



# Considering the indirect effects of colonialism: Example from a Great Plains middle ground



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## ABSTRACT

Historically, there have been many archaeological and ethnographic works that examined the impacts of colonialism on indigenous peoples where direct contact took place. More recently, archaeological scholarship has drawn increasing attention towards examining the far-reaching effects that colonialism had on indigenous peoples by considering communities on the periphery of colonial control. Here, I argue that it is the indirect or down-the-line effects of colonialism that can best inform us of the extent and intensity of social, economic, and demographic change seen in regions adjacent to colonial centers. This paper considers methodological frameworks utilized in several regions and applies elements of these models to the Great Plains of North America to examine the ways indigenous social networks and Spanish colonialism forever changed the lives of people living hundreds of miles away from actual colonies. Evidence of blended technological and manufacturing styles at sites in western Kansas point to a creolized Puebloan/Plains Apache community that formed as a direct result of the indirect effects of Spanish colonial activities, highlighting the significant role of the Central Plains middle ground for many Native peoples.

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## 1. Introduction

Colonialism was a complex process involving not only territorial acquisitions and the establishment of colonies, but also the ensuing social, economic, political, and demographic disruptions for those groups experiencing colonization (Gosden, 2004; Paterson, 2011; Panich and Schneider, 2015; Silliman, 2005). These complexities, paired with the great deal of variation in the process (the timing, location, and powers involved), make defining the term “colonialism” and “colonization” difficult. Michael Dietler (2010:18) provides a flexible definition for colonialism in that it includes “the projects and practices of control marshaled in interactions between societies lined in asymmetrical relations of power and the processes of social and cultural transformation resulting from those practices.” Under this definition, colonialism can operate with or without the more prescribed subjugation of foreign territories, which contrasts with “colonization” or the act of territorial expansion whereby political authority is imposed on foreign lands and peoples (Dietler, 2010:19). Historically, archaeological and ethnographic consideration of colonialism focused largely on areas of direct contact between indigenous peoples and foreign colonizing groups. Recent archaeological scholarship, however, continues

to draw attention towards examining the more far-reaching effects that colonialism had on indigenous peoples living on the periphery of colonial control (Dietler, 2010; Panich and Schneider, 2015; Parker, 2006; Paterson, 2011; Stojanowski, 2005). Scholars studying the indirect effects of colonialism in many different areas of the world have recognized the need for a combination of theoretical and methodological models that emphasize indigenous agency, creativity, and resistance (Lieb, 2008; Oland, 2009; Torrence and Clarke, 2000).

These models are applied to the Great Plains of North America to expand our understanding of indigenous social networks and the extent to which Spanish colonial activities impacted the lives of people living hundreds of miles away. Spanish colonial activities made it difficult for many Puebloan peoples to remain in their northern Rio Grande homes and some chose to leave and settle with neighbors in adjacent regions. One destination for some migrants was the Scott County Pueblo (14SC1) in western Kansas, where they joined ancestral Apache occupants already living in the region, building a seven room masonry pueblo. Although the 14SC1 pueblo has been investigated for more than one hundred years, previous researchers did not seriously consider the indirect effects that this influx of Puebloan migrants had on the indigenous peoples already living in the region. Rather than focusing on these initial migrants, discussion should be shifted to contextualize what

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happened within this ancestral Apache community as they welcomed or at least tolerated new peoples in their territory.

These Great Plains ancestral Apache groups, known to archaeologists as the Dismal River Aspect (CE 1500–1750), were poised geographically and temporally to experience the turmoil that Spanish colonialism brought to their neighbors. Interpretative frameworks centered on the ways that people maintain, manipulate, and express their identity and cultural practices in multicultural situations can be applied to the available archaeological data for these peoples. A key focus here is to move beyond the Puebloan occupation of the Scott County Pueblo to consider how their presence in this burgeoning middle ground space changed the practices and technology of the Dismal River groups they joined. Two additional sites (14SC304 and 14SC409), each less than a mile from the 14SC1 pueblo (Fig. 1), are discussed below as they provide insight into how Native peoples on the Plains may have been

affected by the indirect effects of Spanish colonialism and Puebloan migration. Continued negotiation of identity and practices between these two very different peoples in this middle ground space led to the formation of a creolized community. Evidence for creolization can be found in blended architecture (Dismal River style wickiups and Puebloan masonry and adobe structures), blended technology (ceramics made using elements of both Plains and Puebloan manufacturing, finishing practices, and forms found in both regions), and an increase in the number of trade goods from the Northern Rio Grande region.

This emphasis in examining architecture and ceramic technological practices was informed by the work of other scholars who repeatedly found archaeological variables tied to material expressions of identity and daily practice to be useful in considering the indirect consequences of colonialism (Table 1). The indirect consequences of colonial activities are key in shaping the future

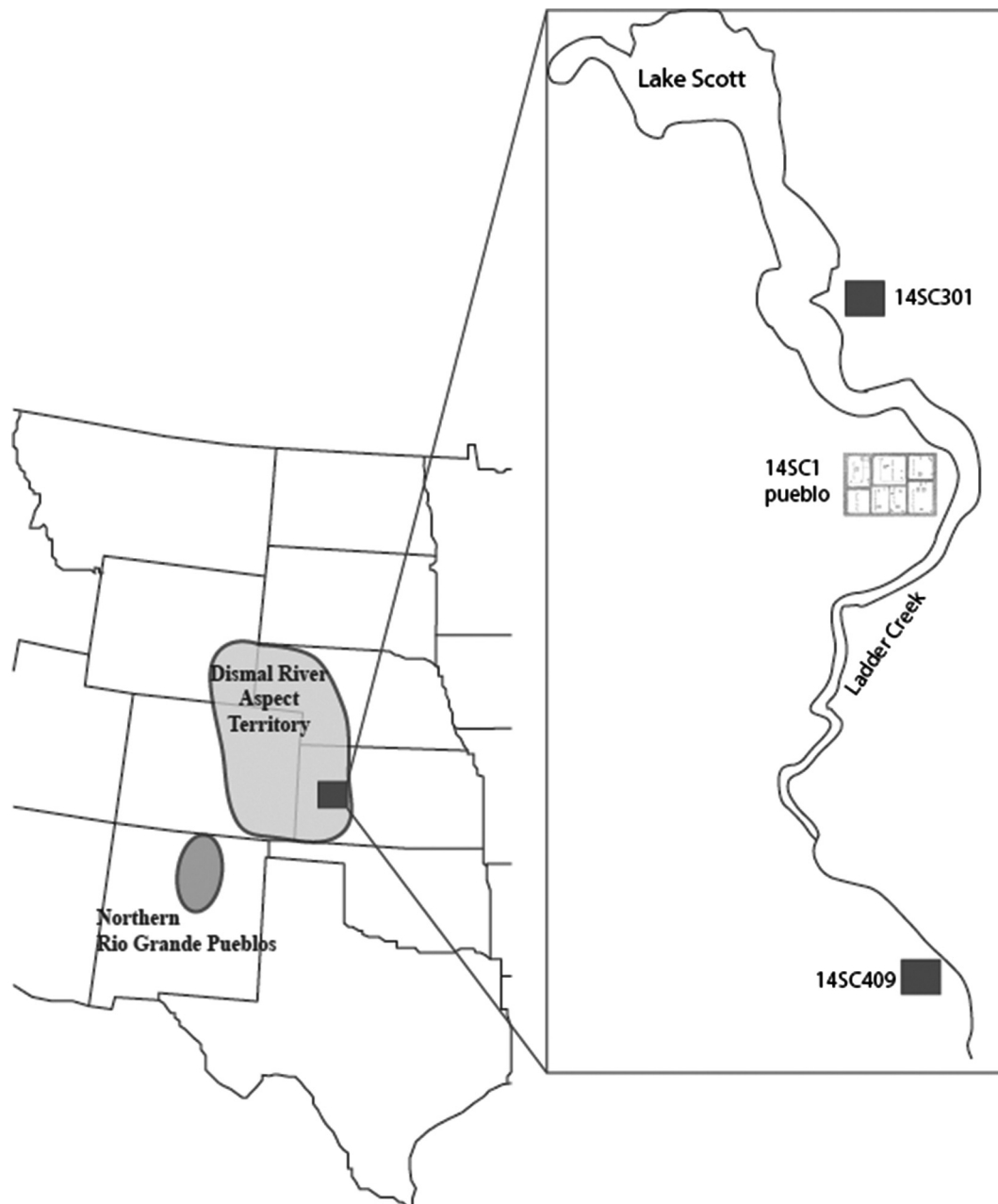


Fig. 1. Location of Lake Scott Sites, Kansas.

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