

FLORENCIA E. MALLON, EDITOR

# DECOLONIZING NATIVE HISTORIES



COLLABORATION, KNOWLEDGE, AND LANGUAGE IN THE AMERICAS

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## DECOLONIZING NATIVE HISTORIES

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## NARRATING NATIVE HISTORIES

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## DECOLONIZING NATIVE HISTORIES

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*Collaboration, Knowledge,  
and Language in the Americas*

Edited by Florencia E. Mallon

Selected essays translated by Gladys McCormick

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**ABOUT THE SERIES**  
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Narrating Native Histories aims to foster a rethinking of the ethical, methodological, and conceptual frameworks within which we locate our work on Native histories and cultures. We seek to create a space for effective and ongoing conversations between North and South, Natives and non-Natives, academics and activists, throughout the Americas and the Pacific region. We are committed to complicating and transgressing the disciplinary and epistemological boundaries of established academic discourses on Native peoples.

This series encourages symmetrical, horizontal, collaborative, and auto-ethnographies; work that recognizes Native intellectuals, cultural interpreters, and alternative knowledge producers within broader academic and intellectual worlds; projects that decolonize the relationship between orality and textuality; narratives that productively work the tensions between the norms of Native cultures and the requirements for evidence in academic circles; and analyses that contribute to an understanding of Native peoples' relationships with nation-states, including histories of expropriation and exclusion as well as projects for autonomy and sovereignty.

*Decolonizing Native Histories* represents an innovative effort to motivate dialogue between scholars living in the North and South, academics and nonacademic activist intellectuals, indigenous and nonindigenous researchers, and the different but overlapping forms of knowledge that arise out of these subject positions. Bringing together research on Native Latin America, North America, and the Pacific, this book enquires into a series of pressing issues: How do debates over Native sovereignty vary over the three regions? What does it mean to be an indigenous researcher, and how might nonindigenous scholars most effectively collaborate with their Native counterparts? How should scholars—whether Native or non-Native—who are committed to Native struggles ask hard questions of activists? What routes must we take to decolonize scholarship in the twenty-first century? The answers, which range from examinations of Native status in Hawai'i and Easter Island, to evaluations of collaborative research and writing techniques in Latin America, and to approaches to race as a critical component of nativeness in North America, all contribute to the dialogue we will need to decolonize our scholarship in the new millennium.





## *Introduction*

### Decolonizing Knowledge, Language, and Narrative

This book was born at a conference entitled Narrating Native Histories held at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in April 2005, a meeting which itself was the result of exchanges and collaborations among faculty colleagues from various disciplinary departments and with different regional specialties who shared an interest in Native studies.<sup>1</sup> Narrating Native Histories brought together intellectuals and scholar-activists, both Native and non-Native, from Hawai'i and the Americas. For three days we exchanged views on how to establish collaborations across differences of language, culture, region, and historical experience that would permit us to disengage ethnography as well as other forms of narrative and research from their colonial moorings.

Given the crucial role of the concepts colonialism and decolonization in the project of our conference, in the book series by the same name that it helped generate, and in this book, which brings together a selection of the papers originally presented in 2005, it is important to begin with at least some rudimentary definitions of them. For the purposes of the conference as well as in this volume we have used these notions quite expansively, to define relationships of domination and inequality that arose historically in different parts of the world with the expansion of Europe. As these notions apply to indigenous peoples, they involve the conquest and expropriation of territories; massive loss of life through war, forced labor, and disease; erasure or marginalization of cultures and languages; and the redefinition of a process of violent conquest as "inevitable" because of supposed differences in levels of "civilization." As has been well documented, the alleged differences of culture and so-called progress between colonizer and colonized were then

used to construct a vision of a world order in which certain peoples were always lower on the evolutionary chain, what the subalternist scholar Dipesh Chakrabarty has termed the “not-yet” principle of historical evolution (Chakrabarty 2000). Among the notions central to this worldview is the racial construction of white privilege. Decolonization, therefore, involves the questioning of the racial and evolutionary bases of colonial power, and how these have tended to underlie the construction of knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

We came together in Madison animated by a common agenda. Since the 1970s, when Native leaders from the Americas joined their fellow activists from other parts of the world in reformulating the UN agenda for indigenous peoples’ rights as a part of international human rights, indigenous demands for political and cultural recognition have generated a series of strong, identity-based Native movements that have challenged the integrationist policies of nation-states. As part of this new political and cultural dynamism, Native peoples have generated their own intellectuals, who have taken center stage in debates over cultural interpretation and translation and over the narration of Native histories. In such a context, the intellectual agency of Native peoples themselves has been placed squarely on the agenda of all research and writing about and with indigenous societies. Scholars working on and collaborating with Native societies, whether themselves Native or non-Native, have therefore been challenged to rethink the ethical, methodological, and conceptual frameworks within which we locate our work on questions of Native histories and cultures.

Yet despite these challenges, the anthropologist and activist Víctor Montejo suggested nearly a decade ago that, despite declarations to the contrary since the mid-1980s, change on the ground was slow in coming (Montejo 2002). While critiques of traditional research methods and postures started an animated and prolonged debate in anthropology (see especially Clifford and Marcus 1986), we still have a long way to go in moving such debates more fully into the area of concrete ethnographic and dialogic methodologies and political positions. Inspired in part by the pioneering efforts of such Native scholars as Devon Mihesuah (1998, 2004), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), and Angela Cavender Wilson (1998a, 1998b, 2004), we wished to look comparatively across distinct regional, tribal, and historical differences in order to attempt to formulate a broader ethical and methodological agenda.

This vision, as implied above, not only inspired the conference, but also inaugurated the series *Narrating Native Histories*. Several volumes that take seriously the principles discussed at the conference, as well as reflecting the

synergy between intellectual vision and debate, on the one hand, and concrete projects and methodologies on the other, have already found a home there. In both the conference and the series, moreover, we were and are committed to troubling relations between North and South and between the Americas and the Pacific region. At the conference our method was to discuss, with the help of simultaneous language interpretation, common issues across differences of culture, region, and history. We began by asking ourselves questions around five themes.

First, building from the perception that traditional academic narratives about indigenous peoples are still embedded in a colonial framework, both epistemologically and politically, we wondered what it would mean to shift ethnography and other forms of research and narrative away from more traditional and vertical forms of engagement toward more symmetrical, horizontal approaches or counternarratives. How would we nurture collaborative relationships that respect the rights of Native people and their cultural experts to make decisions about the use to which their knowledge is put as well as their right to be recognized as coauthors or participants in the production of knowledge? Who gets to talk about what, and in which language?

Second, we wished to consider the relationship of language to power and also to empowerment. In addition to recognizing the urgent nature of projects to recover and strengthen indigenous languages—projects on which a number of the conference participants have worked and are working—we discussed the inescapable interactions between language, the legitimization of voice, and the power relations embedded in all research contexts. How do social, political, economic, and cultural factors shape the research we do and the stories we tell? As researchers and writers committed to the cultures about which we write, what can we do to further the process of recognition of Native intellectuals, cultural interpreters, and alternative knowledge producers within the broader academic and intellectual worlds?

Third, as a matter related to issues of language and power, we talked about some of the ways in which colonialism had marked orality as inferior to textuality, and thus had considered societies with different record systems as “primitive” or “prehistorical.” If language, the law, and the archive have historically served as instruments of colonialism, we wondered, how could these same instruments be used in the construction of autonomy? As researchers, what is our role in the process of recovery, preservation, and extension of Native literary and narrative traditions? What is the relationship between orality and textuality in this process? Is it possible to decolonize

language, law, and history so that they become tools in the construction of horizontal relations between peoples?

Fourth, we considered the importance of storytelling traditions. Among many indigenous peoples storytelling has served as a form of cultural preservation and protection, memory and empowerment, legitimacy and autonomy. Is it possible to productively work through the tensions between these broader intellectual narratives within Native cultures and the requirements of evidence in the academy? How can academic researchers weave distinct, divergent, and sometimes conflictual strands into their stories without betraying their own principles or those of their interlocutors?

Finally, we recognized the many challenges associated with making autonomy a viable option in today's world. As indigenous movements throughout the world have demanded respect for cultural, political, and territorial autonomy, questions concerning citizenship, political coalitions, policy options, and the legal ramifications of autonomy have become increasingly complex. How can we establish a useful dialogue among the extremely diverse experiences with and practices of autonomy and sovereignty that exist in the Americas and the Pacific region? How can researchers profitably involve themselves in these debates in a way that is useful to Native societies?

Beginning with these five themes, we threaded them through particular topics, including indigenous sovereignty; collaboration and truth telling in research methodologies; intercultural conversations on translation, inscription, and the boundaries between inside and outside; and the nature of intellectual and cultural authority. Part of what we found along the way was exhilarating, in the sense that there were points of commonality and solidarity across otherwise seemingly unbridgeable distances—geographical, cultural, and linguistic. People who could communicate only through simultaneous interpretation nevertheless found that they could recognize their common struggles to recover Native languages and, through them, a distinct voice. Or they shared perspectives in which the lines between academic and activist, inside and outside, oral and written could be and had been questioned, leading to a mutual, deep cross-fertilization between theory and practice, analysis and experience. And all of us, whether Native or non-Native, recognized a certain commonality in our intellectual work as translators, as people who inhabit frontiers between worlds, or as *bisagras* (hinges) who serve as connections between disparate knowledges, cultures, and places.

Part of what we discovered was sobering, for the challenges before us seemed daunting and at times overwhelming. We noted deep differences

between North and South, both in the historical experience of indigenous peoples with colonialism and in the place of indigenous intellectuals in societies and academies. We saw distinctions among indigenous experiences within both North and South, within indigenous groups themselves, and between the Americas and the Pacific world. We perceived internal hierarchies along lines of race, region, language, and gender.

One of the most challenging themes we discussed during the conference, one which emerges in this book generally, was the relationship between academic and activist forms of narration and collaboration. This was an especially vibrant theme in the presentations about Latin America. Six of the nine papers presented on Latin America analyzed experiences of collaboration in which scholar-activists participated in projects intended to put new technologies and tools—writing, social science or linguistic theory, video—at the service of indigenous peoples who wished to use them for their own purposes. In the three essays about this topic that are included here—those on the Tzotzil Maya of Chiapas, the Nasa of Colombia, and the Quechua of Bolivia—non-Native collaborators involved themselves in ongoing negotiation with indigenous leaders who envisioned the use of these tools in political and intellectual projects of their own making. While these collaborators were all educated in the university, not all had established themselves within the academy. And the projects in which they were participating demanded that Native agendas be given priority at all times.

The three papers presented at the conference that dealt with Native peoples in Hawai'i and the continental United States were all by Native academics and, while diverse in theme and scope, shared two goals. First, they aimed to bring indigenous political and historical questions into the heart of academic discussion and to highlight how the presence of Native scholars in the academy changed the nature of intellectual conversation. Second, the three papers were interested in using the tools of academic analysis to foster debate within Native societies that would lead to greater empowerment. The two that appear here, by J. Kehaulani Kauanui on Native Hawaiian options for autonomy and Brian Klopotek on notions of race among Louisiana Choctaws, are the work of committed indigenous academics who wish to use the analytical tools at their disposal to move debates on sovereignty and autonomy forward.

While overall the papers read at our conference cannot be taken as representative, they do suggest distinct histories of articulation of academic and intellectual knowledge to indigenous activism between North and South.

In the United States, indigenous scholars and intellectuals, facing immense obstacles, have been making inroads into the academy and into public debate. While such participation is not a panacea, it does open up new venues of academic and political debate that were not present before. In Latin America, while indigenous political and intellectual revivals are also beginning to open public space for Native perspectives—for example, among the Aymara in Bolivia, the Mapuche in Chile and Argentina, the Maya in Guatemala, the Miskito along Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast, and the Maya, Zapotec, and other groups in Mexico—in general it has been less possible historically for Native intellectuals in the South to claim real space in the academy. In providing examples of the experiences and struggles of indigenous peoples in concrete historical contexts and in relation to particular constellations of political and economic power, we hope to deepen our comparative conversations in ways that will be useful to indigenous peoples and their movements.

Perhaps the most important unifying theme of the conference, and thus of the book, was the need to collaborate in the process of decolonization or, as Roberta Hill put it during her conference comments, to “get colonialism off our backs.” All the chapters address the issue of decolonizing methodologies in one way or another, and the theme of decolonization serves as a kind of backbone of the book.<sup>3</sup> As Klopotek explains in his essay, the double meaning of the phrase is productive, in the sense that we aim both to decolonize the methodologies used in research and writing and to elaborate methodologies that decolonize the relationship between researchers and subjects. At the same time, however, the authors represented in the book develop varying takes on what this means.

In the first part of the book, the essays by J. Kehaulani Kauanui and Riet Delsing (whose essay is the only one in the book that did not originate in a conference presentation) solidify the dialogue between the Americas and the Pacific that is an important part of our project. Although the historical differences between the two cases are quite large, we find surprising similarities and parallels. One of these is the timing of the forced incorporation of the territories into distant nation-states, separated by only a decade (1888 for Rapa Nui or Easter Island's annexation to Chile, 1898 for Hawai'i's annexation to the United States). This is not surprising, since the last decades of the nineteenth century were, across the world, a time of intensification of colonialism and of global relations of trade, two reasons the Pacific islands were attractive to economically and militarily expansive nation-states. In this regard it is equally telling that, at the respective moments of forcible annexa-

tion, both Chile and the United States had just emerged victorious from expansionist wars and territorial conquest, Chile from the War of the Pacific (1879–84) and the conquest of Mapuche autonomous territory in 1883, the United States from the Spanish-American War (1898).

Despite the vast geographical distance separating Rapa Nui from Hawai‘i, taken together they remind us that the process of colonialism is at the very heart of the history of indigenous peoples. One example of that centrality is how territory, including both land and other resources, is expropriated through illegal means. In both Rapa Nui and Hawai‘i, as Delsing and Kauanui make clear, concessions that were understood by Native peoples to involve use rights were fraudulently and forcibly transformed into property rights. Even though the political status of the two regions differed greatly—Rapa Nui was a rural, kinship-based society at the time of annexation, while Hawai‘i was an independent kingdom and had been recognized as such by European powers and the United States for nearly a century—colonial violence can prove to be a strong leveling force. At the same time, the distinct historical experiences of Rapa Nui and Hawai‘i dramatically differentiate their present-day options from those of other indigenous peoples who inhabit the continental United States and mainland Chile.

Through a detailed analysis of Hawai‘i’s sovereign history in conversation with present-day international debates about the status of indigenous peoples, Kauanui changes the terms of the discussion about indigenous autonomy. Given the earlier history of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, there is, in international law, a historical basis for making a claim to independent status. A part of the movement for autonomy in Hawai‘i thus supports the notion of total independence based on international law. There is, however, a sizable sector in Hawai‘i whose vision for self-determination would pass through U.S. law; this group prefers to make claims within the U.S. system of federal recognition that has evolved in relation to the indigenous nations on continental soil. Kauanui makes clear that achieving federal recognition for Native Hawaiians would indeed foreclose both the decolonization and the deoccupation models for achieving autonomy, since it would define Kanaka Maoli, or indigenous Hawaiians, as a “domestic dependent” nation with no recourse to independent status.

Delsing demonstrates in her discussion of struggles over sovereignty in Rapa Nui that the perspectives of the Rapanui and the history of their struggle cannot be folded neatly either into Chilean history or into the indigenous histories connected to the Chilean mainland. Originally a Poly-



nesian people, the Rapanui continue to be linked to the Pacific region. And while today the Rapanui are internally divided over the most appropriate strategies to follow in their ongoing confrontation with Chilean assimilationist policies, a significant minority movement has formed around the idea of pursuing political independence in dialogue with other Pacific peoples.

Part 2 of the book discusses the interrelated themes of cross-cultural collaboration, translation, and writing. Joanne Rappaport and Abelardo Ramos Pacho, who have formed part of a collaborative research team led by Nasa intellectuals in Colombia for many years, address the question of collaboration most systematically. Ramos conceptualizes intellectual and theoretical collaboration as a *minga*, a project of collective work for collective benefit, which provides us with the opportunity to think through the connections between physical and intellectual labor and the tensions between academic analysis and political usefulness. Inevitably, he writes, collaboration produces tensions; but these become productive through work. For Rappaport, this work involves a dialogue among ways of knowing—a *diálogo de saberes*—in which indigenous epistemology is primary but not exclusive. Interculturalism, she suggests, must be a grass-roots practice that goes far beyond multiculturalism as an encounter within a context already hegemonized from one side. Building such horizontal relationships is a work in progress, and its success will be found in the political articulation of indigenous and nonindigenous cultural registers.

Rappaport and Ramos also explore the concept of translation and its relationship to writing or inscription. Translation, in this context, is inseparable from indigenous theorizing, for it is a project of appropriation, rethinking, and reconfiguration of language and concepts from indigenous perspectives. This means the improvement and transformation of reality, not only its analysis or representation in a different language. Cultural as well as linguistic translation, therefore, opens up new potentials and possibilities and gives access to an intercultural space where new strategies of negotiation and new ways of living can potentially be suggested. Ramos concludes, along these lines, by suggesting that one goal may be an indigenously grounded objectivity in which the line between academic rigor and political necessities and desires can be more effectively troubled.

Jan Rus and Diane L. Rus discuss how they built on their long-term presence in the highlands of Chiapas among the Chamulas to contribute to the Taller Tzotzil, an already existing Tzotzil-language publishing project, beginning in the 1980s. The Ruses' legitimacy within the Tzotzil community—

they had been given Tzotzil names, which appear at the back of the volumes produced by the Taller—served as a crucial entry point into the project of translation and inscription in which they collaborated. Their long presence in the region also helped them understand more fully issues of alphabet and orthography, which called to mind the presence of Bible translators as well as Protestant missionaries and questions of dialect and the diversity of voices present within the narratives. Indeed, the Ruses' project revealed how deep the negotiations and knowledges involved in a successful project of translation and inscription are, a matter discussed by other authors and summarized by one of our panel commentators, Frank Salomon, when he suggested that indigenous language accounts become text through a collaboration that involves decontextualization and then recontextualization and hence multiple translations.

But even more important, the Ruses' work on the Tzotzil publishing project is an especially dramatic example of an option taken by many principled intellectuals and professionals in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s—that of the committed, *engagé* collaborator. Rappaport, who has nearly three decades of experience with the Nasa and Cumbal peoples of Colombia, is another example of someone who took this option, though in her case she has claimed a place within the academy in the United States, something the Ruses have eschewed. In part activist anthropology in the mold of Alcida Rita Ramos and Terrence Turner, who also presented papers at our conference, this practice of *engagé* collaboration had its origins in the radical mobilizations of the 1960s and, by the early 1970s, was inspired as well by liberation theology and the radical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, mentioned by the Ruses.

These forms of activist collaboration, which existed in many parts of the so-called Third World in the 1970s and 1980s, took on a particularly intense quality in Latin America. Part of the reason for this had to do with the specific history of revolutionary movements in the region, movements that often placed at their very center the collaboration between urban intellectuals on the Left and the rural poor, a significant proportion of whom were of indigenous descent. At the same time, the very nature of Latin America's political and economic crises ate away at earlier coalitions between indigenous people and the Left, so that in a number of areas relationships of collaboration that had rested on these earlier coalitions either fell apart entirely or had to be renegotiated. This has been the case with the Chilean Mapuche, whose intellectuals have increasingly taken center stage in defining research and

activist agendas, and it has also happened in other areas of Latin America, such as Guatemala and Nicaragua's Atlantic coast.

As Ramos and Rappaport and the Ruses demonstrate, collaborative relationships tend to endure when they involve ongoing negotiations. In reflecting on their long-standing collaboration through the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC), Ramos and Rappaport demonstrate that it is precisely the moment of friction, of discomfort, in collaboration that is the most productive. Ramos suggests that it becomes so through work: in other words, through concrete tasks and discussions that help deepen a common commitment to a joint project. The Ruses, for their part, built on their long-lasting relationship with Tzotzil Maya communities in the Chiapas highlands, especially in Chamula, to configure a unique indigenous language publishing project that has spanned two decades, adapting its goals according to the changing nature of conditions in the region as well as in response to feedback from the participants themselves. If their project began with the purpose of recovering pieces of community indigenous history and making them more broadly available across the Chiapas region, it was transformed in the 1990s and beyond, not only by the Zapatista uprising of 1994, but also by the deepening economic crisis that reconstructed the spatial locations of Tzotzil Maya people, forcing many to migrate to the local capital city of San Cristóbal de las Casas and then increasingly across the U.S.-Mexican border into southern California.

Similar multifaceted moves are at the center of the project described by Fernando Garcés V. in his essay. As a nonindigenous linguist originally from Ecuador who has been working on a Quechua-language newspaper in Bolivia, Garcés considers his positioning to be a crucial part of his project. A political process at its very core, the production of the newspaper, *Conosur Ñawpagman*, combines its distribution at political events and peasant gatherings in Cochabamba with the recording of new interviews and testimonials for the next round of articles. At the heart of the newspaper's project, Garcés argues, is what he calls the intertextual play between orality and writing. Inscribing orality in text is not only the reproduction of speech in writing, but a new act of communication that involves political mediation. Intertextuality, in such a context, includes orality in a process in which both the reception and construction of texts are crucial. Moving beyond a purist or academically grounded notion of the preservation of classical Quechua in text, Garcés argues for the interaction between Quechua and the Spanish written word in order to create new usages and to strengthen the Quechua

language. As he suggested in his oral remarks at the conference, the point is not to preserve Quechua either by limiting it to academic use or putting it in a museum (*museoficar*), but to revitalize the social strength of the language by supporting its life-giving and lively usages in daily practice.

Garcés's participation in the publication of a Quechua newspaper has been framed, as in the case of Rappaport and Ramos and of the Ruses, within a broader history of collaboration with indigenous peasant organizations. For him, therefore, intellectual goals must of necessity be interlaced with issues of empowerment and social justice. While his knowledge as a linguist helps him conceptualize the value of a grass-roots newspaper in terms of the larger project of Quechua language revitalization, his experience as an activist provides him with the tools through which he can value a real-life process of language recuperation in which everyday usage, when inscribed in text, allows for new practices that creatively extend the relevance of the language.

The emphasis on the revitalization of indigenous languages through dynamic and creative forms of translation and inscription and through the honoring of indigenous practices and epistemologies that includes all levels of society is a powerful theme in the chapters by Garcés, Ramos and Rappaport, and the Ruses. These notions reverberate strongly with the call made by Edgar Esquit to extend and deepen our understanding of the multiplicity of Maya histories and knowledges. Among some educated pan-Maya intellectuals in Guatemala, he suggests, the uncovering of a unified Maya history can present a past heretofore hidden by official Guatemalan versions of history. While this is an important task, when the members of a particular professional sector among the Maya elaborate it, in dialogue with other knowledges outside of and unknown to Maya oral traditions, they can create their own official history that positions them as "civilized" in relation to their Maya brothers and sisters.

It is precisely these kinds of internal tensions and divisions, and how they might unexpectedly help to reproduce existing relationships of discrimination and inequality, that form the core of Klopotek's and Esquit's explorations in part 3. In his work with the Louisiana Choctaws, Klopotek examines the ways in which racial classification systems specific to the U.S. South, themselves the result of colonial relationships of racial power, are reflected in the definitions of indigeneity used by southern Indian communities. He suggests that a fuller critique of the racial hierarchies embedded in the general system of white privilege, of how the "one-drop rule" as applied to people of

African descent has led to anti-Black sensibilities among Native Americans as a mechanism of self-defense, might in the long run be a positive move for indigenous people.

Esquit, for his part, questions current uses of the notion of internal colonialism by pan-Maya intellectuals.<sup>4</sup> When the concept is used to explain political relations between Maya and ladinos as separate yet homogeneous groups, he suggests, it may hide as much as it reveals.<sup>5</sup> To what extent, he asks, might such a usage result in an understanding of a people's rights and culture as separate from economics? Would it not be more productive to think of political relations as organized, in a more complex way, along many lines of difference and hierarchy that exist between and inside both Maya and ladino groups? In this context Esquit suggests that we consider instead the colonial shape of power relations, which allows us to connect class to notions of race and ethnicity, thus opening the way for a deeper recognition of the multiplicity of experiences, perspectives, and history among the Maya.<sup>6</sup>

Both Klopotek and Esquit, as young indigenous intellectuals, are raising questions about the political and intellectual practices of a previous generation of leaders. Their locations within very different societies—Klopotek is a Choctaw academic in the United States, Esquit a Maya anthropologist in Guatemala—configure their options as they negotiate between activism and intellectual work. Yet at the same time, they share a desire to expand definitions of indigenous identity and belonging so that broader coalitions of people who identify as indigenous, including those traditionally excluded from leadership, can work more effectively to define common goals.

The desire to open up indigenous politics to wider coalitions involves as well the question of gender, as Esquit explains in his paper and as also emerges in the Tzotzil publishing project. As the Ruses explain, Diane Rus's collaboration with Maruch Komes on Komes's life history initiated a broader discussion of a Maya women's weaving and embroidering cooperative as an economic response to crisis. Yet even as this generated new resources for the cooperative it created deep debates about women's economic autonomy. Internal tensions over gendered power relations have also emerged in other contexts of indigenous mobilization, as is divulged in the recent autobiography by the feminist Mapuche leader Isolde Reuque, who was present at the conference.<sup>7</sup>

Taken together, then, the presentations at the conference and the essays in this book explore a myriad of themes relating to the challenges of decolonization—intellectual, academic, and political. Noenoe Silva and Stéfano

Varese, given the perhaps impossible task of summing up the papers and our discussions as a prelude to a last general plenary session, represented in their comments some of this complexity of solidarity and difference. Silva, a Native Hawaiian political scientist whose work has demonstrated how the recovery of Hawaiian language sources changes the history of U.S. annexation and our understanding of Hawaiian intellectual life (Silva 2004, 2007), emphasized the importance of stories and language to the empowerment of peoples, illustrating her points throughout with narratives from her own experiences and those of her people. She also spoke of the importance and the difficulty of fostering Native scholars. She underlined both the possibilities and the dangers connected to this task, but in the end she suggested that only by having Native voices and presence in the academy can we aspire to a truly intercultural education in which indigenous epistemologies and languages have a powerful voice and standing for all.

Stéfano Varese, on the other hand, an activist anthropologist educated in Peru but who has worked on indigenous activism and sovereignty throughout the Americas, focused on the power of political mobilization. He stressed the danger inherent in the academy's absorption of projects aimed at sovereignty, the recuperation of language and territory, and the rewriting of history, suggesting that indigenous intellectuals need to be organic in the Gramscian sense. He emphasized the political dimensions of the projects of recovery and reclaiming, whether these involved language or landscape, history, memory, or sovereignty. Ultimately, he warned against overly academic projects that, even in the hands of indigenous intellectuals, might recolonize indigenous knowledge. The differences of emphasis and vision in the general comments of Silva and Varese can help frame a last set of reflections that emerged from and were prompted by our discussions at the conference. As the subsequent conversations, both formally at the plenary and along the edges in more informal one-on-one exchanges, made clear, these differences arose precisely from the diversity of experience and historical context that exists today among indigenous peoples in the Americas and the Pacific. But they can also be seen in the context of our common project of decolonization, which must involve an understanding of how a respect for and understanding of variation can lead to new forms of creativity.

In her discussion of the power of language and stories, Silva was drawing on a deep tradition of struggle to honor the truths and epistemological perspectives contained in Native oral traditions. As several of the essays in this book argue, the development of more horizontal and respectful forms of

research and analysis must necessarily pass through a rethinking of and re-encounter with the forms of knowledge contained in and passed on through oral tradition. At the confluence of several intellectual debates, discussions about oral history and alternative forms of knowledge and narrative have become increasingly wide ranging in recent years. Whether in the form of *testimonio*, oral history, or subaltern studies, these conversations and confrontations have spanned the globe. While not all the discussions have concerned indigenous issues, many of them have, and Native and non-Native scholars of indigenous cultures have played prominent roles in them. While even a representative sample of these conversations is too large to cite here, often the main issues at stake concern the assessment of claims to truth according to established rules of evidence.<sup>8</sup> Given the distinct nature of oral tradition and oral history as a performative medium based on imparting knowledge and wisdom gained through direct personal experience or connection, the rules of evidence associated with the scientific method are less relevant or applicable. For some, this makes oral tradition a lesser form of evidence, precisely because it is not verifiable.<sup>9</sup>

Two complementary answers to this challenge have taken shape. One takes on the academic project of verifiable research results and demonstrates how alternative forms of knowledge production and transmission, especially oral tradition, contribute new, important, and distinct perspectives to our quest for knowledge. They do so precisely because they are not data but systems of thought that provide, as Julie Cruikshank writes in her work on Yukon communities, “a window on the ways the past is culturally constituted and discussed. In other words,” she continues, “stories were not merely about the past, they also provided guidelines for understanding change” (Cruikshank 2002, 13). Similar claims are made in a very different context by the oral historian Alessandro Portelli, who argues that the performative and apparently subjective form of oral history is its greatest strength, precisely because it allows us to dig beyond fact to meaning (Portelli 1991, 1997). And it is precisely in this access to meaning and interpretation that we can find a practical answer to the challenge set forth by Chakrabarty (2000) when he calls on us to resist the positivist closure of narrative that keeps us from understanding alternative versions of history that do not start from and end in Europe.<sup>10</sup> A second way to confront the objectivist critique has been to question the assumption of superiority on which it is based. Some scholars, including Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), have used postcolonial and other forms of critical theory in dialogue with indigenous knowledge to evalu-

ate the intellectual basis upon which dominant theories and methodologies have been built. Others, such as Devon Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson (1998, 2004), have addressed specific historiographies and their minimization or erasure of Native sources.

It was precisely this rich tradition that Silva referred to when she discussed the power of stories. She also was making reference to her own work on Hawaiian language sources, and how the highlighting of new versions, whether oral or written, can and should turn our interpretations of both the past and the present on their heads. And for Silva, doing so within the academy, through the increasing presence of Native scholars within its gates, is an absolutely crucial priority. This is also the most important point put forward in the recent anthology *Indigenizing the Academy* (Mihesuah and Wilson, 2004), not in the sense merely of inclusion but also of transformation. As Silva noted in her comments, several of the authors represented in that book, including Mihesuah and Taiaiake Alfred, demonstrate that bringing indigenous perspectives into the academy makes sense if and when a critical mass of indigenous scholars can begin to change the way in which academic knowledge itself is organized, produced, and taught.<sup>11</sup> This means not only claiming a space within academic circles for indigenous points of view, but envisioning a time when indigenous languages, histories, and epistemologies are part of the knowledge that everyone seeks out.

On this point, Silva and Varese brought the most distinct perspectives to the table. Historical differences between North and South—how Native-state relations have been negotiated, the role of academic learning in society, the nature of indigenous social and political movements and their relationship to other forms of resistance—help explain in part the diverse visions of indigenous participation in the academy. If today a second generation of indigenous scholars, on the basis of much struggle and sacrifice, is establishing a beachhead in university systems in the United States, Canada, and New Zealand, such is not yet the case, with few exceptions, in Latin America.<sup>12</sup> The always-present danger of the academy colonizing the indigenous scholar, rather than the other way around, is a serious threat in the South. But perhaps even more stark is the variation in the depth and degree of participation by indigenous activists in class-based movements for social change.

Indeed, as Armando Muyolema argued in his presentation at the conference, one of the central distinguishing characteristics of indigenous movements in Latin America historically has been their close interaction and interrelation with popular class-based movements. In Latin America the lack



of treaty or nation-to-nation negotiations led to an early fragmentation of Native territories into small communities and to direct negotiation between national states and these small, land-based political units. As a result, the indigenous question was deeply embedded in the broader land question, and in the majority of cases the most promising line of struggle lay in a class alliance with other landless or rural poor. This alliance was buttressed by the generally dependent status of Latin American countries, which increased the pressure for a common coalition in favor of national development, especially in the heady years of reform between the Second World War and the end of the Vietnam War.

During these three decades national-popular states based on coalitions of leftist intellectuals and political parties, trade-union organizations, and some peasant groups held out promises of egalitarian reform as they confronted entrenched oligarchies and landowning elites, while at the same time promoting relations of so-called internal colonialism in which some of the poor ended up being more deserving than others. Still, at a moment in history when change seemed possible, many found it more important to maintain the unity of all popular forces than to take exception to the ongoing forms of inequality within the reformist alliance. The greater strength of class-based social and political movements in Latin America, moreover, increased the attraction, among laboring indigenous peoples in city and countryside, of a class-based coalition. One major exception to these tendencies could be found among lowland indigenous peoples, particularly in the Amazonian regions of Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and especially Brazil, where Native peoples had little permanent interaction with emerging nation-states except through violent extractive industries and the spread of epidemic diseases (Ramos 1995, 1998; Turner 1995, 2002; Varese 1970).

It was only with the generalized failure of national-democratic and socialist attempts at reform and national liberation, therefore—most notably in the 1970s and early 1980s—that the class-alliance strategy was finally brought to crisis for many indigenous peoples in Latin America. Yet, as Charles R. Hale and Rosamel Millamán have recently argued (2006), the evolution of culture-based demands for indigenous peoples has led to a new kind of trap for activists interested in autonomy, since neoliberal states in process of transition toward democratic rule have articulated a rights-based discourse that provides limited new privileges for indigenous peoples within the context of the new political order. This has given rise, in their estimation, to the emer-

gence of (borrowing a term from the Aymara historian and activist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui) the *indio permitido*, or “permissible Indian,” a new figure who, in return for limited new cultural and political rights, is colonized into the existing system. So in the end, it seems that for a host of historical reasons many Native intellectuals in the South have perhaps a deeper, more enduring suspicion of and hostility toward institutions, both political and academic. This was, in part, the perspective reflected in Varese’s concluding comments.

And yet we must not overdraw the contrasts between North and South but use them—as we use other differences and tensions—as entry points for deeper reflection. In our final plenary session, Leilani Basham, a Native Hawaiian scholar, addressed the nonindigenous people in our midst, reminding us that respect for difference and for the integrity of cultures must lie at the heart of all forms of collaboration. The minute we start to feel proprietary, she implied, it’s time to let go, to establish a respectful distance. Jennifer Denetdale added to this observation that, as Wilson has noted, not only colonialism but decolonization as well engenders violence. “When we speak and we speak honestly and we speak across cultures,” Denetdale said, “one of the things that will happen is that there will be tension, it will be uncomfortable. Don’t be afraid, stay there, see what it feels like, see what it tastes like.”<sup>13</sup> Denetdale’s comments echoed Ramos’s earlier suggestion that collaboration inevitably leads to tension, but that tension and contradiction can be productive through work. They also raised, once again, the painful or uncomfortable quality of the frontier, that place where, as Gloria Anzaldúa wrote, “the Third World grates against the first and bleeds” (Anzaldúa 1987, 3).

As intellectuals, scholars, researchers, and writers who inhabit a variety of frontiers, we face these contradictions daily. Attempting to build nonviolent knowledge must, perhaps, inevitably be done along the frontier—between worlds, between cultures and languages, between histories and territories. What tools do we have? Many, including the law, history, the archive, the academy, and writing itself, have also been the tools of colonialism. And given the history of our world, could it be any other way? To build nonviolent knowledge with tools steeped in violence may be the core of our project. And we need to build such knowledge globally, since the forces that oppose it are global, too. As Ramos suggested during the discussions, it is indeed a challenge to use the same tools the colonizers have used. But, he insisted, it

is a challenge we can take on creatively and ambitiously, with the purpose of transforming both their use and their meaning. We offer this book in that spirit.

## *Notes*

1. Colleagues at Wisconsin who participated in the early intellectual planning stages for the conference are Ned Blackhawk, Ada Deer, Roberta Hill, Patricia Loew, Larry Nesper, Frank Salomon, and Theresa Schenck. Ned Blackhawk in particular was most helpful in identifying potential participants working on Hawai'i, the United States, and Canada. Our conference was held in conjunction with the graduate student conference of the CIC American Indian Studies Consortium, organized that year in Madison by Ned Blackhawk. Some of the participants made important contributions to our plenary discussions. For logistical and organizational support, I owe thanks to the Institute for Research in the Humanities and especially to Loretta Freiling; and to the American Indian Studies Program, especially to Denise Wyaka. Financial support for the conference was provided by the Burdick Vary Fund of the Institute for Research in the Humanities; the Anonymous Fund and the University Lectures Committee of the University of Wisconsin; and the NAVE Fund of the Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian Studies Program. The following programs, offices, and divisions of the University of Wisconsin contributed to the purchase, housing, and maintenance of the simultaneous interpretation equipment used at the conference, which is now available on campus for use by other interpreters: the Language Institute; the Global Studies Program; the Office of Human Resource Development; the Division of International Studies; the Department of History; the Office of Facilities, Planning and Management; the Division of University Housing; the Medical School; the Wisconsin Union; and Learning and Support Services. Simultaneous interpretation was provided by Gladys McCormick, Adan Palau, Yesenia Pumarada Cruz, and Donna Vukelich. I'm grateful to Roberto Galo Arroyo for permission to use his art on the cover of the paperback book. At Duke University Press I'm grateful, as always, to Valerie Millholland, Mark Mastromarino, and Miriam Angress. Carol Roberts did her usual excellent work on the index.

2. The literature on these issues is too extensive to cite here. Among the pioneers in the application of colonial and postcolonial theory to a study of indigenous issues is Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999). Other starting points for postcolonial theory might include Said 1978; Chatterjee 1986; Guha and Spivak 1988; Prakash 1995; Dirlik, Bahl, and Gran 2000; Loomba, Kaul, Bunzl, Burton, and Esty 2005.

3. The phrase "decolonizing methodologies" comes from the title of Smith 1999.

4. Originally formulated as a concept by Pablo González Casanova (1965) and Rodolfo Stavenhagen (1965), "internal colonialism" has been taken up, and its mean-

ing transformed, by indigenous intellectuals in Guatemala and Bolivia. See Cojtí Cuxil 1996; Rivera Cusicanqui and Barragán 1997; Qayum 2002.

5. In modern Guatemala, the word *ladino* is used to designate a Hispanicized person, usually of mixed European and indigenous descent; in many other parts of Latin America that person would be termed *mestizo*.

6. This call for more consciously inclusive forms of indigenous politics is echoed as well by Víctor Montejo (2005).

7. Indigenous women, Reuque suggested at the conference, can be doubly marginalized or doubly invisible; and yet, as her experience with her book has demonstrated, indigenous women are also a source of great cultural and political dynamism. See Reuque Paillalef 2002a, b.

8. Some examples are Cruikshank 2002; Howe 2002; James 2000; Mallon 2001, 2002, 2005; Montejo 1987, 1999; Portelli 1991, 1997; Wilson 1998.

9. An example of these debates can be found in *Hispanic American Historical Review* (1999).

10. I engage in a dialogue with Chakrabarty on these issues in Mallon 2005.

11. See especially Mihesuah's essay "American Indian History as a Field of Study" and Alfred's essay "Warrior Scholarship," both in Mihesuah and Wilson 2004.

12. One might argue that within Latin America indigenous intellectuals have made limited progress in entering academic circles in Bolivia, Guatemala, Colombia, Chile, and on Nicaragua's Atlantic coast, but all gains are partial and very hard to maintain, given the financial difficulties of universities in general. The tendency is for indigenous intellectuals to develop their own institutions, which are financially fragile as well. An especially trenchant example of these problems is represented in Chile by the publication of Marimán, Caniuqueo, Millalén, and Levil 2006, a book of essays by four young Mapuche historians, of whom only one, Marimán, has so far had access to a Ph.D. program.

13. Jennifer Denetdale, General Comment, Plenary Session, Conference on Narrating Native Histories, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 10 April 2005, transcription from recording of the session.