REVIEWS

Repatriation and Erasing the Past. ELIZABETH WEISS and JAMES W. SPRINGER. 2020. University of Florida Press, Gainesville. xii + 264 pp. $90.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-683-401575.

Reviewed by Ann M. Kakaliouras, Whittier College, Whittier, California

Fall 2020 was not an auspicious time for the publication of this book. COVID-19 sent the privileged among us into our homes for months, leaving Black, Latinx, other peoples of color, and poorer white people as our essential workers—who then disproportionately bore the risk of infection. The murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks, and Jacob Blake threw the United States into yet another reckoning around race and justice, one that touched even the highest levels of academia (and see Lynn Gamble et al., "Statement and Commitments from SAA Editors to Change the Underrepresentation of Black, Indigenous, and Other Scholars from Diverse Backgrounds in Our Publications," *American Antiquity* 85:624–626, 2020). Furthermore, the 2020 presidential election in the United States, easily won by the Democratic ticket, only exacerbated the chasm within the electorate. Most apropos to this review, though, is the fact that 2020 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

Nevertheless, here we are. *Repatriation and Erasing the Past*, cowritten by a bioarchaeologist (Elizabeth Weiss) and a lawyer (James Springer), represents the most comprehensive argument against the repatriation of Indigenous ancestors published in the last few decades. It is not, however, an effective argument. The book suffers from numerous distortions and omissions that, late in 2020, did not escape the notice of bioarchaeologists on social media and elsewhere. As of this writing, letters of protest have been sent to the managing editor of the University of Florida Press; a letter distributed online objecting to the premises and content of the book has garnered over 700 signatures from the anthropological community; and the chairs and Ethics Subcommittee of the SAA's Bioarchaeology Interest Group distributed an e-mail to the entire association membership condemning the book. This reviewer cannot think of a moment in the entire history of bioarchaeology where such unanimity has gripped the field—especially around the usually controversial topics of repatriation and NAGPRA. Galvanizing shared viewpoints in the bioarchaeology community is perhaps a positive by-product of this publication.

Repatriation and Erasing the Past is organized into three parts that contain a total of 10 chapters. Part I (Chapters 1–4) consists of extended and cherry-picked bioarchaeological literature reviews, as well as distinctly outdated arguments against repatriation that usually occur in brief spurts at the beginning and end of each chapter. The chapters, probably penned by Weiss, focus on Paleoindians, North American mummies, and populational relationships between precontact peoples in the Americas. There is also a curious chapter that purports to debunk already discredited popular notions about the pasts of Native peoples (Chapter 4, "Reconstructing the Past: Correcting Fallacies"). Part II consists of two chapters (Chapters 5–6), presumably written primarily by Springer. Chapter 5 ("NAGPRA and Beyond: Repatriation and Related Laws in the United States") strangely sidesteps most traditional U.S. federal law about American Indians, including the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA), to make a rather tortured argument about the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution before turning to the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and NAGPRA—laws that supposedly "grant Indian tribes and Indian peoples interests that are not granted to other ethnic groups" (p. 143). Chapter 6 ("Other Repatriation Movements in the United States"), the shortest chapter of the book, focuses primarily on the Havasupai Tribe's legal struggles to regain control of their DNA, but actually bemoans Indigenous peoples' "protection

American Antiquity 86(3), 2021, pp. 646–665

https://doi.org/10.1017/aaq.2021.41 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of their DNA against research answers that may contradict their beliefs" (p. 155). Part III includes four more chapters (Chapter 7–10) and represents the primary argumentative section of the book.

The authors' central argument is twofold, which includes a problem and its solution. First, the problem. They assert that "repatriation ideology" (p. 94)—as promoted by both Native and non-Native "repatriationists" (an oft-used moniker in this book that ironically invokes the "resurrectionists" of the nineteenth century, who illegally excavated recently dug graves to provide bodies for anatomical research) and enshrined in a U.S. federal law (NAGPRA) that gives unfair racial preferences to Native Americans and their religious beliefs (see especially pp. 170–174, 176)—threatens to control and censor all bioarchaeological and DNA research in the United States and will inevitably end all scientific research on U.S. Indigenous peoples, dead or alive. Then, they propose a remedy to this problem—namely a return to the values espoused by "traditional anthropologists [who] believed they could produce an objective and universally valid body of knowledge" (p. 1) about human cultures and biology. Weiss and Springer state their claims about science plainly: "Science is neutral; it does not take sides and is utterly without prejudice. And that is the beauty of science" (p. 218).

Here and everywhere in the book, the authors display a breathtaking ignorance of their own reactionary political project—so much so that they even distort the main text on which they base their definition of scientific objectivity. It should be noted that they take pains, throughout their book, to contrast scientific truth with Native peoples' "unbelievable" (p. 5) oral traditions. They use Karl Popper and John C. Eccles's *The Self and Its Brain: An Argument for Interactionism* (1985 [first published in 1977]), and their three-world concept (World 1 = physical objects, World 2 = human consciousness, and World 3 = "the products of the human mind" [1985:38]) to assert an "ideal of objective knowledge" (p. 213) embodied only in science and scientific research. They conveniently leave out, however, that Popper and Eccles clearly meant World 3 to include *all* products of *all* human minds, including mythology, art, philosophy, science, and religious belief (Popper and Eccles 1985:16, 38, 48, 359). The usual Western philosophical chauvinism aside, Popper and Eccles imply that Indigenous peoples' concept of the world is on par with that of the West, noting that Maori legends line up well with "tests giving the dating of their time of arrival and where from" (1985:457). Moreover, Popper and Eccles also wrangle with the difference between Hopi and Western concepts of time, not relegating the Hopi view to a lesser stage within their World 3 (1985:466–467).

It is also not clear for whom *Repatriation and Erasing the Past* is written. The language is generally too technical for beginning students and lay readers; the tone is alarmist, patronizing, and pedantic; and the main content, especially in the bioarchaeology chapters, is outdated and comically selective. Furthermore, evidently only a scientistic bioarchaeologist and a lawyer could so thoroughly erase history, including the history of colonial oppression in the United States, the history of the often violent and disproportionate collection of Native relatives and ancestors, and the entire history of the twentieth-century development of informed consent laws and regulations in scientific and medical research.

In short, the very publication of this book is an insult to Native peoples, as well as to the disciplines of archaeology and bioarchaeology. Furthermore, it should not be read by anyone who cares one whit about the complex relationship between science and society or the ethical practice of science—but it will be or may be read by those who do not and then used to justify their positions. In that sense, this book is dangerous.

Indigenous Persistence in the Colonized Americas: Material and Documentary Perspectives on Entanglement. HEATHER LAW PEZZAROSSI and RUSSELL N. SHEPTAK, editors. 2019. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque. vii + 250 pp. $75.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0-8263-6042-7. $75.00 (e-book), ISBN 978-0-8263-6043-4.

Reviewed by Christine D. Beaule, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

This volume, edited by Heather Law Pezzarossi and Russell Sheptak, is a welcome addition to a growing body of established scholarship about Indigeneity in the colonized Americas. It consists of 10 chapters written by a group of scholars who collectively use innovative approaches and conceptual frameworks to study Indigenous sites spanning the deeper past, more recent, and contemporary Indigenous communities. The editors write that the authors' theoretical and methodological approaches "create better bridges between past and present" (p. 2). The case studies reveal prolonged Indigenous entanglements and precolonial continuities framed in ways that are more representative of Indigenous experiences and lifeways than selective foci on "contact" events. The best examples of this are Kurt Jordan and Peregrine Gerard-Little's (Chapter 3) study of Seneca use of space through time, and Lindsay Montgomery's (Chapter 6) evidence for Comanche reterritorialization.

https://doi.org/10.1017/aaq.2021.41 Published online by Cambridge University Press