
Native Americans and Archaeologists

*Stepping Stones to
Common Ground*

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Forging a New Ancient History for Native America

Some observers fear that "repatriation" will scorch our ability to investigate the ancient past, but I am intrigued with the possibility of harnessing the flames ignited by this issue in order to shed significant new light on human history. Whatever use we choose to make of this particular fire, it is clear that the landscape of relations between Native America and the American archaeological community has undergone dramatic changes since the 1980s—changes favoring the development of what might be termed a "partnership ecology." The character of this growing national environment of interaction between Indians and archaeologists has been shaped by the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA). This federal law creates a role for native communities in asserting some administrative authority over archaeology, and, in terms of the practice of archaeology in the United States, this may well emerge as the primary result of NAGPRA's intent to foster cooperative relations. But important questions have yet

to be answered. Are mutually rewarding partnerships possible, since many Native American leaders are fundamentally unsympathetic toward the discipline and some archaeologists are unsympathetic toward Indian political agendas? Is it accurate to assume that Native Americans can only serve as administrators over archaeology, and that they have no other legitimate contribution to make as partners in the quest to understand the ancient past? Until these questions are addressed, few archaeologists will be enthusiastic about the idea of becoming "partners" with Indian people in the study of ancient America. Significant answers to these questions, however, may emerge from the study of oral documents.

Interest in the contribution of oral traditions to ancient historical settings has long been an aspect of scholarship on Native America. The vast majority of academic researchers, however, reject oral traditions as a source of historical information about events dating back more than two or three centuries, and the complexity of verbal literature has served to discourage further scholarly interest. In addition, the American academic community has a well-established history of viewing the intellectual and cultural heritage of nonwhite societies as inferior. Therefore, native specialists in the preservation of oral traditions are not treated as peers, colleagues, and intellectual equals. Even when racist paradigms have been successfully challenged and defused, one lingering legacy has been that legitimate insights into the human past are viewed as the sole prerogative of Euroamerican scholarship—simply because no convincing alternative exists. Finally, scholars are hesitant to defer to Indian experts on oral traditions since most such experts are religious leaders who emphasize the spiritual aspects of oral traditions and who typically see academic analysis as inappropriate. A religious approach accepts oral texts as the source of holistic truths rather than as documents that require evaluation for historicity, and this clashes with the Euroamerican academic heritage of disqualifying religious belief as a basis for verifying constructions of human history.

The entrance of NAGPRA onto this stage has created a special problem, since it lists oral information as a permissible source of evidence in evaluating the cultural affiliations between ancient and modern Indian societies. Relying on oral information, Indians can now assert claims for the return of human remains and funerary objects dating back centuries or millennia, and academic institutions must evaluate evidence with which they have little experience. Most typically, the vast literature authored by "prehistorians" offers little convenient guidance for administrators who must decide whether oral traditions can serve as a reliable source of evidence about the past. It is therefore important to give some attention to instances in which oral traditions have been offered as evidence in repatriation negotiations. In this chapter, I discuss the reception given to Pawnee oral traditions in such settings and I suggest that the current trend in American archaeology favors changes not only in how archaeology is administered but also in creating exciting new avenues of research on ancient Indian history. First, however, it is necessary to outline my approach to

what I call "ancient Indian history," and to justify my opinions and arguments regarding historicity in oral texts.

Flight of the Bookworms

Attorneys for the Pawnee Tribe began to consult with me during the 1980s on historical issues related to Pawnee efforts to repatriate human remains in Kansas and Nebraska. In 1988, when I began to investigate the evidence pertaining to the identity of Pawnee ancestors, I made the decision to treat archaeology *and* oral traditions as valid sources of information. My research benefited from the existence of an extensive literature on Pawnee oral traditions created through the efforts of James R. Murie, a Skidi Pawnee scholar who wrote down stories from virtually all of the Pawnee storytellers alive around 1900. I began by sorting this literature into stories presumed to be fictional and those presumed to be nonfictional; the non-fictional stories I further separated into three subgroups: (1) stories that displayed indicators—such as references to firearms and horses—for recent historical settings; (2) stories that could be usefully compared to archaeological data relating to Pawnee ancestors or possible ancestors; and (3) stories that did not fit either of the first two categories and were presumed to articulate historical landscapes of the most distant human antiquity. Information from stories contained in the third subgroup ultimately served as the focus of my master's thesis (Echo-Hawk 1994), in which I argue for the transmission of historical information from the late Pleistocene.

Several general categories of oral data can be presumed to have traveled into the present from the distant past. The first such category involves the transmission of oral information relating to physical processes, such as the very useful insight that sexual intercourse leads to pregnancy in human females, or the knowledge that every person will eventually die. These simple ideas may represent the most ancient topics of unbroken transgenerational human conversation. We can only speculate as to how long humans have been talking about the concepts of procreation and mortality, but it would be unreasonable to presume that, at any point during the last 40,000 years or more, some people somewhere engaged in sexual relations, left descendants, and died without holding any discussions about death and sex.

A second category of enduring information is inherent in archaeological research but is rarely an area of explicit interest: the implied coexistence of technology *and orally transmitted awareness of technology*, such as the awareness that clothing is useful as a means of insulating humans from environmental conditions and as a focus of cultural identity. The concept of clothing can be conveyed nonverbally, but it stretches my sense of credibility to presume that it is rarely, or only intermittently, a topic of discussion among succeeding generations of humans. It is possible to estimate the length of time that the idea of clothing has been a topic of human conversation in any region of the world by examining the archaeological record for

pertinent evidence. Indirect evidence might also be considered, such as evidence that humans dwell in places where the use of clothing might be reasonably inferred. Where the archaeological record suggests long-term continuity in technology—even where the superficial form of such technology undergoes change—we ought to presume the coexistence of human discourse about that technology. Too often, we are encouraged to picture humans producing technology for thousands of years without ever once commenting to one another about this activity.

These represent instances in which a given topic of conversation can be presumed to survive over great spans of time. In both areas, however, the endurance of topical data offers little potential for concurrent preservation of historical information about ancient times, but the perseverance of *any* information over millennia through oral means implies that it is at least possible for historical data to survive long transmission periods. This implication is further strengthened by the fact that folklorists accept the proposition that it is possible to preserve fictional narratives for thousands of years, and it is not difficult to find statements conveying such opinions (Thompson 1966:xxi-xxiii; Wiget 1985:6; Lankford 1987:243). If it is possible not only to imagine a continuing human discussion on topics of interest, but also to acknowledge the likelihood that specific verbal texts have been passed along for thousands of years, then it is reasonable to wonder whether any useful historical data have persisted from the distant past.

A real debate and serious discussion needs to be opened on the analysis of information that has conceivably been handed down from our distant Pleistocene ancestors. I have identified a spectrum of oral traditions with potential for shedding light on Pleistocene worldsapes (Echo-Hawk 1994). These include memories of Arctic Circle patterns of solar behavior, the transition (from the perspective of settlers moving southward) to lower latitude diurnal/nocturnal cycles, descriptions of permafrost thawing/freezing patterns, Pleistocene weather phenomena involving powerful atmospheric disturbances, discussions of European and New World glacial ice sheets, Pleistocene sea level changes, human relationships with New World megafauna, memories of the initiation of complex intergenerational social settings, references to glacial lakes, and the onset of Holocene seasonality. The possibility that these oral traditions have a relationship to the Pleistocene requires serious investigation and informed discussion.

Such a discussion would also motivate scholars of more recent time periods to investigate oral traditions for information relevant to their studies, particularly since two categories of orally maintained information are gaining acceptance for transmissibility over time periods involving centuries—though, generally speaking, not millennia. These categories involve the movement of cultural concepts over many centuries (Hall 1989; Bacon 1993) and the endurance of historical information over the past 1,000 years (Pendergast and Meighan 1959; Moodie, Catchpole, and Abel 1992; Teague 1993). My research cited above would extend the durability of actual

historical data in verbal records back to the Pleistocene. At least one scholar has advocated a similar position for cultural concepts (Hall 1983).

It is unfortunate that scholarship in recent decades has led to conceptualizations of past peoples as if they were actors in silent movies. This implication, reinforced by heavy reliance on the term "prehistory," has become ingrained in bibliocentric academia. I advocate the treatment of verbal records as documents that ought to be accorded the same regard given written records, and from this perspective it may be appropriate to view prehistorians as simply incipient historians. With proper attention to oral documents, they may someday be historians; but for the present, they are merely prehistorians: voracious bookworms refusing to metamorphose and take flight into a world that is filled with the echoes of human voices. It should be surprising (but it is not, somehow) that any serious scholar would be skeptical of a "talkies" version of the human past, in which the actors actually have speaking roles. I hold the opinion that every living human on Planet Earth contributes to an unbroken chain of conversations with roots extending back in time to the Pleistocene, and we do not need to rely wholly on speculation or imaginative reconstruction in order to hear the content of at least some portions of those conversations.

An important obstacle to the development of scholarly inquiry into verbal records is the well-established literature demonstrating the malleability of oral documents (see Vansina 1985). For good reasons, serious researchers ought to hesitate to blithely embrace the sort of claims that I have made, particularly since writings that advocate uncritical acceptance of oral traditions as literal characterizations of past events continue to appear in print and are very popular with the general public (see, for example, Deloria 1995; Hancock 1995). These works generally require readers to dispense with the findings of geologists, physicists, archaeologists, and Euro-american Enlightenment science and substitute a faith-based reliance on oral information—a substitute typically bolstered by selective use of science. A consumerist approach to science permits the modeling of wildly diverse, irreconcilable versions of ancient human history and is therefore an approach that cannot be subject to any form of verification other than faith.

Advocates of literalism in oral traditions often liberally exploit instances in which scholars have been overtly autocratic. This strategy takes clever advantage of the insight that inconvenient science need not be discredited through careful study and analysis when it can more easily be dismissed as scientific dogma imposed by totalitarian scholars. It is not difficult to find oppressive behavior in the academic world, but few researchers whose work has unfairly been the target of acts of oppression would agree with the notion that it is reasonable to respond by rejecting the basic precepts of science and scholarship.

One practical effect of the strategy of promoting unverifiable literalism in verbal documents is to create highly polarized landscapes that serve as fertile ground for

the formation of cultlike groups of "Velikovskians" and "Von Dänikenites" whose members unhesitatingly accept even the most astounding pronouncements. This "fringe" literature has great popular appeal because it presents fascinating and highly entertaining depictions of the human past that are very accessible to a wide readership. Scholars who take pains to denounce these popular cults may not recognize that such groups thrive best under circumstances of confrontational polarization, particularly because literalism based on selective science is not, by its nature, subject to critical challenge in any manner familiar to science-based scholars. For this reason, any confrontational "debate" essentially empowers and authorizes an unresolvable conflict. My treatment of oral traditions relies on a paradigm that does not lend itself easily to such warfare.

Since the known inherent malleability of verbal literature provides a rather sandy foundation for constructions of human history, my approach to oral traditions requires acceptance of science-based models of past world settings. We should acknowledge that the spoken word is indeed a pliable substance, but we also need to develop analytical procedures to identify the presence of durable information in verbal messages. I have proposed such procedures (Echo-Hawk 1994), and it is my hope that this work will become generally available in some form. For the moment, it is important that archaeologists and Indians understand how recent efforts to use oral traditions may point to future developments in the study of what I call "ancient Indian history"—that is, the creation of historical models based on the integration of archaeology and oral traditions. As detailed below, repatriation negotiations have opened a new forum for oral traditions, but one which currently invites collisions between conflicting perspectives rather than productive discourse. In my view, however, this is a short-term situation rather than a permanent condition.

Battlefields of Ancient Indian History

While conducting repatriation research for the Pawnee Tribe on the collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS), I was asked in the summer of 1990 to provide the tribal attorneys with an affidavit communicating the results of my research on ancient Pawnee history. I asserted that Caddoan oral traditions were compatible with archaeological evidence supporting the presence of Pawnee ancestors in the Central Plains during the past 1,000 years or more. In December 1990, the Pawnee Tribe released my report (Echo-Hawk 1990) as evidence attached to a petition filed in support of the Pawnee claim to human remains associated with the Central Plains tradition, dating from A.D. 950 to 1400. This paper, entitled "Ancient Pawnee History," identified more than 40 Caddoan oral traditions that, in my view, have some connection to historical settings predating the sixteenth century.

The response of the NSHS archaeologists followed in January 1991 (Ludwickson et al. 1991).

This response included letters solicited during the fall of 1990 from various scholars, several of whom commented on my affidavit. One archaeologist expressed the view that connecting Pawnee oral traditions "to the specifics of the available archeological record is impossible" (Peter Bleed to Terry Steinacher, September 13, 1990, correspondence appended to Ludwickson et al. 1991). The National Park Service's Midwest Archeological Center weighed in with a letter expressing amusement at my credentials as an "expert witness" and wondering whether I had "lifted" the list of sources attached to my affidavit (F. A. Calabrese to Terry Steinacher, September 7, 1990). This letter from a federal agency advised the NSHS that my professors at the University of Colorado should be informed of my misdeeds, presumably to encourage that institution to silence me through academic censure. I am uncertain as to why such stark hostility emerged from the NPS Midwest Archeological Center, but it is clear that this form of academic critique is not designed to promote productive and informed discussion. For Indians who see archaeologists in terms of a homogenous, oppressive stereotype, it is relevant to note at this point that letters provided to the NSHS by several other archaeologists contained brief comments responding more favorably to my affidavit, but all of these responses—both pro and con—were formulated before the release of "Ancient Pawnee History."

The NSHS archaeologists prepared a reply to "Ancient Pawnee History" and contacted Melburn Thurman, an ethnohistorian, for an additional assessment of my work. Both appraisals rejected my approach. Thurman characterized my paper as an "ideosyncratic" [*sic*] expression of "belief" and claimed that "few Plain [*sic*] anthropology specialists, whether archaeologists or ethnohistorians, would care to argue that Indian traditions provide any kind of useful historical information beyond the living memory" (evaluation by Thurman dated December 31, 1990). The NSHS archaeologists adopted a more sophisticated strategy. They argued that reconciliation of the archaeological record with written documents and Pawnee oral traditions favors a scenario in which the Spanish drove the Pawnees out of the Southwest into the Central Plains sometime around A.D. 1600. Whether or not these scholars actually supported this theory, their fundamental point was to question oral traditions as a source of useful information, and their views have since received wide and influential circulation among other specialists in Plains archaeology.

None of my suggestions on connecting specific oral documents to the archaeological record were directly refuted by any of these appraisals; rather, their strategies centered on efforts to cast doubt on my basic assumption that oral records can be reliably integrated with archaeological evidence. This approach was remarkably effective in undermining serious consideration of my work. Up to this point, I had occasionally indulged a naive expectation that the NSHS archaeologists would be intrigued at the implications of my research, and I looked forward to the

possibility of working with and learning from these experts on Central Plains archaeology. I recall thinking that by working together, we could more effectively address questions surrounding Pawnee ancestry on the basis of cooperative scholarship; but as it turned out, the mediation of lawyers, judges, legislators, the attorney general of Nebraska, the governor of Nebraska, and the president of the United States proved far more essential to Pawnee repatriation efforts than any of my ideas on oral traditions.

As of 1996, not a single set of human remains had been repatriated and reburied as a result of my work on oral traditions. This is an important symbolic victory for those scholars and institutions who have conscientiously labored as a matter of academic politics to protect their prerogatives in the practice of traditional American archaeology. It is, moreover, a source of amazement to me that some scholars unself-consciously deplore Indian repatriation efforts as politically motivated, particularly since my experiences in dealing with archaeopoliticians have starkly clarified for me some of the personal costs that my research might entail—including the unambiguous threat to destroy any aspirations I might have for an academic career. Though my efforts to investigate oral documents in the context of repatriation claims have borne discouraging results, I am convinced, nevertheless, that many Indians and archaeologists are open to these explorations, and I am encouraged by the favorable interest that I have received from individuals in both communities. My experiences with the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) underscore this point.

The Pawnee Tribe discovered that the NMNH also held Central Plains tradition human remains, and in 1992 the tribal attorneys submitted various research papers supporting a Pawnee claim for these persons. A meeting in 1994 with the NMNH Repatriation Office produced a somewhat dismaying result. In the course of this meeting I mentioned some of my ideas on oral traditions and was invited to prepare a report containing this evidence. The Smithsonian representatives were surprised to hear that this information had already been provided in the form of *two* reports: my 1990 paper and a more detailed 1992 version (Echo-Hawk 1990, 1992). Unfortunately, neither paper had been circulated to two scholars—Donna Roper and Richard Jantz—who had been hired by the Smithsonian to help evaluate the Pawnee claim.

Roper's subsequent report (1993) on archaeological evidence offered some consideration of evidence from oral traditions, but it simply responded to a conference paper presenting the views of the Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) archaeologists. Though she took a position that challenged their perspective, she made little effort to assess the oral traditions for relevant information. Physical anthropologist Richard Jantz took pains in his report to emphasize research results that he believed contradicted the "Pawnee position" (Jantz 1993). Nevertheless, Roper and Jantz both provided research conclusions that conformed in very

interesting ways to my evidence from oral traditions, but this circumstance did little to attract the curiosity of the NMNH Repatriation Office.

Roper's treatment of oral traditions illustrates the fact that even when the findings of archaeologists support Indian repatriation efforts, such support need not reflect any sympathy for investigating the contribution of verbal literature to ancient historical settings. In Roper's case, the difficulty of assessing the contribution of Pawnee oral traditions may have been unnecessarily magnified by her ignorance of my research. For this reason, I volunteered to assist the NMNH in assessing the oral evidence, but I was given no opportunity to contribute to this process, and though the NMNH ultimately affirmed a cultural affiliation between the Pawnee Tribe and the Central Plains tradition, oral traditions were dismissed as a factor. William Billeck, the NMNH case officer who handled the Pawnee claim, later defended his approach with the assertion that he saw no need to assess oral documents since the archaeological and biological evidence proved sufficient. It is notable, however, that the NMNH cited and relied on the NSHS position on Pawnee oral traditions in declining to accept such evidence (Billeck et al. 1995:17).

The Pawnee Tribe continued negotiations with the Smithsonian for the repatriation of human remains associated with the Steed-Kisker phase—contemporaries and neighbors of the Central Plains tradition. This effort led to a stalemate of conflicting opinions in 1995, and the matter was brought before the Smithsonian's Native American Repatriation Review Committee for resolution. In a hearing held in September 1995, I was given an opportunity to discuss at some length the contribution of Pawnee oral traditions to the question of Steed-Kisker cultural affiliations. The committee subsequently issued findings that favored the position of the Pawnee Tribe, giving credence to Pawnee oral traditions as a source of historical information about the ancient past (Thornton et al. 1995). It is also highly significant that in two separate publications in 1995, one NSHS archaeologist has acknowledged that Pawnee oral traditions might be of some use to archaeologists studying the ancient Central Plains (Bozell 1995a, 1995b). These recent developments offer important and encouraging signs of change.

Animal Architects

It may be useful to suggest how it is possible to integrate oral traditions and archaeology in an effort to clarify cultural affiliations between the Pawnee people and the Central Plains tradition. As mentioned earlier, I have identified a variety of Caddoan oral traditions concerning ancient historical settings, and in my opinion some of these stories can be connected to the time of the Central Plains tradition (A.D. 950 to 1400). A particularly strong area for productive analysis is found in the topic of architecture.

At least three separate statements and stories concerning the origins of earthlodge architectural structures were collected and recorded by James R. Murie and George Dorsey from Pawnees alive at the end of the nineteenth century (Dorsey and Murie 1906:19–21; Linton 1923; Murie 1981:158–162). This group of statements and stories was told as historical observations, rather than as fictional tales or speculation, and I presume that these stories are not only derived from actual historical circumstances, but that they concern a variety of separate events. One South Band Pawnee story begins with the statement that the first people were placed near Nemaha, Nebraska, where they constructed an earthlodge facing west (Dorsey and Murie 1906:19–21). This story—told by a Kitkahahki Pawnee about the Kawarakis ancestors of the South Band Pawnees—is not a detailed narrative about earthlodges, but it conveys the impression that the first use of such structures occurred while the Kawarakis Caddoans dwelt in southeastern Nebraska at some point in time prior to extensive reliance on corn cultivation and bison hunting.

Two Skidi Pawnee narratives contain detailed information about the circumstances under which the ancestors of the Skidi first adopted earthlodge architecture. One story (Murie 1981:158–162) is set on the Elkhorn River in northeastern Nebraska and concerns the development of earthlodges with circular floor plans, implying that circular earthlodges first appeared in some region beyond the central Nebraska Loup River homeland of the Skidi Pawnees. According to the narrative, this architectural innovation is associated with animal lodge ceremonialism.

The second Skidi oral tradition (Linton 1923) differs in significant ways from the Elkhorn River story and makes no mention of the earthlodge floor plan shape. This narrative describes the origin of the Skidi "Medicine Lodge"—a formal expression of animal lodge ceremonialism. The story reports that a "man who lived alone, and did not mingle with the rest of the tribe" traveled "for many days" toward the east until he arrived at the Missouri River, where he was inducted into an animal lodge beneath the water. Speaking for these animals, a "water monster" explained that it had been sent by Tirawahut from the "Big Waters" in order to "tell these animals to instruct you in their mysteries." After a time, the man returned home, and sometime later, he was told to embark on another journey eastward "to the place where Fremont [*sic*], Nebraska, now is." At an animal lodge located on an island in the Platte River, the man received instructions on building "a new kind of house," which was to be a gift to the Skidi people; the animals then took the man to a nearby hill where they constructed the first earthlodge for him. Until this time, "the Skidi did not know how to build earth lodges." Though this structure is associated with animal lodge ceremonialism, it is also clear that earthlodges were intended to have both ceremonial and residential purposes.

Available literature on the archaeology of the Central Plains often touches on earthlodge architecture but typically makes no mention of these Pawnee oral

traditions. Archaeologists have been reluctant to treat these verbal documents as a useful source of information about the historical past, presumably due to elements in the narratives that sound nonhistorical. In other words, few scholars would give serious attention to any colleague who may embrace the "fact" that the Skidi Pawnees received knowledge of earthlodges from spirit animals in eastern Nebraska—animals that actually built the first such structure. For both archaeologists and Indians, therefore, this situation must be written off as yet another frustrating example of a collision between science and religion. An additional problem presents itself to those scholars who wish to understand "the Pawnee" account of the origin of earthlodges, and then find that they must contend with three separate and conflicting stories describing how the Pawnee acquired such buildings. These two problems probably account for the fact that no scholar who has written about Pawnee earthlodges has ever assessed the potential for integrating these oral traditions with the archaeological record.

Insights from the archaeological record are essential in reconciling the three extant Pawnee perspectives on the origins of earthlodges. Two broad classes of earthlodge structures can be distinguished in the archaeological record: a form with a circular floor plan, found in sites dating after A.D. 1500, and an older form featuring a square floor plan, associated with the Central Plains tradition. The Skidi oral tradition that discusses the origin of circular earthlodges (the Elkhorn River story) most likely concerns a historical setting that follows the time period of the Central Plains tradition, while the other Skidi story (the Missouri River/Fremont story) must describe the adoption of the square structures associated with Central Plains tradition sites. Thus, it is my view that we have Skidi Pawnee oral traditions that discuss not only the historical origin of earthlodge architecture but also its later modification from square to circular. This implies that both forms are expressions of a single continuous architectural legacy and that certain features ought to be present in both square and circular earthlodges. In fact, similarities between these two differing structures served as the primary basis for Donna Roper's finding of cultural affiliation between the Central Plains tradition and the later Pawnees (Roper 1993).

The Kikahaki story bears no resemblance to either of the Skidi stories. My explanation for this situation is that the Kawarakis ancestors of the South Band Pawnee tribes are derived from a group distinguishable from the ancestors of the Skidi Pawnees—an idea that is further aided by a number of other Pawnee oral traditions that are beyond the scope of this limited review. The reference in the Kikahaki story to the Nemaha region suggests that the folk who dwell in this region at the time that earthlodges first appeared were probably more directly ancestral to the South Band Pawnee than to the Skidi Pawnee. On the basis of cranio-metric evidence, Jantz (1993) suggested that the Central Plains tradition may be divisible into two subgroups: a western group comprising Upper Republican

phase and Iiskari phase populations and an eastern group including the Nebraska and Steed-Kisker phases. On the basis of my study of Pawnee and Arikara oral traditions, I am in general agreement with this division.

A recent analysis of radiocarbon dates by Roper (1995) also suggests that Central Plains tradition lifeways appeared earlier in the east and spread westward, a model that conforms to the Skidi account of a man who traveled from somewhere west of the Missouri River to eastern Nebraska to learn of earthlodge construction. It is my suggestion that the eastern Central Plains tradition groups became engaged in cultural activities that included some form of ceremonialism involving animal impersonation and the associated utilization of earthlodges as ceremonial structures, and that this religious complex was subsequently transmitted to the ancestors of the Skidi in the west. Modern forms of this ceremonialism clearly did involve animal impersonation (see Murie 1981). Thus, the following description in the Skidi story takes on a meaning that has little to do with literal animals, and everything to do with humans who are engaged in a specific form of religious life:

In the lodge he saw the beaver, the owl, the otter, the ermine, the bear, the buffalo, the wolf, the mountain lion, the wild cat, and all sorts of birds. He stayed with them for many days, and they taught him more mysteries. At last they told him to go to a nearby hill where they had cleared a site for a medicine lodge. The deer led him from the animals' lodge and put him safe on dry land. When he came to the place for the medicine lodge, he found everything ready. All the animals had cleared away the grass. The badgers had dug the holes for the posts, the beavers had cut them down and peeled them, and the bears and mountain lions had carried them up the hill. The animals helped him to raise the framework and told him how to lay on the willows and grass and cover the whole with earth. They then told him to return to his village and to tell the chiefs to bring the people to the new place, which had been selected for them by the animals (Linton 1923).

I regard this scene—preserved in the form of a highly memorable verbal narrative—as a credible record of an important event in ancient Pawnee history. A more complete review of Pawnee and Arikara oral traditions and a fuller consideration of the archaeological record will, I believe, eventually provide a convincing argument to most specialists in Central Plains archaeology as to the utility of seeking to integrate these data from two different sources.

A variety of significant observations can be made about the oral traditions reviewed here:

1. The historical chronology of the stories cannot be understood without reference to archaeological data.
2. The presence of earthlodges in the archaeological record is a manifestation of some form of animal lodge ceremonialism, and it may be possible to identify specific Central Plains tradition earthlodge structures that were built to accommodate such ceremonialism.

3. Oral traditions point to the appearance of lifeways utilizing earthlodges in the eastern Central Plains and a subsequent diffusion westward, and this is compatible with archaeological evidence.
4. The archaeological record for the Central Plains and adjacent regions should be reviewed to identify sites that date to the general period of A.D. 1300-1600 and feature both square and circular earthlodges.
5. The modern Pawnee people have cultural roots extending very unambiguously into the period of the Central Plains tradition, and this connection is effectively clarified through the integration of the archaeological record with oral traditions.

It is unfortunate that my research, forged in the fires of bitter disputes over repatriation, has moved some very powerful Central Plains archaeopoliticians to attempt to extinguish rather than encourage the light that "ancient Pawnee history" can shed on the prehistory of the Central Plains. In terms of my personal aspirations for an academic career, mine is certainly not a glowing success story; but my research has enabled me to assure the leaders of the Pawnee Tribe that in reburial Central Plains tradition human remains, they are laying to rest the bones of persons who are ancestors of the Pawnee and Arikara people. It is also important to observe that the Pawnee Tribe has relied on the advice and hard work of archaeologists like Larry Zimmerman and Tom Witty in seeking (and accomplishing) the reburial of nearly 400 persons who lived and died during the Central Plains tradition period.

The End of Conquest Anthropology

If the spirit of NAGPRA is to ever have a reasonable chance for fulfillment, then attitudes must change on the part of both archaeologists and Indians. For archaeologists, the building of partnerships can focus on the contribution of Indian knowledge to our understanding of human history. For Indians, the opportunity to address long-standing grievances from a position of power should create new settings in which the contribution of archaeology to Indian historical self-awareness can be explored and embraced. The successful integration of oral evidence with evidence from archaeology and physical anthropology holds forth great potential for reshaping the essential character of academic constructions of ancient human history.

The circumstances under which my research first became available in 1990 offered fertile ground for hostility on the part of archaeologists intent on defending important collections of human remains from repatriation, and it is understandable that my work was not simply rejected, but effectively quashed. From this inauspicious beginning, we need to move forward into more productive interactions. Although I cannot ignore the personal costs of these experiences, I have little

sympathy for Indians who may seek to extract from my story some justification for dismissing archaeology as a tool for understanding ancient Native America.

Despite the current trend favoring a new "partnership ecology," some Indians will continue to advocate the view that it is reasonable to dispense with archaeology and elevate oral traditions as the only source of legitimate information about ancient human history, but such advocacy will find no support in NAGPRA. This advocacy is not simply an expression of cultural pride, since—as I have touched on earlier—the politics of polarity are also useful in bringing together like-minded persons whose unified opinions can serve as a basis for the wielding of power. While I personally support Indian efforts to control the quality of Indian lifeways through the manipulation of social power, I am unwilling to conduct inquiry into ancient human history on the basis of a racialist paradigm that treats "Indian" knowledge (oral traditions) as inherently superior to "white" knowledge (archaeology).

NAGPRA gives no standing to religious belief as a source of evidence about the past, and many Indian religious leaders will be hesitant to submit their knowledge to analysis for historical content. In dealing with the concerns of Indian religious leaders, it is the responsibility of scholars to find a course offering maximum sensitivity to religious perspectives while conducting research that meets acceptable standards of academic scholarship. Even in those cases where tribal authorities support such research, few Indian communities have the financial resources to take advantage of the opportunity under NAGPRA to explore the use of oral evidence in elucidating the cultural affiliations of persons who lived and died long ago. As a practical matter, these conditions therefore shift the burden for conducting this research onto the academic community.

Not every archaeologist will be interested in pursuing partnerships with Indians. At least some archaeologists and physical anthropologists will continue to promote their spheres of inquiry as the only valid means of investigating the ancient past. At present, the assertion that archaeology and physical anthropology together hold an inviolable intellectual copyright to the ancient past pervades anthropological literature and is frequently pressed into service as a powerful tool for uniting scholars who are opposed to Indian repatriation efforts. An implication of my research is that such claims will become increasingly recognized as questionable, narcissistic, and as diagnostic artifacts of a time when paternalistic scholars felt that only they held the power to open windows on so-called prehistoric Native America.

As one result of my experiences, I have learned that archaeopolitics, rather than any interest in scholarship, can dominate the responses of some archaeologists to claims for historicity in oral traditions. The current interest of archaeologists in the contribution of oral traditions to the study of ancient Native America is a matter of some guesswork, but no major archaeology journal has yet made such inquiry a prominent (or even minor) topic of research. I am doubtful that change in this area will come swiftly. I have little doubt, however, that what I call "ancient Indian

history"—the integration of oral traditions with the archaeological record—will become a major feature of archaeology in the twenty-first century.

Researchers who wish to investigate oral traditions about ancient times would be wise to expect a certain amount of skeptical rejection. More positive environments are gradually emerging for such scholarship, though my personal optimism on this point is, as I have mentioned, somewhat speculative. It is certainly appropriate for any academic interpretation of oral literature to be subjected to careful scrutiny and reasoned criticism, and Indians should expect such treatment for any claims made for historicity in oral traditions. Research associated with repatriation, however, enters a highly confrontational political realm, and efforts to bring oral traditions into this setting may provoke an initial response of automatic dismissal from the classroom rather than a fair evaluation according to academic standards.

For scholars, institutions, journal editors, and publishers who are committed to encouraging the growth of partnerships with Indian communities, every archaeological research project involving ancient Native America ought to be evaluated for the potential contribution of oral traditions. A recent article in the *SAA Bulletin* offers excellent advice to archaeologists interested in practical guidelines for exploring this topic (Anyon et al. 1996; also see Anyon et al., this volume). Indians must also be prepared, in the short term, to encounter research that is rudimentary, naive, or less than sensitive to major concerns. It will take time to create mutual trust and productive relationships, and more sophisticated analysis of oral literature will necessarily require a period of development since few archaeologists or other scholars have spent time working in this area. The setting of high standards and demands for faithful adherence may, for the moment, be unrealistic and simply serve to inhibit the growth of interest in oral traditions and interfere with the cultivation of meaningful partnerships.

In conclusion, I sincerely hope that Indians and archaeologists who prefer to reject opportunities to explore common ground will find themselves increasingly marginalized in a world that recognizes the desirability of a true partnership ecology. The short-term benefits of pursuing cooperative relations mostly revolve around the practical recognition that both groups must now work together on projects involving archaeological inquiry. Long-term relationships between Indians and archaeologists will only flourish when both groups can view each other as colleagues with legitimate interests and contributions. The key goal, thus, is to seek engagement in processes that can enhance *mutual* respect. Indians and archaeologists face great challenges in the commitment to find common ground, but the exploration of the ancient past can bring us all forward into an exciting future—a future in which genuine partnerships will open a whole new world of insights for us all.

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SECTION III



The Integration of Tradition and Science