

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Community-Based Archaeology: Research with, by, and for Indigenous and Local Communities. By Sonya Atalay.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/51r1w21k>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 38(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Cipolla, Craig N.

Publication Date

2014

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

end the Osage Nation's efforts to protect our homelands. . . . We will continue to exercise our inherent right as a sovereign nation" (153).

Jean Dennison has written a very good book. It is well organized, clearly written, and accessible. It is also very useful in understanding the current dilemmas not only faced by the Osages but also by all Indian tribes attempting to overcome the unique problems confronted by a people who have been subjected to "colonial entanglement."

Alex Tallchief Skibine

University of Utah, S. J. Quinney College of Law

Community-Based Archaeology: Research with, by, and for Indigenous and Local Communities. By Sonya Atalay. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012. 328 pages. \$70.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper.

Sonya Atalay's *Community-Based Archaeology* represents a vital step toward diversifying and decolonizing the discipline of archaeology on a global scale. The book is part of recent efforts in the discipline to consider the relevance of the field for non-archaeologists, to use research to make practical differences in the world that lies beyond the academy, and to draw indigenous and local communities into the research process. Atalay synthesizes an impressive breadth of literature on the topic, including the ever-increasing number of archaeological publications on indigenous, public, collaborative, postcolonial, and community-based archaeologies, together with a nice breadth of studies from the social sciences and humanities. By bringing these general trends into dialogue with her own work in the United States and Turkey, Atalay extends arguments already set forth in archaeology well beyond their specific regional significance to speak to broader trends in decolonization (see Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*). Atalay frames her work as community-based participatory research (hereafter CBPR), and argues that this general model for conducting research will help archaeologists to critically analyze and adjust the ways in which they relate to non-archaeologists: namely, indigenous peoples and other local communities that feel the impacts of archaeological research, typically without participating or reaping any benefits whatsoever.

Atalay begins by scrutinizing the relevance of standardized forms of archaeological research for non-archaeologists. She notes that archaeology is moving past the stage of simply sharing the results of research with non-archaeologists to actually democratizing the archaeological process. She sees CBPR as a means of furthering this process. For her, CBPR diversifies the epistemologies that

archaeology employs, creates partnerships with non-archaeological communities, and focuses on the local importance of research. Unlike some early forms of indigenous and community-based archaeology, Atalay stresses that archaeology conducted in the spirit of CBPR works towards establishing *equal* partnerships. She subsequently traces the origins of community-based research in archaeology, correctly framing the history of this thread of scholarship as a confluence between both external and internal critiques of archaeology. From Native American activism to indigenous archaeology and from Native American studies to tribally driven research, Atalay provides a much-needed synthesis of the various influences behind contemporary community-based archaeology.

Atalay then outlines and explores the guiding principles of CBPR. Here Atalay introduces two important points: that CBPR begins with the notion that each group or collaborator has something valuable to contribute to the research, and that no collaborator could solve the problem on his or her own. She frames this type of research as a process of braiding together different systems of knowing, or epistemologies, going on to argue that knowledge-braiding can in fact enhance the rigor of research. However, she also highlights some of the challenges that CBPR currently faces, including that it is often complicated and drawn-out and that it is rarely taught in universities.

After introducing CBPR, Atalay proceeds to examine the general phases of archaeological research from a CBPR perspective, continually tying the general discussion back to her own research and the research of others. She first focuses on the ways in which archaeologists identify and connect with community partners, a novel and much-needed discussion in terms of the extant archaeological literature. Atalay's frank discussion demonstrates that this dimension of CBPR is neither easy nor straightforward. She moves on to consider precisely how communities participate, and since CBPR strives towards full community participation, this is a very lofty goal. Given the philosophy of CBPR, it is vital to identify community-sensitive topics as early as possible while also getting community members involved in research design—beyond simply “allowing” them to review the archaeologists' plans and research objectives. Atalay discusses the importance of sharing power, communicating and listening carefully, understanding and empathizing with collaborative partners, and remaining flexible. She notes that archaeologists must remember that training community partners in archaeological methods is not the same as imposing a worldview, or telling non-archaeologists how to see and analyze the past. Instead it is about creating a common ground on which archaeologists and non-archaeologists can conduct research and learn together (see Stephen W. Silliman's *Collaborating at the Trowel's Edge: Teaching and Learning in Indigenous Archaeology*). The penultimate chapter

explores the ways how researchers put CBPR into action by gathering data and sharing results. Atalay discusses community research teams and how they share decision making during the research process. She also covers the ways in which researchers collect and use qualitative data, such as information gleaned from oral tradition. Atalay explores how various community members might enhance their ability to participate in research through field schools, internships, adult-education programs, and training programs at the national level, but also considers the benefits that CBPR offers the discipline of archaeology itself.

Atalay ends the book with a discussion of the lasting effects of CBPR, beginning with some specific examples from her own projects introduced in chapter 1 and discussed throughout the book. Among the lasting effects discussed are the protection of sacred sites and remains, cultural revitalization, the creation and management of cultural tourism, new forms of public education and engagement (including the creation of a community theatre troupe related to an archaeological site), and more practical results such as establishing a girls' school and a health clinic, both in Turkey. These examples testify to the diversity and adaptability of CBPR philosophies for archaeology. For the discipline of archaeology itself, Atalay argues that CBPR "fills a methodological gap—one that exists within the space of critical discussions about the colonial nature of archaeological practice in the past and the potential for the future" (251). She is also candid about the challenges that this type of research faces, noting the important issues that will continue to challenge those archaeologists and community members that engage in this form of work. Atalay concludes that CBPR approaches will challenge and obliterate long-existing dichotomies in the discipline of archaeology, particularly those between archaeologist and non-archaeologist.

Sonya Atalay's book presents a critical synthesis of twenty-first-century archaeology that concerns itself with much more than the needs and interests of those of us in the "ivory tower." Atalay's CBPR approach offers a productive set of parameters for archaeologists interested in extending the relevance of archaeological research and in decolonizing the discipline. This book will be particularly useful for those of us training advanced undergraduate and graduate students in that its holistic and comparative framework fills an important gap in the literature, as well as in its discussion of the challenges and rewards involved in all phases of community-based archaeology. It is clear that some practitioners will simply disregard this book and the general branch of scholarship that it represents as an extreme form of relativism. However, if these skeptics read carefully, they will realize that CBPR represents a more rigorous and healthy form of archaeological scholarship that does much more than speak to itself. Philosopher Richard Rorty noted in *Objectivity, Relativism, and*

Truth that for pragmatists, “the desire for objectivity is not the desire to escape the limitations of one’s community, but simply the desire to extend the reference of ‘us’ as far as we can” (23). The research described in *Community-Based Archaeology* does just that, making archaeological research something to which all can contribute while learning together.

Craig N. Cipolla
University of Leicester

Geronimo. By Robert M. Utley. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012. 376 pages. \$30 cloth.

My first reaction when asked to review this book was, “What more could be said about this iconic Chiricahua Apache than what has already been written?” A second reaction after reading it was realizing the difference in perspective a historian such as Robert M. Utley has of Apaches and their actions when compared with that of an anthropologist such as myself. I will address both reactions as I continue.

This book consists of a table of contents, preface, prologue, twenty-eight chapters, epilogue, appendix, list of abbreviations, notes, bibliography, and, according to the table of contents, an index. However, the advance copy I was given did not have an index and needed a variety of editorial corrections that I hope were taken care of in the final edition. These included repetition of some paragraphs, various contradictory statements, omission of authors’ names in the bibliography, and no page numbers in the notes that referenced page numbers in the chapters. The first two chapters give some not particularly well-informed cultural background to the Geronimo story, and the rest are named primarily for particular events in Geronimo’s life.

Utley’s prologue addresses my first reaction by saying that since the 1976 publication of Debo’s *Geronimo: The Man, His Time, His Place*, new material has become available which leads him to a different interpretation of Geronimo than Debo. Certainly a number of books have been published since Debo, especially Sweeny’s 2010 work *From Cochise to Geronimo: The Chiricahua Apaches, 1874–1886*, whom he cites frequently, but other than Sweeny’s material I was unclear as to what specific new sources the author was using.

Utley also differentiates this book from other recent treatments by rejecting the notion of resistant American Indian leaders as heroic “freedom fighters” and rather more akin to “terrorists.” This is in line with the current US Army’s view of Apache as insurgents. Geronimo and the Apache war is worthy of study because of its tactics and results; in preparing for this review I found