This volume began as an idea for a symposium at the annual meetings of the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) in 2012. Both of us had been interested in colonialism and colonial studies for quite some time, and we wanted to work together on a personal research project. Billy had done research on and off in New Mexico since his graduate school days, and John had been doing research on the Mission period in California for a decade or so. John was particularly interested in work that could widen his viewpoint on colonialism by studying another area for a comparative perspective. As a result, we organized a symposium at the 2012 SAA meetings in Memphis entitled “Transformations during the Colonial Era: Divergent Histories in the American Southwest.” It turned out to be a very fun and stimulating symposium that brought together many of the scholars who are currently engaged in colonial studies in the Southwest. Immediately, we knew the symposium would be the foundation of a worthwhile edited volume. We are thankful that all of the original participants of the symposium—save Jun Sunseri, who sadly had to bow out—agreed to be a part of a book project. To round out the line-up of participants, we also asked David
Hurst Thomas to be a part of the project and to write a second comparative chapter for the end of the volume. Dave graciously accepted, and his chapter on the American Southeast (chapter 15) provides a wonderful complement to Lightfoot’s comparative chapter on Alta California (chapter 14).

While Billy has worked in the American Southwest his entire career, John is more of an archaeological “mutt,” having worked some in the American Southwest, but also in California, in the Midwest, and in Mesoamerica. Because of our different geographical foci and our different trainings and experiences, we feel that we have complemented each other well in this project and have found it very easy to exchange ideas and to write together. Our different backgrounds and our different theoretical viewpoints have come together in unexpected ways. We have learned much from each other, and even more from all of the contributors in this volume.

We ought to be clear that the content and topics that are contained in this volume are in no way meant to be viewed as comprehensive of the wide breadth of colonial studies in American Southwest archaeology. Rather, we included a number of friends and colleagues who we felt would bring strong topical or theoretical contributions to the project. There are a number of important scholars, research issues, and cultural groups that are not included in this volume for one reason or another. Realistically, we tried to be as inclusive as possible while keeping in mind our ultimate goal—to create something new and interesting that would have comparative importance to the study of colonialism in archaeology more generally, but not something that would be too huge an undertaking to pull off.

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