CHAPTER 4

TURNING TABLES IN SEARCH OF DIALOGUE: THE MAKING OF INDISCRETE SPACES IN LATIN AMERICAN CONTEXTS

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This chapter is part of a bigger project in which I intend to touch upon the political aspects implicit in the archaeological practice and that, inherently, form part of the definition of the discipline and its members. The aforementioned project responds to the need to deal with these and other aspects and introduce them actively into the academic debate. Here, I am interested in emphasizing the experiences through which the relationships between archaeology, politics, and society become evident and in which the debate and decisions over the past is also claimed by other stakeholders. It is important, I argue, to trace the conceptual and practical frameworks (as well as their implications), power relations, and the social and economic connotations in which these relations take place, especially regarding the discourses of cultural plurality in nationalists and postnationalists contexts.

Archaeology is not exempt of such debates, directly or indirectly, since the past remains as a key element in the construction of identities and ethnicities in the present, as many authors have accurately shown (Trigger 1984, 1989; see also Diaz-Andréu 1999; Diaz-Andréu and Champion 1996). The convulsive social landscape, now experiencing deep and increasing changes fostered by global economics, has resulted in the acknowledgment of the "multicultural" more as a constitutive requirement of globalization than as a response to this process (Hale 2002; Žižek 1998); it has also led to a reemergence of identity projects (Jones 1997; Olsen 2001) permeating the practice and theoretical view of anthropology and archaeology (Appadurai 1996; Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

A democracy with neoliberal tinges has torn to pieces much of the direction of social critique, such as Marxism (Oyuela-Caycedo et al. 1997), on its return to those countries that were previously racked by

dictatorships, as is the case of Bolivia, Argentina, and others in Latin America. An evaluation of this and other "trends of critique" is necessary, therefore, in the light of a critical position on the practice of archaeology. This, certainly, has a strong impact on the practice of the discipline that, in many cases, was forced to rethink its conceptual frameworks as well as the practice itself from a position that was subject to challenges, multiple interpretations, and different needs from the past. It is precisely these challenges that promote and open these "indiscrete spaces," turning tables and forcing us to consider a necessary repositioning as academics and individuals who work within different social contexts.

As Gnecco asserts (2005:184), one of the most important aspects in the process of consolidation of the authority of science (assumed by archaeology) was the "delimitation of the site of enunciation, the space where the historical discourse was and still is legitimated" within the academy. This space of enunciation, worthy to keep in mind, is consolidated by academic events, like the one at which this paper was originally presented, and others to which I will make reference further ahead, where specific agendas are established. Usually in these scenarios, it is hoped that these agendas be dealt with according to a particular rhetoric—the academic—therefore defining the mechanisms of participations and, consequently, those of exclusion as well.

This is something that, for most of us, is crudely taken for granted. However, it is more and more evident that the diverse circumstances in which concepts like "heritage," "identity," "culture," and others, have overran the limits of what is conceived of as strictly academic, are now appropriated and rearticulated in different kinds of discourses held by a myriad of social actors. These discourses respond to political and ideological claims (be these vindicative, millenarist, exclusionist, and others), articulating themselves around old contingencies and promoting new ones.

Contrary to other studies, then, my work is not based in an analysis of a single, specific, case study. Instead of presenting a case that, from its dissection and objectification, is transformed in a case study, my work attempts to focus on the very fact that brought us to congregate in spaces of debate to discuss these themes. What is more, I argue that is important to conduct a reflexive analysis of the process in which we, whether we want it or not, are immersed. It is from this analysis of some of the reactions and attitudes that began to take shape in the academic world, following the formation of specific contexts, that I understand this emergent process as a process of emergency, a cry that calls us to assume new positions at the dialogue table.

PART 1

The current Latin American and global context of the last decades has been shaken by the arise of social movements and their subsequent acknowledgment within the public sphere in terms of the "multicultural" (Hale 2002). The emergence of critical trends within anthropological and archaeological thinking has brought their role as scientific disciplines within society into question. Thus, the preoccupation to challenge exclusionist discourses of fascist and neocolonialist nature (Arnold 1996; Díaz-Andréu 1999; Politis 1995) had a strong effect on the analysis of the relation between archaeology and nationalistic discourses (Díaz-Andréu and Champion 1996; Gnecco 1999, 2005; Jones 1997; Mamani 1996; Trigger 1984, 1989). The nation-states, a project to which archaeology had widely contributed (Jones 1997; Trigger 1984, 1989), besides being spaces in crisis (Bhabha 1990; Gupta and Ferguson 1997), became a fashionable theme of archaeological inquiry.

Nowadays, it is not news to find extremely sharp and mordacious critiques targeted against nationalism—as well as other similar specific topics (Michael Shanks, Bjornar Olsen, and Chris Witmore, personal communication 2003)—contesting exclusion and homogenization in order to attain the label of "critic." Nation-states, with their invented traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and their imagined communities (Anderson 1991), are now the object of a harsh, although not so effective, critique (Fernández 2003; Paz 2004; Zaburlín 2005). The result, nonetheless, is scarcely gratifying, especially when the critique to the positivist foundations of modernity of the nation-states does not offer an alternative to confront the results promoted by the burgeoning process of "balkanization" of some of these, or to confront the charge of neoliberal economic powers of transnational capital (Angelo in preparation; Kojan and Angelo 2005).

It is also impossible, within this very frame, to attempt to provide alternative answers along with these criticisms to nationalism. A case in point to clarify this claim, in my opinion, is the incapacity of archaeologists (and other social scientists) to deal critically with some of the hottest issues in Bolivian politics, such as the emergence of regionalist autonomist projects. These projects, echoing the critiques against the oppressive characteristics held by nation-states and their dominant discourses, have begun to forge separatist discourses with even more exclusionist and neo-fascist overtones (Antelo 2004; cf. *Tinkazos* no. 16, a journal edited by the Program of Strategic Research of Bolivia [PIEB], La Paz). In the face of this and other new social challenges, many of us (archaeologists and anthropologists) have decided to turn a blind eye and deaf ears, discretely, avoiding becoming part of this volatile and

highly dynamic context that is being engendered in the social and politic realms in present-day Bolivia.

Related to the questioning of the asphyxiating nature of colonialist representations and the homogenizing structures of the nation-states, new interventions and representations, this time coming from indigenous groups and others—identified as these minorities historically displaced and subordinated—made their presence felt in the debate. These new actors and their claims for vindicative rights regarding the use (and abuse) of the past by science and anthropology were brought into the academic forums. This is the case of the work of Vincent Deloria (*Custer Died for Your Sins*, 1969) and others (see also Echo-Hawk 1989; Langsford 1983; Mamani 1996; Watkins 2002; Zimmerman 1989), making evident the need to consider critically the contributions of archaeology to a wider social context (Layton 1989; see Gnecco 1999, 2005; Politis 2001 for Latin American examples).

However, this seems to be a phenomenon that does not end there. Facing an apparently increasing process of homogenization, promoted by the advances of global capitalism, other different processes of empowerment and new (re)configurations in the social and cultural geography can be seen (auspiced, generally, under the problematic label of multiculturalism). The dynamics of the transnational movements and the emergence of diasporic or revivalist communities have turned categories such as "identity" or "local" into elusive ones, forcing archaeologists, and social scientists in general, to adopt a more informed perspective. As Hodder (2003:72) asserts:

> The increased concern with alternative perspectives, multivocality and identity issues in archaeology is linked to globalism, post-industrial societies, the information age and so on. Writers such as Castells (1996) have looked at broad globalizing trends in economic systems, and Arjun Appadurai (1996), working from an anthropological perspective, has discussed the cultural components of this process, describing a new fluidity whereby the emphasis is on transnationalism and diaspora.

It is from these intricate relationships between archaeology and society that definitions like cultural heritage, local communities, and others, have now attained considerable currency, being explicitly included as central themes within the agenda of academic and public debates (Shanks 2002; Ucko 1987). Nonetheless, even when there is an extensive literary production concerning these issues, impulsing a more reflexive and responsible practice of the discipline (see Hamilakis 2003; Meskell 1998), these issues have been largely absent—or have received scant attention—in the debate in countries like Bolivia, and others, where the heralds of multiculturalism and pluralism were already saluted and celebrated. Thus,

despite the fact that these issues have been looming over (and kept at bay from) the academic and political domains for more than two decades, they are recently being incorporated into Latin American spaces of debate (Ayala 2005; Ayala et al. 2003; Gnecco 1999, 2005; Politis 2003).

PART 2

The influence of global factors affecting diverse local communities has resulted in its very reconfiguration, promoting at its turn identity claims related to their past and culture. As some authors argue, these claims have moved from aspects that have to do with *social politics* (class and social equality) toward those related more to *cultural politics* (identity politics and politics of recognition) (Fraser 1997). Identity politics—as is assertedly pointed out by Comaroff (1996)—are situated as part of complex interweaving and power equations, expressed in material, symbolic, and political terms. In some of the interpellating discourses, then, "ethnic identity must call on some shared sensibility, some latent cultural essence; a primordial infrastructure, as it were, from which appropriate signs, symbols, and sentiments may be extracted when necessary" (Comaroff 1996:165). In that sense, the past (and the archaeological discourse), no doubt, acquires a remarkable importance, becoming a field of strategic struggle (Hodder and Preucel 1996:604). Four vignettes will help me to illustrate my analysis.

Vignette 1

"I have a question about how to make a difference" said a post by one of the participants of the World Archaeological Congress (WAC) electronic mailing list. This person's preoccupation had to do with the construction of the new airport in Quito, Ecuador, which was "beginning to take shape over hundreds of tombs, structures and villages. It is being plowed under, the whole lost civilization," and the lamenting of the potential loss of data that "would be worthy of any museum." The message also added:

> How can we protest the government and stop the construction? Also, TLC or The Free Trade talks are going on right now and we, as Americans, have been warned to stay low profile. So, did you know about this happening? Do people care? Because the Ecuadorian government does not? What is there to do? (G. H., quoted by A. P., March 20, 2006, WAC LISTSERV,)

Different answers and comments followed the question. Some made evident the tense relationships between national and foreign

archaeologists, the former being uncomfortable with the interference of the latter in "national affairs"; others stressed issues related to the source—whether private, international, or national—of funding for the project so as to determine who could be charged as guilty. Still, others emphasized the state, conditions, and limitations of the archaeological research, and even the need for a new airport. Thus, as one poster stated:

> I take offence at [his] communiqué disparaging the Ecuadorian government and archaeologists and the fact that it's being spread around all over the world. The new airport has been in the planning stages for the past 8 years or so. Quito's soon to be old airport is very dangerous due to its envelopment by the city [with] many accidents and deaths there in recent years. The National Institute of Cultural Patrimony conducted Phase 1, 2, and 3 studies and mitigation at the new airport site a couple of years ago now. (T. B. March 22, 2006, WAC LISTSERV)

Another poster would respond:

> With respect, I have to suggest that your response on this matter highlights a structural problem that characterizes the cultural heritage programs of many Latin American countries. While the laws trumpet the sanctity of the nation's cultural patrimony, it is left to the chronically under funded cultural ministries to protect and manage it. The construction and economic development agencies of government are assigned no responsibility whatever. (T. K., March 23, 2006, WAC LISTSERV)

In a matter of days the flow of e-mails escalated, heating up the debate and exposing serious tensions within the country's politics and the interweaving of global capitals and local interests found in contradiction between international standards and national legislation proceedings regarding cultural heritage. And, while some would remark that the archaeological finds a the site "[only] consist of utilitarian ceramics, of rustic manufacture, which are found on the surface (no more that one meter deep), and are fairly common in the area of Quito" (A.O., March 29, 2006), and that no architectural structures, neither houses nor ceremonial centers, were found—clearly privileging a monumentalist notion of valuable heritage—others would cry out, denouncing

> I was turned down permission by INPC to make some corrections [of mistakes made in phase 1], at that point INPC *officers told me that, Ecuador was a sovereign country with their own laws and that they will not allow anyone who claims to be enforcing World Bank Standards …* I am concerned since I do not know what will happen with the tombs? Are there physical anthropologists involved? What are the analyses Quiport [the project's name] will perform on those burials and to what extent the analysis will go? (P. L., March 28, 2006, my italics, WAC LISTSERV)

In my opinion, what this exchange of thoughts clearly evidences is that we, as archaeologists, are situated in different intersecting planes (political, economical, academic, national sovereignty, and so forth), where some of them demand from us immediate, protagonic and well-informed action. However naive the initial question may sound, it exposes different concerns, which are differently echoed by different responses; on the one hand, the worries about the lost of irretrievable data reflects the high value that is still invested upon the archaeological object. On the other hand, the denouncement of inescapable responsibilities in which archaeology is globally involved would also come forward:

> Please, have a look on the news about thousands of indigenous peoples demonstrating against TLC in Ecuador, and then think about the government position regarding indigenous peoples and their heritage and future. Then also think about the warning you've received as Americans: "stay low profile." What are the roles of American archaeologists? To stay low profile and let your American government do whatever they want? Ecuadorians are struggling against what they see as an injustice. They do not stay low profile. (A. H., March 22, 2006, WAC LISTSERV)

It seems to be the case that the practice in the discipline remains immersed in tension. Seemingly, it is still hard to overcome the image of the discipline as concerned only with objectivity, the empirical data, and an agenda that privileges the academic, leaving politics aside (Latour 1993, 1999; Shanks 2002). This also reflects the different positions and the intricate networks in which we are trapped, where our work is instrumental for other stakeholders. In any case, we are tied to responsibilities we cannot deny and we need to make ourselves accountable in front of possible interpellations.

Vignette 2

To this scenario we must add the fact that many of the new emergences in the public space (and that now irrupt into the academic debate) pose a threat to our ethos as community, promoting deep anxieties that begin to reveal some of our deepest preconceptions and biases toward the Other(s) that emerge(s) to interpellate us. Thus, for instance, I was stunned by the degree of disillusion and disappointment of several of my colleagues about the relation between archaeologists and indigenous communities (especially the role of the latter in this relationship), a hot and recurrent topic in the academic sphere nowadays. In many cases, this disillusion has to do with a rather pragmatic and cynic perception (and prescription) of these relations and in other cases—perhaps the majority—with the romanticization of "the indigenous."

In the first case, some researchers seem to see the members of local communities as passive receivers of the knowledge of the past and think that—despite their rights over territories and material culture, sometimes sanctioned by state's legislation—they should have no opinion in the decisions about how research about the past must be done (Mamani 1996). Almost a 100% of archaeological investigations in countries like Bolivia, for instance, are conducted in rural areas or lands that belong to indigenous communities recently recognized by the state (Albó 2002). In many cases, the relationship is absent, aside from the bureaucratic paperwork, and the only thing that matters is to keep "good PR" with these communities, while making sure that they are kept at bay and do not interfere with research (e.g., Stanish and Kusimba 1996).

In the second case, local communities are framed within romantic and nostalgic conceptions of the Other. The "indigenous" or the "*originario*" (Spanish word commonly used to denote "aboriginal"), which are generally the terms used to make reference to members of these communities, is perceived as possessing an atavistic link with the past. Related to this conceptualization there are other concepts such as "purity" and "originality" for which, necessarily, this Other has to be good and docile, as in the myth of the "noble savage." Thus, when these local communities fall from these preconceptions and stereotypical images that prevail in most of us (thanks to anthropological views that privilege conceptions such as possession of communal lands, peasant economy, and some particular atavistic belief/relationship with ancestors, etc.), they are seen as "culturally contaminated by economic interests," which results in their becoming "greedy," "corrupt," and other much less kind epithets—as commented in conferences halls, corridor chitchat, and informal meetings among scholars. Nostalgically, then, the "noble savage" is announced as dead. Of course, all these comments are carefully cleansed and removed from any academic or technical monograph or report.

This, necessarily, derives from the imposition of negative connotations that point to the compartmentalization and seclusion of these communities and their members within primordialist categories (Benhabib 2006; Said 1989; Van Buren 1996). These categorizations are usually based on essentialist conceptions of "culture" subject to scrutiny, whose characteristics are generally presented within synchronic models of sociocultural analysis (e.g., Bastien 1978; Isbell 1977; Murra 1975). These analyses, nonetheless, are challenged by the very members of the represented societies in the practice due to, among other reasons, the rapid pace of globalization and the diverse historical and social changes taking place within it (Starn 1991, 1994; Appadurai 1996; Paine 2000). Commonly, this results in a nostalgic disappointment in the ideal of the "indigenous" for some archaeologists.

Vignette 3

On the other side of the discussion, reacting to these challenges to the nature of history and the irruption of new political actors, the response has been (a forced) openness and inclusion. This is the case (and the reason) for many of the conferences and meetings recently held, such as the "Encuentro de reflexión sobre patrimonio cultural, comunidades indígenas y arqueología" (Cultural heritage, indigenous communities and archaeology: A reflexive encounter) in Ollagüe (Chile, at the end of 2002) and, more explicitly, the 51st International Congress of Americanists (ICA) in Santiago (Chile, July 2003) and the "Reunión de Río Cuarto" (Río Cuarto meeting), Río Cuarto (Argentina, May 2005) (Ayala 2005; Ayala et al. 2003; see also *Arqueología Suramericana* 1:287–293). In other cases, the questionings had a more disruptive character, fuelling internal tensions in the discipline—see, for instance, Politis (2001) about the case of the mummies of Llullayllaco in Salta, Argentina. Since then, scholarly practice is trying to open spaces to include these new voices in the archaeological discourse so they can take part in the interpretation and use of the past (Hodder 1999, 2003). Nonetheless, this openness risks being no more than a strategic move, a gambit, in the articulation of a new hegemonic discourse that only seeks to include these voices while reaffirming its authority.

As Hodder points out, this liberal trend that now attempts to portray itself as self-critical "continues a colonial impulse. It tries to engage the subaltern in a Western discourse that is not only elitist but also difficult, specialized and abstract" (2003:24). Despite the fact that some authors have manifested their worries (and some their pleasure) about the new role that local communities are beginning to assume regarding the control and management of archaeological resources (Monné and Montenegro 2003), it is still hard to delineate the frame within which these relationships take place. Apparently for many of us, accepting that these communities become the *owners* of *our objects* of study is no more than a formality with which to comply. Undoubtedly, the relations between local communities and archaeological projects are determined by unequal power relations, which are usually defined by the authority, cultural capital, and academic credentials of the researchers (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu and Thompson 1991). It is worth mentioning some of the assumptions usually held aprioristically by some researchers: (1) local communities, in spite of their intrinsic relation with the past, are dispossessed of the knowledge to approach it, and (2) therefore "they can benefit"—from a very positivistic view—from knowledge that academia can provide regarding ("their") history.

In other cases, the economic advantage held by these projects, especially when they are backed by international agencies and/or foreign universities, clearly set unequal relationships between the projects and the economically depressed communities, affecting the balance in the decision making regarding the objectives and agenda of research (however, see Pyburn 2002:121). Sometimes, these projects are economically endowed to afford local museums, which can or cannot have clear policies about tourist impact on the sites and where results are presented as contributions of science to these local communities (Bauer and Stanish 2002; Muñoz 2002; Nielsen et al. 2003; Stanish and Kusimba 1996). This is mainly because one of the aspects in which archaeological investigation has gained relevance is related to the increasingly oversaturated tourist market (Lima 2003; Nielsen et al. 2003).

The results can be significant in terms of providing economic alternatives to these communities so they can insert themselves (successfully or not) in tourism circuits (Nielsen et al. 2003). Additionally, besides opening a path to insertion into the tourist economy for local communities, archaeological investigations have also become instrumental for political discourses related to territory and identity claims (Capriles 2003; Hodder 1999; Lima 2003). Nonetheless, a majority of these projects scarcely consider the repercussions that these types of actions can have. Neither the political consequences of the forms of representation nor the processes of bracketing off these communities are considered critically. Generally, these communities are encouraged (if not forced), for the sake of tourism, to represent primordialist images of themselves, as the following paragraph shows:

> In December the community celebrates the Khapac Raymi[1] festival in the archaeological [s]ite [of Inkallajta]. While in previous years it was a rather popular party, with electronic music and all, since 2002 *they [the people of the community] have recovered [in the festival] their own customs as well as their autochthonous musical instruments emphasizing these rituals and offerings to Pachamama, despite the influences of a protestant church that has a strong presence in the region.* (Muñoz 2002:16, my italics)

In front of this statement it may be useful to ask whether a possible decision to turn their backs on these cultural practices would define the people of this particular community as less authentic and, therefore, not fit to possess this heritage.[2] I must acknowledge that, in many cases, this essentialist representation (or self-representation) acquires certain strategic characteristics that are played by these communities, either as a group or individually (Spivak 1988; cf. Benhabib 2006).

The problem I see, in any case, is that this type of (self)representation is becoming more and more the only possibility rather than an option

among many others to choose from. This, evidently, has to do with the demand and consumption of this kind of cultural product (Shanks 2002; Shanks and McGuire 1996), whose success or failure depends on the credibility of these new inventions of the "authentic and natural" where local and global unite in complicity (Castañeda 1996; also Angelo, in preparation). Critical approaches that could count with the participation of fellow archaeologists about these economic strategies—which ultimately promote the insertion of these communities in global economy in unequal conditions—are scarce. Therefore, power relations defined in this type of relationship between the local and its counterparts are unbalanced, resulting in the infliction of a subtle but effectively symbolic and neocolonialist violence (Bourdieu and Thompson 1991).

Vignette 4

Recently, *Chungará* has dedicated a complete issue (vol. 35, no. 2) to presenting the results of academic projects that initiated debate around cultural heritage and the relationship between members of indigenous and academic communities.[3] These experiences of collaboration are still incipient to providing accurate evaluations; nonetheless, the framing, the representations, and conceptualizations of the relations between what is defined as "the indigenous" and "the academic" scarcely receive critical consideration in the whole publication. Thus, the imbalance generated by this kind of conceptualization of the power relations, stereotypically dualistic and conservative, is barely called into question, which risks the possibility of reinforcing existing power structures through the consolidation of a system of knowledge about the past (that of archaeological science) that, in this case, becomes fortified as dominant at the expense of the subjection and passivity of its alleged interlocutors (Gnecco 1999; Preucel and Hodder 1996a).

The critique to postmodernist's pretensions of hyperreflexivity provided by Crapanzano (1991) is worth considering. This author argues that postmodernism, with its critical baggage toward metanarratives and the positions of authority held by rationalist epistemology and its economic and political power networks, has promoted a discourse that describes for us (i.e., analyzes critically) the intricate relations of power but, at the same time, prescribe us (i.e., constrains us) to a fixed way of approaching reality. According to Crapanzano, it is possible to assume a position regarding this prescription but, as long as this is confused with description, is not possible to reject it completely, which defines a confrontation, or rather an "[incorporation] into a totalizing hermeneutic—a sort of epistemological antinomianism—which rejects totalization, questions the authority of any hermeneutic, and refuses

any transcendental position" (Crapanzano 1991:435). This, certainly, provokes a type of closure to the debate that does not allow the effective articulation of discourses nor the challenging of dominant structures, since it does not acknowledge the subversive potential of the different individual positionings (Wylie 2003) and, according to Crapanzano, promotes this critical stand as a sort of fundamentalism.

Crapanzano's work alerts us to an argument that could become problematic and susceptible of being easily co-opted by liberal discourse, if we are going to understand this space of critique as framed solely within a cultural critique that only blends positivistic postures as necessary—that is, demagogically celebratory of a discursive diversity (Hale 2002; Žižek 1998:176). In this sense, it is important not to cordon off or contain these claims, such as the vindicative claims of indigenous groups regarding their past, by defining them as fundamentalist expressions (leading to their disqualification), especially if these claims phrase their critique in postmodern jargon[4] or, even worst yet, to include them demagogically as samples of recent academic openness to local claims (e.g., Ayala 2005; Ayala et al. 2003).

Undoubtedly, Crapanzano is informed about this possibility when he warns us against the insistent discourse of equality and reflexivity promoted by postmodernism or, better said, by multiculturalist neoliberalism, about which Butler et al. (2003), Hale (2002), and Zizek (1998), among others, talk to us. For this author, the notion of egalitarian dialogue, or the so-called "dialogical space," has been overestimated, where, apparently,

> [interlocutors] pretend that they are equals and have equal rights in the exchange. *This dialogical egalitarianism may in fact be purely ideological, a mystification of "real" differences in power, and these real differences may—certainly do—affect the plays of power that occur within egalitarian-framed dialogue.* (Crapanzano 1991:436, my italics)

The result of this idealization, he goes on to say, is that it produces a "double indexing that occurs within any exchange: an intra- and extra-dialogical indexing of the participants, for example, *as equal within the dialogue but as unequal outside the dialogue*, in real life, as we say" (1991:436, my italics). In other words, these differences and power relations that two or more parties get into, in any exchange, are concealed by the idealized pretension (the pretense) in which this kind of dialogue is conceived or represented.

This is the problem that I see in many of the collaborative projects presented in Ayala et al. (2003), which, through a change in the academic attitude toward local notions regarding cultural heritage, pretend to show an opening in the spaces of debate, to be occupied by those

groups historically disenfranchised. Whereas it is evident that one of the objectives of the reflexive trend inside the discipline was to promote the inclusion of "local voices," opening up multiple interpretations and uses of the past (Hodder 1999, 2003), it is necessary to differentiate between dialogue and ventriloquism (Castañeda 1996). The latter implies the legitimation of the dominant discourse through the incorporation of subaltern voices, subsuming their potential critique to subvert and challenge hegemonic views, resulting in what Spivak refers to as the impossibility of the subaltern to speak (Spivak 1988; cf. Hodder 2003).

PART 3

Certainly, in the last decade we have witnessed a change in the attitude concerning the position academia and especially disciplines like anthropology and archaeology have taken in relation to this new social context in which they are situated. Nevertheless, it is necessary to maintain a suspect attitude and constant scrutiny. Apparently, in many of the new dialogue situations that are being promoted, it is assumed that much change is not necessary and that business can be carried on as usual, but only to assist (paternalistically?) these communities. As Hodder sarcastically, but rightly, puts it, "Dialogue and collaboration and multivocality on their own are not enough. Many discussions of dialogue assume that we just [need to] add a bit of collaboration and stir" (Hodder 2003:2).

Yet, there is a strong reticence to accept that the battlefield, as Gnecco (2005) argues, is widening. For some, it seems, these kind of interpellations are still uncomfortable, producing indiscrete spaces and disturbing our usual *habitus*. In this sense, the response so far has been generally to make special room, opening spaces to debate (dialogue) these issues. The results of this response have included the organization of the "Foro de Pueblos Originarios de Río Cuarto" (Forum of the Originary Peoples of Río Cuarto, which resulted in the Declaración de Río Cuarto 2004) or the session in which this work was initially presented.

Thus, for instance, the following happened during a recent academic event in Tilcara where some voices that questioned archaeologists and their interpretations emerged.[5] In some cases, the critique was directed, generically, to the colonialist nature of archaeology; in others, the archaeological interpretations and epistemological foundations were questioned (one of the speakers, for instance, assumed a rather romantic, messianic, and totalizing view of the Inkas and the Tawantinsuyu, now very common in discourses that seek to promote a pan-Andean identity). Amidst a hot peak in the discussion created by this indiscreet participant, and addressing the interrupting voice, one of the archaeologists in the conference room respectfully said, "Sorry for interrupting.

This certainly is an interesting and much-needed discussion, but, back to where we were," and then, turning around and addressing the colleague who was dissertating, asked, "what is the chronological framework for the region?" (Tilcara, 2005).

The organizers of the event were compelled "to open" a space of debate at the end of the presentations so this inescapable issue could be discussed but, at the same time, unwittingly perhaps, the very debate was removed from the context in which the presentation and discussion of academic works was being contested.

Thus, this "interesting issue" was treated at the end of the event, after several dozens of academic lectures, in front of a tired audience of archaeologists and the public. Rhetorical participations followed, deriving from a dialogue that was closer to those of multiculturalist type auspiced commonly by international agencies like the World Bank (Hale 2002). By that time, the dissident "non-academic" voices had been attenuated, becoming less confrontative; many of them valued and thanked the fact that "they were being allowed to participate in the event," receiving a general ovation from the academic audience (see also Ayala et al. 2003 for a similar situation). From my perspective, the inclusion of other voices can result, in cases like this, in a cacophony where everybody can speak without prejudice since differences are already neutralized.

It is necessary, I contend, to accept the enlargement of the spaces of discussion that, from challenges and interpellations like those described above, could allow us to sustain a more committed and active dialogue, keeping a critical eye open for possible compartmentalization of the debate. To restrict the discussion of these and other issues that could emerge in which other stakeholders' interests are involved, would be to promote a normative and disciplinary process, that is, bracketing them off within a shell. Reactionary positions would clearly applaud these (unwitting?) actions by which science, once again, is put in charge of establishing the limits and conditions that entitles its authority. Our actions are always political, so there should be an explicit participation toward the decolonizing of our discipline.

Conclusions

It is from the works of Nancy Fraser and Seyla Benhabib that I reflect on the limitations as well as the scope of recent attempts at the inclusion of alternative perspectives and their debate in academic realms. Benhabib (2006), following Nancy Fraser (1997) and Marion Young (2000), argues for the search for a universalist deliberative democracy that could emerge from the recognition of public expressions of cultural identities in civic spaces (Benhabib 2006:50). In order to do this, she contends, it is also

necessary to consider the faculty of the(se) peoples to elaborate their own narratives and cultural resignifications—positioning them within interlocutive networks from which that very subjectivity can be also be called to question—so that their cultural legacies are in constant transformation and the production, reproduction, as well as the reappropriation of these legacies, therefore, escapes totalization (Benhabib 2006:144).

Gnecco (2005:187–188) argues that, in certain way, "historic subordination has displaced the place of enunciation of the past" through local narratives that began to acquire acceptance within new normative legislations, both nationally and internationally. Even though I concur with this observation, I also share Gnecco's own skepticism expressed in another publication (Gnecco 1999); I fear that this acceptance is but another strategy of assimilation through which difference and conflict are neutralized and demobilized. For Benhabib (2006:44), "According to the interactive universalism, I can learn who the other(s) is(are) only through their narratives of self-identification and I can be conscious of this otherness, and these aspects of their identity that present them as others in front of me, only through their own accounts." It would be necessary, then, to be more careful and to pay closer attention to these narratives to grasp the subjectivities that they represent.

However, in many cases, conditions of equality in the production and valorization of these narratives are quickly assumed, which, as we have seen, is largely critiqued and debated by authors like Crapanzano (1991; see also Preucel and Hodder 1996b:667–677 passim). On the other hand, it is helpful to remember that the number of local communities and stakeholders (among which archaeologists and other professionals can be found) in front of whom we are accountable is large and varied (Hodder 2003:25). A close evaluation of these aspects, carried out in a very explicit way, would be necessary in order to promote a dialogue in which the needs and priorities can be verbally uttered and dealt with. Evidently, this is not an easy task and, again, considerations about whom and what should be given priority in this dialogue makes it a strategic field of negotiation.

In that sense, I see two inherent problems that we need to deal with before these public expressions of identity could achieve these public and civic spaces having enough power to contest domination. These are, first, the pretensions of equality and the representations we sometimes keep in mind at the beginning of any dialogue for which we will probably need

> to understand these group identities in a much more dynamic way, keeping in mind that, in reflecting about identity politics and politics of difference, we need to concentrate less in what the group *is* by paying more attention to what their political leaders *demand* from the public sphere. (Benhabib 2006:47, italics in the original)

Second, it is also important to remember that, despite the fact that liberal democracy now heralds equal opportunities and equal access to resources among the individuals of any given society through their juridical system, this "equality" depends on the resources that individuals will possess and be able to mobilize to justify their choices and decisions (Hall and Held 1990).

In previous paragraphs I mentioned the nostalgic character that leads many archaeologists to see, disappointedly, how different local communities are abandoning their cultural practices that before tied them to the past, or how they became "non-authentic," losing their "purity and innocence." This nostalgic view, according to Rosaldo (2000), is a key element and plays a fundamental role in the acritical repetition of synchronic sociocultural analysis that reifies the orientalist image of the Other (Said 1989), neglecting the historical processes of cultural and economic interaction. Thus, regardless the extensive debate about the archaeological role related to collaborative works with local communities, it seems that, in many cases, the production and consolidation of cultural essentialisms is still one of the aspects that archaeology is able to promote and reify, dangerously. I would argue that it is extremely risky to follow this path, for it only reinforces seclusion and museifies the Other. Therefore, this should be avoided if we pretend to make a real contribution to the acknowledgment of diversity, and if we attempt to make this relevant in terms of promoting real spaces of encounter.

Notes

  1. The Khapac Raymi festival became popular in the last decades as one of the commemorative celebrations of the indigenous identity that takes place in the archaeological site of Inkallajta. Similar versions of this festival include Inti Raymi, popularized since the 1940s in Cuzco, Peru, as is mentioned by Marisol de la Cadena (2000), or the celebrations of the Andean New Year, held in Tiwanaku and other parts of Bolivia and, recently, Ecuador, Argentina, and other countries.

2. A similar case is shown in the work of Rivolta (2004), in which she discusses the cultural practices recently (re)introduced to the Quebrada de Humahuaca and the celebration of the Andean New Year in the region, and its variations throughout the last years.

3. This issue of *Chungará* presents the insertion of this thematic in Chilean, and—to certain extent—Latin American academic spaces (Ayala et al. 2003); the volume incorporates experiences both inside and outside the Chilean borders (Fernández 2003; Lima 2003; Nielsen et al. 2003).

4. Many recent claims for the restitution of human remains made in recent years in Latin America (Politis 2001) have been commonly dismissed by conservative factions of academia under the presumed vinculation of these claims with postmodern thinking. Thus, for example, some of the arguments of this conservative trend hold that "these claims are part of a *gringo* fashion," clearly trying to allude to the nationalities of some of the representatives of the postmodern perspective; others would assert that "this is not a real problem in Latin America where [local and indigenous] communities not only see this as part of archaeological work but also participate, very enthusiastically, as assistants in scientific excavations" (comment made by conference participant, Stanford University, 2002).

5. While I was conducting my Ph.D. research in the Quebrada of Humahuaca, Argentina, I attended the workshop "Procesos sociales prehispánicos en los Andes Meridionales," held in Tilcara in August of 2005. The brief ethnographic references included in this part of the text come from the notes I had taken there; of course, the interpretation of the events may or may not be shared by other participants.

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