

MEMORY LANDS: KING PHILIP'S WAR

and the Place of Violence in the Northeast

Christine M. DeLucia
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Even as pioneering scholarship embraces diverse and multivalent understandings of New England's social-environmental history, innumerable local historical societies and museums retain perspectives that are markedly focused on the experiences of settler colonists, with little understanding of Indigenous experiences or persistent discrepancies between settler and Indigenous interpretations of historical events. Even those aiming to foster multi-cultural awareness tend not to demonstrate continuities between past violence and present day conflicts. By overcoming uneven availability of written source materials to nonetheless establish a more balanced analysis, historian Christine DeLucia's book *Memory Lands: King Philip's War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast* offers us a compelling template for reconsideration of the relationship between historical methods and social justice. Her vital synthesis of empirical rigor and accessible language may therefore prove particularly useful for public scholars in geography, history, and other disciplines.

From the outset, the book title *Memory Lands* conjures past, present, and the continual construction of places as relational sites of cultural meaning. Memories are of the past, yet live on in present cognition. Lands are multiple, viewed as plural, spread across some social vista, and in memory, the biophysical landscape is imbricated with human action. Imbuing her text with these rich connotations from the moment we view the cover, DeLucia thus begins her deeply evocative re-telling of a period in New England history, providing a new lens through which we view a social-environmental history that powerfully shapes the present.

The book conveys tensions that began between Euro-American settlers and Indigenous residents from the outset of English colonization in the early seventeenth century, as settlers asserted territorial claims by disinterring Indigenous remains and building militarized village enclosures. Given settlers' continued insistence on rendering Indigenous peoples invisible, escalating violence a half century later seems all but inevitable in retrospect. Settlers displaced tribes to commodify their land and resources for transcontinental markets, killed indiscriminately to quell resistance, and suppressed sacred practices in the name of Christianity. They designated the period of heightened violence between 1675-78 as King Phillip's War, after the English name of Metacomet, the Wampanoag leader who mobilized regional, multi-tribal resistance among southern Algonquian communities (in what is now central and southern New England) until he was killed and dismembered, his head displayed publicly in Plymouth for decades after.

Central to DeLucia's telling, however, colonists never completed erasure of Native peoples,

despite their repeated efforts, generation after generation. Many of the tribes still dwell on these lands and traverse these waters, despite historical trauma and ongoing settler incursions. Keen attention to these continuities -- of violence, displacement, and racism, but also memory, materiality, survival, kinship, identity, and honor -- infuses this story of the war's causes, events, and longer term implications, for both living Indigenous communities and a national mythos.

DeLucia graphically narrates the earliest days of colonization, when tribes (including Metacombet) hoped for peaceful cross-cultural relations and commerce, despite incipient colonial intentions to subjugate and eliminate. As violent incidents escalated into regional war, with tribes allying with and against the colonists, settlers imposed an array of racialized social controls. They confiscated firearms, relocated Natives living in semi-Christianized, semi-sedentary villages into concentrated ghettos, and forbade Natives to enter or transit more densely settled colonial towns. (Strikingly, it was not until 2005 that the Massachusetts state legislature repealed the ban on Indigenous people in Boston.) They interned Natives on barren coastal islands in winter, where many died of starvation and exposure. As the war escalated, colonists increasingly relied on terror as a concerted strategy, and fomented inter-tribal conflicts. They coerced many into slavery, indentured servitude, or military service as spies, scouts or soldiers, executed many, and slaughtered thousands of Natives in gory massacres, often attacking peaceful encampments in the dark of night, and without consideration of age or gender. Such wholesale assaults differed radically from the limited nature of traditional Indigenous warfare.

As DeLucia explains, tribes dwelling farther from the colonial epicenters resisted more successfully, using an array of social and environmental strategies. They appealed to the British crown for aid against colonial encroachments and organized multi-tribal alliances through formal agreements and strategic kinship ties. They established and shared sites of refuge and hiding, positioning encampments near crucial resources, building fortifications, and caching food in anticipation of wartime exigencies. They studied settler beliefs, practices, texts, and technologies, strategically adopting some, and turning others to their advantage. They established kin relations with African Americans and Euro-Americans and negotiated complex diplomatic, military, and land use agreements with settlers. They took enemy captives, often as hostages to leverage military negotiations, and engineered escapes from enemy captivity for themselves and their kin. With no apparent alternatives in response to the rising genocide, they adopted Euro-Americans' willingness to wage war more lethally. Meeting violence with violence, they expelled Euro-Americans from more remote areas of the region, retaking lands that had been taken or purchased under terms of varying clarity, consent, and coercion. Some reclaimed lands remained under Indigenous control for extended periods, while others were shortly recolonized. Some survivors fled north to shelter among tribes in northern New England and Quebec, which were somewhat less embroiled in the imminent violence of English colonial power centers. Others moved westward, extending Algonquian social networks and engendering new, multi-cultural traditions.

Even after the war, settlers continued to restrict Indigenous settlement and movements, banning newcomers to semi-Christianized villages, forbidding transit and gatherings (not always effectively), and acquiring more land through various means of purchase, deceit, or coercion. Even as subsequent "Indian" wars extended into the early 18th century, indigeneity became simultaneously a target of cultural suppression and caricatured imitation. As a prominent exam-

ple, Euro-Americans costumed as Natives for the 1773 Boston Tea Party, theatrically appropriating Indigenous identity to protest British taxes. Settler narratives continued to evolve through the following centuries, including more sympathetic (if ethnocentric) accounts, paralleling New Englanders' involvement in the national politics of slavery and new Indigenous displacements as renewed waves of colonists surged westward. As hobbyist and scholarly collectors excavated Indigenous encampments, burial grounds, and battle sites, Indigenous artifacts and human remains, real and fake, accumulated in Euro-American collections. Over time, these items have signified an array of curatorial and performative sentiments largely unconnected to the realities of lived Indigenous experience, with flagrant disregard for moral questions of sanctity, ownership, and acquisition. As international immigration and Yankee xenophobia rose, colonial descendants nostalgically celebrated ambivalent Anglo-Indian relationships as supremacist legacy. In the twentieth century, government entities continued to minimize Indigenous lands, resource access, and cultural heritage, through policies such as privatizing collective properties, removing children from Native communities and punishing them for speaking Native languages, asserting then retracting federal trust responsibilities and tribal sovereignty, and posing stringent requirements to federal tribal recognition that can be particularly difficult for the longest-colonized and most dispersed New England tribes to meet.

Meanwhile, and perhaps the most central point in DeLucia's scholarship, Indigenous communities continued to assert their existence and vibrancy in innumerable ways, even as popular and schoolbook texts recently stated that all eastern tribes had died out. They have claimed their material objects and remains, restored ceremonies, and founded their own museums, re-establishing their living material cultures that closely link historical events with contemporary lifeways. They have joined urban, multi-cultural economies and have built casinos to replace subsistence livelihoods destroyed by settlers. They have called upon, and recast, memories of violence and dispossession to assert access rights to natural resources. They stage commemorative and protest events to affirm Indigenous counternarratives, among them a Day of Mourning observed annually at Plymouth for nearly a half century. They ally with other tribes and politically active groups to strengthen collective voices in support of ethnic identities and environmental stewardship. They contest legal, regulatory, and planning documents, speak in public hearings, and file ensuing court actions. They demand respect for, access to, or custody and ownership of their homelands. They revitalize ancient crafts, technologies, and detailed knowledge systems, and integrate traditional beliefs and practices with cultural heritage conservation techniques. They develop collaborative projects with non-Native scholars, curators, and agencies. They share Indigenous perspectives in visual, performing, and literary arts, as well as historical narratives. With all these commitments, Indigenous communities memorialize the period of time during, before, and after King Philip's War, a particularly violent period in a longer history that is both fraught with conflict and graced with survivance.

Concluding this compelling and detailed retelling of the widespread violence and oppression that founded the New England colonies and United States of America, DeLucia offers more tentative narratives around deportations of enslaved southern Algonquians to Spain, North Africa, Central America, Bermuda, the Caribbean, and other Atlantic islands. An array of servitude and bondage arrangements persisted in the New England colonies, but deportation as chattel hastened the disintegration of kinship networks, economic relations, and political power

within Indigenous communities. It also planted seeds for recent reclamations of shared, multi-cultural memoscapes that traverse the Atlantic.

Geographers might find this book to be as much a work of cultural-political geography as of history. The work projects forward more than back, with current social relations, environments, and identities remaining as central as the more distant past. From DeLucia's scholarly perspective, historical events are significant as starting points, viewed almost entirely in retrospect as memories, some shortly thereafter, but more in the following centuries, through the present day. Interpretive meanings of historical events in the emotional lives of local people compete for importance with documented facts, though DeLucia is careful to present evidence with contextual information about its provenance, to support her own assessments of accuracy. From the perspective of our own discipline, it seems fair to say that in the main, DeLucia does not engage substantively with large bodies of geographic theory. She mentions geography frequently, but rarely as a discipline, more as a general referent or shorthand for spatialized social and human-environment relations. Yet, her attentiveness to place, scale, materiality, methodological ecumenism, human-environment dynamics, migration, cultural identities, and maps, all reveal that directly or indirectly, she derives central principles from our discipline.

DeLucia's scholarly approach is deeply empirical, integrating almost a decade of fieldwork. Though archives of written and printed materials include more items produced by settlers than by Natives, particularly from the seventeenth century, DeLucia also investigates the larger material record, including drawings, maps, monuments, artifacts, craft, excavations, interments, ceremonies, and human alterations of biophysical landscapes. She also considers contemporary local knowledge, among both Native and settler communities. Ultimately, her narrative is convincing and compelling because her epistemology is deeply reflexive. Attuned to the layered social meanings of text, artifact, and landscape, she seeks to "braid" knowledge from diverse sources and perspectives, citing the work of Sonya Atalay on indigenous-scholar collaboration (2012, 207). She seeks decolonizing methodologies that do not inflict new or renewed trauma and embrace alternate modes of inquiry. As a political ecologist with similar sympathies, I would note one omission in her methodological toolkit. She mentions making field visits in the company of local people, but she provides no information about why she chose those particular people, any interview techniques, documentation, or analysis. Perhaps as a historian, she would perceive the verbiage of social science methodology as objectifying, but a little more detail would be helpful in tracing important linkages between present day understandings and past events.

Ultimately, DeLucia's work is deeply geographic, particularly her understanding of space and scale as profoundly social and contingent, her attention to cross-scalar dynamics and closely intertwined social and biophysical factors, her interest in the territoriality of conflict, her assertion that regional phenomena may be best understood as articulated through local evidence, and her organization of the text as a series of place-based studies that span extended time periods. The book should find receptive audiences among scholars, students, local historians, advocates for social justice and environmental issues, and the general public.

References

Atalay, S. 2012. *Community-based archaeology: Research with, by, and for Indigenous and local communities*. Berkeley: University of Berkeley Press.