A COMPANION TO COLONIAL AMERICA

Edited by

Daniel Vickers

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A Companion to Colonial America

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Introduction

Daniel Vickers

The colonial period is at once the most disparate and collective field of study in America's past. Certainly, it is disparate in the number of colonies, cultures, countries, continents, and concerns that now constitute its subject area. Colonial historians study and teach a dizzying variety of different people – no longer just the residents of Beacon Hill and Broad Street or the settlers on the Welsh Tract in Pennsylvania and the shores of Chesapeake Bay, but now also the indigenous peoples of the Mississippi, St. Lawrence, and Colorado River Valleys, as well as Europeans and Africans from Bordeaux and Bristol to Barbados and the Bight of Benin. Yet, it is also collective as an academic project in which the density of scholarly interaction – concentrated around a relatively small number of graduate programs, a few extremely active historical institutes, and a dominant periodical, the *William and Mary Quarterly* – cannot be matched by any other period of American history. Colonial historians read one another with focused energy, meet together frequently in conferences and colloquia, cite one another endlessly, and publish books that manage to garner a remarkable number of prestigious prizes every year. By any measure, the intensity of interest in those few million prerevolutionary people, the merest fraction of all historical Americans who ever lived, is nothing short of astounding. Edmund Morgan suggested many years ago that we already knew "more about the Puritans than sane men should want to know."[1] Historians of other periods and places would today almost certainly extend that quip to American colonial society as a whole. As the essays in this volume bear witness, this field continues to recruit fine historians in numbers quite out of proportion to the number of subjects under study.

This extraordinary fact is rooted more than anything in the blossoming of a fruitful interdependence between history and anthropology. Not too long ago, it was common to celebrate the interconnectedness of colonial history with *all* the social sciences, but in the past twenty years, anthropology has come to influence far more historical enquiry in the early American field than has any other discipline. Colonialists may still practice demography, trace the course of political events, and attempt to chart economic growth, but it is the study of gender, race, politics, capitalism, religion, and so forth as cultural constructions that drives the liveliest thinking and research in the field. This is not really surprising, for the study of culture has always been at the core of the greatest history. All good historians are anthropologists operating across time; their training is to become ethnographers of particular societies in particular ages. Many things about the past they are not particularly well equipped to study: they

cannot systematically excavate ruins, perform econometric acrobatics, or deconstruct medieval plainsong. But historians do understand better than anyone else, as R. G. Collingwood once reminded us, how to think oneself into the action of the past and "to discern the thought of its agent."[2] That is why they are better equipped than economists or sociologists to recognize the meaning that their subjects attached to the world of that day.

Historians – like anthropologists but unlike sociologists, psychologists, or economists – are particularly adept at understanding cultural *difference*, and this is why so many of the best of them feel at home in the period of American history (for which there exists a documentary record) that is most remote from our own. We gain the longest historical perspective on the most significant issues that Americans face today when we study these problems in their chronologically deepest American context. Do we possess any communitarian tradition worthy of the name? How deeply imbedded is the subordination of women in our culture? Where exactly do the roots of racism lie? Perhaps most important of all, wherein sit the origins of the global, sometimes imperial, pre-eminence that the United States occupies today? Americans do well to revisit often the period when they inhabited colonies dominated by a distant power and when they themselves carried terror into the homelands of a foreign, indigenous people. The past can teach patriotism; it should also teach humility.

Twenty years ago, Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole published a book of essays entitled *Colonial British America* in which they attempted to assess the state of early American history by recruiting some of the most talented historians of the day to write a series of fourteen topical essays on the major themes that had occupied scholarly attention in the field over the previous two or three decades. This fine collection has served a generation of colonialists as a creative and remarkably thorough survey of the state of the field as it stood in the mid-1980s. In their introduction, Professors Green and Pole drew attention to the explosion of new interest in the colonial period over the previous twenty or thirty years and tried to account for it principally in terms of two important external stimuli. One was the influence of the social sciences, especially sociology, psychology, economics, and anthropology, to whose language, concepts, methods, and concerns historians were increasingly drawn. The other was the example of historical inquiry carried on across the Atlantic by the French Annales school and Cambridge Population Group in England. "If the social sciences turned the attention of colonial historians in the direction of socioeconomic and cultural history," Pole and Greene contended, "the work of early modern historians in France and Britain taught them the virtues of endeavoring to recreate past societies in their own integrity, within their own terms of reference, and, insofar as possible, without the distortions of teleology."[3] Twenty years later, it is not hard to imagine other forces that may have borne equally on the writing of colonial history. Social unrest within the United States during the 1960s and 1970s is relegated to a condescending footnote in the introduction to *Colonial British America*, but it undoubtedly influenced many historians. So too did the challenge of the new British Marxist history practiced by E. P. Thompson and his followers, which Greene and Pole chose to ignore entirely. Feminism and a new interest in those whom Eric Wolf termed "the people without history" were also beginning to redirect the course of colonial historiography during the late 1970s and early 1980s in ways that were only marginally recognized in this volume.

Yet, from twenty years' perspective, it is not the omissions that stand out for this

reader as much as the spirit of enormous confidence that suffuses the work. Although Greene and Pole worried about the narrowness of much of the new scholarship, they believed that in sum it really did begin to add up to the sort of *histoire totale* to which the French *annalistes* had aspired. Not only did they feel they could identify a list of shared characteristics that bound all of British Americans together; they also believed it was possible to construct for the colonies a general developmental framework that could encompass the entirety of this colonial world. That they advanced their particular conceptions in a "tentative and enquiring spirit," claiming these were nothing more than "an interim report on progress," diminishes not a whit the faith they possessed in the "underlying coherence of the field."[4]

Colonial British America reflected a general confidence in the cohesion of early American history that has since fractured. Historians of that day may have fought over the models in which they believed, but at least they believed their models were worth fighting over. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, notwithstanding the remarkable vigor of the colonial field, the chimera of one coherent master narrative seems more remote than ever. This is true mainly because so much of the important historical scholarship of the past twenty years has been advanced in the spirit of criticism. Though characteristically moderate in its attachment to the newer strands of critical theory, much of the freshest new work in colonial history aims either to deconstruct common sense interpretations of the past, undermine more and more of our national myths, construct new narratives to compete with the old, or at the very least complicate the old ones sometimes to the point of collapse. Colonial peoples are now the subjects of multiple perspectives with separate logics that seem impossible completely to reconcile. Their actions can be understood simultaneously from the perspectives of class, race, or gender, looking west from the European metropoles or the shores of Africa, "facing east from Indian country," or sitting in the mid-Atlantic looking all around at the swirl of humanity trading, warring, negotiating, settling, and working their lives away.[5] For most of the twentieth century, historians believed in an interpretive center to colonial American history – or at least in their own version of such a thing. Such no longer seems the case. And yet, the centrifugal course of this historiography is no indication of weakness; indeed, the reverse is true. While the multiplication of perspectives cuts against the grain of any aspiration towards an *histoire totale* and may sometimes cause historians to talk past one another, it also forces them into a habit of continual self-reflection, and in particular to question their reliance on common sense.

This volume attempts to explain the issues that have defined the historiography of colonial America, and in particular what distinguished it culturally from other parts of the early modern world and from subsequent periods in American history. Some of the chapters are organized topically. The history of colonial politics, religion, and migration, for example, are sub-fields with well-established literatures possessing many internally contested issues. Other chapters focus on specific historical debates. Class and the origins of the American Revolution, for instance, have in themselves been hotly argued issues since the revival of early American history in the 1950s, and they both deserve treatments of their own. Still other chapters are defined geographically. Here the attempt has been made to describe the historiography of areas external to the mainland colonies that eventually became the United States in an attempt to set the concerns of American colonialists in some comparative perspective. Not every corner of the pre-revolutionary past has been covered, and this volume will undoubtedly

show its age as years roll by. If, in general, it serves to provide readers with an introduction to the current state of studies in colonial American history, with a view not to achieve some coherent vision of colonial history upon which we can all agree but rather to investigate the problem of cultural difference – that which ultimately distinguished them from us – across the greatest span of historical time available to Americans, it will have served its purpose.

NOTES

1 Morgan, Edmund S.: "The Historians of Early New England." In Ray Allen Billington, ed., *The Reinterpretation of Early American History* (San Marino, CA: Huntingdon Library, 1966), p. 41.
2 Collingwood, R. G.: *The Idea of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 213.
3 Greene, Jack P. and Pole, J. R., eds.: *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 7.
4 Greene, Jack P. and Pole, J. R., eds.: *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 16.
5 The quotation is the title of a new book by Richter, Daniel: *Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

Chapter One

Pre-Contact: The Evidence from Archaeology

David G. Anderson and Marvin T. Smith

Human beings have been present in the New World for perhaps 15,000 years, a span of time thirty times longer than the five centuries since AD 1492. During the pre-Columbian period, profound technological and social advances occurred, and population levels over the hemisphere grew from a few hundred to millions of people. The changes that occurred in these societies, and the remains they left behind, have long held a fascination for archaeological researchers in eastern North America. The first monograph produced by the Smithsonian Institution, in fact, was devoted to the mounds and earthworks of the Mississippi and Ohio River Valleys (Squier and Davis, 1848). While this early literature provided valuable descriptions of sites since destroyed or modified by the growth of our own civilization, many of the ideas advanced about the mound builders themselves were quite fanciful, invoking peoples from all over the world (Silverberg, 1968). By the 1880s, however, technical monographs and papers documenting archaeological investigations in the East were appearing every year, by individuals in institutions like the Smithsonian's Bureau of American Ethnology and the Harvard Peabody Museum, as well as through the efforts of many private citizens. A major triumph of late nineteenth-century American archaeology was the demonstration, based on survey and excavation data from hundreds of sites, that the mounds and earthworks were the work of American Indians (Thomas, 1892; Willey and Sabloff, 1974, pp. 49–50).

Archaeological research in the East grew dramatically throughout the twentieth century. The discipline has been the beneficiary of major federal support since the earliest years of the Great Depression, when huge field projects were funded to provide relief to unemployed workers, support continuing with the reservoir salvage programs of the 1940s and 1950s (Lyons, 1996). The passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966, mandating archaeological survey and excavation in cases where significant historic properties are threatened by federally funded or licensed activities, has prompted a vast amount of fieldwork and reporting in recent years (Fagan, 2000; Smith and Ehrenhard, 1991). As a result, a massive technical literature documents the development of North American Indian culture, much of it in the form of highly specialized archaeological reports, encompassing far more information than any one person can readily access or read. Accordingly, our goal in this chapter is to provide a broad general synthesis of this research, and let the reader know where to go to find

more specific data. Our discussion spans the period of initial human colonization in the late Pleistocene through the mid-seventeenth century, and focuses on changes within American Indian societies. Major research findings from the 150 years of archaeological investigation that has occurred in eastern North America are emphasized, as well as the kinds of questions that remain to be answered. Several detailed syntheses on eastern North American prehistoric and early historic period archaeology exist, to which the interested reader is referred (Anderson and Mainfort, 2002; Anderson and Sassaman, 1996; Bense, 1994; Brown, 1994; Fagan, 2000; Grumet, 1995; Sassaman and Anderson, 1996; Smith, 1986, 1992a; Snow, 1980; Steponaitis, 1986; Willey and Sabloff, 1974).

In the course of presenting the results of archaeological research in the East, we will also outline some of the major research topics and questions that occupy the attention of contemporary scholars, as well as various competing positions when no clear agreement exists. For some of these subjects, such as the date of initial human colonization, or why complex agricultural societies arose in some areas and not in others, there are no clear answers, and the debate can be highly contentious, with research going in a number of directions. In chronological order, we discuss: (1) the peopling of the New World, (2) the beginnings of sedentary life, (3) increasing ceremonialism, (4) the rise of cultivation, (5) the beginnings of political complexity, and (6) the effects of European contact. In our discussion we will frequently refer to major time periods that also correspond to major periods of cultural development across the region. Briefly, these include (1) the Paleoindian period, which lasted from the unknown date of initial colonization until approximately 11,000 BP (years before present) or 9000 BC, and encompassed the highly mobile hunting and gathering ice-age inhabitants of the region; (2) the Archaic period from 9000 to 1000 BC, which included populations adapted to hunting and gathering, yet that also witnessed the beginnings of plant domestication, the construction of ceremonial mounds and earthworks, and the establishment of long-distance exchange networks across the region; (3) the Woodland period, which lasted from 1000 BC to AD 1000 in the Southeast, and until European contact in the Northeast, and was characterized by the widespread adoption of pottery, simple agriculture, earthen mound construction, and settled village life; and (4) the Mississippian period, which lasted from AD 1000 to 1650 in the Southeast, and was characterized by the emergence of chiefdoms, societies with hereditary rulers supported by tribute-based economies, and in many areas highly dependent on intensive maize agriculture.

The Peopling of the Americas

Archaeologists have long been interested in beginnings . . . what are the first stone tools like, where did plant and animal domestication occur, what is the earliest evidence for the use of fire, or artwork, or language, and so on. Careers have been made and in some cases tarnished by this quest for primacy. While it has become fashionable and indeed correct to say that the goals of archaeology include the resolution of broad adaptational patterns and historical processes, as well as the reconstruction of specific events and lifeways, great renown still accrues to the earliest sites of a particular type and, of course, to their discoverers. Resolving the origins of the first Americans, or Paleoindians, is no exception to this trend. While hundreds of archaeological sites are excavated in the New World every year, the popular media typically devotes consider-

able attention to those few for which a great antiquity has been advanced. While sites dating back 15, 20, and even 30 thousand years have been reported from time to time, until quite recently the evidence in support of these claims was almost invariably found to be deficient in some respect (e.g., Dincauze, 1984). Until a few years ago, in fact, no sites more than roughly 13,000 years old were accepted by more than a few members of the profession. In 1997, however, after years of debate, a site in Chile that had been dated to 15,000 years ago was accepted as valid by many archaeologists (Meltzer et al., 1997). With this finding, it became apparent that people were present in the New World much longer than previously thought, a somewhat revolutionary interpretation.

Throughout prehistory, Indians across the Americas made spear and arrow points of stone, bone, or ivory. These tools exhibit appreciable stylistic and technological variability, and as a result many forms can be dated to within a few hundred or at the most a thousand or so years. As such, the occurrence of diagnostic projectile points is one way archaeologists can quickly identify the approximate age of particular sites. Most sequences of cultural development in the Eastern Woodlands, particularly prior to the development of radiocarbon and other dating procedures, in fact, have been based on sequences of projectile point forms and, after about 3,000 years ago, when the use of ceramics became widespread, pottery types.

In 1926 a distinctive type of projectile point, characterized by a pronounced thinning flake scar running upward from the base on each face, was found in association with an extinct form of bison at Folsom, New Mexico. While these points had been reported in the technical literature prior to this, their great antiquity had not been recognized. With the Folsom discovery, which was witnessed by some of the prominent archaeologists of the day, "fluted" points were recognized as a signature of early human occupation, and they were soon found to occur throughout North America in areas that had not been covered with ice sheets or glacial lakes during the Late Pleistocene. A number of stylistic variants or types of fluted points were soon recognized, of which the earliest stratigraphically was called Clovis, after a town in eastern New Mexico near where this antiquity was demonstrated.

From the 1920s onward fluted points were found in great numbers – more than 12,000 have now been reported in the literature from the United States and Canada – sometimes in direct association with the butchered remains of large, extinct animals such as mammoth, mastodon, ground sloth, and a giant form of bison (Anderson and Faught, 1998, 2000). By the 1960s Clovis points had been radiocarbon dated to around 13,000 years ago, and were assumed to represent the first wave of colonization by people from the Old World, big game hunters that were so successful that they drove many species to extinction (Haynes, 1992). Whether what is now called the "overkill" model is correct remains a subject of heated debate among paleontologists and archaeologists, but there is one compelling piece of evidence to support it. Over the past two million years upwards of ten complete glacial-interglacial cycles have occurred worldwide, on a periodicity of about 100,000 years, and only at the end of the last one, about the time the first peoples arrived, did massive extinctions occur in North and South America. How humans may have brought about or contributed to such a dramatic event in the history of life is unknown, although superb hunting abilities, the introduction of new diseases, or the uncontrolled or widespread use of fire have all been suggested mechanisms, none of which are widely accepted. Some

archaeologists, in fact, question whether these people hunted big game very often or in many areas, particularly in eastern North America, suggesting instead that they were likely more generalized foragers, exploiting a wide range of animals and plants (Meltzer and Smith, 1986). Unfortunately, few sites yielding well-preserved subsistence remains have been found anywhere in the East at present, so this argument remains unresolved.

Throughout most of the twentieth century, efforts to document earlier, pre-Clovis cultures in the Americas were singularly unsuccessful. While many such sites were proposed, and sometimes received great fanfare, as each came to be carefully examined doubts would emerge. Learned papers were written on the rigorous standards of evidence needed to unequivocally demonstrate pre-Clovis occupations, and each new discovery was evaluated by them and debunked or deemed questionable (e.g., Dincauze, 1984; Fidel, 2000). As a result, by the 1960s it became conventional wisdom that the makers of Clovis points were the first people in the hemisphere, and that they arrived around 13,000 years ago. Earlier sites continued to be announced, and since no diagnostic projectile points were found at these locations, it was thought by some archaeologists that pre-Clovis sites would be "pre-projectile point" as well, that is, with simple flaked stone tool industries.

Eastern North America produced its share of these possible pre-Clovis sites. The most controversial was Meadowcroft Rock shelter in Pennsylvania, where nondescript tools were found in strata with associated radiocarbon dates as early as 17,650 BC (Adovasio et al., 1978). The Meadowcroft dates were immediately questioned, and an extensive and sometimes acrimonious debate has been fought back and forth in the journals for almost 20 years with no end in sight (e.g., Haynes, 1992). Meadowcroft was not alone, however. At the Page-Ladson site in northern Florida, several radiocarbon dates between 14,000 and 14,500 BP were obtained from a level containing a mastodon tusk with possible cut marks on it (Dunbar and Webb, 1996). A radiocarbon date of 12,030±200 (*c.*14,000 BP) was obtained from the Little Salt Springs site in southern Florida on a wooden spear apparently used to kill a giant Pleistocene tortoise (Clausen et al., 1979).

But the nail in the coffin for the view of the primacy of the Clovis culture did not come from eastern North America, but from excavations at the Monte Verde site in Chile (Dillehay, 1989, 1997). Here in the extreme end of the hemisphere, an occupation dating back to around 14,000 years ago was found and extensively documented. Like the original Folsom discovery, Monte Verde was visited by a blue ribbon panel of experts, including some of the top proponents of the "Clovis First Model," who pronounced it authentic (Meltzer et al., 1997). The one difference, however, is that this time the visit occurred after the excavations were over, and so a few skeptics remain unconvinced (i.e., Fiedel, 1999, 2000). Their position, however, is now viewed about the same way that scholars advancing pre-Clovis sites were received previously. Breaking the "Clovis Barrier" however, took archaeologists almost three-quarters of a century, and in the new frontier we no longer have any clear idea as to when people actually did arrive, although most scholars think 15,000 years ago is a probable minimum age.

If people could reach lower South America by 14,000 years ago, they could have likely reached most other areas by then or even earlier, including eastern North America. It is now widely accepted that there were people in the Americas prior to the Clovis

culture, and the hunt is on for their sites. At both the Cactus Hill site in Virginia and the Topper site in South Carolina, stone tool industries have been found stratigraphically below Clovis, although dating and associations remain somewhat uncertain (Goodyear, 2000; McAvoy and McAvoy, 1997). Interestingly, at Cactus Hill large triangular stone projectile points were found in the lowest levels which have been traditionally assumed to date much later in time. Pre-Clovis, accordingly, may not necessary have been pre-projectile point. Instead, the points that were used by these first peoples resembled later forms, and are only now being recognized. The fact these early remains are so few and far between, however, suggests that they likely represent visits by very small groups who died without issue, so-called "failed migrations," or else the remains of early continuous settlement, by such low numbers of people that the archaeological record they produced is nearly invisible.

Where the distinctive Clovis fluted point manufacturing technology itself originated remains unknown, however, and appreciable effort has been directed to locating source areas, in places as far removed as extreme northeastern Asia, Alaska, on the High Plains, in the Southeast, or even the Upper Paleolithic of western Europe. To this day we don't know where the "first" fluted points were made. Even though by far and away the greatest numbers of fluted points occur in eastern North America – almost ten times as many occur east of the Mississippi than west of this drainage – only a few scholars have argued that Clovis technology could have originated in this region. It remains identified, perhaps incorrectly, as a High Plains/southwestern culture, a lingering legacy of the fact that this was where the first major sites were found. Perhaps the most important archaeological development in recent years has been the profession's shift away from the Clovis first model. A major research focus for the foreseeable future, however, will continue to be "When and how were the Americas first peopled?"

Settling In: Beginnings of Sedentism in Eastern North America

The end of Clovis culture occurred about 12,500 BP, about the same time that the major Late Pleistocene extinctions were over. The last 1,500 years of the Paleoindian period, from 12,500 to 11,000 BP, witnessed a diversification of point forms across the Eastern Woodlands, and a dramatic increase in the number of sites. Populations were clearly growing, although we remain uncertain about the rate. Many of the new point forms were restricted to fairly small areas, no more than a few hundred miles in extent, and it is thought that these marked the beginnings of distinctive subregional cultures. Projectile point use changed as well, from lanceolate-shaped forms used primarily for spearing game, to serrated forms that were used as combination spear points and knives. Point edges were sharpened over and over by the removal of small flakes until some showed distinct beveling along their margins. The change in point forms is thought due, in part, to an increased need to kill and process large numbers of small animals, such as deer, rather than the occasional larger animals like mammoth or mastodon that were taken previously. While this trend toward smaller game is undoubtedly correct, it is also likely that human populations at all time levels, including the earliest Paleoindian peoples, ate whatever they could get when food supplies were low.

The Archaic period, which begins after 11,000 BP, was traditionally thought to have been the time when human populations in eastern North America became fully adapted

to post-glacial climate, vegetation, and animal populations. Over time, and as human populations grew, group ranges became progressively smaller, first perhaps along one or more river systems, then to within a single drainage, and finally to within portions of single drainages. Until recently, conventional wisdom had it that Archaic peoples were primarily mobile hunters and gatherers. There was little evidence for sedentism, the permanent, year-round occupation of specific locations. As group ranges contracted, and peoples spent more and more time in smaller and smaller areas, some places came to be visited over and over again. In some areas, both on the coast and along rivers in the interior, massive piles of shellfish and other debris ("midden" in archaeological parlance) accumulated, suggesting extended occupations. These sites only rarely produced evidence for substantial structures that could have been used year round, however, and examination of the plant and animal remains (to determine what season they were collected) suggested that many interior sites were seasonal rather than year-round occupations (Marquardt and Watson, 1983).

Existing models of settlement during the Early Archaic period, from *c.*11,000 to 8500 BP, include appreciable seasonal movement of small band-level societies (i.e., small groups of *c.*25–50 people related by kinship and marriage ties), with annual fall aggregation events by multiple bands for trade and marriage purposes. That extensive group movement occurred is accepted by everyone, although appreciable debate centers on the details, such as how often and how far people may have moved from season to season, where aggregation events may have occurred and how many people may have participated, and what species of plants and animals were exploited. Wild plant and animal foods made up the entire diet, although local populations were undoubtedly growing increasingly familiar with their natural environment, and some plant species that were later domesticated may have begun to be collected intensively at this time.

By the Middle Archaic period, from *c.*8500 to 5500 BP, there is evidence for more restricted mobility in many parts of the region, something unquestionably brought on, in part, by increasing population levels. Post-glacial warming was at its peak at this time, with average temperatures warmer than at any point in the last 10,000 years, save perhaps for the past decade. As such, this mid-Holocene warm interval may offer clues to what climate might be like in a few decades if global warming trends continue (Anderson, 2001). Some areas in eastern North America appear to have been abandoned or greatly depopulated, particularly portions of the southeastern Gulf and Atlantic coastal plains, where pine forests replaced hardwoods, providing less food for both game animals and the human groups that preyed upon them. What conditions were like for human populations over the region, in fact, is the subject of appreciable research and debate. Large sites characterized by dense accumulations of occupational debris, particularly shellfish, for example, appeared in a number of the major river valleys in the Southeast and Midwest, and towards the end of the period large shell middens were present along the coast as well. The occurrence of these sites has long been thought to have been due, in part, to a retrenchment of populations into particularly favored areas during the mid-Holocene.

Large sites continued to occur in many areas of the Southeast and Midwest throughout the Late Archaic period, from approximately 5500–3000 BP. In many cases the accumulated deposits were several feet thick, and had large numbers of firepits, human burials, and postholes from structures. Appreciable research has been directed to delimiting whether these were occupied seasonally or year round, and hence reflect the

beginnings of true sedentism. While most occupations continued to be seasonal, some sites do indeed appear to have been occupied throughout the year, at least in coastal areas, such as at Horr's Island in southern Florida (Russo, 1991). Conversely, there is little evidence of sedentary life in New England during the Middle Archaic, although there are some (seasonally?) occupied shell middens (Snow, 1980).

During the Middle and Late Archaic periods across much of eastern North America, appreciable evidence appears for substantial house construction activity (Sassaman and Ledbetter, 1996), the beginnings of violent conflict between groups (Maria Smith, 1996), the establishment of long-distance trading networks spanning much of the region (Johnson, 1994) and, as will be detailed in the next section of this chapter, increasing ceremonialism manifested in large-scale earthwork construction. Wild plants were utilized extensively, and by the Late Archaic, some local plants were being cultivated for their starchy or oily seeds, such as chenopodium, sunflower, and maygrass, as well as a local squash (B. Smith, 1992a; Cowan, 1997). The Late Archaic also witnessed the so-called "container revolution" in which pottery or stone vessels appeared from Florida through the Carolinas, but this technology did not spread very far until the subsequent Woodland period (B. Smith, 1986; Sassaman, 1993). How sedentism ties in with all of these other changes that were occurring is a topic that will receive much more research in the near future. Crucial to this will be the careful analysis of seasonal indicators found in archaeological sites, such as plant and animal resources available only at certain times of the year.

Ceremonialism, Warfare, and Exchange

While all modern human groups engage in religious and ritual activity, in many hunting and gathering societies archaeological evidence for this kind of behavior tends to be rare. The same is true in eastern North America, at least during the Paleoindian and Early Archaic periods. Few clearly ritual or ceremonial artifacts are known, although in some areas unusually large and well-made projectile points have been found that are thought to have been used in some kind of ritual behavior, possibly intended to promote interaction and alliances between groups (Walthall and Koldehoff, 1998). Typically, burials tend to have few associated grave goods, as was the case at the terminal Early Archaic/initial Middle Archaic period Windover site in Florida, where bodies were wrapped in cloth and placed in pond/bog deposits, offering excellent preservation of the textiles, but also showing little else was present (Doran and Dickel, 1988). Exceptions sometimes do occur, such as at the Sloan site late Paleoindian period cemetery area in northeast Arkansas, where a number of burials were found with clusters of finely made stone tools, many in mint condition (Morse, 1997). Caches of unusually well-made stone tools are also sometimes found with no evidence for an associated burial, which may also reflect some kind of ceremonial behavior. Elaborate artwork on cave or rockshelter surfaces, or rock art in general, however, has not been well documented until the Woodland period and after in eastern North America (Simak et al., 1997).

Beginning in the Middle Archaic, evidence for extensive ceremonial behavior appears in a number of parts of eastern North America. Burials with elaborate grave goods of worked shell, bone, stone, and copper, signaling individual status and in some cases group affiliation, appeared in many parts of the region. Many of these

goods were exchanged over great distances, suggesting increased interaction between groups. Not all of this interaction was friendly, as many burials resulted from violent death, as evidenced by broken bones, embedded projectile points, and scalping marks. As populations grew and mobility decreased, competition and interaction between groups appears to have increased, perhaps as people were forced closer and closer together on the landscape. This competition was held in a number of arenas, such as for personal status items as indicated by the growth in exchange networks, for food or other natural resources as suggested by the increased evidence for warfare, and in collective ceremonial behavior, as reflected in the construction and use of elaborate mound centers. Some of these processes may have been mutually exclusive while others worked in tandem.

While some scholars might argue that ceremonialism would more likely have increased following the adoption of a sedentary lifestyle, complex ceremonialism in the form of mound building is actually earlier than any conclusive evidence for sedentism in many parts of eastern North America. Years ago, James Tuck (McGhee and Tuck, 1977) demonstrated burial mound construction at the L'Anse Amour site in Labrador dating back to 8000 BP. This was a small mound constructed of stone and earth covering the burial of a 12-year-old child. The people who constructed this monument were seasonally mobile hunters and gatherers.

In the lower Mississippi Valley, the conventional archaeological wisdom until quite recently held that earthen mound construction was first practiced by the Poverty Point culture of the Late Archaic period, from around 4200 to 3000 BP. Poverty Point is an elaborate site located in northeast Louisiana with a massive bird effigy mound some 70 feet high, making it the second tallest earthen mound in Eastern North America. In addition, a number of smaller mounds are nearby, and the primary mound fronts on an elaborate complex of six concentric earthen rings some 1,200 meters (¾ mile) in diameter. There is an abundance of occupational debris, suggesting many people lived at the site, although at present it is not known whether residence was year-round or less permanent. Poverty Point was the largest of a number of contemporaneous mound centers in the vicinity of the lower Mississippi Valley, and these peoples exchanged a wide range of materials back and forth, and obtained raw materials from across much of the lower Southeast and into parts of the Midwest. That such an elaborate culture could seemingly spring up so quickly, however, puzzled archaeologists for many years (Gibson, 1996b).

We now know that massive earthen mound complexes were being built at a much earlier time in parts of the region, well back into the Middle Archaic period prior to 5000 BP (Russo, 1994a). In Louisiana, the Frenchman's Bend site has radiocarbon dates between 5100 and 5600 BP, the Hedgepeth site has dates from 4900 to 7500 BP, and the Watson Brake site has dates from 5300 to 5900 BP (Saunders et al., 1994, 1997; Gibson, 1996a). These are not isolated mounds, but are huge complexes with multiple mounds in some cases connected by earthen embankments. One of the most complex sites is Watson's Brake, where the main period of construction occurred between about 5400 to 5000 BP (Saunders et al., 1997). This site consists of 11 mounds, seven of which are connected by a circular ridge/midden deposit. The largest mound is over 7 meters high, and the entire complex extends almost 300 meters across. Analyses of plant and animal remains from the site suggest seasonal occupation, in the spring, summer, and fall. The recognition of these large, complex Middle Archaic mound sites, dating up to 2,000 years earlier than Poverty Point, has been another revolution-

ary change in our understanding of eastern North American prehistory in recent years, comparable to the implications of the Monte Verde dating (Russo, 1994a).

These Louisiana sites are not alone in their antiquity. Mound sites from Florida are also very early, although in this region both shell and earth were used as construction materials (Russo, 1994b). At the Horr's Island site on the southwest Florida coast, a complex arrangement of mounds was constructed between 4600 and 5000 BP. Analysis of subsistence remains indicates that this site was occupied year around, furthermore, indicating true sedentism, the earliest evidence for this in the region. Apparently the abundant marine resources allowed an early sedentary lifestyle. Excavations at Horr's Island found minimal evidence for social differentiation, suggesting the mound building was likely the work of an egalitarian society, albeit one in which some groups may have had higher status or prestige than others (Russo, 1991). Other societies were also building elaborate mounds at an early date. The Tick Island mound site in northeastern Florida, for example, was built about 5,000 to 5,500 years ago (Russo, 1994b, pp. 106–8). Rock and earthen mounds were also built in the Nebo Hill culture of the lower Missouri River valley, and in the Helton and Titterington phase cultures of Illinois and Missouri from 5000 to 4000 BP (Claassen, 1996, p. 243).

Other elaborate Middle and Late Archaic cultures are known from across eastern North America, among which perhaps the best known archaeologically are the Shell Mound Archaic cultures of the mid-South and lower Midwest (Claassen, 1996; Marquardt and Watson, 1983), the Benton Interaction Sphere in the lower mid-South (Johnson and Brookes, 1989), the Stallings Island Culture of Georgia and South Carolina (Sassaman, 1993), the Mount Taylor culture of the St. Johns river valley of northeastern Florida (Piatak, 1994), and the Old Copper culture of the Great Lakes region (Stoltman, 1986). All appear to have been involved at varying levels of participation in the long-distance exchange networks spanning much of the region at this time. While still considered egalitarian societies, it is clear that some were fairly complex, and that some individuals had much higher status than others, and likely competed with other such individuals in their own and other societies for recognition and leadership in warfare, exchange, and probably the direction of public construction episodes and ceremony.

What is the significance of mound building activity? Mike Russo (1994b: 108) believes that the early mounds served the same purposes as later mound constructions, that is, they were built as "sacred places, as burial places, as centers of ceremony and ritual, and as territorial markers" and that mound building may have been a "mechanism for integrating the society." Were these populations sedentary? Jon Gibson (1994) points out that many of these sites are located in highly favorable ecological niches that might have promoted a sedentary lifestyle. He goes on to note, however, that we simply do not have firm archaeological data, in the form of sufficient food remains, house remains, and trash deposits, to determine if many early mound builders were sedentary or mobile hunter-gatherers. Research will continue on this problem of the relationship of sedentism and mound building, as well as how these factors tie in to evidence for exchange, warfare, and more complex forms of social organization.

The Emergence of Agriculture

Eastern North America represents one of the few areas on earth where the independent domestication and subsequent extensive cultivation of a number of native plant

species is thought to have occurred. Between 4000 and 3000 BP, at the close of the Late Archaic period, morphological changes indicative of domestication are observed in a number of local plants whose remains have been found on archaeological sites (Smith, 1992a, p. 287). These changes include an increase in seed size to well beyond the average occurring in wild populations in sunflower (*Helianthus annus*) and sumpweed (*Iva annua*), and a decrease in seed coat thickness in goosefoot (*Chenopodium berlandieri*). Other plants that were domesticated include maygrass (*Phalaris caroliniana*), knotweed (*Polygonum erectum*), little barley (*Hordeum pusillum*), and local cucurbits or gourds. Knotweed, maygrass, and little barley are assumed to have been cultivated since they are found in archaeological settings far outside their natural range. It has recently been argued that a local variety of squash was also domesticated (Cowan, 1997). Taken together, these species are sometimes referred to as the "Eastern Agricultural Complex." This was apparently a true independent domestication of local plants by indigenous populations, who had been collecting them for millennia prior to this in their wild state.

Tropical species like maize, tobacco, and beans appear to have come into the East appreciably later, well into the Woodland period. These introductions occurred well after local domestication was under way, although evidence for earlier contact has not been unequivocally ruled out. It should be noted in passing that these tropical domesticates are the only "artifacts" of unequivocal, albeit very indirect Mesoamerican origin known from eastern North America. That is, there is no evidence at present for direct contact between the two regions, although over time agricultural products appear to have moved across the intervening areas, probably as they were adopted from group to group. The nutritional value of the Eastern Agricultural Complex plants is extremely high, with some "oily seeds" like sunflower and marshelder proving to be excellent sources of fat, and other "starchy seeds" like goosefoot, maygrass, and knotweed excellent sources of carbohydrates. Harvest yields comparable to those for maize can be obtained from some of these plants, on the order of 500 to 1,000 or more kg of seeds per hectare, although whether yields of this magnitude were obtained in the prehistoric Eastern Woodlands remains unknown (Smith, 1992a, p. 177). The role of these plants in the economies of eastern North American populations has become an important area of research. Bruce Smith (1986) has suggested that Woodland peoples in some parts of the mid-South and lower Midwest may have grown large fields of Chenopodium and other crops, and were true agriculturists, not simple gardeners. Human paleofeces recovered from Salts Cave in Kentucky show that some of these plants made a substantial contribution to the diet of Woodland peoples in this area. Pollen analyses suggest that fairly extensive forest clearing was taking place in some parts of the region by the middle portion of the Woodland period, additional evidence for possible cultivation. Taken together, these lines of evidence suggest that cultivation of plants was growing increasingly important (Smith, 1992b, pp. 108–11).

Two competing theories about how the process of domestication occurred are now debated. The first, the "weedy floodplain" hypothesis, suggests that these plants were first collected from and then encouraged to grow in the disturbed habitats in and near major earth and shell mound sites of the mid-South and lower Midwest (Smith, 1992a). An alternative hypothesis suggests that these plants were collected in adjoining upland areas, or in more hilly and mountainous parts of the Southeast like the Ozarks and the Cumberland Plateau, since that is where many of the domesticated specimens are found