

NEGOTIATION AND INCORPORATION ON THE MARGINS OF WORLD-SYSTEMS: EXAMPLES FROM CYPRUS AND NORTH AMERICA

P. Nick Kardulias

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

College of Wooster

pkardulias@wooster.edu

ABSTRACT

As originally formulated, the world-systems model postulated a relationship in which core states exploited peripheries for raw materials and made the latter into dependent satellites. This approach views indigenous people in peripheries as passive recipients at the mercy of political and economic forces beyond their control. While in many cases the impetus for change was from cores to peripheries, there were certainly instances in which the margins actively (and occasionally successfully) resisted incorporation. At times, they also had the ability to select the precise form of their incorporation. While in many cases this did not alter the consequences for indigenous people, there were occasions when natives not only reacted successfully, but also outlined the terms of the encounter. This is a process that I call negotiated peripherality. Underlying this perspective is a biological analogy: just as biological populations experience the greatest change at the borders of their territories where the effects of gene flow are felt first and most dramatically, so too do cultural changes occur at an accelerated rate in contact zones. This paper explores the nature of negotiated change through two case studies. The archaeological example examines how ancient inhabitants of Cyprus selectively adopted features from the Near Eastern and Greek cultures for whose world-systems the island served as a marginal periphery. The second example is an ethnohistoric study of how Native Americans managed the terms of their involvement in the fur trade with Europeans. Both cases demonstrate the active role of peripheral people as decision-makers.