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Re-emerging Frontiers: Postcolonial Theory and Historical Archaeology of the Borderlands

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Abstract The article considers the importance of frontier studies in historical archaeology and discusses applicability of some of the concepts deriving from post-colonial theories for a better understanding of human relationships in the frontier zones. The conditions of frontiers and borderlands are compared with the characteristics of the "Third Space" described by Homi Bhabha as a realm of negotiation, translation and remaking. It is argued that concepts developed in postcolonial theories, such as "Third Space," "in-betweeness" or hybridity, are useful not only to address cultural and social processes in borderlands that were created by colonial empires. They are also an apt way to conceptualize relationships in frontiers that lacked colonial stigma. To illustrate this point, two different historical examples of borderlands are scrutinized in this paper: the medieval frontier region that emerged between Denmark and the Northwestern Slavic area and the creation of the colonial frontier in Northeastern America through the establishment of the Praying Indian Towns.

Keywords Frontiers and borderlands · Third Space · Medieval Danish–Slavic frontier · Praying Indian Towns

Introduction

Borderlands or frontiers are ambiguous landscapes. The dictionary definitions describe borderland and frontier in synonymous terms: as a fringe, as a vague intermediate state or landscape or as a region positioned along the dividing line between two countries. This synonymous meaning of frontiers and borderlands is adopted in this paper.

Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more groups come into contact with each other, where people of different cultural backgrounds occupy the same territory and where the space between them grows intimate. Frontiers have

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many dimensions. The geographical one is the most obvious as frontiers and borderlands imply the existence of limits confining the territorial scope of one's dominion, settlement or known world. A frontier seen as a limit of possession or settlement means that borderlands are ultimately also politically, socially, ideologically and culturally charged places. A frontier could be a barrier for contacts, a hot war zone, a buffer region with no clear political authority or a place of peaceful interactions and a cradle of original social and cultural solutions. Multiplicity of the relationships in the frontier is not the only characteristic of this shifting landscape. Frontiers can expand to become a separate political entity. They can also be narrowed to become borders, thin and artificial lines that might be clearly visible in the landscape, leaving no doubt that they are established to divide, delineate and control. The partitioning walls that scar landscapes of the southern United States, the Middle East and Cyprus and those that carve out the Spanish settlements of Melilla and Ceuta in Morocco are modern examples of separation barriers of the type that were ambitiously raised already in antiquity (e.g. the Great Wall in China or Limes Romanus).

These practices that seek to close off the frontier are, however, extreme examples. In fact, most of the early frontiers, even if delineated, remained considerably fluid zones. Most of them were also places of manifold realities. Tensions and dynamics of conflicts, control and friendly relations were inscribed in these landscapes. These conditions created a type of life that might have differed considerably from that in the central areas. It might have been a life with greater freedom and feelings of self-reliance, but also a life strictly controlled by authorities. Frontiers thus emerge as fragmented landscapes, distinguished by fluidity in social and cultural sphere and by the multiple loyalties and identities of their inhabitants (Berend 2002, p. xi; Power and Standen 1999; Voss 2008).

Frontiers as a Field of Study

The beginning of systematic studies of frontiers and frontier societies is often associated with the American historian Frederick Jackson Turner. In 1893, he presented an essay entitled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History", where he described the particularities and uniqueness of the frontier in the United States (Turner 1996 [1920]). Turner's American frontier was a sparsely populated zone located between metropolitan culture on one side and the wilderness on the other: it was a space to be captured, colonized and domesticated. The indigenous population that the new settlers met as a result of their movements was not part of the frontier. It was an obstacle (Forbes 1968).

Turner argued that the frontier in America was advancing not only in the geographical sense but also in social, cultural and ideological terms. It promoted straightforward and linear development as well as technological progress and gave birth to democracy. He also drew attention to the dynamic role of the frontier in the formation of American society. The wilderness that the settlers faced in their steady movement towards the West transformed them, creating new human beings: they were no longer Europeans but Americans. "Thus the advance of the frontier has meant a steady movement away from the influence of Europe, a steady growth of

independence on American lines. And to study this advance, the men who grew up under these conditions, and the political, economic, and social results of it, is to study the really American part of our history" (Turner 1996 [1920], p. 4).

Turner's thesis had a profound impact on the early studies of frontier in the Americas as well as in Europe (Burns 1989; Faragher 1993; Forbes 1968; Kutchen 2005). Although since its conception the approach has undergone criticism and reformulations, the ideas of the frontier presented by Turner still appeal to scholars and are hard to overcome (for recent reviews and critiques, see Berend 1999; Kutchen 2005). The frontier as a theme of study has not lost popularity, and it remains one of the more keenly researched topics in North American historiography, occasionally being addressed by historical archaeologists. In North American scholarship, too, several important and inspirational studies of frontiers were developed focusing on the Native American and European relationships and co-habitation (e.g. Lightfoot 2005; Merrell 1999; Voss 2008; White 1991).

In European archaeology, with an exception of Roman studies, frontiers as a subject of research are uncharted territory. Traditionally they are the domain of historians and in the case of modern borders a terrain explored by sociology and anthropology. The focus of these scholars is naturally colored by the sources and methods they are trained to work with. Historians are primarily interested in the political frontiers and their military aspects. They address questions concerning the reasons and causes of the economic and political expansion into new territories and the ways of controlling the frontiers. In most historical studies of European borderlands, emphasis is placed on subjects such as the military institutions and the overall organization of the border, the particular mentality of the frontier settlers and their involvement and focus on the war and the specific mechanisms of negotiation and mediation they develop (Abulafia and Berend 2002; Bartlett and Mackay 1989; Berend 1999; Power 1999). Some attention is also paid towards reinterpretation of political borders as zones of cultural clash and co-existence and towards ideological aspect of frontiers where the 'rhetoric of identity' is employed (e.g. studies in Bartlett and Mackay 1989; Bartlett 1993). As these zones tend to be studied through the prism of written sources, the picture of relations within the frontiers and across their boundaries is biased towards the official vision of the borderland. This is the perspective of those holding power, i.e. kings, frontier missionaries or frontier administrators.

The different ways of focusing on frontier zones in American and European scholarship as well as diverging socio-political backgrounds of the studied frontiers are reflected in the manner 'frontier' is defined. In American historical scholarship, the concept of frontier is equated to colonial expansion. In the historical literature, particularly from the first half of the twentieth century, frontier, perhaps due to the weight of the Turner thesis, was still understood as the 'westward movement' or the outermost edge of this movement. A 'frontier' was a territory owned by white men pushing the limits of wilderness. In European historiography of medieval and postmedieval times, the definition of frontier is synonymous with that of borderland. It is an area located between two political and cultural units that may be cut by the border. It is a zone of separation and junction helping to define the identities of places and people on either side of the imaginary or real border through the negotiations that take place in the frontier. 'Frontier' in such an understanding always involves at least two groups or nations that interact with each other.

This latter understanding of frontier – as an in-between space between two or more culturally or politically different groups – was also proposed in American scholarship in studies concerned with prehistory (e.g. papers in Green and Perlman 1985) and in historiography and historical archaeology as a part of reaction against Turner's thesis (Forbes 1968). It was pointed out that the 'wilderness' that the European settlers were pushing against was inhabited by native groups: thus, talking about "the American frontier" in the singular was deemed rather inadequate. Positivistic and one-sided treatment of frontiers was also questioned and the necessity to study interactions within the zones was stressed.

The idea of frontier as presented by Turner faced strong critique in the historical archaeological and anthropological research applying postcolonial theory and method. As pointed out by one of the readers of a draft of this article, the concept was deemed as "tightly entwined with notions of unequal power relations and Eurocentrism, and therefore seriously flawed" (Charles Orser, personal communication). While this is a correct observation, it is also necessary to stress that the Turnerian use and interpretation of the concept of frontier is neither the only one existing in the historical, archaeological and anthropological scholarship nor the one which is invoked or known worldwide. In other words, while the Turnerian understanding of the concept should be abandoned, the studies of borderlands and frontiers should not be automatically avoided. What we need to do is to restore the meaning of frontier as a geographical entity positioned between politically and often culturally different organisms, where interesting cultural and social processes might take place. Understood in such a basic way, frontiers should emerge as a relevant and important field of study.

Such an attempt to indicate the importance of frontiers in archaeological studies, due to the cultural processes these places generate (and omitting the Turnerian definition), was presented by Kent Lightfoot and Antoinette Martinez in their article published in 1995. One of the postulates presented by the authors was an urgent need to see frontiers as zones of interactions, "in which cross-cutting, segmentary groups can be defined and recombined at different spatial and temporal scales of analysis" (Lightfoot and Martinez 1995, p. 474). They urged that research should be directed towards issues such as establishing and maintaining inter-ethnic relationships in the frontier context, construction, negotiation and manipulation of identities and innovations in the lifeways of those residing in the frontiers and outside of these landscapes. The authors' plea had its background not only in the dissatisfaction with the Turnerian understanding of the frontier. It arose also from the critique of straightforward application of world-system perspectives to analyses of the frontier situation. The most explicit use of world-system perspectives (deriving from Wallerstein's World System Theory and dependency theory) in frontier studies was the invocation of core–periphery relationships. Accordingly, frontier was conceived as a sharply delineated periphery, politically, economically and culturally dependent and subordinate to the central or "core" regions (Lightfoot and Martinez 1995). Although individual studies applying these perspectives produced interesting results (especially in understanding economic dynamics, e.g. McGovern 1985; Paynter 1985, Urban and Shortman 1998), generally the application of the dependency theory produced rather polarized and schematic views, in which frontiers and their inhabitants were often reduced to passive recipients of innovations and ideas

streaming from the core. It was often believed that the process of direct and straightforward acculturation could explain the cultural situation in the frontiers, where people on the periphery give up their traditional way of life and assimilate the traits of the dominant culture over time (review in Cusick 1998 and Stein 2002; Rogers and Wilson 1993). The importance of the traditions and culture of the native population for the cultural development of the frontier was often marginalized or ignored. It was also believed that groups occupying the frontier zones were tightly bound and distinguishable in archaeological records.

Along with the changes in understanding the nature of human interactions and engagement with material culture and traditions, it became apparent that dependency theory and world-system perspectives are not encompassing enough to address the dynamics between the frontiers and centrally positioned areas (especially in the sphere of culture) and did not permit an analysis of the cultural and social processes taking place in the borderlands. Lightfoot's and Martinez's voices pleading for a radically different focus on these spaces were important contributions aiming at lifting up the complexity and importance of these landscapes.

I would like to follow the position of these scholars and further argue that cultural and social developments in the frontier zones can be aptly addressed in historical archaeology due to its methodological and theoretical awareness, its ability to synthesize historical documents, oral sources and archaeologically recovered evidence on equal terms and its serious attention to the human–objects relationships. This sort of "materiality conscious" archaeology (Beaudry 1988; Little 1992, 2007, pp. 29–31; Wilkie 2007) offers perspectives and understandings of the past not possible to attain through single lines of evidentiary analyses.

Viewing both historical and archaeological sources may provide overlapping, challenging or entirely different insights into realities of the frontiers. Each of these strings of evidence might provide information about differing aspects of life in the border zones. Employed together, they permit a fuller picture of past realities, one that is not only based on the political visions of the leaders but also includes glimpses of the experience of the common frontier inhabitants. In multicultural frontier settings, this method also allows for the possibility to capture the ambiguity, hybridity, conservatism and change caused by these meetings in the borderlands.

Studies of frontiers can benefit greatly from the methodological strength of historical archaeology, but they should be also informed by relevant conceptual frameworks. Postcolonial theories, with their interesting way of problematizing human relations and viewing material culture as enmeshed in negotiation, preserving or shifting social and cultural identities might just provide a right angle for looking at and approaching the complexity of the borderlands. I am not the first one to argue the usefulness of postcolonial theories for understanding human interactions and human–object entanglement. They found a fertile ground in the studies of colonial interactions in historical archaeology (so-called *culture contact* studies) and altered the way of looking at the process of acculturation and colonizer–colonized discourses (e.g. Hall 2000; Jordan 2008; Voss 2008). However, the relevance of postcolonial theories extends beyond the studies of colonial realities. Some of the concepts developed in, for example Homi Bhabha's writing, can be utilized to study and to describe cultural processes that evolved in the frontier landscapes lacking colonial stigma, i.e. in the frontiers that evolved organically between neighboring

tribes, kingdoms or states. Meetings in the frontier, regardless of it being an effect of colonial expansion or a buffer zone between two independent political organisms, led to confrontations with different cultural and social traditions. These confrontations caused responses and actions involving both people and material culture. However, the character of these responses might have differed considerably. It could have spanned from confusion, misunderstanding and tensions to elaboration of common cultural ground—from growing conservatism, prejudice or even racism to creation of unique practices and identities. What postcolonial theories have to offer is a conceptual toolbox to nuance the cultural processes and their backgrounds and to describe diversity and shiftiness of inter-human and human–object interactions in the borderlands. They allow one to move from the pastoral and idealized and, above all, from the uniform notion of 'the frontier' urging the need to look at differences of life experiences in the specific border zones.

Confrontations with incompatible social practices, ideologies and norms, and the differing material world might have unforeseen effects. What emerges in the frontier is a field of discourse and practice, which I find helpful to describe through Homi Bhabha's concept of the "Third Space". This is a space of hybridity (Bhabha 1996, 2004; Fahlander 2007; Grossberg 1996; van Dommelen 2006; Voss 2008, p. 14–15), a realm of inventions and conventions, initiated and maintained by day-to-day situations and encounters. Bhabha, one of the leading postcolonial theoreticians, defines the "Third Space" as a space of translation and construction of a political object that is new, neither one nor the other. This is "a space that can accept and regulate the differential structure of the moment of intervention without rushing to produce a unity of the social antagonism or contradiction" (Bhabha 2004, pp. 37–38). The "Third Space" opens up discourse beyond simple binary antagonisms; it is a space of constant dialogue and remaking. He conceptualizes it as "discoursive sites or conditions that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (Bhabha 2004, p. 55). For Bhabha, the "Third Space of enunciations" is "the precondition for the articulation of cultural difference" and it serves to create the "instability which presages powerful cultural changes" (Bhabha 2004, p. 56). He argues that

> The theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *inter*national culture, based … on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. … it is the "inter"— the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space—that carries the burden and meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the 'people'. And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves. (Bhabha 2004, p. 56)

Bhabha's idea of the "Third Space" is theoretical and conceptual, and in its literal meaning it was already invoked by archaeologists studying the ambivalence and anxiety of a colonial situation (e.g. Hall 1999, p. 193–194; 2000, p. 21–22, 38–39, 117–122). However, the tensions and processes that this concept embraces may have also a reflection in real-life situations. The concept is powerful and I see its potential

and strength as a metaphor when approaching and describing the frontier settings—not only those created through colonial encroachment but also those that emerged in the landscapes unmarked by colonial expansion. Frontiers, colonial or not, like "Third Space" conditions, are landscapes in between, where negotiations take place, identities are reshaped and personhoods invented. They are landscapes created by discourses and dialogues of multiple voices, not only those belonging to the people that actually live in the frontier areas but those of administrators and authorities located outside of this zone. The conceptual "Third Space" of Bhabha is an intervention disrupting homogenizing tendencies. Frontier conditions might be characterized in similar terms, as at times disruptive and tense landscapes whose inhabitants may have agendas of their own, incompliant with the official political goals. Translation and cultural bilingualism are involved and required from all parties caught up in the politics and life in the frontier zone. "A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary … People who inhabit both realities … are forced to live in the interface between the two", writes Gloria Anzaldúa in her powerful testimony about life on the US/Mexican border (Anzaldúa 1987, p. 92).

The third-space settings of frontiers mean that these spaces are in constant flux; they are created by negotiation and dialogues within the frontier and outside of it. The situation within the frontier might be at times close to Richard White's (1991) example of "the middle ground". It is a process based on creative misunderstandings, which leads to a situation of cultural, social and political equilibrium, i.e. the inability of one side to establish dominance over the other. White claims that "the middle ground" was unique to his area of study – the Algonquian–French frontier in the Great Lakes region, from the mid-seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries. He might be right about the uncommonness of such condition, although degrees of acted-out mutual misunderstanding were probably a part of frontier realities elsewhere (e.g. the Medieval Muslim–Christian frontier in Spain (Lopez de Coca Castañer 1989; MacKay 1989; Manzano Moreno 1994, 1999)), but, as pointed out by White, the creation of a middle ground of mutual (mis)understanding is not something given or everlasting in frontier situations. Sometimes frontiers emerged between irreconcilable worlds, often as a result of resettlements and colonization. The bridging of these two worlds is done at times by 'go-betweens' or cultural brokers (Connell Szasz 1994; Merrell 1999; Meuwese 2003). These cultural brokers, traders, missionaries and individuals with and without public roles may at times bring these different worldviews close together. Other scholars point out that the nature of co-habitation in frontier zones is more complex than that. Go-betweens and individuals inhabiting these zones might share practices, play up or invent areas of common ideology, interest and experience but at the same time they might not be able and willing to shed prejudices and negative feelings about the other (Merrell 1999; Meuwese 2003). The character of relationships in the frontier zone is never static and it should not be taken for granted. The case studies presented will illustrate how different historical backgrounds influenced the shaping of the frontier and how the story of frontier life can be woven from the threads of tales, written documents and material remains of past practices.

I am focusing on two diverse case studies. They are geographically and chronologically distant from each other. The political and social background and

conditions for their emergence varies as well. The available sources for understanding the relationship within and outside of these zones are another point of divergence. While the medieval frontier between Denmark and the Slavic Obodrites is marginally treated in written sources, the history of Praying Indian Towns is abundant with written records of various types, contents and authorship. In both cases, archaeological sources, as limited as they are, offer an exciting opportunity to add texture to an understanding of the daily life in these landscapes.

In choosing these different case studies, my goal is to point out that there are multiple lenses through which one can look at the frontiers. One can zoom in and study a single frontier settlement or zoom out to look over entire regions. I wish also to illustrate different factors behind the emergence of frontiers. Some of the medieval and postmedieval European borders evolved naturally from the narrowing of the frontiers stretching between two or more territories, while the frontiers that emerged in the New World as a result of the European settlement were colonial constructs. The circumstances in which frontiers emerge have bearing on the interactions between the inhabitants of these zones. I wish to point out, however, that even though each frontier emerges in a very specific historical context, nevertheless there are certain cultural processes that are repeatedly observed in frontier situations and which seem to be enabled by the particularities of the frontier realities. Finally, I want to argue that, regardless of frontier location in time and space and regardless of it being a colonial construct or a zone between two independent groups and territories, the methods of historical archaeology and a postcolonial theoretical approach provide the possibility to account for multiplicity of experiences and visions of frontier and the dynamics of these landscapes.

The Medieval Danish–Slavic Frontier. The Case of the Southeastern Danish Islands of Lolland, Falster and Møn

The geographical location and the natural landscape of Scandinavia make it a fairly isolated region with a few national borders. The scarcity of multicultural frontiers was even more evident in medieval times when in many cases heavily wooded areas largely limited interactions between tribal groupings and early kingdoms. One exception to these conditions was the territory of Denmark, which in the beginning of the Viking age received two new neighbors: Western Slavs who settled in the coastal areas of the Baltic Sea, sometime in the 700s, and Franks, who after defeating the Saxons in the year 804, pushed the frontier of the Frankish Empire to the Northeast. This newly created constellation of power greatly influenced developments and power relations in this region. As a result, three frontier zones were created in the ninth century: the Frankish/Ottonian and the Western Slavic, the Danish and the Frankish/Ottonian and the Danish and the Western Slavic. This third frontier that evolved between the Danish Kingdom and the tribal federation of Slavic Obodrites is the subject of the first part of my study (Fig. 1).

Until the twelfth century, the relations in this frontier zone seemed to be controlled and shaped largely by the people who occupied this space (Ericsson 1998; Naum 2007; Villads Jensen 2002). Archaeological evidence and scarce written accounts indicate the particular importance of trade relations between the neighbors

(e.g. Duczko 2000; Leciejewicz 1981; Łosiński 1997; Maleszka 2001). These relations were undoubtedly facilitated by a politically important alliance officially formed in the second half of the tenth century between Danish Harald Bluetooth and the Earl of the Obodrites, Msciwoj, sealed by the marriage between Msciwoj's daughter Tove and the Danish King. This union between the Obodrites and Denmark was the strongest and longest-lasting alliance across the Baltic Sea, and it was often measured against German Emperors and other Slavic tribes. The alliance was split in the year 1066 by the pagan and conservative reaction that erupted among the Obodrites. Peace and mutual friendship on the official level was at times interrupted by pirate raids and plundering expeditions, phenomena that both sides engaged throughout the Viking age and the early Middle Ages (Etting 2000; Grinder-Hansen 1983, p. 32, 35; Skaarup 2000).

More profane changes affecting the Danish–Obodrite frontier took place throughout the twelfth century (Hermanson 2004; Villads Jensen 2002). These changes were related to the overall political and economic development in Europe from an economy based on force and warfare to one based on intensive agriculture and craft specialization and from rule based on the personal alliances between a

Fig. 1 Geography of the Slavic–Danish frontier.

leader and noble families to a centralized government and the authority of the kings. In Northern and Central Europe, this transition can be traced back to the end of the eleventh century. In Denmark, the rule of Canute the Holy (1080–1086) is considered as a breaking point (Lindkvist 1988). The king pursued a domestic policy of taxes and payments that were to support the Crown. He issued edicts arrogating to the Crown extensive rights including the ownership of common land, the right to goods from shipwrecks, and the right to inherit the possessions of foreigners and kinless folk. As a strong advocate of the Church, he tried to enforce the collection of tithes. The era of Viking raids and collection of large sums of tributes and war booty was nearing its end; thus, to afford the payments of taxes and to assure income, the landowners had to increase agricultural production, which meant intensive clearing of more land (Sawyer 2001, p. 181). This internal colonization proceeded towards the outland and simultaneously aimed at regulation and establishment of larger productive units, such as villages (Schmidt-Sabo 1997, 2001). Internal colonization and increasing importance of agriculture led undoubtedly to some migrations and resettlements, involving Slavic settlement on the southeastern Danish island of Lolland, Falster and Møn. It is not certain whether some of the Slavic peasants that came to the islands were recruited or openly encouraged to settle. It is not certain if recruitment of the peasants from outside of a specific territory was practiced in early medieval Denmark; if it was, the scale of such recruitments must have differed regionally and never reached any considerable size. It is without a doubt, however, that migrations and recruitment of foreign settlers would have cultural (and political) consequences, which might have been unexpected or already calculated when organizing such a settlement. Resettlements could have a distorting effect, weakening old traditions and ways of life; thus, they were potentially viable to employ as a tool in reshaping the political and social landscape. In the particular case of southwestern Danish islands, migration and settlement of Slavic peasants contributed to the emergence of multicultural and complex frontier landscape.

The Slavic settlement on Lolland, Falster and Møn has to be also viewed through the prism of the events in the Slavic home territories located on the southern coast of the Baltic Sea. Since the early tenth century, these areas became an object of expansion politics launched by German emperors and Saxon frontier lords (Naum 2008, p. 48–51; Strzelczyk 2002; Zschieschang 2009). Wars causing damage and dispersion of settlement as well as insecurity, and instability might have lain behind a decision to flee to safer places. The areas that were directly incorporated into the Saxon marches suffered from economic pressure, which led to open uprisings and forced some to leave their home territories. Witnessing these events Helmold, frontier missionary and parish priest of Bosau in the Obodrite area, wrote in his chronicle that Slavs and the Saxon inhabitants of Holstein were fleeing to the neighboring territories of southern Jutland and the southeastern Danish islands, forced by the heavy taxation and feudal duties in the German marches. Describing events from the year 1156–1158, he observed that the whole territory between Havel and Elbe was largely depopulated by the Slavs moving eastwards or to ‘the land of the Danes’ (Helmolda 1974, p. 339 pp. 350–352). It was only in 1162/1163 that the Duke of Saxony, Henry the Lion, and the Danish King Waldemar signed an agreement prohibiting further refugees to settle (Helmolda 1974, p. 362).

The permeability of the frontier as described by Helmold is starkly juxtaposed with a vision of frontier presented by another contemporaneous chronicler. Saxo Grammaticus (c 1150–c 1220), connected with the court of Archbishop Absalon (1128–1201) and the author of a monumental history of Denmark–*Gesta Danorum*, envisioned the border as a sharp and frozen line running along the coasts of the Baltic Sea. To make this picture of division even stronger, he described the Slavs living on the southern coast of the Baltic Sea and the Danes in an almost diametrically opposed manner. All of the qualities that the Danes embodied were lacking in the Slavs: the Danes were Christians, civilized and united, seeking justice and fighting for the right cause. The Slavs were dissolute and arrogant pagans, dangerous pirates who were a threat to Denmark, and according to Saxo it had always been this way. The divergent description of the frontier has to be viewed in the context of the circumstances that the two works were composed. Saxo and Helmold had quite different intentions when writing their chronicles. Saxo's anti-Slavic propaganda was deliberate. He wanted to support and legitimize the royal policy paving the way to the dominion over the Baltic Sea region and justify the war that was launched by King Waldemar and Archbishop Absalon, under the banner of Christendom (Nors 1998; Villads Jensen 2000, p. 4). The way Saxo chose to portrait the closest neighbors of the Danes was not unusual for that period. Fostering antagonisms toward neighboring groups by creating a negative image of them and the use of ideological slogans were two of the ways of controlling and expanding the frontier by medieval leaders (Villads Jensen 2000, p. 6–7; 2002, p. 178).

Helmold's chronicle, on the other hand, is an example of a frontier genre rather than a national epos, but he is not specifically concerned with the situation between Denmark and the southern coasts of the Baltic Sea, which in his work is only of secondary importance and is pushed to the background. He describes the Slavic–German frontier, colonization efforts and the expansion of Saxon dukes and lords ruling the marches and the last years of independent existence of the Slavic federations in Polabia.

Interestingly, however, Helmold's accounts about Slavic immigration to southern Denmark and the creation of a co-habitation zone are reflected in another category of sources—place names (Fig. 2). The latest study of Slavic-sounding toponyms on the islands of Falster, Lolland and Møn, conducted by Frederike Housted, indicates that settlements and villages bearing such names were founded most likely during prolonged periods of time. Some might be dated as early as the tenth–eleventh century; others were founded in the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries or later. The dating of the others is uncertain (Housted 1994, 2000). Some of the villages on Lolland might have originated from the time the island was enfeoffed to Prislav, son of Niklot, the ruler of the Obodrites. It is however impossible to conclude if Prislav encouraged Slavic settlement on the island. The remaining number of villages with Slavic names is rather considerable, which might indicate a substantial presence of the Slavs on the islands. These settlements, with few exceptions, do not build up enclaves and they are surrounded by villages with Danish names. Due to the limited written sources and the fact that these villages were not subjected to any considerable archaeological investigation, it is hard to make a conjecture about the daily interactions between the islands' inhabitants. An interesting clue that might not however be symptomatic to the whole territory comes

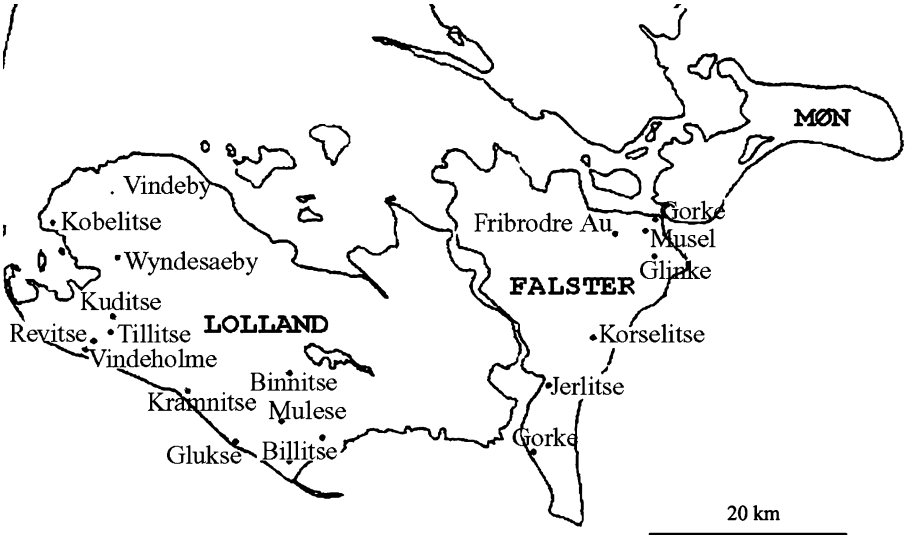

Fig. 2 Settlements with Slavic-sounding names on the islands of Lolland, Falster and Møn.

from a settlement that was excavated in the northern part of Falster. On one of the banks of the Fribrødre River not far from its mouth, archaeologists have found remains of a settlement and a wharf dated to the eleventh century (Skamby Madsen 1984, 1991) (Fig. 3). The extant fragments of the boats that were built in accordance with the Slavic technology using wooden nails and the other finds, including personal objects, not to mention the name of the river – Fribrødre – deriving from the old Polabian 'Pri brode' or 'Prybrode' (meaning 'at a ford'), suggest that this place was kept and used by the Slavic inhabitants of Falster. The site is an interesting example providing some glimpses into the complexity of the frontier landscape. Frontiers created opportunities for continuity of practice and resettlement did not always mean radical and encompassing change in practices and traditions. Differences in conduct might have led to the formation of factional groups or the emergence of a discourse about "otherness" and "sameness"; however, a fair amount of differences might have been accepted and tolerated, even taken for granted and inscribed into the in-between space of borderland. How much these different discourses were in play and how material culture and daily conduct were drawn into the creation and erasure of the lines of division in this particular context remain largely puzzling and can only be deduced when more medieval sites on Lolland, Falster and Møn are excavated.

We can imagine nonetheless that sizable immigration undoubtedly created an interesting cultural situation on Falster, Lolland and Møn. This perhaps could have led to a degree of cultural syncretism or merging of the elements of both Slavic and southern Scandinavian traditions into new cultural forms, practices and ideas. On the other hand, it could also cause a certain level of cultural orthodoxy and a reluctance to change (Naum 2007). We can imagine that, in such a situation, practices and things used in everyday life might have obtained new meaning, become reconstituted and "translated" (e.g. Gosden 2004, pp. 3–5, 82–86; Naum 2008, pp. 83–84, 140–146, 278–282; Silliman 2005, pp. 66–68; Thomas 1991; van Dommelen

Fig. 3 Excavations at Fribrødre Å, Falster. In the Middle Ages, the site served as a wharf and, judging from its name, material culture and the technological feature of recovered boat fragments, it was operated by the Slavic settlers. Photo courtesy of Roskilde Viking Ship Museum and Jan Skamby Madsen.

2006). The emergence of a multicultural frontier was a novel situation requiring fresh observations and decisions. The creation of diverse projects drawing on the memories and traditions, on the narratives of cultural difference and sameness and based in the commonality of occupied space became an important aspect of frontier realities.

One of the most visible changes in the sphere of everyday life that occurred coevally with the Slavic settlement on the islands was the introduction of new pottery styles,

technology and modes of pottery manufacture. In the course of the eleventh century, the hand-made, crude vessels that were produced individually in accordance with the specific needs of a particular household were replaced by vessels made by specialized potters, who mastered the technology of clay preparation, use of a turntable to form and shape vessels and pottery firing in controlled environment. At first, this pottery, the so-called Baltic ware, resembled very closely ceramics made in the Slavic coastal areas. However, with the passing of time, potters working on the islands developed their own repertoire of forms diverging from the ceramics made in the southern coast of the Baltic Sea (Gebers 1980; Liebgott 1979; Madsen 1991; Naum 2007; Roslund 2007). Some of the pottery forms, such as oil lamps or vessels intended to be hung over the hearth, become specially developed for the needs of the local household. Thus, the pottery that was made on the islands throughout the eleventh and the twelfth centuries was a kind of hybrid solution, merging Slavic technology, forms and styles with the forms and household needs of the local environment.

Pottery making and ceramics are worth closer consideration in this context, as they may illustrate how seemingly unimportant and mundane objects can be used as tools in constructing political, social and cultural projects in the context of a frontier and multicultural settlement. The specialized mode of pottery production was introduced together with growing immigration of the Slavic peasants, but this substantial change, one that involved transformations in division of labor and the equipment of the household, was conditioned by other, much deeper alterations in economy and politics taking place in Denmark at this time. Without these internal conditions that required a greater investment in agricultural and non-agricultural production and increased specialization, the introduction of new ways of pottery making and "domestication" of Baltic ware might never have materialized or could have had different outcomes. Thus, leaving pottery production in the hands of skilled potters who were among the group of newcomers might have been a solution to changing and pressing economic requirements (Naum 2008, p. 134–140).

However, the introduction of pottery might have been a tool in planned projects aiming at reinforcing social and political transformation. Throughout the eleventh century, Danish kings made several attempts to unite the claimed territories of Denmark and extend nominal titles of rule into factual ones. Singling out mundane tasks as a way to control routines and reinforce seemingly minor shifts in everyday activities went hand-in-hand with other shifts and modifications at different levels of social and political organization (Bowser 2000; Pauketat 2000, 2001). Changes on the household level might have been preceded by transformations in administrative and economic organization of the islands, and they might have been used to beget other profound modifications. Altering one tradition requires people to admit that some other artifacts, a different practice and order are possible. Thus, successfully induced change could serve as a tool to legitimize further social, cultural and political changes. This example of "practical politics" (Silliman 2001, pp. 194–195), that is, the ability to exploit elements of everyday life for political, social and cultural maneuvering might have been also a part of the Slavic acting after migration to the islands. We can imagine that the situation of resettlement impacted on the creation of novel networks between immigrants and the well-known practices and things, in this case pottery use and pottery making. These otherwise mundane and dull

activities and artifacts might have now become heirlooms and valuables. The unquestionable and everyday became a center of focus. Previously obvious elements of everyday life such as a ceramic vessel, after migration, when found in the kitchen, might have ignited sudden flashes of memory of the household one had left forever. The making of Baltic ware pots by a Slavic potter might have struck similar memories. Thus, such an ordinary and unquestioned element of everyday life as pottery also gained extraordinary status among the Slavic immigrants, Baltic ware makers and users (Naum 2008, pp. 140–146). It might have served then as a material object employed in a project of creating separate identities in the multicultural frontier settings.

The example of pottery illustrates well the multitude of meanings that objects can be equipped with in the frontier landscape. At the same time, this example shows how the same objects can simultaneously function in different cultural worlds that meet in the geographic spaces of borderlands and how traditions in such landscapes are expanded to include different forms of new and hybridized objects and practices. These ambiguities in the sphere of material culture could be understood as a material aspect of the "Third Space" realities. The conditions of "Third Space" landscapes defined by translation, negotiation and constant remaking and appropriation do not only affect human dialogue and verbal contacts. They influence the realm of material culture and practices involving making and handling material objects. Hence, the Baltic ware pottery discussed here, as an object developed in the complex frontier conditions, could have been simultaneously many things for different people. While these types of vessels in the eyes of the Slavic settlers might have been "rediscovered" and transformed from unquestionable everyday objects into things allowing them to find familiarity in a new landscape and stabilize their identities, the same vessels for the local inhabitants had diametrically different meanings. They could have been regarded, for example, as a novelty or superficially already known thing, which could be easily fitted into existing daily patterns due to the unchanged practical function of the pottery. For some, they might have proved to be useful objects in reinforcing more considerable social and political changes. With passing time, as Baltic ware vessels became common and unquestionable household equipment found in everybody's kitchens and storerooms, the new pottery technology might have been perceived as a part of the internal, age-old tradition.

Frontier realities create settings for invention of practices and formation of novel relationships between people and their material world. Because they are ambiguous places where the inhabitants often operate simultaneously in different cultural worlds and are able to skillfully maneuver in an uncertain landscape, they provide also a viable context for inventing or re-inventing one's self. One such person who successfully crossed the cultural border between both groups was a Gnemer from Falster. Saxo names him as a commander of one of the warships in Waldemar's fleet. Gnemer knew very well the areas of Rügen and Barth (today's province of Nordvorpommern in Northeastern Germany) and it is likely that he came from there. His knowledge and skills allowed him to climb the social ladder and acquire large land holdings. According to King Waldemar's Land Register, he was the owner of a few estates on Falster. It is likely that Gnemer was not an exception in his taking advantage of the situation that emerged in the frontier landscapes, although some frontier inhabitants, as illustrated by the already mentioned example

of Fribrødre settlement and wharf, might have chosen to actively sustain traditions and separate identities.

The frontier is a unique place not only because of its often multiethnic character or because of the merging of different traditions. Frontiers are peripheries in a geographical sense for at least two centers, centers that are not necessary always peaceful towards each other. In this context, a special role for the frontier leaders emerges. They are forced to reach compromises in ambiguous situations on the frontier where antagonisms coexist with the need for peaceful interactions. Conflict situations might tear the communities living in the frontiers apart but they might also bring them together. That is what most likely happened on the Southeastern Danish islands during Waldemar's war against the Slavs, vividly captured by Saxo Grammaticus on the pages of his chronicle.

The war against Slavic tribes was launched in 1160. The official pretext of the campaign reported by Saxo was the urgent necessity to stop Slavic plundering of the Danish territories. Since most of the Slavic groups resented Christianity for cultural as much as political reasons, the war was also sanctioned by the Church promoting the ideology of the Crusades. Finally, the imperial ambitions of archbishop Absalon and young King Waldemar to turn Denmark into a dominating power in the Baltic Sea region were likely to play a role (Villads Jensen 2000, 2002). The military preparations mobilized the inhabitants of the entire area controlled by Waldemar, including the frontier islands of Falster, Lolland and Møn.

Saxo mentions the inhabitants of Falster in a few places in his chronicle and he does not have the best opinion about them. The people of Falster did not seem to support the official view about the Slavs but instead tried to solve the problem by taking into consideration both Slavic and Danish interests. There were Falster contingents in the Danish army but they apparently did not have a very strong will to fight. Instead, they were ready to negotiate and resort to compromise. Saxo also states that people of Falster were willing to hold prisoners taken by the Slavs and that, from time to time, they informed them about attacks being planned by the Danes. The Danish commanders took steps against this leaking of information by making sure that people from Falster and Lolland were informed about military operations only at the last minute (Damgaard-Sørensen, 1991; Etting 2000; Saxo Grammaticus 2000 XIV 22, 23).

This attitude of the inhabitants of Falster could have been triggered by practical reasons – the need for self-defense – or the fact that their participation in the war would be disadvantageous. However, it would be reasonable to assume that the position of the inhabitants of the islands was the reflection of the particular ethnic and cultural situation in the frontier zone and its in-betweenness and third-space characteristics.

Saxo's vision of frontier as being fixed and impermeable was an ideological and political construct having little to do with realities on Lolland, Falster and Møn. In reality, the frontier seemed to be far from being sealed: by combining different categories of sources in the analysis of this landscape, the complexity of the frontier can be revealed.

Praying Indian Towns —Colonial Frontier Experiment

About 500 years later and on the other side of the globe, an English missionary, John Eliot, began his mission among New England's Native American groups. His

civilizing visions and goals took a physical shape in the establishment of Praying Indian Towns. Located along the Connecticut Path on the margins of English settlements in New England and in the areas already inhabited by the indigenous groups (the Nipmucs, the Massachusetts and the Pawtucket), these towns became as much colonial as frontier installations. The first Praying Town was Natick, designated for the Nonantum Indians whose chief, Waban, was one of Eliot's first converts. The history of this town settled by Waban and his group at the beginning of the 1650s and located between the English settlement of Dedham and the forests of Massachusetts is captured in a variety of written sources, including letters and reports of its founder, court cases, parish records that were written down from 1721 onwards and probate inventories. Other valuable sources include drawings and maps as well as the material remains of the settlement.

Oliver Bacon in his 1856 *History of Natick* provides the following description of the town, which is based on the report of Daniel Gookin, who acted as Indian superintendent:

> It consisted of three long streets, two on the north and one on the south side of the river, with a bridge eighty feet long and eight feet high, and stone foundations, the whole being built by the Indians themselves. To each house situated on these streets was attached a piece of land. The houses were of Indian style. One house, larger and more commodious than the rest, was built in the English style. One apartment of it was used as a school room on week-days, and a place of worship on the Sabbath. The upper room was a kind of wardrobe, where the Indians hung up their skins and other valuables. In the corner of this room was partitioned off an apartment for Mr. Eliot. This building was the first meetinghouse in Natick (Bacon 1856, p. 9; see also Eliot 1670, pp. 24–25; Moore 1822, pp. 64–65).

The Natick example was followed by the establishment of additional Praying Indian Towns in eastern and central Massachusetts (Connole 2001, pp. 104–114; Eliot 1670; Moore 1822, pp. 90–111) (Fig. 4). The pattern of spatial arrangements of these towns might have been relatively uniform. Daniel Gookin's description of another Praying Town established in Magunkaquog (within the boundaries of Natick and operating under its supervision) and the recent excavations on the site provide a very similar picture to that of early Natick (Herbster 2005; Mrozowski *et al.* 2005, 2009). These settlements were a clear example of how frontiers and neighborhoods create opportunity for social and economic leverage, how they promote the creation of new roles and identities and how these diverse projects and negotiations make use of material objects.

For indigenous groups collaborating with Eliot and his associates, Christianity might not have been the direct magnet drawing them to the towns. Harold Van Lonkhuyzen argues that, due to the way the tribal and spiritual leadership was organized among New England tribes, the appearance of the English offered potential means of evading or manipulating inconvenient ties and alliances and a way of subverting existing relationships (Moore 1822, p. 55–59; Richter 2001; Van Lonkhuyzen 1990, p. 401). Jean O'Brien puts forward other viable reasons for native collaboration in the establishment of the Praying Town. She argues convincingly that Christianity offered ways to preserve community and land in the

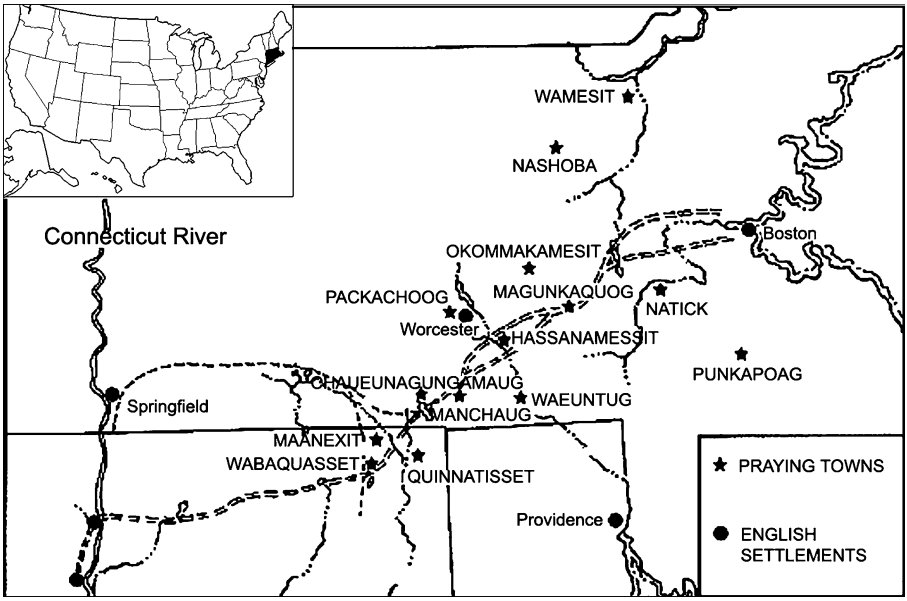

Fig. 4 Praying Indian Towns and neighboring English settlements as of 1674.

face of growing English expansion. The establishment of the towns in accordance with the English legal rules and yet on the site selected by the native groups offered a promise of secured tenure of the ancestral land (O'Brien 1997, p. 52). Eliot, too, believed that Praying Indian Towns would save the natives, although his idea of doing it was through a "civilizing" program, which aimed at turning the Indians into English Puritans. Thus, in addition to propagating Puritan religious teachings, he provided a small but steady flow of English goods and technologies to his converts.

Consequently, the Praying Indian Towns became an experiment of eclectics, places where different cultures collided and new ways were negotiated with elements of both cultures, Puritan and indigenous, readily apparent. Although using the English goods and technologies, native inhabitants did not necessarily embody the English norms. Here, again, the material aspect of the "Third Space" condition could be recognized. The new concepts, objects and technologies were creatively reworked to fit the familiar, redefined and transformed as a means not of abandoning traditional ways of life but of fulfilling them. Farming was combined with traditional subsistence practices: traditional lithic technology and basket weaving were practiced together with carpentry and spinning. The wigwam continued to be the favored form for a house but the space within it seems to be now divided according to Puritan moral standards (O'Brien 1997, p. 47; Van Lonkhuyzen 1990, pp. 414–416). Seasonal transhumance that formed the basis of social relations and subsistence was likely to be continuously carried on despite the English idea of 'order' equated with permanent settlement (Eliot's letter to Robert Boyle dated April 22, 1684, in Moore 1822, p. 140). Even the religious sphere remained ambiguous and the new rituals and worldview promoted by Eliot and other missionaries did not replace the traditional practices. Powwows were carried on, and the specific

notion of the non-Christian idea about afterlife was expressed in the continuous custom of depositing with the deceased certain earthly objects of native origins (like wampum beads) or artifacts of English provenience (Bragdon 1988, pp. 130–131; Brenner 1984; Connole 2001, p. 115; Kelley 1999; Mandell 1991, p. 555). Constance Crosby has suggested that the Native Americans extended the concept of *manit* (the appreciation of spiritual power manifested in any form) to be incorporated into their daily lives and religious traditions and a range of European things "not in the Western sense of change as progress, but in their own cultural as a means of acquiring spiritual power" (Crosby 1988, p. 185; see also Rubertone 2000, p. 431). The new elements of material culture and ideas brought by Eliot and English settlers were translated into the indigenous culture.

Interactions between colonialists and Native Americans had also a transformative effect on the English settlers' culture. The same processes of translation and appropriation characterize these cultural borrowings. New grains and vegetables were incorporated in the diet omitting, however, their social and ceremonial associations (Hallowell 1957, p. 205; Strickland Hussey 1974). New England forests and meadows offered a variety of plants, which were utilized by local groups for their medicinal and other properties. Much of this knowledge was acquired by the European settlers, who quickly found other than previously known uses for the plant extracts: poison ivy juice, which was used by Native Americans as a source of black dye, became a substitute for ink for the English (Strickland Hussey 1974, p. 312); pokeweed used by Native Americans for dyeing became a herb in the colonial kitchen (Strickland Hussey 1974, p. 327); the bark and the roots of cedar, which served as a raw material in producing ropes, mates, bags and stamp baskets and for extracting red dye, became a source of building material and fuel for the English (Strickland Hussey 1974, p. 327).

Perhaps one of the most interesting examples of cultural transformative adoption of a native object is the use of sewant or wampum. Among northeastern American tribes, these beads fashioned from the whelk and clamshell had various meanings. They were used as ornaments or employed in ceremonial contexts as gifts exchanged on occasion of marriage, confirming intertribal peace treaties and friendships or as a compensation for crimes. Already in the early 1600s, Dutch colonists settled in New Amsterdam and along Hudson River sensed the economic possibilities of wampum trade and began mass producing the beads, transforming them into widely used legal tender in the colonial economy (e.g. Herman 1956; Peña 2001; Schnurmann 2009).

As pointed out by Nicholas Thomas and recent scholarship on colonial entanglement, "objects change in defiance of their material stability. The category to which a thing belongs, the emotion and judgment it prompts, and the narrative it recalls, are all historically refigured" (Thomas 1991, p. 125), but appropriation and "semantic shifts" towards incorporation of new objects into existing cultural schemes are not the sole way novel artifacts and norms are dealt with. Colonial projects, large and small, are politicized fields entailing not only compromise and appropriation but also subordination, resistance, ironic mimicking and refusals, all involving the use of material objects (e.g. Deetz 1996, pp. 212–214; DiPaolo Loren 2001; Gosden 2004; Hall 2000; Silliman 2005, pp. 66–68; Thomas 1991, p. 31, pp. 185–189).

Written sources related to the history of the Praying Town at Magunkaquog and recent excavations of the settlement provide examples of native ambiguity and ambivalence towards Eliot's missionary and civilizing attempts. Appropriation and refusal

is visible in daily and mundane activities as well as in the ritual and religious sphere, and it is the use (and refusal to use) of things that provides most interesting clues about the reaction of the Magunkaquog Nipmucs to the mission.

Sewing implements were among the objects Praying Town residents were supplied with by Eliot and other missionaries. Not surprisingly, a number of copper alloy thimbles were also recovered during the excavations in Magunkaquog. Interestingly, all of them show little, if any, wear. They were all found in the context of foundations interpreted as remains of a meetinghouse (Fig. 5). All of them, too, were of small size, suggesting that they were meant to be used by children and young girls (Beaudry 2006, pp. 112–114; Beaudry, personal communication; DiPaolo Loren and Beaudry 2006, p. 258; Mrozowski *et al.* 2005, pp. 65–66). These ordinary finds that often feature in historical sites, in this particular context, might have been used by Eliot and other missionaries as much more than an ordinary and practical everyday object (Beaudry 2006, p. 113; DiPaolo Loren and Beaudry 2006, p. 258). As pointed by Mary Beaudry, thimbles and other sewing implements were imbued with ideals of womanhood, cleanliness and sedentary domestic tasks—ideals that characterized proper conduct of girls and women in contemporaneous Europe. Introduction of sewing and embroidery served thus as a practical tool used by missionaries to plant Christian ideas of self-discipline, Godliness and self-sacrifice and the Puritan work morale, in which industriousness played a key role (Beaudry 2006, p. 113; DiPaolo Loren and Beaudry 2006, p. 258). Focusing on practical and sedentary domestic activities such as sewing, weaving or spinning could have been also an attempted strategy employed by missionaries to destabilized native concepts of gender roles and division of labor (or an accidental process that have disastrous effects on local communities). A woman's role in native society bore certain similarities but also considerable differences to a woman's position among the English colonists. Native women were responsible for agricultural production and they held important economic and leadership roles as sachems and shamans and property owners. Transforming native communities along the norms functioning among the Puritan neighbors meant suppression of native gender roles and reversal of tasks that would ultimately lead to the breakdown and social and cultural crisis

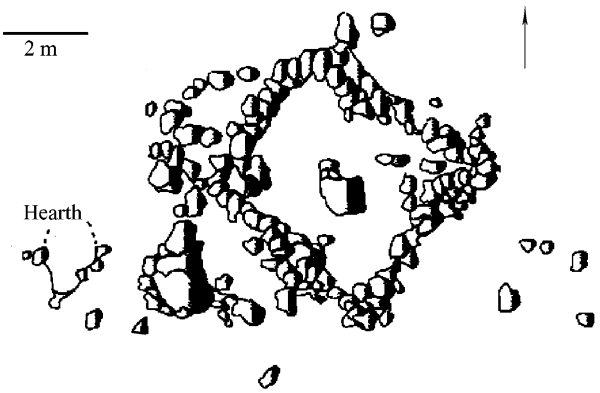

Fig. 5 Magunkaquog: foundation of the meetinghouse and adjoining hearth in context of which quartz crystals were found. Adopted from Mrozowski *et al.* (2009).

among the native groups (Richmond and Den Ouden 2003, pp. 183–184). Thimbles then, and other sewing implements, were consciously employed in the Christianizing and civilizing project of Eliot and others. These small tools with hidden agendas were examples of objects very closely connected to European ideals and practices. The experiment of implementing these ideas in seventeenth century Magunkaquog seemed to be unsuccessful. The insignificant or non-existent wear seen on the thimbles might indicate that they were rarely used or they might have been simply discarded.

Native ambivalence or even open resistance to ideas propagated by Eliot among the residents of Magunkaquog could be deduced not only from the excavated material but also from reading between the lines of Eliot's letters and reports. In one of the letters, Eliot confesses, "I obtained of the General Court a grant of a track of land for the settlement and encouragement of this people, which though as yet it to be by some obstructed" (Eliot 1670, p. 32). Perhaps the most striking example of incompatibility of missionary propaganda and Eliot's aims with the native ideas of delimitated settlements is the persistence of the latter in engaging in ritual and spiritual practices and the spatial context of these practices. In a hearth located next to the Magunkaquog's meetinghouse (Fig. 5), built to serve religious and educational purposes and as a storage room for goods brought by missionaries, remains of quartz cobbles were found, which were interpreted as residues of extraction of crystals. A few such crystals were recovered from the foundation of the meetinghouse. John Murphy argued that these crystals should be seen in the context of indigenous spirituality, therefore as an example of ritual practices continuously practiced by Nipmucs at Magunkaquog (Murphy 2002; see also Mrozowski *et al.* 2005; Mrozowski, personal communication). This practice could be also viewed as an example of mimicry turned into mockery (a process that often features colonial situations). Meetinghouses were places of worship, "houses of God" or spiritual centers of the settlements, and it is easy to imagine that Eliot used such rhetoric while preaching and commending construction of the churches in the Praying Indian Towns. By choosing areas immediately outside of the meetinghouse for conducting traditional rituals, Magunkaquog's residents, and above all the spiritual leaders, might have referred to the holiness of the place, yet this mimicking of Christian ideas and following missionaries' rhetoric quickly turned into mockery through spiritual and ritual engagements deeply rooted in the native tradition and cultural memory. The effect was precisely opposite to the missionary intentions, leading to undermining the position of Christianity and English ideas as superior or even valid.

Other elements of material culture, perhaps less ideologically charged and finding use in already existing cultural practices, seem to be incorporated more easily into the native repertoire of tools (Fig. 6). However, they resumed functions and use inherent to the native traditions. Some pieces of earthenware brought from England found on the site bear traces of cooking directly in the fire in the hearth located next to the meetinghouse, thus giving a clue about the continuity of indigenous ways of preparing food (Mrozowski *et al.* 2005, p. 67; 2009, p. 19).

Even though some of the traditional practices were still carried on by the residents of the Praying Indian Towns, the teaching and work of Eliot imposed profound changes on the local communities and might have created a category of "in-betweenness", which was readily ascribed to them by the English and the indigenous

Fig. 6 Examples of European objects imported to the Praying Indian Towns: Fulham jar and Staffordshire-type slipware plate with combed decoration found in Magunkaquog. From the collection of Fiske Center for Archaeological Research, Boston. Photo: author.

groups remaining outside of the direct activities of the Puritan missionaries. The Indians in the Praying Indian Towns were neither like the English nor like the other natives living outside of the Praying Indian Towns. This "in-betweenness" was most sharply and dramatically revealed in upcoming events. In the 1670s, the relationships between the English settlers and native groups in New England became very fragile and tainted with open and mutual distrust, mostly due to a change in colonial regulations. The colonial government accepted a proposal according to which natives as citizens were to be required to comply with the civil and criminal laws functioning in the colony and with the creed of Puritan religion. All forms of conduct deemed unacceptable by church and state were no longer to be tolerated. The government planned also to introduce a strict policy of enforcement, which in practice meant that the English settlers and the Christian Indians were encouraged to act as "watchdogs" for the government (Connole 2001, p. 116). These regulations resulted in nothing more than further polarization of the attitudes, pitting Christian Indians against non-Christian ones and deepening the divide between the native inhabitants and the English, which some few years later led to an open uprising. Eliot and his followers tried to act as intermediaries in these increasingly hostile settings. From the records of the Massachusetts Historical Society, we learn that on August 1, 1671, "Two natives, named Anthony and William, were sent by the "poor church of Natick" with written instructions, signed John Eliot, with the consent of church, to the Missoghounog Indians, and to the English of Aquidnick and Plymouth, for the purpose of preventing a war between those Indians and the English" (see Bacon 1856, p. 24). The conflict seemed to be only temporarily postponed. In 1675, the foundation of early colonial New England was shaken by the eruption of a native revolt led by Metacomet, the leader of Wampanoags (the so-called King Phillip's War). Some of the residents of the Praying Indian Towns joined

the anti-English rebellion; the others, including Natick Indians, took the side of the English or tried to stay out of the fighting. They were however often a target of the campaigns: captured and killed by the English who had troubles in differentiating them from the enemies and mistrusting them and hated by Wampanoags and Metacomet's allies, who considered their position as a betrayal. They were reserved for special tortures if captured.

Harold Van Lonkhuyzen, Jean O'Brien and other scholars argue that the war changed the context of native-English relationships, terminating the interaction that had allowed the two sides to derive benefits from each other. The dealings in the frontier were irreparably damaged. Mutual distrust and prejudice made any interactions and attitudes towards each other generally stilted and difficult (Eliot's letter to Robert Boyle dated October 23, 1677 in Moore 1822, pp. 126–129). The war destroyed Eliot's efforts and disrupted most of the Praying Indian Towns, except for a few including Natick, which grew in significance (Eliot's letter to Robert Boyle dated April 22, 1684 in Moore 1822, pp. 139–141). The town, located on what was then the western border of the Massachusetts settlement, became a hub for native settlement. Natick inhabitants, which were now also recruited from inhabitants of other Praying Indian Towns, seemed to return to their traditional ways of life and enjoyed social and economic independence.

Until the beginning of the eighteenth century, the inhabitants had rather limited contacts with their English neighbors although almost from the early days of the town's existence until the beginning of the eighteenth century a border dispute continued with the Dedham inhabitants. Dedham villagers complained that the Native Americans visiting Natick stole their grain in the fields, that the Natick inhabitants are hostile and proud and "altogether idly, not planting corn for themselves, & refusing to work for the English except on unreasonable terms" (see Mandell 1991, p. 558; O'Brien 1997, pp. 33–42). Until the beginning of the eighteenth century, Natick remained fairly isolated from the rest of Massachusetts, but changes were approaching as the province developed a more trade-based economy, tied more strongly to the British monarchy and as English and European settlements were increasingly hungry for new land. A few English families were living almost continuously in the town and in the settlement nearby, but the real change started to occur in the early 1700s. Within 6 years, between 1723 and 1729, the number of newcomers quadrupled and was steadily increasing during the following years, causing considerable changes and challenges in the daily life in Natick. Many Indians resented the presence of the English and the English, distrusting the natives, formed separate communities within the town. The contacts between groups seemed minimized to only necessary interactions. Christian natives chose not to attend the Church, arguing that they prefer to worship at home. To a certain degree, they continued the custom of communal land sharing and continuously engaged in certain traditional routines and domestic activities. Intermarriages between groups seemed to be extremely rare if occurring at all (O'Brien 1997; Van Lonkhuyzen 1990). On the other hand, the inflow of the new settlers and goods as well as changes in economy and ecology imposed some shifts on the native lifestyle. It also created divisions within the native community. While some opposed the use of English as an official language and the treatment of land as a market commodity, others became actively involved in new economic processes,

becoming crop farmers. This considerable change in lifestyle required resources, and to cover expenses connected with purchasing plows and tools, building barns and English-style houses, natives were forced to sell parts of their holdings to the newly arriving English settlers. Natives were also purchasing English household consumer goods and their strenuous efforts to adopt English ways resulted in increasing debts and land sales: this was one of the reasons for the decline of their importance in the town counsel and ultimately led to their departure from Natick (O'Brien 1997, pp. 91–93). The co-habitation did not remove the psychological boundaries and prejudices inherent in the English part of the society. Morrison (1995) and Puglisi (1996) point out that the Native Americans were never offered integration with New England society, and the whole project of Praying Indian Towns and multiethnic villages that evolved from them was doomed by a combination of factors, including 'institutionalized intolerance' towards the natives.

Alienated and impoverished, some natives chose to move out. The last recorded native birth in Natick was in 1770, the last marriage in 1798. Half a century later, public records and official histories are silent about native inhabitants of Natick (see Moore 1822, footnote on pp. 119–122). This does not necessarily mean that they were not there or were not visiting the town. Part of colonial policies towards indigenous peoples was an official denial of their existence and categorizing natives as "white" or "colored". This tactic made the Indian groups disappear and official acknowledgment of them would also erase the frontier (Engendering …; Herbster 2005, pp. 208–211; Mrozowski *et al*. 2009, p. 6).

Thinking about native-English relations in Natick and other Praying Towns brings to mind the inevitability of translation and dialogue attributed by Homi Bhabha to the landscapes of the "Third Space." Frontier as a "Third Space," a place in-between, enforces dialogue and translation not only to facilitate communication but also to allow negotiation, making individual agency and corporate acting clearly visible. An early example of such 'translation' is the focus on healing in Eliot's preaching among the natives of Natick and other Praying Towns (Moore 1822, p. 47, 76, compare p. 53 and pp. 79–80). Eliot possessed some understanding, if only partial, of the Native Americans' belief system in which the healing practices of powwows (shamans) played a pivotal role. Also, he was aware of the fear and rippling effects of the diseases and epidemics that devastated native groups. Thus, framing Christianity into the rhetoric of healing and portraying Christ as a physician, i.e. translating theological ideas of English Calvinism into spiritual ideas familiar and important to the indigenous people, effectively helped Eliot in his Christianization and Anglicization process.

Another example of translation and transcription is the rhetoric of the 'friendly Indian'. The term was coined in the wake of King Philip's War to describe the inhabitants of the Praying Indian Towns who show an interest in civilizing efforts and who supported the English in the War. After the War, the rhetoric of the 'friendly Indian' was played out by both, the natives and the English, and depending on circumstances it was translated and transcribed, allowing for the opening up of a space of negotiation. Shortly after the War, Natick Indians recalled the 'friendship' and translated it into an assertion of their 'natural rights' of land ownership. The English were forced to recognize their obligations towards friendly Indians. At the same time, they narrowed the definition of the 'friendly Indian' to include only those

individuals who embraced the Christian faith and English ways of life and recognized the primacy of the English governance. Bounded to the Praying Indian Towns, natives continued to refer to their status as friends to negotiate their special treatment within colonial realities. Soon, however, the English could afford to simply ignore native voices as the former's presence and rule in Natick and other Praying Towns became dominant (O'Brien 1997, pp. 66–89).

The rhetoric of 'friendly Indians' is also an exemplary example of a discourse described by Bhabha as mimicry, which often features colonial relations. Mimicry is a compromise and camouflage. It is an ambivalent categorization of the other as almost the same, but not quite (Ashcroft *et al.* 2000, pp. 139–142; Bhabha 2004, pp. 122–123). Although Bhabha talks about mimicry as a strategy imposed by the colonizers on the colonized ("Mimicry is a strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which appropriates the 'Other' as it visualizes power"(Bhabha 2004, p. 122)), the act of making ambivalent statements and use of 'camouflage' can be a part of the conduct of the colonized. Such a reading of the concept was proposed in studies of interactions between the European settlers and the indigenous groups in Northeastern America (Hodge 2005). Being almost the same but not quite, accepting certain English material goods and embracing certain ideas but linking them to already existing and familiar norms allowed one to continue some practices and to cope with ever-shifting frontier settings. It provided a camouflage. The existence of these practices is evident in both the archaeological material mentioned above and in the written sources. One example of the latter is the account of the reasons behind native conversion, in which the prospect of keeping one's own land stands as a strong motive (O'Brien 1997, pp. 52–53).

Conclusion

More than 50 years ago, Charles Julian Bishko, eminent Hispanist and frontier researcher, concluded in his speech presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association that frontiers played quite a pivotal role in the medieval and early modern history of Europe and newly colonized territories overseas (Bishko, 1955). The stiffening of the frontiers and their incorporation into contemporaneous ideologies and politics transformed these landscapes, creating new categories of people—the frontier nobles, the pioneering peasants, the missionaries, the frontier merchants, the land speculators and colonial promoters. Frontiers were formed and structured by the inhabitants and administrators, but the particular special dimension of the frontier had a structuring effect on the borderland settlers as well. Bishko argued that the medieval frontiersmen pushed forward the edges of the known world. They were people whose "warlike and peaceful dealings with non-Europeans first raise for medieval thinkers the great question of the rights of native peoples and the legitimacy of war against them (…) and led medieval-minded Spanish theologians and jurists to lay the foundations of international law and the rights of non-European men" (Bishko, 1955, p. 7). He concluded that for these reasons frontiers deserve serious attention.

It is equally important to revisit the idea of studying borderlands in archaeology and seriously consider the cultural and social conditions of the frontiers. The

approach of historical archaeology and its theoretical awareness may at the very least shed more light on all of these aspects of frontier mentioned by Bishko. I argued that using the concepts developed in postcolonial theories is an apt way to describe life conditions and processes taking place in the border zones. These concepts are not only useful to address interactions between the colonizers and the colonized in the border zones marked by serious political and economic inequality. Hybridity, in-betweeness and ambiguity are features of life and dealings in the frontiers that lack colonial stain.

Frontiers are ambivalent and shifting landscapes emerging in the spaces amid two or more politically and culturally different territories. This geographically grounded notion of frontier makes it a worldwide phenomenon and, although each frontier is different because it emerges in a very specific historical context, certain cultural and social processes seem to be a common feature of many frontiers. The two case studies presented above aimed at illustrating this point. The first frontier that emerged in the early medieval southwestern Baltic Sea area, between Denmark and the Ododrites, was a zone between two political and cultural territories that often interacted with each other in a both peaceful and hostile way. The relatively balanced relationships and the contemporaneous political development in the region influenced the relationships in the frontier. The co-habitation promoted innovation in the sphere of material culture while at the same time allowing the accomplishment of certain projects on the level of groups sharing common cultural norms. It also created room to maneuver, becoming a space in which individuals could redefine themselves and create new personhoods and identities. The character of this frontier enabled corporate, collective acting when the inhabitants were faced with conflict at their doorsteps aiming at changing political balance in the area.

The frontier that materialized through the establishment of the Praying Indian Towns in New England was a colonial project from the outset. It, too, provided the possibility of forging new identities and furthering certain goals, but it was marked by the increasing inequalities in the power structure. Above all, this example illustrated the acts of translation and transcription that are often features of colonial realities in the frontiers and beyond. I wanted to point out that these translations and the necessity of cultural bilingualism were required, at least initially, from all groups involved in shaping and living in the frontier. The realities of Praying Indian Towns and the rhetoric that featured dialogues between and among all parties involved in this frontier were also an interesting example of the politics of mimicry. Mimicking and camouflage were strategies employed to deal with contradictions arising from colonial interactions and from the specific character of the frontiers where people face the problematic process of identification (Mitchell and Bhabha 1995).

The frontiers described in this study, and I believe some other borderlands as well, are examples of the "Third Space," where degrees of "in-betweenness" are visible. They are places that are characterized by transformation and change, not only in a geographical sense (frontiers can be narrowed down, expanded, moved) but also culturally, socially and with regard to attitudes towards other people inhabiting frontiers and landscapes beyond borderlands. Living in the frontier, between two political or cultural spaces, might feel like being neither one nor the other or being both at the same time, being defined by the location of the frontier in a distinctive spatial condition (Grossberg 1996, p. 91). From a certain perspective, the frontier

culture might seem partial, 'in-between' "contaminated yet connective tissue between cultures – at once the impossibility of culture's containedness and the boundary between … bafflingly both alike and different" (Bhabha 1996, p. 54). Borderland conditions, regardless of colonial stigma or its lack, might cause greater mobility, uncertainty and multiplicity, but they are also empowering, creating possibilities to act in ways impossible or difficult to do in other places, creating hybrid solutions pregnant with potential for new worldviews and discourses. They are confusing places where the merging of some elements can give birth to new solutions, where redefinition of self and creation of new identities may take place. Frontier realities like no other spaces illustrate that the relationship between artifacts and identities is ambiguous and evanescent and that culture or tradition is not an entity. Because they are spaces of negotiation and creation of various projects, in which material objects constitute an essential element, it is in the context of these landscapes that it becomes apparent that the same objects can be viewed differently depending on the situation and on the observer's and user's goals and his or her cultural sensitivities. The multicultural, in-between context of the borderlands forms a background for human acting and creation of novel human–objects relationships, which have an ability to elevate mundane things from an ordinary to an extraordinary position. As pointed out by Nicholas Thomas, the fact that "objects pass through social transformations effects a deconstruction of the essentialist notion that the identity of material things is fixed in their material form" (Thomas 1991, p. 28), and the frontier conditions clearly illustrate this polisemy of identities and meanings.

Borderland landscapes are complex, interesting and important places: for this reason alone, they have to be afforded a place in historical archaeological studies which, having an ability to integrate documentary sources, oral histories and archaeological evidence, can also tackle their manifold character.

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