

## Lower Case “indigenous”: Indexing an Archive and Archaeology of Whiteness in Studies of Ancient Greek Colonization

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the discursive and theoretical matrix deployed to conceptualize “indigenous” peoples, landscapes, and material culture within the context of the archaeology of Greek colonization in southern Italy during the Iron Age. Of particular interest is how ways of knowing as well as knowledge produced around ancient “Greek colonization” reproduce white and colonial ways of knowing contemporary Indigenous and colonized peoples and communities. This paper will suggest that “indigenous” as a category comes to represent a stalking horse for conceptual voids in approaches to archaeological studies of ancient Greek colonization. A close reading of the archive of the archaeology of Greek colonization in southern Italy positions this paper to reflect on larger questions including how invented images of the “indigenous” can become violently appropriated to settler colonial projects in classics and how the indigenization of ancient southern Italic people represents a maneuver to appropriate critical theory.

**Keywords:** indigeneity, whiteness, colonialism, Italy, archaeology.

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In 2022, when the Indian Child Welfare Act (“ICWA”) was once again challenged in *Haaland v. Brackeen*,<sup>2</sup> as someone whose own adoption fell subject to ICWA, I listened closely to the oral arguments that November over my headphones while walking to my morning class on Greek colonization. As I listened to the case, I considered how little classics connected its questions (e.g., the question “what is Greek ‘colonization’?”) to the fabric of colonization, not to the theorizing of colonization as a “studiable” object, but to how it is experienced: as if the field is atemporal, ahistorical, or disembodied.<sup>3</sup> This disjunction became pronounced just as it

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<sup>2</sup> *Haaland v. Brackeen* sought to challenge the constitutionality of Indian Child Welfare Act. The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), passed in 1978, is a federal law that regulates the removal of American Indian and Alaska Native children and youth. Its purview includes child custody proceedings such as foster care placement, termination of parental rights, adoption, etc. The act purports to maintain minimum federal standards for the removal of American Indian children from their families, define the roles of State and Tribal governments in child welfare cases, prioritize placement with family and Tribal members, and provision some protections against the termination of parental rights. The law was enacted after the Federal Government was forced to recognize that American Indian children and youth were being disproportionately removed from their homes and communities.

<sup>3</sup> I raise this critique, but the field has already been invited to see this problem by many scholars, particularly with respect to nationalisms and classical archaeology (c.f., Greenberg and Hamilakis 2022; Hamilakis 2018). Most recently, the “manifesto” for the 2024 volume *Critical Ancient World Studies* has challenged the field to reject “positivist accounts of history, and all modes of investigation that aim at establishing a perspective that is neutral or transparent” and instead practice from a place that acknowledges “the contingency of history and historiography in a way that is alert to the injustices and epistemologies of power

became routine, as the lawyers' talking over my headphones became the soundtrack of my walk to my class. Yet, something else also became routine: the experience of utter disjunction, as I stepped into spaces so thoroughly disconnected from the fabric of what was being deliberated by the Supreme Court of the United States.<sup>4</sup>

As seems typical in my experience of American traditions, "colonization" is problematized as the dirty "c" word; these traditions ask what ancient Greek colonization is, *if it is*, and what colonies are, *if they are*.<sup>5</sup> As November and the semester passed, I realized that my primary questions and logics when engaging studies of ancient Greek colonization became more about position and context: what was I bringing into the classroom and to my research given my own experiences, and what were others bringing in as well given their own relationships to ongoing colonization? What were the stakes for each of us? What could it have meant for classics to engage with its current political contexts in its questions? How could its questions be transformed by such engagement?<sup>6</sup> Instead, in my experience there is a kind of silence when one brings up their lived experiences of colonization or ongoing social, political, and cultural realities, and how they relate to the questions that guide studies of Greek colonization (as if these two things are disjointed). Between the November oral arguments and the June decision, it thus became clear to me that it was important to excavate the archive of what classics scholars had to say about ancient Greek colonization in the contexts of wider and ongoing social, political, and cultural materialities.

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that have shaped the way that certain kinds of knowledge have been constructed as 'objective' within the discipline known as classics" (Umachandran and Ward 2024, 1).

<sup>4</sup> This story serves as a throughline for this paper, following the example set by Indigenous scholar Margaret Kovach (2018). It takes seriously the words of Cree scholar Shawn Wilson in *Research is Ceremony*: "As an Indigenous academic, without story there is no academic me" (2008). I begin by speaking from the place of adoption and ICWA because an argument from Aileen Moreton-Robinson's book *The White Possessive* resonates deeply with this research: namely, with respect to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), courts feign to operate under the nonexistence of race even as they deploy it through racial signifiers for Indigenous people (2015, xii); It is this argument, both transposed and reconfigured, that I am making. I share this insight in order to be transparent about my research story and the place that animates its agenda.

<sup>5</sup> Osborne 2016, 25. These qualifications seem to reflect the postcolonial critique in anglophone scholarship that focused on envisioning indigenous agency (scholars like Robin Osborne and Peter Van Dommelen) or on critical re-readings of archaic sources as Greek colonial propaganda (such as Irad Malkin). Regardless of the approach, what remains clear is that the 20th century historiography of the period of Greek settlement in south Italy during the Iron Age fixated on ethnicity: on Greek and indigenous identity. I do not think this fixation has passed (only morphed). Initially this fixation was mediated by the comparison between ancient colonizations and European colonies in the Americas (such as Dunbabin's *The Western Greeks*). Today, however, understandings of Greek colonization seek to de-essentialize "Greek" and "indigenous" identity, recognizing that identity is permeable and constructed in various colonial contexts and that indigenous communities were not passive (consider the work of Michael Dietler and Tamar Hodos). In practice, scholars now use postcolonial theory to build models to understand Greek colonization and the relationships between Greek and indigenous peoples (the most common being models of hybridity, middle ground, and entanglement).

<sup>6</sup> If we didn't dismember the field from a "heart-centered practice" situated in its "political, social, institutional, and emotional contexts" (Supernant et al. 2020, 7), what would our archaeologies look like? As Conkey tells us in the epilogue to *Archaeologies of the Heart*, "we have not yet deeply engaged with the ways in which our own emotions, personal situations, and perspectives figure into the choice of a research problem or project" (Supernant 2020, 272). This is especially important since we as archaeologists arguably do the "remembering" for the past, a serious duty of care that demands our "hearts" and not just our heads be involved (Supernant 2020, 274), particularly when we are speaking of colonized pasts.

This paper emerged out of my experience in the 2022 class. Consequently, it pays close attention to context, focusing on the social and material realities that affect how Greek colonization is studied. It argues that the archaeology of Greek colonization in southern Italy reflects an epistemology of whiteness which operates through whiteness’ logics of the “indian.” I argue that the category of “indigenous” within studies of Greek colonization is modeled on simulations of the “indian.” This paper weaves together three strands to make its argument: (1) Italy’s 20th century political construction of southern alterity as contoured by comparisons to American Indians, (2) the rise of an “indigenous discourse” in anglophone scholarship surrounding Greek colonization in the late 20th century, and (3) late 20th-early 21st century terminological ambiguity (via synonyms like native, local, and colonized). The paper begins with an overview of what I mean by “simulation” and by “whiteness,” then proceeds to these three strands which aim to bring both of these concepts into relief against discourses of Greek colonization in southern Italy. These strands each, and altogether, first position “indigenous” as a white racial mechanistic term (something that “does the work” of racialization, in some cases vis-à-vis ethnicization), and then “indigenization” as a maneuver taken up by scholars.<sup>7</sup>

### Modeled on simulacra of the “Indian”

“Indigenous” peoples, landscapes, and cultural material implicated in studies of Greek colonization in ancient southern Italy are wrapped up in inventions of the American Indian, a simulation of “indigenous”: the simulacral indigenous, if you will. As Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor explains, the very word “indian” is a white invention that “became a bankable simulation.”<sup>8</sup> The “indian” as a simulation is sometimes invented ethnologically or literarily and sometimes archaeologically.<sup>9</sup> Thus we must investigate the “ruins of indian simulations,”<sup>10</sup> where such an investigation, as Vizenor explains, serves as a critique to

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<sup>7</sup> Orser 2004, 75, 111. Ethnicization attempts to shift the emphasis from race to ethnicity, minimizing (1) the potential analytic of racialized power dynamics, (2) academic disciplines’ own defining relationships with racial colonial systems, and (3) the imbrications between the racial project of European modernity and the contexts in which scholars work now.

<sup>8</sup> Vizenor 1998, 10-11. “Bankable” seems to be a useful word to carry over, since scholars materially benefit from the production of the category “indigenous” when they excavate, research, publish, etc.

<sup>9</sup> Building on the work of Jean Baudrillard’s theories of simulation, Vizenor claims that the word “indian” explains “who we are not” and “nothing about who we are” (Vizenor and Lee 1999, 84). Although, it is important here to recognize the capacity “we” implies to claim presence and self-definition, which ancient southern Italic people cannot do. This difference represents a key gap in how Vizenor’s simulation works and how I operationalize it. Vizenor’s articulation of the “indian” simulation is based on Baudrillard’s work “Simulacra and Simulation” (1994), in which he writes about how contemporary simulacra ambiguates simulation and “reality.” Baudrillard notes that a simulacrum does not resemble any “original” (11) and the very first example Baudrillard uses is the invention of the category “Savage” (15). Vizenor’s larger theory of the simulation draws on Baudrillard’s theory of simulacra to describe how whiteness’ culture of “manifest manners” invented “simulations” of indigenous people. For example, in the early 19th century, Indigenous peoples were cast as “vanishing” by dominant culture (aided, in part, by salvage anthropology and archaeology). The trope of the “vanishing indian” became short hand for the erasure of Indigenous peoples (via extermination, marginalization, reservation systems, assimilative policies and practices, etc.). Importantly then, simulacra do not merely represent a non-indigenous perspective but a systemic and therefore deliberate ambiguity between the “real” and “simulated” to conceal the fabrication of identities by non-indigenous people and systems.

<sup>10</sup> Vizenor 1998, 15.

confront what they are and what they do.<sup>11</sup> The invention of the “indian” (or in this case “indigenous”) as a simulacrum – a representation, imitation, a fiction of the real – acts in the world and on people as a simulation, giving shape to discourses that in turn shape material realities (or reproduce them as the case may be). The invented indian is a copy without a true original, where the archaeologically invented “indigenous” often represents the absence of real natives and relationships with real natives with the result that the “absence of natives has become a perverse presence of the other.”<sup>12</sup> This othering (which occurs through racial logics) enables the simulation to function as an *a priori* category, where archaeology produces and stabilizes, either consciously or unconsciously, the very effects of alterity through the category “indigenous.”<sup>13</sup> That is, through racial logics, the “West” is talking to itself, in its own language, inventing the “other”: (re)creating a simulation of “indigenous” through fictive ways of being.<sup>14</sup>

I borrow this idea of the simulacral indigenous in order to apply it to ancient Mediterranean archaeology, but I am not operationalizing it to argue for or about or to speak to the indigeneity of ancient southern Italic peoples as Vizenor does for tribal communities. Indeed, there is heuristic value in comparing Vizenor’s “indian” and ancient Greek colonization’s “indigenous,” which is not to suppose that they are ontologically the same or function alike in all respects.<sup>15</sup> Rather, I draw on the ways Vizenor particularly addresses representations of American Indian people in discourses, asserting that the (re)production of knowledge about American Indians through simulacra is a mechanism that enables ongoing colonization. I borrow this idea, suggesting that within studies of Greek colonization, ancient southern Italic peoples are in some ways modeled on invented and racialized images of the “indian” located in the present, and that these representations are embedded culturally with the result that they operate as “real.” Whiteness animates these simulations. Its logics position “indigenous” as a “racial signifier” which is “presupposed as being ‘known,’” and used by scholars to create knowledge about those “whose bodies are deemed to be marked by this racial knowledge.”<sup>16</sup> Considering and locating these habitual logics in studies of ancient Greek colonization can perhaps allow us to see how colonialism continues to function at a paradigmatic level, and therefore also allow us to confront dominant and colonial forms of knowledge elided by scholarship on Greek colonization. In *Fugitive Poses*, Vizenor uses the word “*indian*” in lowercase italics, rather than “Indian,” as a deliberate intervention and provocation.<sup>17</sup> The lowercase “indigenous” in this paper thus also both visibly marks the unrealness of the simulation, engendering the lowercase word, and indexes when the word is invoking the simulation, just as the hyphenated “simulacral” aims to do. In contrast, this paper capitalizes the term “American Indian” at several points. This capitalization pays attention to the issues that lie at the intersections of citation, nomenclature, and terminological practices in the academy, specifically in relation to

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>13</sup> By *a priori* I mean, Indigenous people do not precede nor are the referents for the lower case indigenous. The lower case “indigenous,” as an invention of “indigenous,” precedes the category. The invention engenders the category.

<sup>14</sup> Spivak 1988.

<sup>15</sup> Putting these two categories in dialogue is intentional, although I have no intention of suggesting that these categories as developed by their respective fields share in indivisible ontology.

<sup>16</sup> Moreton-Robinson 2015, xii.

<sup>17</sup> Vizenor 1998, 15.

American Indian sovereignty. For instance, various style guides, including APA and Chicago, grapple with defining “Native American” as an ethnicity, race, or nationality, and recommend capitalization for different reasons. When “American Indian” and “Indigenous” are capitalized in this paper, it is done to affirm the distinct cultural and political relationships, as well as the lifeways, that Indigenous peoples maintain with our homelands.

### Why Whiteness and What is Whiteness

At some point in the course on Greek colonization in 2022, some folks in the class started asking different kinds of questions - mostly methodological questions - based on our informal and interpersonal conversations: namely, *how* should and *can* archaeologists of ancient Greek colonization attempt to speak to the worlds of colonized communities? How do we engage with an archive, methods, and an epistemology very much tied to colonial violence? More to the point, how do we deconstruct such methodologies and epistemologies? As Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s example indicates, we must first study archaeology’s production itself, taking the discipline as our object of study.<sup>18</sup>

In many ways this work is already being undertaken, but this article aims to contribute by suggesting whiteness’ role in the archive and archaeology of studies of Greek colonization. Sharing my experiences then is a story meant to call out the context in which classics systemically deals with colonialism, in particular the way “indigenous” is thought to function as a raceless category in scholarship. I have chosen the subtitle of this paper, *Indexing an Archive and Archaeology of Whiteness in Studies of Ancient Greek Colonization*, in order to call out the ways in which whiteness premises studies of ancient Greek colonization.

Today, “Greek colonization” often serves as an organizing concept in the study of the ancient Greek world. Political, social, and cultural studies of the ancient Greek world usually engage this concept. As such, “Greek colonization” has become a naturalized topic within the study of the ancient Mediterranean, although not as a monolith.<sup>19</sup> However, instead of being a neutral approach to studies of the ancient Greek world, it is related to its social conditions of production, which include whiteness. The colonial matrix of classical archaeology, which must be understood within the larger “disciplinary coloniality of classics,” has begun to be articulated in recent decades, and conversations about race – and whiteness in particular – are coming from within the field.<sup>20</sup> However, they often appear as a part of wider questions about the futurity of the field or are characterized as non-traditional scholarship.<sup>21</sup> Following these examples, this study of whiteness is an invitation

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<sup>18</sup> Trouillot 2015.

<sup>19</sup> See De Angelis 2010 for an overview. The trajectory of this modern study starts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with literary models derived from surviving ancient sources, then critical approaches to these sources in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, next the development of new models derived from a cultural history approach in the late twentieth century, and most recently followed by the development of new models based in twenty-first century critical studies of colonialism.

<sup>20</sup> Blouin & Akrigg 2025, 64. For examples where whiteness is being discussed in the field, see the volumes *Critical Ancient World Studies* (Umachandran & Ward 2024) and the Routledge *Handbook of Classics, Colonialism, and Postcolonial Theory* (Blouin & Akrigg 2025).

<sup>21</sup> This ranges, for example from works dealing with race in antiquity such as Sarah Derbew’s book *Untangling Blackness in Greek Antiquity* to disciplinary critiques offered, for example, by Dan-el Padilla Peralta in the New York Times magazine article entitled, “He Wants to Save Classics From Whiteness. Can the Field Survive?” (Poser 2021).

to deconstruct this invisible category and the means through which Western ways of being and thinking “go without saying” in archaeology of Greek colonization. It acts as an invitation to unsettle disciplinary epistemological whiteness and to confront how whiteness contributes to the ways in which archaeology has been and remains a violent vehicle of Western modernity.

In this paper, whiteness refers not to White racial identity, but to an analysis of whiteness, where whiteness “as a structuring ideology, frames archaeological epistemology.”<sup>22</sup> Articulations and theorizing of whiteness possess a long although not particularly well acknowledged history.<sup>23</sup> Critical theorists and the rise of critical whiteness studies, building on the work of people such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Toni Morrison, Frantz Fanon, bell hooks, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, and others, have long discussed how whiteness, as a structuring ideology, operates as an epistemology, i.e., as a “way of knowing.”<sup>24</sup> This is true for how whiteness acts as a “way of knowing” Indigenous people. As Goenpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson notes, “[academics] have produced knowledge about Indigenous people, but their way of knowing is never thought of by white people as being racialised despite whiteness being exercised epistemologically.”<sup>25</sup> Whiteness prescribes “what can be known about the other through itself, disappearing beyond or behind the limits of this knowledge it creates in the other’s name.”<sup>26</sup> Whiteness creates the simulation and its referents are colonial fictions. It is thus not simply a noun but an epistemic process whereby whiteness defines “others” while remaining invisible. This paper is therefore a visible indexing of this made-to-be invisible way of knowing.<sup>27</sup> As a process, the important question is how does epistemic whiteness act? I argue that whiteness defines the category “indigenous” in studies of ancient Greek colonization, where “indigenous” comes to be known through modern white Euroamerican cultural discourses, systems, and structures (simulations grounded in whiteness’ logics). While whiteness remains unnamed, it acts upon the category “indigenous” or even produces the simulacral indigenous.

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<sup>22</sup> Reilly 2022, 55.

<sup>23</sup> For example, see the theorization of “imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” by bell hooks (1992) or whiteness as a de facto and de jure possession (Moreton-Robinson 2015).

<sup>24</sup> Moreton-Robinson 2004, 75.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> While sociologist Karen Fields and historian Barbara Fields (2012) speak in terms of the “invisible ontology” of “racecraft,” I speak in terms of an epistemological knowledge system. Yet, I want to think alongside how they develop the neologism “racecraft” precisely because these two ways of seeing are not oppositional. Fields and Fields outline how social practices of racism, “something an aggressor does,” are transformed into race, “something the target is” (17), yet it is racecraft that “transforms racism into race” (248). Race thus seems real as a result of the processes of racecraft, the “fingerprint evidence that racism has been on the scene” (19). The “craft” in racecraft makes visible the active crafting or the “socially ratified making or doing” by which racism makes race appear as a fact (192). Indeed, in what follows I draw upon epistemological critiques raised by Indigenous scholars, acknowledging that understandings of epistemological knowledge systems are already well discussed across Critical Indigenous Theory. This critique about whiteness’ epistemology, however, has its correlatives in Fields and Fields’ work (2012): for example, they both draw attention to the active processes of fiction (not lie) making (“race” and “indigenous,” for instance, as fictions). They both posit that such fictions act in the world as “real.” In analyzing whiteness through these lenses, I am not attempting to unseat Fields and Fields’ contributions, but rather center a different language proceeding from my own experience.

I have now used the term “logics” several times and in particular alluded to “logics of whiteness” as an analytic with which to examine the body of scholarship that deals with ancient Greek colonization. In this case whiteness is revealed in and through certain logics of the “native” which animate simulation of “indigenous,” namely the logic of fossilization, the logic of primitivism, and the logic of disappearance.<sup>28</sup> These are logics that shape, maintain, and reflect racialized reality in the U.S., and thus reveal practices and pathologies that reflect socially constructed and historical beliefs about Indigenous people which have given shape to the study of Greek colonization and the meaning we produce around this topic. Critically, naming whiteness as the producer of this category offers a problematization of whiteness rather than the racialized “other” (the native, the local, the indigenous, or the colonized in Greek colonization) as is so often the case in critiques of theories of ancient colonization.<sup>29</sup> Locating the problem in whiteness reveals the ways in which the conceptual matrix around Greek colonization pathologically turns to the “subaltern” (or creates it) to resolve scholarly crises of modernity (be they theoretical or terminological issues located in postcolonialism, decolonial theory, archaeology, or anthropology, and so on). This new locus allows us not just to see that such crises represent theoretical voids, but also to reveal the ways in which critical discourses and theorizing represent the “last frontier” to be conquered by modern Western scholars.<sup>30</sup> What kinds of new conversations could we then have if instead of asking “what should we say instead” or “what is the solution,” we asked “how can we confront the kinds of epistemic and ontological violence that the field’s past and present ways of knowing are (re)producing?” These initial questions often work to conceal or reflect claims to neutrality that guise the power to “define what matters, who matters, what pasts are alive and when they die.”<sup>31</sup>

### Parameters of the Argument

First and foremost, this paper is not an answer to the question Alejandro Haber highlights in *Indigenous Archaeologies*: “Who is indigenous?” As Haber notes, however, “Archaeology had

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<sup>28</sup> It would of course be an oversimplification to view these logics with strict boundaries in mind or as completely unconnected.

<sup>29</sup> Here I also follow Trouillot’s example when he shifts the “focus from the problem of the Other” in, for example, anthropology, which asks, “can the Other be represented? how and by whom?” to the “problem of the asker of such questions” (Bonilla, Beckett, & Fernando 2021, 31). My argument about “indigenous” representing an *a priori* category then not only follows Moreton-Robinson (2015) but also Trouillot’s work which states that “[t]he question of otherness, of alterity, as posed by the West, takes for granted the very alterity it seeks to interrogate, positing otherness as a foil against which the West can speak endlessly about itself” (Bonilla, Beckett, & Fernando 2021, 31). This can be traced back to “anthropology’s relationship to the Savage” where the “Savage” is seen “not as metaphor but as historical actor” or a category that acts as “real” giving shape to the world (Bonilla, Beckett, & Fernando 2021, 31).

<sup>30</sup> Mendoza 2018, 111.

<sup>31</sup> Simpson 2017, 21. These stakes suggest that we can look to other disciplines and thinkers to formulate responses to the questions “what should we say instead” or “what is the solution,” viewing their analytics as generative pathways. While epistemic whiteness and settler colonialism are shapeshifters, analyzing them is not a detached or despairing practice. It is hopeful, an invitation that doesn’t claim to have the answers but instead repositions ancient Mediterranean colonization studies within ongoing dialogues from critical whiteness studies and Native American studies. These dialogues center thinkers who wrestle with the academy, directing readers to Indigenous thinkers who have long been exposing and refusing settler colonial racial projects. Yet, it is also for those concerned with the “genealogy of theory,” for whom, as la paperson reminds us, it is possible to refuse “to be claimed into a Eurocentric lineage. Rather, the genealogy of (y)our theory lies in the breaks as theorized by Black and Indigenous intellectuals” (la paperson 2017, 19).

the huge task of transforming how the verbal tense ‘to be Indigenous’ was phrased. The goal of archaeology was (and still is) to answer in past perfect the question ‘Who is Indigenous?’ Putting the Indigenous in the past.”<sup>32</sup> So this paper is concerned with archaeology’s relationships to the simulacral indigenous and how it recreates peoples as objects of study, particularly how ancient Mediterranean archaeology continues to operate to sustain inventions of indigenous people. There is no doubt that ancient Mediterranean archaeologists have historically contributed to this “tensing,” yet, Haber writes, despite the power of this “tensing,” that archaeology cannot and does not answer the question “Who is Indigenous?” Moreover, I do not think that ancient Mediterranean archaeologists working, for example, with ancient populations “indigenous” to southern Italy are trying to answer this question. Not because they are engaging with questions in their own contexts of modern Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, but rather because they are failing to seriously grapple with questions about indigeneity.<sup>33</sup>

Although this paper is not about claims to indigeneity, it is concerned with terminology. While it is obvious that both the Italian “*indigeni*” and the ancient terms that could be approximated with the term indigenous (e.g., *indigenus* and *indigena*) influenced scholarly traditions, there is more to the term “indigenous” than simple transliteration. As Jeremy LaBuff has pointed out in “Prolegomena to Any Future Indigenous History of the Ancient World,” in anglophone literature, attempts to depoliticize the field’s terminology (moving away from “barbarian,” for instance) seem to find root in the 1960s, with the transition towards the term “indigenous” in ancient Mediterranean scholarship as a shorthand for non-Greek.<sup>34</sup> This paper understands “indigenous” as a shorthand, not exclusively, but particularly for ancient southern Italic peoples. It focuses on so-called Greek colonization from the eighth through the sixth centuries BCE precisely because this is one of the three most common colonial contexts that invoke “indigenous” discourses among scholars. Further, it looks to southern Italy in particular because, in spite of the shift away from thinking about the eighth through sixth century BCE Greek migrations to and settlement of southern Italy in terms of “colonization,” scholars still use the term “indigenous” disproportionately to the other two contexts in which it appears, namely Roman imperialism and Hellenistic empires.<sup>35</sup> While much of the literature surveyed in this paper includes Sicily, I am de-emphasizing Sicily in my argument both to narrow the scope of this work and because Sicily, even today, possesses its own parallel yet equally complicated racialized discourses. Nonetheless, as in many other ancient Mediterranean colonial contexts, I would invite a comparative reading of the archive.

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<sup>32</sup> Haber 2007, 220.

<sup>33</sup> With the exception of LaBuff 2023, who defines it based on three criteria informed by the critiques offered by several Indigenous scholars: “first, a self-articulated relationship to particular ancestral place(s) and/or landscapes; second, a self-determined and self-constituting sense of shared kinship (i.e., ethnicity); and, finally, a relationship to the dominant sector of society defined by both ‘colonial power’ in tension with subaltern knowledge and agency within the constraints of that power, leading to a process of constant (and mutual) transformation” (1082).

<sup>34</sup> LaBuff 2023, 1077, although he does not contextualize this trend within the Indigenous student activism and American Indian Movements of the 1960s.

<sup>35</sup> LaBuff 2023, 1078-1084.

### Inventing Southern Alterity

The title of this subsection does not aim to suggest the existence of a “South” in Italy. Rather, it aims to make visible the colonial model that animates archaeologies of ancient southern Italy. The emergence of southern Italy in anglophone scholarship as a locus for modeling Greek colonization is historico-contextually unsurprising. The periods of Italian 20th century political life offer ways of understanding how discourses of Greek colonization are contoured by the simulacral indigenous. There are two mutually constituting threads this subsection must make visible; namely, the logics of whiteness (logics of fossilization, primitivism, and disappearance) and the “othering” of south Italy. It is through these logics that south Italy comes to be positioned as an alterity.

The first quarter of the 20th century sees the development of analogies between prehistoric Italic peoples and modern Indigenous peoples at the same time as Italy is undertaking colonial expansion. Scholars used what is referred to as the “southern question” to develop theories of Italy’s ancient southern Italic communities.<sup>36</sup> One such scholar was Luigi Pigorini (1842–1925), a scholar of Italian prehistory and founder of the National Museum of Prehistory, the partial foundations of which were some two thousand archaeological objects from indigenous North America as well as more than one hundred photographs of American Indians, like the Giglioli collection.<sup>37</sup> Pigorini relied on this southern discourse as contoured by comparisons to Indigenous peoples.<sup>38</sup> For instance, it is no coincidence that early in the museum’s history “[t]he prehistoric collections were complemented with ethnographic ones near a Cabinet of Classical Archaeology.”<sup>39</sup> In other words, the prehistoric southern Italic collections were placed in conversation with Indigenous collections. Additionally, from Luigi Pigorini’s personal correspondences with a missionary named Rosendo Salvado, it is clear that he used the museum’s Indigenous collections to teach “how the ancestors of the Italians had lived.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, European perceptions of what “indigenous” is and means (i.e., simulacral indigenous) were the basis from which discussion proceeded around how the prehistoric ancestors of Italians lived.<sup>41</sup> This was predicated on a discussion of the difference between Italy’s north and south, given that the “history of the museum and museum narrative reflects the tensions in different areas of the kingdom, [where] it was possible to observe the survival of primitive ways of life, providing comparative material, focused on arts and traditions among the populations living in Italy.”<sup>42</sup> Importantly, this comparison, which had as its premise the then influential theory of Bronze Age and early Iron Age migration developed by Pigorini, positioned the south as less “civilized” or the place where “primitive ways of life” survived. Comparing the ancient peoples of southern Italy with modern “barbarians” made this argument self-evident to the colonist paradigm of the period because it relied on the invention of modern Indigenous

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<sup>36</sup> In Italian history, the so-called “southern question” refers to a political issue, emerging out of the unification of the north and south of Italy, that casts southern Italians and southern Italy as backwards and primitive (especially culturally and socioeconomically) compared to the North.

<sup>37</sup> Giordano 1994, 90.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Lerario 2012, 57.

<sup>40</sup> Kinder & Davidson 2016, 70.

<sup>41</sup> Falcucci 2022, 131.

<sup>42</sup> Lerario 2012, 50. Here “areas of the kingdom” refer to Italy’s history of northern and southern kingdoms and the “difference” can be read to mean that the southern area is perceived of as more “primitive.”

peoples as “living fossils.”<sup>43</sup> This traces back to the fossilization of American Indians which is rooted in the simulacral indigenous created by white logics. That is, this valence of the simulacrum relies on a logic that freezes Indigenous people in time. This is based in the U.S. racial system whereby whiteness ensures that U.S. and Indigenous political relations are grounded in the assumption that Indigenous people are situated in a so-called premodern American political time (colonial time) and are thus situated incapably in American political worlding (just like the southern Italians). In the 1930s this took on new depth when Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci began to dialogue with the idea of the subaltern in relation to northern and southern Italy’s divide, to tackle the ways in which Italian political life “linked racial inferiority to southern Italian culture.”<sup>44</sup> Thus, through this analogizing fossilization, southern Italians and by extension ancient south Italic peoples were positioned as a racialized alterity. Indeed, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak would go on to borrow this term from Gramsci in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

Pignorini’s theory of Bronze Age and early Iron Age migration and political ideology became so pervasive that in the following period the pro-fascist Emanuele Ciaceri (1869–1944), an Italian ancient historian, was clearly reacting to it. Because of earlier scholarship, he had to, for instance, actively avoid comparing ancient “native” southern Italians to so-called “redskins” of North America in the question of Greek colonization. Ciaceri wrote in his preface to the book *Storia della Magna Grecia: La fondazione delle colonie greche e l’ellenizzazione di città nell’Italia antica*, “chè non eran le coste del golfo di Taranto o della Campania le lande delle pellirosse dell’America scoperta nell’età nostra...” or “the coasts of the gulf of Taranto or Campania were not like the land of the redskins (sic) of America discovered in our time.”<sup>45</sup> Although fascist colonialism and scholars were less focused on studying the relationship between Italian antiquity and colonial ethnology, decentering Pignorini’s model, they still took the backwardness of colonial subject populations as obvious.<sup>46</sup> The invention of the primitive Indian in prehistory was then still at work, as an enabling myth for both colonialism and fascism. This myth is founded on inherited American racial logic: where racist ideologies about “primitive” people were invoked to deny Indigenous people any Western right to land, sovereignty, and self-determination.

Anthropology and archaeology actively took up this comparison again in relation to southern Italy – casting it as primitive, backwards, uncivilized, and undeveloped. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the perceived “otherness” or alterity of Italy’s “south” once again became a prominent feature of Italian political, cultural, historical, intellectual, and anthropological ideology. Regions like Basilicata and Calabria became again referentially understood through inventions of the “American Indian” and anthropology began to study south Italy as a place and culture threatened by disappearance. Anthropological research, in part, did the work of legitimizing this comparison and perception. Take, for instance, the ethnographic work of Ernesto de Martino (1908 – 1965) in south Italy: De Martino explicitly made comparisons between southern Italians and American Indians. In De Martino’s book *La terra del rimorso* he cites a Jesuit missionary named Michele Navarro who described southern Italy as “Indias de por acá” (“the Indies but here”) or the Italian India in order to underscore just how the south

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<sup>43</sup> Falcucci 2022, 140–141.

<sup>44</sup> D’Agostino 2002, 320; 323.

<sup>45</sup> Ciaceri 1966, xiii.

<sup>46</sup> Falcucci 2022, 144.

was “conceived of as a radical alterity.”<sup>47</sup> Moreover it is well known that De Martino widely read ethnographic reports on Indigenous culture and religion which enabled him to participate in what scholars even now characterize as the “discovery” of a “new world” (“la graduale scoperta di un mondo nuovo”).<sup>48</sup> De Martino explicitly positioned his own fieldwork within the ethos of discovery that characterized expeditions to the “new world,” describing his travel to Lucania in southern Italy as a “spedizione etnologica.”<sup>49</sup> In her article “The Magna Graecia of Ernesto de Martino” Salvo notes, “De Martino’s career and work reveal how blurred the boundaries between classics and anthropology were in the intellectual milieu of mid-twentieth-century Italy.”<sup>50</sup> Anthropology had a significant influence on the archaeology of Greek colonization and the indigenization of Italic peoples. For example, Massimo Pallottino (1909–1995), an Italian archaeologist, with respect to southern Italy wrote about the “genti indigene” or “indigenous races” (as published in the 1990s translation by the University of Michigan Press) and discussed the experiences of indigenous Italy (“esperienze dell’Italia indigena”). Moreover, in the introduction to his *Storia della Prima Italia*, he acknowledged that the study of the experience of indigenous Italy was “oriented towards protohistorical ethnography or anthropology” (“orientato verso l’etnografia o l’antropologia protostorica piuttosto che verso la storia vera e propria”).<sup>51</sup> Importantly, anthropology’s study of the “disappearing” south was contoured by its comparison to the trope of the “vanishing indian,” another kind of white logic. This is a U.S. racial logic that depicts American Indians as a disappearing race, with the extinction of Indigenous groups being unavoidable and imminently complete. It pays no attention to the violent acts of disappearance (epidemics, mass murder, blood quantum, removal, etc.) and instead positions Indigenous culture as needing to be “salvaged” by anthropology and archaeology before it disappears. It also positions Indigenous people as “vanishing” in order to, without obstruction, exterminate their place-based lifeways. This comparison between disappearing southern Italian culture and American Indians even makes it into popular imagination. Italian crime fiction writer Giorgio Scerbanenco (1969) describes the Stazione Centrale as “una riserva di pellerossa nel mezzo della città” or “a reservation of redskins (sic) in the middle of the city” within the context of southern Italians arriving to Milan.<sup>52</sup> Many tropes for American Indians became associated with not just the cultures of southern Italy but a referential framework for addressing the so-called “southern question.” The trope of the “vanishing Indian” became a referent for the perceived decline of southern Italian culture.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Geisshuesler 2021, 97.

<sup>48</sup> Satta (2005, 291) writes, “Il contatto con le monografie etnografiche dovette rappresentare, per un lettore di etnografie da tavolino che pensava l’etnologia attraverso quel modello di scrittura, la graduale scoperta di un mondo nuovo. Nelle schedature di questi testi possiamo immaginare di seguire de Martino mentre si perde all’interno delle complesse trame culturali dello sciamanismo tunguso o eschimese, dimenticando sempre più spesso, man mano che procede nel lavoro, il proposito iniziale di raccogliere e ordinare l’attestazione dei fatti relativi ai poteri magici nelle società primitive, e si addentra nella complessità e nelle articolazioni delle credenze e pratiche magiche.”

<sup>49</sup> Geisshuesler 2021, 99.

<sup>50</sup> Salvo 2018, 341.

<sup>51</sup> Pallottino 1985, 14 -22.

<sup>52</sup> Scerbanenco 1969/2020, 4. The invention of southern Italians as racialized “others” remained following their emigration to North America and can be seen in cases where they are perceived to occupy a mobile position between “whiteness” and “nonwhiteness.”

<sup>53</sup> Caruso 2023, 390.

Interestingly, outside of anthropology and archaeology, the counterculture movements of the Italian “Years of Lead” (Anni di piombo), roughly the 1960-80s, appropriated inventions of American Indians, once again as an analogy for the south and even as a face for the youth protest movements. While inventions of American Indians had a place in the Italian imagination since the initial colonization of the Americas, “[b]y the beginning of the twentieth century, ‘invented’ indians had acquired a stable role in Italian popular culture,” and fifty years later the Indigenous student activism, Red Power Movement, and American Indian Movements of the 1950s and 1960s inspired Italians once again.<sup>54</sup> A microcosm of this influence is seen in the proliferation of publications that explored Italian political protests and reactions to traditional capitalism, patriarchy, and bourgeois values through genres of American Indian literature as well as translations of American Indian memoirs into Italian.<sup>55</sup> The simulacral indigenous appeared outside of literature as well, with Italian protestors from the “Metropolitan Indians” (Indiani Metropolitani) group (much like the German “Stadtindianer”) dressing up as “Indians” in the 1970s.<sup>56</sup> The Indiani Metropolitani in fact went so far as to tie bandanas on their head, sound drums and horns and, instead of yelling slogans, would ululate, drawing on stereotypes of “primitive Indians” “war whooping” as a form of political “subversion.”<sup>57</sup> The simulacral indian created by the U.S. became the partial means through which Italian political protesting occurred during the counterculture movements of the Italian “Years of Lead” (Anni di piombo), as American Indians became shorthand for political alterities.

I offer this new (supposedly) subversive valence to the simulacral indigenous, which European youth movements picked up and which is grounded in the earlier archaeological and anthropological historiography of southern Italy and its prehistoric studies, as a possible context for the post-colonial turn anglophone scholarship. Ancient southern Italic peoples had, at this point, long been compared to these inventions of American Indians, and the anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist agenda of the postcolonial turn in classics may have readily appropriated this new valence at the same time as it was being transformed by its own relationship to indigenous political movements in the United States and across the global South during the second half of the 20th century. What I have shown is that throughout the 20th century inventions of indigenous people first created through American racial logics have served as a referent for Italy’s south and in turn for ancient southern Italic people. Inventions of “indigenous” people came to represent alterity itself in the face of modern imperialism and in the archaeology of Greek colonization in southern Italy. That is, in drawing analogies to American Indians, some Italian groups weaponized such analogies as political provocation – a provocation the postcolonial turn arguably picks up. I have argued that whiteness’ racial logic of the “indian” actually crafts archaeological discourses in the twentieth century, beginning of course with those “indians” manufactured and inherited in and by the U.S.

### **Lower case “indigenous”**

Against this political background two major changes prove important: namely, as mentioned above, the 1960s transition from a “barbarian” discourse in scholarship about non-Greek

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<sup>54</sup> Giordano 1994, 94-97. Although, the Italian interest in American Indian culture can be traced as far back as the papacy’s invested interest in the “spiritual colonization of the Natives” (82).

<sup>55</sup> De Giuseppe 2025, 130.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 140

<sup>57</sup> De Giuseppe 2025, 140; Caruso 2023, 403.

peoples of ancient southern Italy toward an “indigenous discourse,” while the following decades witness the transformation of conception of “indigenous” into a political provocation in both American and Italian contexts. What remains outstanding then is the connection between this Italian historiography and classical archaeology’s simulacral indigenous at the point of the postcolonial turn (1980s–1990s).

This subsection suggests that the category of a lower case “indigenous” became discursively positioned, contextualized by the goals of the postcolonial turn, as a de-racialized idea. The invisibilization of “race,” which actually grounds inventions of indigenous, thus served as a veiled political maneuver that appropriated southern alterity in order to co-opt critical theory to secure an alternative futurity for ancient colonization studies. I argue that inventions of indigenous, as an “other” of Western modernity, become central to contemporary critical imaginaries of ancient Greek colonization, as the “West” tried to cope with the crises imbricated in its colonial archaeology that came under critique during the postcolonial turn. As such, the idea of “indigenous” was constructed as offering futural possibilities for the field and colonization studies in particular through a Western and colonial invented indigeneity.<sup>58</sup>

By the 1990s, “indigenous” came to function, for contemporary theorists/archaeologists, as a disguise for those critical scholars who aimed to meet the newly fashionable demand to develop alternative approaches to knowledge production around ancient Greek colonization. Going back a little, however, is necessary to understand this “move to innocence.” Subaltern studies emerged during the 1980s as a critical approach to historiography; it directly challenged dominant historiographic narratives and practices by focusing on marginalized groups in South Asia. Subaltern studies significantly influenced humanistic disciplines that responded to the postcolonial turn such as classics, which emphasized the critical re-reading of ancient Greek colonial foundation narratives.<sup>59</sup> Similarly to what Métis scholar Zoe Todd has observed, anglophone scholars, “with the wave of the post-colonial wand,” looked past ongoing colonial realities.<sup>60</sup> This, coupled with the political post-Cold War distinction between modern Western and traditional (premodern) societies, it must be noted, mapped onto older binaries between colonizer and colonized, so indigenous also became shorthand for the “colonized” – previously the “barbarians.” The modern academy, in the decades since the rise of subaltern studies and the postcolonial turn, is being “rescued” by its creation of the subaltern, particularly indigenous peoples where Otherness or alterity – Indigenous – is grounded in myth, in inventions produced by racist logics. In other words, “indigenous peoples/the subalterns” live in the Western theoretical imagination and are invoked as the invisible other to “rescue” modernity: modern Western scholars envision futural possibilities for their field based on the radical (sub)alterity of Indigenous peoples.<sup>61</sup> American inventions of “indians” were appropriated by Italian political, anthropological, and archaeological worlding and redeployed as a challenge to the

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<sup>58</sup> This may be related to the so-called ontological turn. Martin Holbraad and Morten Axel Pedersen (2017) state in the *The Ontological Turn: An Anthropological Exposition*, “the turn to ontology in the discipline of anthropology reverses the position of the Indigenous subject, from being an object of anthropological study to enabling a new approach of speculative analytics, placing Indigenous thought and practices as the ‘analytical starting point’ for the discipline itself.” For an Indigenous critique of the ontological turn, see Todd (2016): “An Indigenous Feminist’s Take On The Ontological Turn: ‘Ontology’ Is Just Another Word For Colonialism.”

<sup>59</sup> Marked in many ways by Palestinian-born Said’s *Orientalism* (1978).

<sup>60</sup> Todd 2016, 15.

<sup>61</sup> Mendoza 2018, 119.

coloniality of archaeology of ancient Greek colonization. The simulacral indigenous legitimized archeologists' attempts to "provincialize" how Western epistemology shaped the questions of ancient Greek colonization and served to meet the challenge of untangling the coloniality of knowledge by drawing on the latent power of alterity established through Italian appropriations of the simulacral indigenous.

The indigenization of ancient southern Italic people, however, was also racialized, predicated as it was on these racial inventions of "indians" (animated by the logics of fossilization, primitivism, and disappearance). Even in the 1990s, amidst the turn away from race and towards the analytic of ethnicity, race played a key role in the construction of southern Italic identity.<sup>62</sup> English translations racialize "Italic," with translators even going so far as to name prehistoric Italic peoples as "races" themselves.<sup>63</sup> Yet the role of racialization in the creation of simulacral indigenous was disappeared in the postcolonial turn. More often scholarship spoke in terms of ethnicity – a supposedly less politically charged analytic.<sup>64</sup> Yet ethnicity as a category in the study of Greek colonization reinscribes alterity – an idea reinforced by ancient Mediterranean scholar's reference to Gramsci.<sup>65</sup> This represents a new kind of white logic of the "indian."

### A terminological hydra

It became apparent in my 2022 course on Greek colonization that some sort of three headed monster was being animated by the terms "indigenous," "native," and "local" in the archaeology of Greek colonization and that it was disappearing the racing of southern Italic people. This subsection argues that racing, an animating feature of the simulacral indigenous, was further disappeared through terminological ambiguation among the synonyms "native," "local," and "colonized."

I am first going to pick up again with Pallottino's *Storia della Prima Italia* (first published in 1985). The 1991 English translation published by the University of Michigan Press clearly participates in an indigenous discourse (the casting of southern Italic people as indigenous). This is intentionally tied to peopling archaeology and relies on a terminological slippage. In the 1991 translation, a slippage occurs between the idea of local and indigenous as well as indigenous and people. With respect to southern Italy, "local" and "indigenous" get used interchangeably, sometimes even in the same sentence to refer to the same subject. For example, the Italian reads "nel quadro di tali presupposti e orientamenti rientrano le relazioni pacifiche e la parziale reciproca permeazione con le popolazioni locali, rilevabili archeologicamente nei casi degli *abitati indigeni* prossimi alle colonie greche," while the 1991 English translation reads, "Such motives would explain the fact that peaceful relations were established with *indigenous peoples* and that some degree of fusion took place, as the archaeological evidence shows, with the local populations who lived near Greek colonies".<sup>66</sup> The Italian calls the "abitati" or "settlements" indigenous while the English translates the

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<sup>62</sup> Consider the work of scholars like Hall's (1997) *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* or Jones' (1997) *The Archaeology of Ethnicity*.

<sup>63</sup> Pallottino 1991, 26; 52.

<sup>64</sup> Malkin 1998, 55.

<sup>65</sup> Zuchtriegel 2021.

<sup>66</sup> Emphasis added.

Italian to “indigenous peoples.”<sup>67</sup> While I am not arguing that this instance is the first time such slippages occur, I do want to suggest that they are representative of the archaeology of Greek colonization’s wider discursive habits proceeding well into the twenty-first century. In fact, John Boardman does the same thing. In his paper entitled “Aspects of ‘Colonization,’” he uses the words “colonized,” “local,” and “native” to refer to the same subject: south Italy.<sup>68</sup> There is a clear practice in publications to use these terms as functional synonyms. Yet the picture becomes more complex as we move into more recent scholarship. The synonyms act to obscure the “indigenous” discourse and its roots in racialization, functionally depoliticizing the terminology for the archaeology of Greek colonization in south Italy.

I have thus far suggested that the simulacral indigenous came to give shape to studies of ancient Greek colonization in southern Italy, yet these inventions do not remain static. Following the turn towards an indigenous discourse seen in the late 20th century, it is clear that the life of the term “indigenous” has taken on new valence, especially as critiques of the fixity and accuracy of categorical terms and binaries like colonizer and colonized have been called into question. This renewed life has been contoured by synonyms deployed in its place: local, colonized, and native. There are three observations I can make about the term “indigenous” and these localized synonyms in a brief survey of wider literature dealing with ancient Greek colonization: namely, (1) local is more often used as a reference to objects and places while indigenous and native is used to describe people, communities, and cultures; (2) local, native, and indigenous appear as synonyms for authors regardless of the type of text; and (3) each of these three terms is consistently orbited by critical discourses (e.g., hybridity), but particularly the terms indigenous or native. The surveyed material for these observations covers the years 1998-2022 and includes both anglophone single author publications and large edited volumes related to Greek colonial contexts, where possible with particular attention to south Italy in these texts.<sup>69</sup>

In Tsetskhladze (2008), the patterns I have mentioned above come into relief, including loose usage around the terms “local,” “indigenous,” and “native.” Slippage abounds between the words local, indigenous, and native across nearly all the contributions. D’Agostino, for example, in his chapter “The First Greeks in Italy” seems to foreground what will become the discourse of “local responses” taken up by Hodos and Jason with his subheading “Local Responses.”<sup>70</sup> Emanuele Greco, meanwhile, in his work “Greek Colonisation in Southern Italy: A Methodological Essay” uses a variety of terms to describe the peoples, sites, and cultures of southern Italy. He describes the ancient peoples of southern Italy as “indigenous populations of the Italian peninsula,” “native Italian,” and “natives.”<sup>71</sup> Hybridity, middle ground, frontier zone, and “mixed” all appear in both the background of the introduction and in the individual chapters of Tsetskhladze’s book. On the whole, the authors in the

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<sup>67</sup> Pallottino 1985, 63; 80.

<sup>68</sup> Boardman 2001, 322 (emphasis added): “The ‘acculturation’ -awful word- took many different forms, all of it affecting the *colonized*, not the colonizers, who behaved almost as though they had never left home in terms of their way of life, art religion, language, and beliefs. In south Italy the *local* peoples accepted Greeks and Greek goods even to some degree Greek art, and if there are occasional examples of Greeks making objects of *native* forms, especially pottery, the motivation was purely commercial.”

<sup>69</sup> These works include: Van Dommelen 1998; Graham 2001; Lomas 2004; Malkin 2004; Hurst and Owen 2005; Hodos 2006; Tsetskhladze 2006; Tsetskhladze 2008; Shepherd 2009; Van Dommelen 2010; Broodbank 2013; Garland 2014; Lucas et al. 2019; Colombi et al. 2022.

<sup>70</sup> Tsetskhladze 2008, 215.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 171-172.

volume do not clarify the distinctions or meanings of “indigenous,” “local,” or “native.”<sup>72</sup> For example, in the case study of Taras by Greco, the descriptions “indigenous populations of Italy,” “indigenous Italic peoples,” and “local indigenous inhabitants” seem like synonyms. Indigenous appears no less than 94 times to describe people, cultures, and sites, and “local” appears more widely at 384 times. I see this volume as reflecting the shift away from “indigenous” to “local” (although both are still used widely), and this shift does not negate my wider argument given how each term is used in the chapters, i.e. with little distinction. Smaller scale sampling shows similar trends. Dietler (2010) is transparent about how he uses the terms “local,” “indigenous,” and particularly “native.” He cautions against the fixity of terms like colonists and natives: “[T]he discussion of patterns in the regional archaeological record becomes so cumbersome and confusing without them that they are an unavoidable narrative vice. Hence, they will be employed in this book always with implicit ‘scare quotes’ as crude indexical markers of discursive convenience in referring, respectively, to people coming originally from elsewhere in the Mediterranean (and those broadly descended from them) and to people (and their descendants) who were already living in the region when these foreigners arrived.”<sup>73</sup> In Lucas et al. (2019), contributors use the terms “Greek and ‘indigenous’ populations” as well as “Greeks and natives.”<sup>74</sup> Colombi et al.’s (2022) volume contains an entire chapter dedicated to “Relationships and Forms of Contact with the Indigenous Population,” which uses terms like “native groups” and “natives” and “local population,” but without critical delineations. In his contribution Zuchtriegel even writes “non-Greekness/indigeneity,” while putting scare quotes around the term “indigenous,” and then reinscribes “Greekness vs. indigeneity,” finally writing: “ethnicity–Greekness and indigeneity.”<sup>75</sup>

There are of course nuances to these observations. Van Dommelan, for example, in his dissertation entitled “On Colonial Grounds: A Comparative Study of Colonialism and Rural Settlement in First Millennium BC West Central Sardinia,” is terminologically strict. He uses the terms “local” and “indigenous” but clarifies that “local” need not be “inherently linked to the actual provenance” of people since people’s identities are mobile and contextual. However, in the end he does explicitly tie together “local identity,” “hybridization,” and the term “indigenous.”<sup>76</sup> Interestingly, his is the only writing of a Mediterranean archaeologist included in the volume *Indigenous Archaeologies* edited by Margaret Bruchac, Siobhan Hart, H Martin Wobst. In *Indigenous Archaeologies* he uses the term “colonized Italic peoples.”<sup>77</sup> A good snapshot of how these terms are not only used but function comes from Tamar Hodos’ milestone 2020 work, *The Archaeology of the Mediterranean Iron Age: A Globalising World C.1100–600 BCE*. While Hodos is intentional in her framing of contexts, responses, and people as “local,” she nevertheless does not remain entirely consistent in her use of terminology. For example, she discusses the “local populations among whom these foreigners settled” and how “features we associate with colonial developments were sometimes adopted by local communities.”<sup>78</sup> Yet she also uses the terms “indigenous communities” and “indigenous

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<sup>72</sup> Tsetskhladze 2008.

<sup>73</sup> Dietler 2010, 78.

<sup>74</sup> Lucas et al. 2019.

<sup>75</sup> Zuchtriegel 2022, 220–224.

<sup>76</sup> Van Dommelen 1998, 214.

<sup>77</sup> Bruchac et al. 2010, 332.

<sup>78</sup> Hodos 2020, xviii.

Italic communities” when it comes to Italy.<sup>79</sup> The southern Italic site of Torre Galli, for example, has “indigenously characteristic assemblages” rather than “locally characteristic assemblages.”<sup>80</sup> A true slippage occurs in her conclusion with the compound “local indigenous populations.”<sup>81</sup>

Slippage particularly seems to occur in term usage when it comes to southern Italy. All of this is not to say that Hodos, like others, has not tackled this issue head-on. For example, she explains that our terminology is dissatisfying, especially the terms “native” and “indigenous.” She acknowledges the slippage occurring between the term “local and “indigenous,” but she ultimately concludes, “I do, however, use the term ‘local’ to distinguish the origins of pre-existing populations and their material culture from those peoples and goods that were initially colonial.” (Notice the very next sentence is about hybridity).<sup>82</sup> Yet, as Heba Abd el-Gawad tells us in *Ancient Pasts for Modern Audiences*, “local and indigenous are not neutral terms and should not be used interchangeably.”<sup>83</sup> It is my opinion that “local” is doing the work of “indigenous,” carrying all its theoretical implications, but can be guised as raceless and apolitical in contemporary contexts. It is indexing what white logics mean when they say “indigenous” without overtly flagging that it is doing so since such racialization “goes without saying.”

The third observation I made about these synonyms is that each of these terms is consistently orbited by critical discourses, but particularly the terms indigenous or native. There are two things to unpack in this statement; not only do synonyms for indigenous (like colonized, local, native, and so on) enable scholars to invoke postcolonial, decolonial, anti-colonial discourses, but also it is particularly words associated with indigeneity that are proximal to these same discourses. Calling these words out as functionally synonymic recalls the “mobility” with which “Westerners” treat theory that Beatriz Marín-Aguilera critiques.<sup>84</sup> Marín-Aguilera points to this “mobility” by citing a quote from the article “Theory Adrift: the Matter of Archaeological Theorizing” where Pétursdóttir and Olsen claim that theories are “adrift”: “[theories] are not natives confined to any particular territory, but nomads in a mixed world, always accommodating themselves to shifting local conditions.”<sup>85</sup> Yet, Marín-Aguilera tells us that theories are always “natives,” contingent and contextual. It is because of this that theories matter for “what things they bump into, what networks and meshworks they become entangled in.”<sup>86</sup> These synonyms bump into and up against American systems of racialization in classics, so they cannot function as raceless and apolitical. In fact as Marín-Aguilera tells us, [t]he very act of disregarding the politics of bio- and geopolitical locations, and their effects and affects in the creation and transformation of theories, is a performative practice that normalises power asymmetries and subalternisation.”<sup>87</sup> Indigenous and its synonyms are thought to function as a raceless and apolitical category, yet they do not; their roots in the simulacral indian prohibit them from doing so. Moreover, the claims to

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>82</sup> Hodos 2006, 15.

<sup>83</sup> Gardner and Higgins 2025, 63.

<sup>84</sup> Marín-Aguilera 2021, 136-137.

<sup>85</sup> Pétursdóttir & Olsen 2018, 114-15.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Marín-Aguilera 2021, 137.

indigeneity that some of these terms seem to make become the means by which academics appropriate critical discourses but without attention to their “loci of enunciation,” or the wider and ongoing social and cultural materialities from which they emerge.<sup>88</sup>

## Conclusion

One cannot make sense of the epistemic norms of whiteness, how whiteness acts and how it “goes without saying,” however, without considering the organizing structures of settler colonialism and the ways in which the construction of the colonial category “indigenous” is a project of elimination. Recalling Vizenor, the simulacral indigenous *does* something. This project of elimination is served not just by the “past tensing” of “indigenous” to ancient colonization, but through the reification of the racialized alterity produced by the history of the study of Greek colonization. Engaging the analytic of whiteness without facing the intersections of Indigenous perspectives, Indigenous racialization, and ongoing processes of colonization risks reproducing the problems described in this paper with the ways classics engages with colonialism, reproducing classics as a *de facto* and ongoing racial project.

In this paper, the analytic of whiteness has enabled me to connect the structural production of white racial logics to the discursive construction of race within the archaeology of Greek colonization. Archaeology, without exception, operates as part of a wider cultural matrix that, without intervention, reproduces extant hegemonic relationships. This paper has shown how “indigenous” peoples both are produced as an *a priori* subset of the subaltern, and through that production, remain the invisible “other” even as they are invoked to secure a settler futurity for the discipline. The examples in this paper situate whiteness as a producer of racially contingent models of ancient Greek colonization, reframing questions about the dirty “c” word from a “problem to be solved” to political and productive forces in the construction of Western modernity. The term “indigenous” in studies of ancient Greek colonization reifies particular categories, assuming they are objective and natural rather than relating them to their social conditions of production. Whiteness organizes not just the logics of Western modernity, legitimating racial settler projects, but discourses in classics as part of those projects and modernity. I offer this paper as an invitation, sharing a reading of this archive from my own position as a scholar of mixed Mvskoke and European heritage. My impressions of the theoretical matrix of studies of Greek colonization in southern Italy are not without consequence, since archaeology exists in the present as “a political field, and as a practice located in relation to power structures” and as a mediator of the “epistemological subject and object.”<sup>89</sup> Part of this means confronting the role of racialization in our own contexts and its impacts on the field’s discourses. The other part means we use this confrontation to ask different questions of the material from colonized worlds. We must analyze the internal structure of our discourse, and its imbrications with critiques already offered by Critical Indigenous and Native American Studies.

What can the question “What is ancient Greek colonization?” - a question posed by my 2022 course on the topic - look like when excavated from the ruins of indian simulacra and its white logics of the native? I invite this discussion. My suspicion is that there are unseen, but looming, stakes not only to the path this question takes as it becomes refined in and by

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Shanks & Tilley 1987, 186.

the field but also to the answers offered: are they wrapped up in a desire to rescue classics (and in particular the Greeks) from the shadow of what the word colonization implies? This paper has been, not a rereading of the archaeological data for or against Greek colonization in southern Italy, but an examination of the impression the archive leaves as I come into contact with it. What I suggest the archive tells us is that answers about the dirty “c” word, what ancient Greek colonization, colonies, and colonialism is, *if it is*, not only are contemporary mirrors, but also implicate the future of this field. Towards what analytics do we turn or re-entrench? What debates can we not move past, and which do we skirt? Most importantly, what identities do our decisions reflect? What investments do they reveal?

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