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KENNEWICK MAN, ARCHAEOLOGY, AND THE
BATTLE FOR NATIVE AMERICAN IDENTITY

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Nineteenth-century anthropology assigns itself the work of salvaging ethnographic detail from the Vanishing Americans. Anthropologists define a synthetic "ethnographic present" to separate living Indian informants from the rest of nineteenth-century America. Because Indians are seen as prototypes of humanity's earliest condition, social Darwinists predict that they must fall victim to more evolved forms of humanity.

6 THE GREAT AMERICAN SKULL WARS | 52

Nineteenth-century natural historians define the most important scientific task at hand as collecting, describing, and classifying the species of the natural world—including man. Army surgeons and curators at natural history museums scramble across post-Civil War America to stockpile Indian skulls.

7 THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF ASSIMILATION | 64

Drawing upon Lewis Henry Morgan's scheme of social evolution, late nineteenth-century anthropologists believe that long-term selective pressures targeted the Indians for extinction—unless they give up their tribal ways and join civilized America

once and for all. American anthropologists convert scientific principle into disastrous federal Indian policy.

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Frank Cushing pioneers the "participant observation" method of ethnographic research and draws upon rich Native American oral traditions to help interpret archaeological materials from the American Southwest. Although an effective cultural broker between the Zuni and non-Zuni, Cushing also irritates Indian people by making their most private rituals public.

9 COLLECTING YOUR FOSSILS ALIVE | 77

Six Polar Eskimos find themselves stranded on New York's fashionable Central Park West in 1897, an anthropological experiment gone awry. The myth of the Noble Redman comes alive when Ishi—the world's "most uncivilized, uncontaminated man"—wanders out of the California chaparral to become a living museum exhibition in San Francisco. But his death in 1916 triggers a certain regret in mainstream America that the Indian has indeed vanished.

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Despite considerable personal risk, a number of Indian people rush to record their vanishing traditions and preserve their disappearing customs. But early twentieth-century anthropology declares that "aboriginal logic" and oral tradition are incompatible with the new objective framework of the "science of mankind." Robert Lowie admits that he "cannot attach to oral traditions any historical value whatsoever under any conditions whatsoever," in the process declaring American Indians to be irrelevant to their own history.

11 THE PERILOUS IDEA OF RACE | 102

Franz Boas, one of America's most avid skull collectors, initiates a research program that soundly disproves earlier theories of racial determinism. Although mainstream anthropology eventually rejects the concept of enduring racial types and race, vestiges of such thinking resurface to complicate the Kennewick Man controversy.

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Seeking national history on an epic scale, mainstream Euroamerica explores a range of creation stories to explain the First Americans. Dreams of lost prehistoric races surface across nineteenth-century America—from ancient white Moundbuilders to the Red Sons of Israel to the Arizona Aztecs—looking to archaeology to define a heroic (non-Indian) past.

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New waves of professionally trained archaeologists demolish the mythical Moundbuilders, protect America from a Paleolithic invasion, and attempt to purge amateurs from the business of American archaeology.

14 WHERE ARE ALL THE NATIVE AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGISTS? | 139

Although American Indians had been written out of mainstream American history, a residual Indianness helped make the concept of America actually work. Congress passed the 1906 Antiquities Act to protect America's archaeological heritage and, in the process, establish professional archaeologists as the sole proprietors of the remote Indian past—now defined as part of the greater public trust, like Yellowstone and the American bison.

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A catastrophic flash flood exposes bison bones and artifacts near Folsom, New Mexico, and forces professional archaeology, virtually overnight, to award Indian people Ice-Age tenure in America.

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Despite his “spaghetti budget” at Monte Verde, Chile, Tom Dillehay surmounts a solid wall of skepticism to establish, apparently, the presence of pre-Clovis people in the Americas.

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The Kennewick and Monte Verde finds have turned the conservative world of First American archaeology upside down. Archaeologists, physical anthropologists, linguists, and molecular biologists scramble to frame new and largely untested theories to explain the first human presence in the Americas.

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Indians in the early twentieth century announce that they have not vanished. They are here to stay and intend to use Indian imagery for their own benefit. Several prominent Indians take on roles as cultural mediators, seeking to span the social and racial gulfs between early-twentieth-century Indians and non-Indians.

19 AN INDIAN NEW DEAL: FROM ABSOLUTE DEPRIVATION TO MERE POVERTY | 186

During the Great Depression, John Collier brings a different perspective to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 reverses previous assimilation policies and reaffirms the importance of the tribal concept in restoring Indian sovereignty.

20 THE RED POWER OF VINE DELORIA, JR. | 198

*In 1969, Deloria publishes *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, heavily criticizing anthropology's mandate to study Indians as "pure research." Scoffing at their self-proclaimed "objectivity," he brands archaeologists as exploiters of Indian people, and asks them to stop digging up the dead.*

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Congress passes the NAGPRA bill of 1990 that shifts the national narrative by inviting Native Americans to assign their own spiritual and historical meanings to

archaeological sites and their contents. Repatriation and reburial become the law of the land, with predictably mixed results as the bones go home.

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NAGPRA directs America's museums to establish the modern tribal affiliation, if any, of ancient human remains and sacred objects in their collections. But previous federal legislation defines modern American Indian tribes in mostly political terms, and scientists have difficulty in tracing tribal ancestry in the archaeological record. Indians deeply resent the fact that archaeologists still control the dialogue linking modern tribes to their ancestors.

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While many archaeologists rethink their role as hardcore, "objective" scientists, anthropology at the millennium is revisiting its humanistic roots. Having rejected oral tradition for decades, a number of archaeologists are now exploring traditional knowledge as another key to learning about America's ancient past. Some Indian people welcome the inquiry, others fear that science is once again trying to pry into sacred territory.

24 AN ARCHAEOLOGY WITHOUT ALIENATION | 254

Putting aside stale stereotypes, several tribes are actively working with archaeologists to explore their own past. Within this new spirit of cooperation, an increasing number of Native Americans are deciding to pursue careers in professional archaeology.

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