution overwhelmingly lies with mainstream individuals and institutions. In terms of repatriation, this is true of the procedure and timing of NAGPRA, as well as past settler poaching of the images, objects, and bones of Indians for purposes of self-fashioning that formed the problematic museum collections NAGPRA was intended to address. These processes are entirely obscured in the present conduct of repatriation, where living in a certain way, and having lived that way in the past, is all that matters. Put differently, under the guise of secularism, "culture" has replaced politics, making political conflicts seem resolved.

Conclusions

We have argued that recognizing secularism as ideology provides a new perspective on the complications and contradictions of repatriation. Secularist ideologies of cultural equivalence and mutual isolation, as embodied in the repatriation process, have resulted in short-term transfers of cultural material to Indian nations, but in ways that reproduce settler colonialism at other levels. We in no way argue that the process of returning cultural materials (many of which were acquired under illegal or reprehensible circumstances) to indigenous possession should stop; we instead argue that more supple notions of cultural process desperately need to be applied within repatriation procedures.

We highlight here by way of a conclusion how this may be at least in part accomplished in a reflexive manner. Following the critique of

the secular approach to culture, people, including archaeologists, do not automatically and completely manifest preexisting cultural tendencies. We are not "archaeologists"; rather, we practice archaeology in very specific conditions that color how we imagine ourselves and others. In this sense, we dialectically *create* the world by living in it and confronting the opportunities and limitations that our positions as archaeologists present. While groups may imagine themselves as a "people," even a "people" engaged in conflict, by living in the world they come to know the consequences of these ideas and constantly debate and adjust them to changing circumstances. It is this awareness of change and the need to debate and respond to change that the routinization of repatriation has eliminated.

We suggest that archaeologists commit to working to know more about how they culture the world, both for themselves and others, through their work. Considering the critique of secularism, which establishes that "culture" itself is a way of creating positions in times of conflict, we need to regard how our actions as archaeologists are implicated in the larger historical conflicts that surround us. In part, we need to know more about what "being an archaeologist" means outside of our professional ranks and within the local contexts where archaeology is applied in everyday public practice (Matthews 2005). Yet, more importantly, we need to be increasingly aware of how "archaeology" itself (especially as an "archaeology" that guarantees our actions as archaeologists) embodies the political-economic inequalities that are masked by the secularist approach. When we allow the difference between Indians and Academics or Whites to be interpreted as a sign of "culture," we have not established a respect for diversity but allowed the historic dynamics of "archaeology" that created archaeologists and/against Indians in the first place to be forgotten. This is all to say: as archaeology offers the living world the benefit of hindsight, which is another way of reminding people to not forget, we need to be sure to construct the content of these memories as the result of the conflicts we face now over how we—professionals and publics together as a group—ought to proceed.

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Notes

1. We argue moreover that the use of living cultures is a required base for creating compelling representations even of the ancient past such as the Paleolithic era, or perhaps more poignantly in the case of Kennewick Man. This means that present-day entangled self–other relations are embodied in every display regardless of the antiquity or continuing existence of the cultures presented.
2. Emerging NAGPRA regulations governing the treatment of "culturally unidentifiable human remains" (*Federal Register* 2010) may change these dynamics, but at the time of this writing it is too early to judge how the process will play out.

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*Imagined
Pasts Imagined*

Memory and Ideology
in Archaeology

RUTH M. VAN DYKE

My task in this paper is to examine the relationships between ideology and a burgeoning archaeological interest in social memory. I see ideology and social memory as intersecting and overlapping constructs. At the scale of our individual lives, we know ourselves through our experiences in the world, along a temporal dimension. Along larger social and temporal scales, people construct identities and relationships in reference to their understandings of circumstances, events, and meanings that have come before. Inequalities and identities are always deeply implicated in interpretations of the past, whether these interpretations are expressed and created through written histories, oral traditions, archaeological investigations, or other venues. The discipline of archaeology is one way our contemporary society constructs social memory within both dominant and counterhegemonic discourses. An archaeological focus on memory is grounded in larger cultural phenomena, including modernist anxieties, postmodern subjectivities, social traumas, and the rise of identity politics. In the paper that follows, I begin with a discussion of the relationships among ideology, memory, and history. I chart the rise of memory studies in

*Ideologies
in Archaeology*

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