


Categorical Denial: Evaluating Post-1492 Indigenous Erasure in the Paper Trail of American Archaeology

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To understand the implications of archaeological site recording practices and associated inventories for studying Indigenous persistence after the arrival of Europeans, we examined the documentary record associated with nearly 900 archaeological sites in Marin County, California. Beginning with the first regional surveys conducted during the early 1900s and continuing into the present, the paper trail created by archaeologists reveals an enduring emphasis on precontact materials to the exclusion of more recent patterns of Indigenous occupation and land use. In assessing sites occupied by Indigenous people from the late sixteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries, we discuss how the use of multiple lines of evidence—including temporally diagnostic artifacts, chronometric dating techniques, and historical documentation—may help illuminate subtle but widespread patterns of Native presence that have been obscured by essentialist assumptions about Indigenous culture change. Our findings further reveal the shortcomings of traditional site recording systems, in which archaeologists typically categorize sites within the prehistoric-protohistoric-historic triad on the basis of commonsense decisions that conflate chronology with identity. Instead, we argue for recording practices that focus specifically on the calendric ages of occupation for any given site.

Keywords: Indigenous persistence, colonialism, site recording, dating, California

Para entender las implicaciones de las prácticas de registro e inventariación de sitios arqueológicos asociados con la persistencia indígena después de la llegada de los europeos, examinamos el registro documental asociado con casi 900 sitios arqueológicos en el condado de Marin, California. Comenzando con las primeras encuestas regionales realizadas a principios del siglo veinte y continuando hasta el presente, el registro creado por los arqueólogos revela un énfasis constante en los materiales precontacto y la exclusión de patrones de uso y residencia más recientes. Al evaluar los sitios ocupados por grupos indígenas desde finales del siglo dieciséis hasta mediados del siglo veinte, analizamos la manera en que el uso de múltiples líneas de evidencia (incluidos los artefactos diagnósticos, técnicas de datación cronométrica, y documentación histórica) puede contribuir a iluminar patrones sutiles pero generalizados de presencia que han sido ocultados por premisas esencialistas sobre el cambio cultural indígena. Nuestros hallazgos resaltan las deficiencias de los sistemas tradicionales de registro en los que los arqueólogos clasifican los sitios como prehistóricos, protohistóricos o históricos con base en decisiones de sentido común que mezclan la cronología con la identidad. En su lugar, abogamos por prácticas de registro centradas específicamente en las fechas calendáricas de ocupación de los sitios.

Palabras clave: persistencia indígena, colonialismo, registro de sitios, datación, California

Three decades after the Columbian Quincentenary generated a florescence of interest surrounding the archaeology of colonialism in the Americas, the field has reached new levels of sophistication and nuance. One important area of growth during this period

concerns the reflexive use of terminology to describe the events and processes of the past 530 years in both archaeology and scholarly communication to the broader public. Archaeologists have considered the arbitrary nature of the prehistoric-historic divide, the ethnocentric

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assumptions embedded in acculturation frameworks, the relative strengths and weaknesses of key concepts such as culture contact and colonialism, and the ways that archaeological interpretations can unwittingly support narratives of Indigenous extinction (Cusick 1998; Jordan 2014; Lightfoot 1995; Rubertone 2000; Schmidt and Mrozowski 2013; Silliman 2005; Wilcox 2009). These conversations have transformed the landscape of research and publishing on post-1492 Indigenous sites in North America.

Nevertheless, stubborn remnants of earlier approaches remain deeply engrained in the everyday practice of archaeology. For example, the prehistoric-historic divide is codified within the eligibility criteria for the United States National Register of Historic Places, the very basis of the cultural resource management (CRM) industry in the United States. This distinction is replicated in the basic forms that archaeologists employ to record sites in the field as well as in digital databases that cover large portions of the continent's cultural resources. As previous research has shown (Beaudoin 2016), seemingly low-level recording decisions—for example, those regarding chronological placement or the ethnicity of site occupants—can result in a highly distorted picture of regional archaeology that is perpetuated in CRM decisions, culture historical frameworks for particular areas, and popular understandings of the past. In short, terms that many of us find problematic, such as the common prehistoric-protolithic-historic tripartite system of temporal classification, still apply to vast portions of North America's archaeological record. This pattern continues—in no small part because of institutional inertia—at the same time that the misidentification of post-1492 Indigenous sites perpetuates anthropological narratives of extinction.

We examine these issues through a review of archaeological site records from Marin County, California. In doing so, we considered the official temporal designation assigned to each site and completed a thorough review of associated documents to find potential mismatches between the assigned site age and the reported physical or historical evidence for Indigenous site use after the arrival of Europeans. This exercise reveals

deeply rooted biases in the practice of site recording and chronological placement that have reverberating implications for the baseline knowledge of regional archaeology. As we show in our case study, the current reliance on the prehistoric-protolithic-historic sequence effectively erases dozens of sites crucial for understanding Indigenous persistence in the face of successive waves of Euro-American colonialism. Our findings point toward ways that archaeologists can improve site recording practices and chronological classification by better accounting for enduring Indigenous presence in central California and elsewhere.

Recording and Recognizing Post-1492 Indigenous Sites

Systematic archaeological research into post-1492 Indigenous sites in North America began in the early twentieth century and was most commonly associated with the direct historical approach in which researchers attempted to trace historically documented tribal groups back to precontact times (e.g., Dixon 1913; Steward 1942; Wedel 1940). Within this framework, archaeologists often divided sites or site components into three basic temporal categories: prehistoric, protolithic, and historic. The definitions of these terms have shifted over the intervening decades, but the basic tripartite system continues to be employed throughout the continent. These terms have similar applications in other regions (e.g., Flexner 2014; McNiven and Russell 2005); however, for the sake of brevity, we focus on North America.

As historical archaeology emerged as a sub-discipline in the 1960s, researchers who focused on the recent past struggled with how to define their field and the sites that fell into its purview. Bernard Fontana (1965), for example, sought to delineate the realm of what he called “historic sites archaeology.” His classification of five site categories was chronological and followed what he considered to be the “New World historical development: from Indian to non-Indian” (Table 1). Following suit, Robert Schuyler (1970:85) argued that “Indigenous sites become historic sites, and thus the subject matter of our discipline [historical archaeology], only when

Table 1. Summary of Fontana's (1965) "Classification of Historic Sites"

Category	Definition	Key Characteristics
Protohistoric	Native sites with evidence of non-Native groups but <i>prior to contact with outsiders</i>	"Scanty" evidence of non-Native items
Contact	Existing Native settlements visited by outsiders	Non-Native items <i>and</i> historical documentation
Postcontact	Newly established Native sites that were inhabited <i>only after</i> contact with outsiders	None given
Frontier	Sites established by outsiders "to deal with the natives"; for example, missions or forts	None given
Nonaboriginal	Non-Native sites that do not involve Native people in a substantive way or at all	Predominantly or entirely non-Native items

their basic cultural and ecological patterns have been altered by contact and when this is displayed in the archaeological data." In both instances, the underlying assumption is that sites will include only single components, whereas the primary criterion for determining if Indigenous sites of whatever chronological age are considered historical is whether their material constituents deviated markedly from earlier patterns.

Few archaeologists adopted Fontana's classifications verbatim, and in the following years, many used the term "contact" in ways that extended far beyond his strict definition. This usage seems to have grown out of an interest in culture contact more broadly. As discussed by Silliman (2005), culture contact came to be a conceptually empty shorthand for colonialism in many North American contexts. Emphasis on contact (as opposed to colonialism) focuses archaeological attention on short-term encounters at the expense of understanding long-term entanglements, reifies cultures as static and bounded entities, and downplays the devastating cultural, demographic, and political effects of colonialism for Indigenous nations. Whereas Silliman and others have critiqued the culture contact concept, at a practical level, many scholars (including us) often use the terms "precontact" and "postcontact" as admittedly imperfect replacements for "prehistoric" and "historical" when discussing chronological placement.

Other archaeologists followed in Fontana's footsteps by delineating a contact period that differed in important ways from both earlier and more recent sites. In many cases, sites that fell in this chronological gray area were characterized

as protohistoric. Early use of the term was limited to sites that, in the words of Wedel (1940:297), were "clearly occupied in contact times but not specifically identifiable with recorded villages," a definition that was echoed by Fontana (1965; and see Strong 1940). Yet even as Wedel was considering protohistoric sites on the Great Plains, archaeologists in California were employing the word differently. Heizer (1941), for example, used the protohistoric concept to describe sites occupied after the arrival of Europeans but that lacked physical evidence, such as glass beads or iron tools.

Today, "protohistoric" generally defines a period between the first isolated interactions and later times when colonial structures were more fully in place and Native life became a common aspect of the documentary record (Arkush 1990; Ray 1978). In some areas, such as the American Southeast or the Great Plains, the period "between contact and colonies" lasted as long as 200 years, and the explicit archaeological study of Indigenous societies during this gap has led to the widespread acceptance of the protohistoric concept (Wesson and Rees 2002). Not all archaeologists, however, are satisfied with the term. Some argue that it perpetuates the same Eurocentric biases as "prehistory" and allows researchers to ignore the issues of process and power inherent in colonial entanglements (Hull 2009:309–310; Mitchell and Scheiber 2010:13–14; Rubertone 2000:429; Schmidt and Mrozowski 2013:17–19; Silliman 2005:73–74; Traibert 2019:11). Still, many site recording systems use "protohistoric" as a temporal designation.

Classificatory schemes like Fontana's highlight one major challenge in recording North

American sites dating to the past 530 years: the conflation of chronology and identity. This central issue has been uncritically codified in regional site recording systems that require archaeologists to assign an ethnic or cultural affiliation. Without explicit guidance on how to assign ethnicity, this question is often left to commonsense distinctions that equate Indigenous sites with prehistory and label sites occupied by people of European descent as historical. In this approach, which we suspect drives a large percentage of in-field recording practices, a lithic scatter or shell midden can unquestionably be classified as prehistoric/Indigenous while a cabin or bottle dump would be classified as historical/Euro-American without strong indication to the contrary. Rather than being harmless and expedient, these decisions have a series of cascading effects on how a particular site is treated, including decisions about field methods, personnel, permits, tribal consultation, laboratory analyses, and interpretation (Beaudoin 2016; Byrne 2004; Colley and Bickford 1996; Lightfoot 1995; McNiven and Russell 2005).

Thus, when it comes to Indigenous sites occupied after 1492, the issue is one of both recording and recognition. Commonly, the field identification of postcontact Indigenous sites relies on a small set of index artifacts, such as glass beads, that signal the adaptation of new goods into traditional practices (Arkush 1990). Yet this focus may unintentionally restrict the range of sites that can inform on various patterns of postcontact Indigenous presence. Some may be sites of labor, where Native people worked for Euro-Americans and thus used primarily foreign objects, while others may be sites occupied by Native Americans who sought to use colonial material culture as a way of securing social position and autonomy (Silliman 2010; Watkins 2017; Yellowhorn 2015). Others may be sites where Native people intentionally eschewed the material trappings of colonialism (Heizer 1941; Schneider 2015b). To more fully account for the range of sites used by Native Americans after the arrival of Europeans, we suggest that archaeologists consider a wider variety of material that Native people may have created or consumed in particular contexts as well as chronometric dates that may reveal such sites even in the absence of foreign objects.

At stake here is much more than a turf war between subdisciplines. In most of North America, the archaeology of Indigenous life has traditionally focused almost entirely on periods before Europeans arrived, to the exclusion of postcontact sites or components thereof. Widespread disregard for archaeology of the more recent past supports the mistaken notion that Native Americans vanished early in the colonial period. In this milieu, the sovereignty of contemporary tribal groups may be challenged partly because of the lack of documentation of the time between prehistory and the present day (Schneider 2019). These challenges are not unique to North America. For Australia, Byrne notes an “illusory hiatus is produced by the radical under-recording of Aboriginal post-contact heritage places and a lavish, almost obsessional recording of pre-contact places” (Byrne 2004:136; and see Colley and Bickford 1996). Ultimately, the misrecognition and misrecording of sites of long-term Indigenous presence reinforces the logic of settler colonialism and eliminates narratives of Indigenous survivance from the scope of “future histories” (Borck 2018; Wolfe 2001).

Site Recording Practices in Marin County, California

To assess the magnitude of the problem stemming from the misrecognition and misrecording of sites related to long-term indigenous presence, we examined the paper trail for archaeological sites in Marin County, California. Marin County encompasses roughly 1,300 km² of land north of the Golden Gate, between the Pacific Ocean and San Francisco and San Pablo Bays. This area is an excellent location for a study of archaeological categories because it has a long history of Indigenous-colonial interactions.

Initial encounters with Indigenous Coast Miwok people likely occurred in 1579 when Francis Drake and his crew spent several weeks in the region, but firm archaeological evidence of this landfall has thus far eluded researchers. A second encounter occurred a few years later, in 1595, when Sebastian Rodríguez Cermeño and his crew were temporarily marooned near Point Reyes after their ship, the *San Agustín*,

sank in a storm. Coast Miwok people salvaged timbers and ceramics from the *San Agustín*, providing clear material correlates in local archaeological sites (Lightfoot and Simmons 1998; Russell 2011). Nearly 200 years later, in the 1770s, the Spanish began actively colonizing the San Francisco Bay region. Proselytization of Native groups living on the Marin Peninsula began almost immediately, and missions and other European settlements were established there by the 1810s. However, Coast Miwok people maintained important connections to the landscape and resided continuously at several autonomous villages from precontact times well into the nineteenth century (Schneider 2015b; Schneider and Panich 2019).

Archaeologists have been recording Native American sites in Marin County for more than a century. The first systematic attempts were Nels Nelson's surveys of the early 1900s (Nelson 1907, 1909) in which he documented dozens of shell mounds and shell middens along the Pacific and Bay coasts of the Marin Peninsula. Later academic investigations in the county are associated primarily with efforts to locate materials associated with the sixteenth-century landfalls of Drake and Cermeño, as well as a spate of masters' theses from San Francisco State University during the 1970s. Although the region escaped much of the suburban construction boom that affected archaeological sites across the San Francisco Bay area in the second half of the twentieth century, numerous CRM projects have been conducted in the past 50 years. These have largely focused on the more densely populated coastal strips.

Methods

The State of California's Office of Historic Preservation maintains the California Historic Resources Information System (CHRIS) inventory, which serves as the state's official record of cultural resources, including archaeological deposits. Nine regional information centers provide access to the confidential database that is routinely referenced by archaeologists in the CRM industry and, to a lesser extent, academic archaeologists. The portion of the CHRIS

inventory covering Marin County is housed at the Northwest Information Center (NWIC) at Sonoma State University. There, we searched the database to find all resources classified as sites, a category that includes all manner of archaeological deposits and some aspects of the built environment. These resources, in turn, could be filtered by chronological age, employing the prehistoric-protohistoric-historic sequence.

The CHRIS inventory contains two categories of documents relevant for our analysis: site records and study reports. Since the onset of the CRM industry in California in the 1970s, archaeologists have used standardized site records (known as DPRs for the forms issued by the California Department of Parks and Recreation) that include fields to record information about site age and cultural constituents, among other common attributes. Unlike cultural resource inventory systems elsewhere in North America (e.g., Beaudoin 2016; IHRWG 2018), the forms do not require site recorders to assign a cultural or ethnic affiliation to the resource. However, they provide contradictory information on how to record postcontact Native American sites. The Primary Record, which is required for all resources, offers a choice between prehistoric and historic (or both) with instructions to identify resources used by Native Americans after the arrival of Euro-Americans as historic in age. The Archaeological Site Record, in contrast, allows recorders to categorize sites using the common prehistoric-protohistoric-historic sequence in which protohistoric is the preferred option for sites "occupied by Native Americans during the historic period" (California Office of Historic Preservation 1995:8, 15). Site records dating to earlier in the twentieth century were often present as forms issued by the University of California Archaeological Survey (UCAS), which did not contain fields for chronological placement.

In August 2018, we visited the NWIC to examine documents associated with the 873 resources in Marin County categorized as sites in the CHRIS inventory. Though some materials were missing and many sites have little associated information, the combined records include tens of thousands of pages of documentation. To address gaps in the CHRIS database, we also

reviewed the published archaeological literature for Marin County, masters' theses and doctoral dissertations, UCAS records, and documentation from the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, whose territory encompasses Marin County. At the end of the second phase, we returned to the NWIC in March 2019 for a follow-up visit to cross-reference data collected from other sources. Aside from unpublished field notes and reports in progress, which were unavailable at the time of our study, this approach offered a comprehensive review of the documentary record associated with Marin County archaeology.

From these sources, we compiled data relevant to the use of sites by Native Californians after the arrival of Europeans and assigned each site a consolidated terminus post quem (TPQ). As evidence, we considered two main criteria present in the paper trail of Marin County archaeology: diagnostic artifacts and chronometric dates. In the case of the former, we noted the reporting of key postcontact materials associated with Indigenous sites in western North America, including glass beads, flaked glass artifacts, and remains of domesticated plants or animals. We also considered the reporting of ceramic vessels and metal implements, which in some cases can be specifically linked to the sixteenth-century encounters at Point Reyes but in other cases may represent indigenous residence into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Our intent is not to equate postcontact Indigenous presence with particular material classes—many of which, like glass beads, may perpetuate unfounded assumptions about Native American life under colonialism—but rather to evaluate how well regional site recording systems capture data that is relevant to understanding long-term Indigenous persistence.

For chronometric dates, we included sites where researchers reported radiocarbon dates that extend into the colonial period at two standard deviations, as well as obsidian hydration values of ≤ 1.2 microns—designations derived from our research on colonial era sites in the region (Panich, Griffin, and Schneider 2018; Schneider 2015a, 2015b; and see Byrd et al. 2018). We acknowledge that this is a liberal approach, but our intent is to broaden the

conversation about how archaeologists recognize and record sites of long-term Indigenous occupation. Presented below, our results suggest that archaeologists in California have been too conservative in their interpretation of radiocarbon and obsidian hydration dates from known or potential postcontact sites

Lastly, we collected data on the Late Period (cal AD 1050–1770) evidence for each site, including chronometric dates and temporally diagnostic artifacts such as clamshell disk beads and certain types of projectile points. It is important to note that these are objects Native people continued to carry with them after colonization. They were often described and illustrated by colonists, and they are present at colonial-era archaeological sites throughout the region (e.g., Heizer 1941; Panich 2014, 2016; Panich, Allen, and Galvan 2018). Therefore, it seems likely that Native people continued to use traditionally defined Late Period items, such as corner-notched points, well into the nineteenth century while they readily adopted imported goods, such as porcelains or other ceramics, into their material repertoires early in the colonial period.

Results

Out of the 873 Marin County sites in our sample, the records of 122—14% of all previously recorded Marin County sites—include conclusive or probable evidence of Indigenous site use after the arrival of Europeans. The evidence ranges from sixteenth-century porcelains associated with the 1595 Cermeño landfall to archaeologists' descriptions of Coast Miwok people living at ancestral sites as recently as the 1930s. These results provide insight into two distinct phenomena: archaeological site recording practices and their implications for understanding the geographical and temporal patterns of Indigenous residence in postcontact Marin County, California.

With regard to the first issue, an interesting pattern concerns the temporal classification of sites within the CHRIS inventory that include evidence of post-1579 Native Californian use. Despite the relatively robust evidence of postcontact Indigenous site use present in the

archaeological paper trail, the majority of the sites in our sample (69 of 122) are categorized as only exhibiting prehistoric components (Tables 2 and 3). Many of these sites are well-known Coast Miwok settlements. For example, the community of Echa-tamal, recorded as CA-MRN-402, appears on mid-nineteenth-century maps associated with Mexican land grants and is known to have been occupied into the 1880s (Dietz 1976; Panich, Schneider, and Byram 2018). Other examples include CA-MRN-201, -202, and -489, all of which are associated with a historically documented trading post that existed from the 1840s through the 1860s at a landform called Toms Point. Since the early twentieth century, archaeologists visiting the sites at Toms Point have collected items including obsidian projectile points, metal implements, ceramic sherds, and an “assortment of white man’s beads” (Gerkin 1967; Panich, Schneider, and Byram 2018; Peter 1921). Still, all three sites carry the prehistoric designation in their official site records and thus the CHRIS inventory with no formal indication of their nineteenth-century occupation by Native people.¹

Less than one-third of the sites ($n = 37$) with evidence of post-1579 Indigenous site-use were recorded as having both prehistoric and historical components, and many of these were assumed to be precontact sites overlain by more recent materials derived from Euro-American occupation. One example is CA-MRN-284/H, which Meighan (1952) characterized as having “lots of nineteenth-century historic stuff; practically

nothing aboriginal.” A mere five sites in our sample were classified as strictly “historic” in the CHRIS inventory. This latter group included sites like Mission San Rafael where Native people are known to have lived and worked during the colonial period. The full inventory of Marin County sites contained 224 additional sites that carried the historic designation alone; among those, there are no doubt other places that relate in some way to the continued presence of Native people but for which confirmation was lacking in associated documents.

The CHRIS database lists only 14 sites in all of Marin County as having protohistoric components, 13 of which were in our sample of sites that had documented evidence of Indigenous use after the arrival of Europeans (the other site appears to have been mistakenly labeled). For six of those, the protohistoric designation was likely intended to denote Native Californian occupation well into the colonial period. For example, one site (CA-MRN-260/H) contained common mission-period (ca. 1770s–1840s) glass beads as well as a flaked glass projectile point. Another site (CA-MRN-262/H) was

Table 2. Chronological Placement of Marin County Archaeological Sites Reported as Having Evidence of Post-1579 Indigenous Use, as Classified by the CHRIS Inventory

CHIRS Age Classification(s)	Count	Percent
Historic	5	4.1
Prehistoric, historic	35	28.7
Prehistoric, protohistoric, historic	2	1.6
Prehistoric, protohistoric	11	9.0
Prehistoric	69	56.6
Total	122 ^a	100.0

^aNote that a small number of locales have multiple associated site numbers in the CHRIS database.

Table 3. Postcontact Indigenous Sites Identified in Our Study ($n = 122$) by Evidence Type and Assigned Consolidated TPQ

Evidence from Site Documentation	Count	Percent ^a
Colonial-era artifacts (selected examples below)	86	70.5
Sixteenth-century materials	18	14.8
Glass beads	28	23.0
Flaked glass	10	8.2
Phoenix button	3	2.5
Colonial-era flora/fauna	16	13.1
Obsidian hydration samples	26	21.3
Radiocarbon dates	11	9.0
Historical documentation	36	29.5
Contained key Late Period artifacts in addition to one or more of the above	47	38.5
TPQ	Count	Percent
1595	17 ^b	13.9
1775	44	36.0
1825	18	14.8
1850	35	28.7
1930	8	6.6

^aMost sites were identified through multiple lines of evidence.

^bThree sites associated with sixteenth-century landfalls also had more recent materials

inhabited by Native Californians as late as 1930. The remaining seven sites classified as protohistoric were Indigenous settlements near Point Reyes whose temporal designation relates to the presence of sixteenth-century porcelains and iron spikes associated with early, chronologically isolated landfalls. These contexts most closely conform to traditional definitions of the protohistoric concept in North American archaeology. However, the record for 11 other sites indicates the presence of materials from the sixteenth century, primarily Ming Dynasty porcelains, but these sites were *not* categorized as protohistoric. Instead, they are listed as prehistoric/historic multicomponent sites ($n = 8$), single component prehistoric sites ($n = 2$), and a historic site ($n = 1$). Two additional sites have not yielded sixteenth-century artifacts but are listed in the site record as villages seen or visited by Cermeño in 1595. These are also listed as prehistoric only.

Of the 122 sites we flagged as relevant to our study, 58 lacked any mention in the official site record of evidence for postcontact Indigenous use. These sites represent roughly half the sample and a large proportion of the sites listed as strictly prehistoric in the CHRIS inventory. Indeed, one common issue we noted among the site records was a lack of information, a pattern that is likely due to cursory site visits during the early twentieth century. For example, the 1940 UCAS record for the site of the mid-1800s trading post at Toms Point (CA-MRN-202), introduced above, describes it simply as “shell dirt” (Panich, Schneider, and Byram 2018:160). For these sites, we only found the relevant information regarding long-term Native Californian site-use in associated CRM reports, academic studies, or other publications, most of which dated to the past 50 years.

Unearthing Patterns of Coast Miwok Presence

The colonial entanglements of central California, and the San Francisco Bay region in particular, have been the source of many ethnohistorical and archaeological studies. One common interpretation drawn from the analysis of mission baptismal records is that Native Californians steadily abandoned their settlements in an ever-expanding

arc that swept from the core Spanish mission establishments outward into numerous Indigenous homelands. The effect, according to the interpretation of historical documents alone, was a landscape “empty of villages” by the 1830s (Milliken 1995:200; and see Madley 2019). Recent archaeological research directly contradicts this model. At mission sites, the analysis of obsidian and shell beads has demonstrated widespread patterns of exchange and material conveyance that linked Native mission residents to their compatriots living beyond the reach of the mission bell (Arkush 2011; Panich 2014, 2016; Panich, Griffin, and Schneider 2018). Similarly, scholars have documented how Native Californians maintained a presence in their homelands at a range of sites across the colonial-period landscape (Byrd et al. 2018; Lightfoot et al. 2009; Nelson 2017; Panich and Schneider 2015; Schneider 2015a, 2015b; Schneider and Panich 2019).

In Marin County, most archaeological work during the twentieth century built upon and perpetuated unfounded assumptions about Coast Miwok extinction drawn from the historical record. The earliest research specifically targeted shell middens and shell mounds, leading to the strong coastal distribution of sites in our study (Figure 1). Though Nelson (1909:347) noted that some residents recalled Native people living on local shell-bearing sites as late as the 1870s, he exemplified an early preference for single component “prehistoric” sites, and his actual site records for Marin County seldom mention colonial-era or later cultural constituents. This pattern, which was repeated for several decades, reinforced the association of these sites with purely precontact occupation. Past recording practices reflect both the primacy given to the historical record by some archaeologists and deeply entrenched subdisciplinary boundaries between prehistoric and historical archaeology. Taken together, these trends have led to an under-recording of post-1579 Indigenous sites in the region and a concomitant underappreciation of the complexities of long-term Coast Miwok presence. We discuss the results chronologically, proceeding along the five consolidated TPQs generated from our review of site records and reports: 1595, 1775, 1825, 1850, and 1930 (see Table 3).

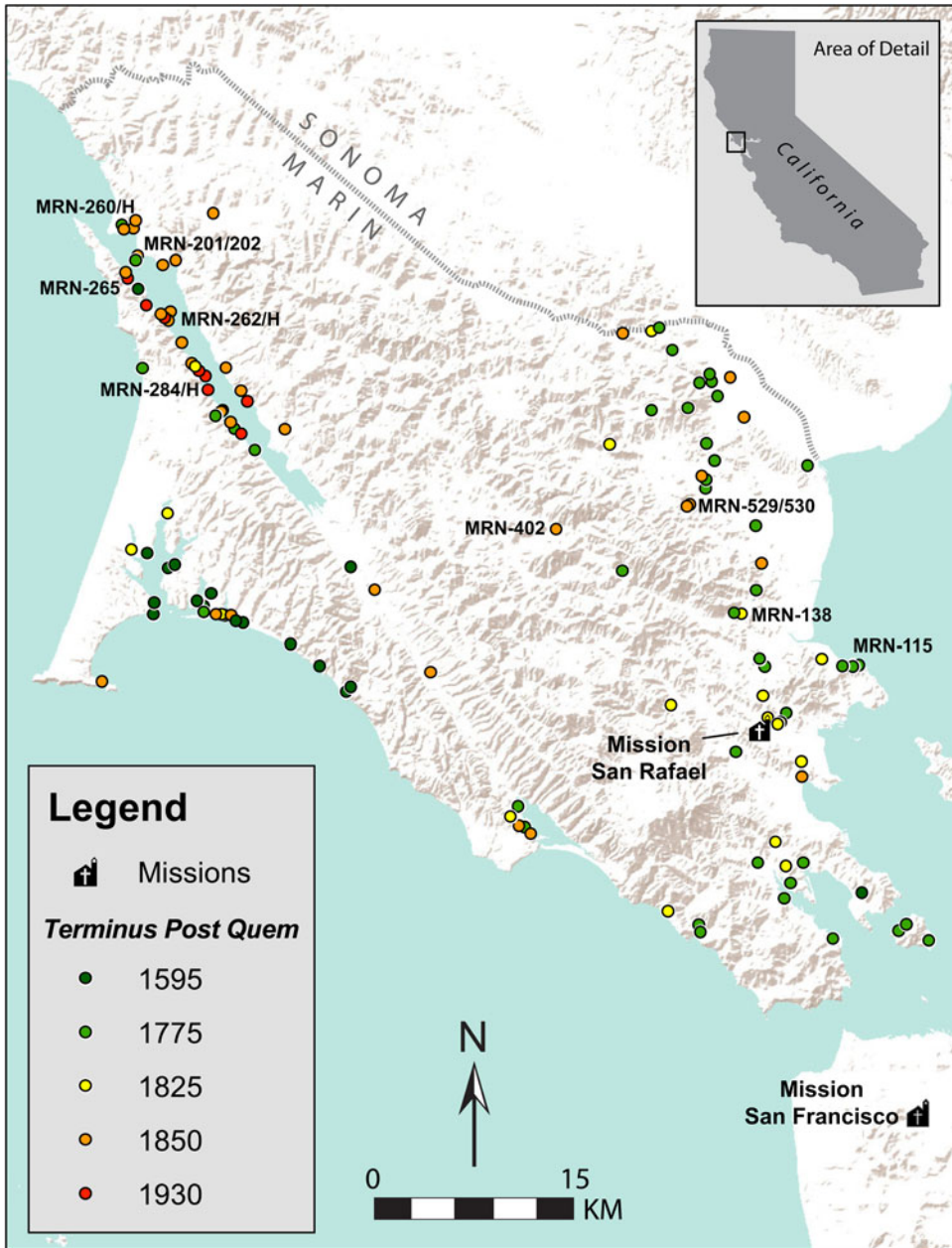


Figure 1. Sites with evidence of postcontact Indigenous site use in Marin County, California.

Our study found roughly 20 sites recorded as having evidence of social or material engagements with Cermeño and his crew in 1595 (and possibly Drake’s voyage some years earlier). Within the documentary record, most of these earliest sites seem to have warranted mention only because they relate to key events in the

Euro-American history of California. These sites fall under the traditional definition of proto-historic (Lightfoot and Simmons 1998), but only about half are classified as such in the CHRIS database. Schuyler (1970:85) argues that these coastal sites are “still prehistoric” and that the “intrusive artifacts” obtained from Europeans

are only useful for the purposes of placing them in precontact chronologies. We contend, however, that the artifacts did not enter the sites by themselves; rather, they were chosen and brought there by Coast Miwok people engaged in culturally specific practices (Russell 2011). A narrow adherence to temporal categorization and disciplinary boundaries in which these sites would be categorized as strictly prehistoric obscures Indigenous agency and would effectively erase these early encounters in the regional site inventory.

Nearly two centuries later, Europeans returned to Marin County to recruit Coast Miwok people to newly established Spanish missions. Sites dating from this time (ca. 1775) again served as handy indexes of Euro-American history for regional archaeologists. For instance, a report from one shell mound, CA-MRN-115, described artifacts such as obsidian projectile points and shell pendants, typically associated with the Late Period, before speculating that the residents of the site may have been “taken to one of the Spanish missions” circa 1800 (Meighan 1953:5). Another example is CA-MRN-10, a shell mound that Nelson recorded as the birthplace (but not residence) of Chief Marin, a notable Coast Miwok leader during the mission period. These snippets from the archaeological paper trail demonstrate how archaeologists effectively wrote Native Californians out of the recent past. This erasure was both chronological and spatial, as early recorders implicitly precluded the reuse of sites as part of Indigenous mobility or refuge from colonial impositions. That both sites (CA-MRN-10 and CA-MRN-115) are categorized solely as prehistoric in the CHRIS database perpetuates this bias. Similar patterns of site recording have limited archaeological understanding of Indigenous presence in colonial contexts and urban areas elsewhere (Irish and Goward 2012).

These enduring assumptions about where and when to expect Indigenous people also extend to the types of materials we anticipate finding at postcontact Native American sites. Schneider’s reanalysis of CA-MRN-115 and study of two neighboring shell mounds (CA-MRN-114 and CA-MRN-328) demonstrate how an expanded approach to site recognition can reveal patterns

that challenge the conventional wisdom about regional site use and reuse (Schneider 2015b). Delivering a story quite unlike that of abandonment previously attributed to CA-MRN-115, careful parsing of radiocarbon and obsidian hydration dates from all three sites suggests continued site use by Coast Miwok people even in the absence of typical colonial-period index artifacts such as glass beads. In fact, less than a quarter of all 122 post-1579 Coast Miwok sites in our sample were reported as containing glass beads ($n = 28$). While this figure is no doubt limited by the field methods employed by site recorders (e.g., conducting surface survey only or using relatively large mesh size for subsurface testing), a slightly larger number ($n = 31$) produced radiocarbon and/or obsidian hydration dates that pointed toward Indigenous occupation after the onset of Spanish colonialism in the region during the 1770s. Given that most archaeological sites in Marin County, and elsewhere, have not been subject to dating programs, we suspect that these kinds of sites are underrepresented in our sample.

Other sites defy traditional archaeological expectations by containing a large array of diagnostic artifacts despite late occupational dates (ca. 1825) and proximity to colonial settlements. Site CA-MRN-138, for example, is thought to be the village of Cotomko’tca, from which 42 people were baptized at Mission San Francisco in 1808. Mission San Rafael was founded just 6.5 km south of CA-MRN-138 in 1817, and one additional baptism of an individual from Cotomko’tca was recorded there in 1821 (Panich and Schneider 2015:55). In traditional approaches to the postcontact landscape (e.g., Milliken 1995), this final baptismal record would signal the end of that village community; and as a site, CA-MRN-138 is officially classified as prehistoric only. However, archaeological excavations there in the 1970s revealed an assortment of nineteenth-century items, such as bottle glass, domesticated animal bone, shell buttons, and metal implements alongside a flaked glass projectile point, a flaked obsidian cross, glass beads, and a phoenix button—the latter of which indicates site use into the 1820s or later. CA-MRN-138 also contained the full complement of Late Period artifacts, although the

associations with the postcontact material remain unclear (Slaymaker 1977). Sites like Cotomko'tca are unfortunate examples of how archaeological practices obscure the ways Coast Miwok people, like other Indigenous groups, maintained connections to ancestral sites despite the impacts of colonialism.

By the 1840s, Native Californians faced new challenges as the United States took political control of the region, with California gaining statehood in 1850. Marin County sites occupied by Indigenous people after this time include some interesting hints at continued presence near growing Euro-American settlements. These include sites CA-MRN-529 and CA-MRN-530, where archaeologists recovered postcontact obsidian tools, as revealed by hydration dating, as well as a metal crucifix and late red-on-white, or Cornaline d'Aleppo, glass beads (Clark et al. 1992, 1995). This group also includes Echa-tamal (CA-MRN-402), in the central peninsula, where Coast Miwok families lived until the 1880s (Dietz 1976). Perhaps not surprisingly, all three sites (CA-MRN-402, -529, and -530) are categorized as prehistoric only in the CHRIS database. Most other Indigenous sites in Marin County that date to the mid-nineteenth century are located to the west, along Tomales Bay. There, Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo people occupied numerous villages and campsites, many of which were likely used continuously for centuries. Despite the relatively high visibility of these sites in oral narratives, historical maps, and local histories, archaeologists have largely considered them to be prehistoric, as reflected in site forms and the CHRIS inventory. These include the sites on Toms Point, discussed above, where Native people engaged in entrepreneurial activities with a newly arrived American merchant, as well as a constellation of other sites where Coast Miwok families created safe harbor from the pressures of settler colonialism (Panich, Schneider, and Byram 2018; Schneider 2018, 2019; Schneider and Panich 2019).

Coast Miwok families occupied a final group of sites as recently as 1930, all of them along Tomales Bay. Other contemporaneous sites are no doubt missing in the CHRIS database because archaeologists recorded these sites as single-component shell middens and often overlooked

evidence of more recent occupation. One particularly egregious example of this preference for prehistoric sites is CA-MRN-265, recorded by Bryant in 1934. He describes “broken mortars” and a “good specimen of spear head” in the artifact description and casually mentions that an “Indian woman, [Bertha] Campigli, has lived on this site for many years” (Bryant 1934). Like the places mentioned above, CA-MRN-265 is listed only as prehistoric in the CHRIS inventory and remains largely invisible to researchers interested in more recent sites of Indigenous persistence. As discussed by Schneider (2019), the twentieth-century heritage of Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo people who continue to visit and live along Tomales Bay is relatively unknown by archaeologists and the general public. A more concerted effort to employ oral narratives and the knowledge of contemporary tribal citizens in the process of site identification and recording could no doubt flesh out the inventory of sites relevant to more recent periods of Indigenous occupation.

Taken together, the identification of sites used by Indigenous people after the arrival of Europeans is part of a broader effort to reverse terminal narratives and what has become an increasingly segregated past. We must also be attentive to what is still missing. At one end of the continuum are places that bear few physical traces (e.g., fishing spots or gathering areas) but nonetheless helped to sustain Coast Miwok communities during difficult periods in the past 250 years. At the other end may be places in the built environment—sites of labor, residence, or even exclusion and persecution. These types of resources have, for the time being at least, slipped through the net of archaeological recording because of enduring disciplinary boundaries and recording practices that continue to equate Indigenous people with the precontact past (Byrne 2003:81–83; Irish and Goward 2012; Siliman 2010).

In contrast, collaboration with local Indigenous groups can illuminate the broader range of places relevant to studies of long-term presence and persistence. One fascinating example from Marin County is a shipwrecked fishing vessel, the *Point Reyes*, that has become a local tourist attraction even as its ties to twentieth-century

Coast Miwok families remain largely unacknowledged (Schneider 2019). Like popular interpretations of the past, site recording systems and associated inventories are biased by a lack of understanding about the ways in which Indigenous people made do across multiple forms of colonialism. This pattern, in turn, serves to undermine the foundation of contemporary tribal groups, including the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, whose ancestors occupied the sites in our study area.

Discussion: Reaffirming Long-Term Indigenous Presence through Archaeology

Our study employed a multifaceted approach to assess the magnitude and implications of the underreporting of postcontact Native Californian sites in one central California county. In so doing, we seek to foreground Indigenous presence without unnecessarily restricting the variable ways that Native people made futures for themselves and their families in colonial contexts. Continuity, in other words, does not mean staying the same (Ghisleni 2018).

To operationalize these commitments, archaeologists must be attentive to archaeological patterns that may fall outside our commonsense approaches to recognition and recording. This will mean rethinking the identification of sites from the earliest phases of Indigenous-colonial interaction by moving beyond index artifacts such as glass beads to a more holistic approach that regularly includes chronometric dates (Byrd et al. 2018; Schneider 2015b). In other words, archaeologists cannot rely on using prehistoric as a default setting for sites associated with Indigenous people. As we note in our case study, treating all Indigenous sites as prehistoric until proven otherwise has led to some egregious errors in the CHRIS inventory for Marin County, a pattern confirmed by researchers in other areas (Beaudoin 2016:18). This is an especially thorny problem for regions where site records force archaeologists to choose either prehistoric or historic—for example, the Intermountain Antiquities Computer System (IMACS) form of the Great Basin region of western North America.²

For more recent sites, archaeologists will similarly need to move beyond the narrative of

Indigenous decline that suffuses the written record and expand the kinds of material evidence used to mark Indigenous use or residence. Take, for example, the presence of whiteware ceramic sherds in a shell midden. This pattern does not by itself constitute a prehistoric camp with a later Euro-American occupation (an explanation we saw multiple times in Marin County records) but may instead point toward Indigenous people's continued engagement with ancestral sites or even shellfish harvesting by Euro-American settlers. The key to distinguishing between these various possibilities is both a strong familiarity with regional archaeological contexts and, in many cases, collaboration with local descendant communities. As Watkins (2017:133) points out, "Put simply, the same mass-produced objects (or modifications of objects) that are used by Euroamericans can carry very different meanings for Indians."

Of course, not all areas will have the same material correlates or potential for chronometric dating. At the regional or local level, accounting for a broader range of Indigenous experiences under colonialism requires that academic and CRM archaeologists alike have a thorough understanding of the cultural-historical developments in the areas where they work, including the possibilities of postcontact Indigenous presence. Meaningful collaboration with local tribes is one important step in this direction. Professional societies and government agencies can also establish regionally appropriate research frameworks to help archaeologists critically assess the range of materials potentially related to chronology of site use, ethnicity of site occupants, and other issues. One example is the research design for the greater San Francisco Bay–Delta region developed for the California Department of Transportation, which fully lays out the possibilities of postcontact Indigenous sites in the region (Byrd et al. 2017). Ideally, such regional frameworks will stimulate the rewriting of generic background sections in CRM documents that often confine Indigenous people to precontact and early colonial periods and accordingly restrict how sites are identified, recorded, and evaluated (Byrne 2004:142–143).

Once archaeologists recognize sites in the field, the second challenge is to record them in

ways that do justice to their complex histories. One option in many regions, including California, is to include protohistoric as a category instead of simply using prehistoric and historic. Despite several attempts at standardization, protohistoric still remains a vague catchall that covers “a twilight zone separating the well-documented present from the unwritten prehistoric past” (Wedel 1940:296). As it relates to the recognition of sites, research in the past several decades amply demonstrates that the material correlates of early interaction between Native Americans and Euro-American newcomers are extremely variable across the continent. For example, in some regions, such as the Great Basin, glass beads seem to work well as indicators of what has been termed the protohistoric period (Arkush 1990:30), whereas in Canada, research has shown no direct relationship between chronology and the frequency of foreign goods (Ray 1978).

Supporters of the protohistoric designation argue that it can focus our attention on the transitional periods of indirect or infrequent contact—before the full brunt of colonialism was realized in a particular region (Arkush 1990; Wesson and Rees 2002). In our sample, the term was applied inconsistently and relatively infrequently, suggesting that archaeologists working in Marin County feel ambivalence about the concept. This pattern is even more stark when the search extends to include all nine counties of the San Francisco Bay area. In that larger region, totaling some 18,040 km², the CHRIS inventory lists only 105 resources as protohistoric. Sixty of those are in Sonoma County, an area largely beyond the reach of the Spanish missions and where Native Californians escaped sustained colonial entanglements until deep into the nineteenth century. As with our Marin County sample, a careful parsing of the Bay Area’s protohistoric sites includes several that do not conform to the traditional use of the term, including ranches operated by Mexican and Russian colonists as well as a cemetery used in the late mission period at Mission San José. At the level of recording, we contend that the term “protohistoric” is too ambiguous to be useful and is conceptually problematic for reasons discussed above (Rubertone 2000:429; Schmidt and

Mrozowski 2013:17–19; Silliman 2005:73–74; Trabert 2019:11).

Yet simply excising “protohistoric” from our vocabulary does not solve the problem of how to classify sites occupied by Native Americans after 1492. We are wary of introducing new terms into the literature and of using existing ones in idiosyncratic ways—just witness the fate of Fontana’s site types or even the phrase “historic sites archaeology.” However, existing terms are clearly inadequate. Temporal classifications like “contact” or “historical” can unwittingly obfuscate issues of power and erase long-term cultural trajectories, and for many contexts, it makes sense to classify such sites as colonial (Silliman 2005). However, not all sites were in fact colonial, as noted by archaeologists working in regions where Native Americans and newcomers developed distinct patterns of interaction prior to or along the margins of more full-fledged colonial systems (Schurr 2010; and see Jordan 2014). Some researchers have applied the concept of “pericolonial,” suggesting that the term may help archaeologists capture the unique experiences of people who navigated the indirect effects of colonialism as opposed to those who experienced it firsthand (Acabado 2017; Trabert 2019).

A more straightforward solution is to focus on calendar years rather than the conceptually loaded and chronologically variable prehistoric-protohistoric-historic sequence, at least at the level of field recording. That is, archaeologists can use temporally diagnostic artifacts or chronometric dates to list a site’s likely age range(s), particularly given that most sites are recorded during the inventory or evaluation phase, when information might be limited to what can be gleaned from reconnaissance survey or preliminary subsurface testing programs. A calendrical approach may be particularly useful for regions, like the North American Plains, where Indigenous people were not subject to the full brunt of settler colonialism until relatively recently and where archaeologists find the standard prehistoric-protohistoric-historic triad limiting (Scheiber and Finley 2012; Trabert 2019).

The major benefit of chronologically categorizing sites by calendric dates is that it effectively decouples the intertwined questions of chronology

and ethnicity that risk relegating Indigenous sites and associated lives to the shadows of prehistory. Instead, the baseline record would point to constellations of places in use at given periods and over time, patterns that could then be used to generate regionally appropriate research questions about postcontact Indigenous presence. Through the use of multiple lines of evidence, including temporally diagnostic artifacts and chronometric dates, a calendric approach would also allow for the more robust recording of multicomponent sites. This, in turn, might more fully capture the various ways that Indigenous people used ancestral sites after the arrival of Europeans—potentially unobtrusive patterns that have often gone unrecorded in existing regional site inventories.

The calendric approach can, in many contexts, be appended to expanded regional culture historical chronologies. Liebmann (2012), for example, points out that simply referring to the “historic period” limits our understanding of the variability of Indigenous action under successive colonial regimes, suggesting that the existing Pecos Classification of the Pueblo Southwest be expanded to include a Pueblo VI period that covers the period 1848–present. A similar amendment has been proposed for the Yuman Complex of Baja California (Porcayo Michelini 2018). In our writing on colonial central California, we typically subdivide time into the mission period, Mexican period, and American period, even as we grudgingly use the terms “pre-contact” and “postcontact” as general temporal signposts. Here, using calendar dates instead of or in tandem with expanded regionally-specific chronological periods may help to decenter the primacy given to colonial powers and reaffirm long-term Indigenous presence.

These changes, however, will require substantial commitment from state historic preservation offices and others to modify existing forms and associated databases. In California, for example, the CHRIS database is organized along the prehistoric-protohistoric-historic triad, while the site forms that are used to capture chronological data in the field provide confusing and contradictory options, as discussed above. The Archaeological Site Record does offer a series of date ranges beginning with 1542 to 1769 (the period that encapsulates the first European voyages to

the region until the founding of the missions). Yet the use of these ranges for Indigenous sites is not specifically mandated, and the form provides no parallel structure for sites occupied earlier (California Office of Historic Preservation 1995:15). Moving forward, chronological classification could be simplified by moving calendric date ranges to the Primary Record, which is filled out for all resources, most often during a project’s inventory phase. Because chronometric dates may only be collected during evaluation and/or mitigation, we recommend close collaboration with local tribes and descendant communities during project planning to help characterize ancestral sites.

We recognize that these solutions are not perfect, and archaeologists interested in working toward a more nuanced account of Indigenous places, practices, and temporalities should acknowledge that our attempts are likely to fall short in various ways. As noted by Gnecco and Langebaek (2014:v), “Accepting that extant typologies order the world, that they reduce it to manageable proportions, does not mean that we should also accept that it only fits in them and that we cannot invent new categories, new ways to interpret, and new analytical avenues.” We present these thoughts as one step in this direction.

Conclusion

Nearly two decades ago, Rubertone (2000:429) neatly summed up the problems with existing site typologies associated with the “historical archaeology of Native Americans.” Not only do recording systems that rely on the prehistoric- protohistoric-historic triad perpetuate outdated assumptions about the disappearance of Indigenous societies, but they also obscure the realities of lived experience and the element of power inherent in the process of colonialism. To examine these issues at a regional scale, we examined the existing paper trail for archaeological sites in Marin County, California. Our study demonstrates that the official record for Marin County vastly underreports postcontact Indigenous sites, an issue that is present in other settler colonial contexts (Beaudoin 2016; Byrne 2003). We argue that this problem has two interrelated

origins: the misrecognition of postcontact Indigenous sites in the field and regional classificatory systems that limit the ability of archaeologists to correctly record such sites.

At the level of recognition, we advocate for an expanded range of materials that we, as archaeologists, use to make the crucial distinctions about chronology and ethnicity of site occupants. As shown in our study, noting the presence or absence of certain items such as glass beads is not sufficient. In contrast, to identify the broader set of places that represent enduring patterns of Indigenous presence, archaeologists will need to consider sites with no foreign goods but relatively recent chronometric dates as well as sites that exhibit late nineteenth- or even early twentieth-century deposits. Similarly, the ability to recognize the full range of sites relevant to long-term Indigenous persistence—beyond highly visible forts, missions, and the like—will require close collaboration with local tribes. These recommendations mesh well with an emerging interest in the archaeology of Indigenous homelands and sustained colonialism that encourages archaeologists to consider a broader range of sites and materials that relate to Native American experiences after the arrival of Europeans (Law Pezzarossi and Sheptak 2019; Lightfoot and Gonzalez 2018; Panich and Schneider 2015).

Solutions at the level of site recording are equally complex, given that chronological assessments draw from and perpetuate conceptual approaches to archaeology that are often more dynamic than the recording systems themselves. Despite sustained critique of the prehistory concept, we believe there is utility in distinguishing between periods before and after Indigenous peoples met European and American colonists. Like chronological periods, site recording systems are regionally specific, and any changes to them will need to account for the particular culture-historical developments of the areas in question. Still, some general observations can be made. Based on our experience in California and our review of the literature from other areas, we argue that the term “protohistoric” is both ambiguous and outdated. And while terms like “colonial” or “pericolonial” have analytical potential, they do not cover the

full range of postcontact Indigenous sites in North America or elsewhere. Instead, we suggest site recording practices that capture occupational chronologies based on relatively narrow ranges of calendrical dates. Where appropriate, these ranges can be used in concert with expanded regional chronological classification systems that bring the reality of Indigenous presence up to the present. This approach may require far-reaching changes to existing practices, but the past three decades have seen rapid shifts in how archaeologists conceive of and write about Indigenous histories. It is time for regional recording systems to catch up.

Notes

1. We conducted fieldwork at these latter sites in 2015 and 2016. We will update the DPR site records to more accurately reflect their occupational histories after laboratory analysis is complete.
2. In 2018, Utah replaced the IMACS forms with the Utah Archaeology Site Form. The term “ethnohistoric” was used instead of protohistoric, although the form still encourages recorders to assign ethnic affiliation by making a distinction between prehistoric/ethnohistoric and historic in the site type field (IHRWG 2018).

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Data Availability Statement. A summary of our findings, including site-specific information, will be placed on file at the Northwest Information Center at Sonoma State University (Rohnert Park, California).

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