



WILEY-  
BLACKWELL



A · M · E · R · I · C · A · N  
A N T H R O P O L O G I C A L  
A S S O C I A T I O N

---

Between Powhatan and Quirank: Reconstructing Monacan Culture and History in the Context of Jamestown

Author(s): Jeffrey L. Hantman

Source: *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 92, No. 3 (Sep., 1990), pp. 676-690

Published by: [Blackwell Publishing](#) on behalf of the [American Anthropological Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/680342>

Accessed: 11/02/2011 14:13

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=black>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



*Blackwell Publishing and American Anthropological Association are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to American Anthropologist.*

<http://www.jstor.org>

## Between Powhatan and Quirank: Reconstructing Monacan Culture and History in the Context of Jamestown

---

*One of the more enigmatic events in the history of European colonization in the New World is the generally tolerant reception the Jamestown colonists received in 1607 from Powhatan, the paramount chief of the Powhatan people of Tidewater Virginia. Understanding that event requires an anthropological study of the complex sociopolitical relations between the coastal Powhatan and the less-well-known interior cultures of the native world. This article is primarily concerned with describing one such interior culture, the Monacan, a people who ethnohistoric texts suggest were less complex than, and a principal enemy of, the Powhatan. Analysis of those texts, and insights derived from archeology, provide a picture of the Monacan that leads to a different perspective on the context of the Jamestown settlement, and on relations of power between indigenous cultures in the precontact world.*

---

THE HISTORY OF EUROPEAN COLONIAL EXPANSION following the late 15th century is riddled with a multitude of curious and seemingly inexplicable encounters between native cultures and Europeans, which demand the conjoining of historical and anthropological methods. Captain Cook's interaction with the Hawaiians and the conditions of his murder (Sahlins 1985), Columbus's initial "discovery" of Native Americans—"the most astonishing encounter of our history" (Todorov 1984:4), and the ambiguous response of Montezuma II to Cortes's conquest of Mexico (Conrad and Demarest 1984; Todorov 1984) have all been the subject of recent anthropological forays into historical events. To this list I add one more well-known, yet equally equivocal moment in the long history of European expansion: the response of the paramount chief Powhatan (Wahunsunacock) to the permanent settlement of English colonists at Jamestown in 1607.

The late 16th century witnessed at least two prior attempts at European colonization in the Virginia Tidewater area (one Spanish and one English), both of which failed to establish a permanent "beachhead" in the colonial effort (Gradie 1988; Lewis and Loomie 1953; Quinn 1985). Yet in 1607, just slightly more than 100 Europeans engaged in a private commercial venture were able to sail 40 miles up the James River and establish an English presence permanently in the midst of Powhatan's world at James Fort, later to be called Jamestown (Barbour 1986:I:7). Within a few years, the illustrious colonist Captain John Smith would be ritually initiated into Powhatan society (Barbour 1986:I:8); Powhatan's daughter Pocahontas would marry the Englishman John Rolfe in a quasi-royal marriage alliance enthusiastically approved by then governor of the colony Thomas Dale (Woodward 1969:160–167), and the Englishmen and Indians would engage in a cautiously cooperative relationship (Potter 1989). This, of course, is now the stuff of popular American folklore. Given the prior history of European intrusion into the Tidewater region, however, the actions of the natives immediately following 1607 are exceedingly curious. To be sure, occasional hostilities occurred (Morgan 1975), and in par-

ticular, the Paspahegh villagers within whose hunting territory Jamestown was settled were particularly militant against the fort and its inhabitants (Barbour 1986:I:99). However, in the earliest years of contact, the relationship between the Europeans and Indians generally was tolerant, if not friendly. One must ask, as J. Frederick Fausz recently wrote in pithy fashion, “Why did Powhatan and his people allow Jamestown to survive?” (Fausz 1987:45).

There is no ready answer to this question at present, despite the recognition by historians and anthropologists alike that this cultural interaction in the James River dramatically affected subsequent American history (Fausz 1987:145), as well as the course of Indian adjustment to European settlement (Lurie 1959). One avenue of research that can help to resolve this historical enigma is to expand the geographic and cultural focus of attention beyond the Virginia Tidewater theater in which the direct contact between the English and Powhatan took place. Historians have long considered the impact of other European nations on the actions of the English in Virginia. Far less attention has been cast upon the complex native cultural matrix within which the Powhatan acted. One reason for this is the relative paucity of ethnohistorical data relating to the neighboring noncoastal groups who, prior to the overwhelming impact of the European maritime economy, were critical elements in native cultural interaction. Many groups who occupied the continental interior, and who did not interact directly with Europeans, remain even today only vaguely known (Smith 1986). They are metaphorically much like Sahlin’s “remote islands,” whose obscure histories “deserve a place alongside the self-contemplation of the European past—or the history of ‘civilizations’—for their own remarkable contributions to an historical understanding” (Sahlins 1985:72).

In the context of Jamestown, “the remote island” we still need to know is the Monacan—a linguistically distinct (Siouan) group who occupied the interior region of Virginia west of the Tidewater-based, Algonquian-speaking Powhatan chiefdom (Figure 1).

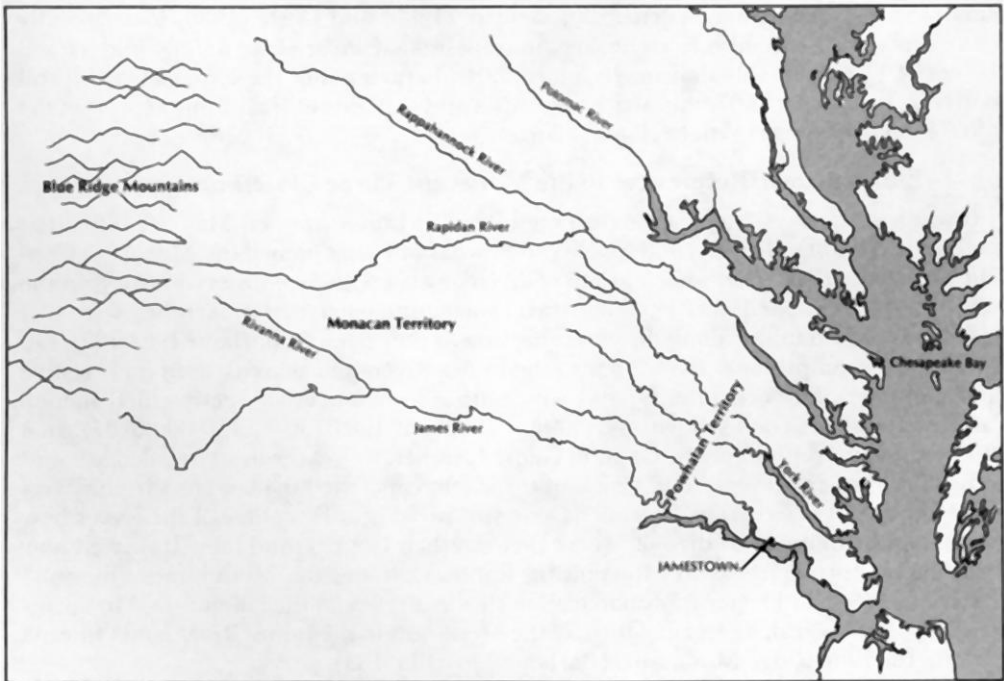


Figure 1  
Monacan and Powhatan territory in Virginia, circa 1607.

While the Powhatan world was characterized by a complex and ever-fluctuating coastal network of friends and enemies, tributaries and nontributaries (Potter 1982; Rountree 1989; Turner 1985), it is the Monacan who are most often cited as the principal enemy with which Powhatan was concerned at the time of European contact (Lurie 1959:43; Morgan 1975:72). Yet the English had little contact with the Monacan, and save for a general assessment that they appeared to have been "less complex" and "more loosely organized" than the Powhatan (e.g., Mooney 1907), they are relatively unknown to us. The Monacan are thus typical of the interior cultures described above. Only briefly noted by fragmentary ethnohistoric texts, interpreted through European eyes, or those who chose to talk with Europeans, these people generically became the "barbarians," "chichimecas," or "dead ones" of history. We cannot ignore these continental "remote islands" or continue to accept their history as interpreted vacuously through the words of their conquerors or native enemies. On the contrary, the anthropological reconstruction and study of these cultures at the contact event will "multiply our conceptions of history by the diversity of structures. Suddenly there are [will be] all kinds of new things to consider" (Sahlins 1985:72).

This article is concerned with the writing of Monacan history and culture, reflecting ultimately on critical contingencies potentially created by the Monacan at the event of the Jamestown settlement. The discussion is in three sections. First, I review the information obtained by the Jamestown colonists about the Monacan, and show how those fragmentary texts became crystallized into one brief ethnographic synthesis that has affected cultural reconstructions of the Monacan throughout the subsequent four centuries. Next, a critical evaluation of the language of that synthesis suggests that such derived interpretations are equivocal at best, given the colonial ethnographic rhetoric of which it consists. In the final section I review archeological data in a preliminary attempt to reconstruct Monacan culture, ideology, and history at and before 1607. The insights derived from archeology lead to some new questions and avenues for future research concerning the Monacan, Monacan-Powhatan relations, and European colonialism in Virginia (and in North America generally). Schrire (1988) and Deetz (1988) have recently made explicit the special role archeology must assume if we are ever to fully understand the era of European colonialism. By more fully characterizing the indigenous cultural matrix in Virginia at 1607, this article describes and explains at least some aspects of the initial native response to that colonial effort.

### **Ethnohistoric References to the Monacan: Three Close Encounters**

It was just ten days after the English set anchor at Jamestown, on May 24, 1607, that the English colonists learned of the polity to Powhatan's west named the Monacan. Captain Christopher Newport took a group of 23 colonists on an exploratory journey up the James River (Barbour 1969:81). Their travel was unimpeded, and in fact they were met by clusters of Indians all along the way, cheering as they passed (Barbour 1964:129). On May 24, they camped near the fall line of the James River, and shared a seemingly festive dinner of pork and beer, brandy, and wine with a local *werowance* (petty chief) named Pawatah (not to be confused with Powhatan) (Barbour 1964:130-133, 1969:86-87). In a letter written most probably by Captain Gabriel Archer, we get the most detailed account of the after-dinner conversation, which, it turns out, concerned the land of Virginia west of the fall line. Archer wrote: "Dynner Done we entred into Discourse of the Ryver how far it might be to the head thereof, where they gat their Copper, and their Iron, and how many Dayes Iornye it was to Monanacah, Rahowacah and the Mountaines Quirank" (Barbour 1969:87). The term Monanacah in this text refers to the land of the Monacans generally, Rahowacah a principal town of the Monacans in the James River, and Quirank refers to the Blue Ridge Mountains (Barbour 1964:130-133).

While at first willing to lead Newport beyond the fall line and into the Piedmont of Virginia, Pawatah had a sudden change of heart, and declined with "a thousand excuses" (Barbour 1964:131), expressed by Archer in the following manner:

he began to tell us of the tedyous travell we should have if wee proceeded any further, that it was a Daye and a halfe Iorney to Monanacah, and if we went to Quirank, we should get no vittailles and be tyred, and sought by all means to disswade our Captayne from going any further: Also he tolde vs y<sup>t</sup> the Monanacah was his Enimye, and that he came Downe at the fall of the leafe and invaded his Countrye. [Barbour 1969:88]

Newport and his group heeded this advice so as not to alienate or offend their Powhatan allies, and the group returned to Jamestown without venturing any farther inland. Archer, however, wrote that an Indian later whispered to him that, in fact, *caquassan* (red stone, copper?) was found in Quirank (Barbour 1969:89, 132).

It was not until August 1608 that a direct encounter with the inhabitants of the Virginia Piedmont transpired. In a new venture into the continental interior, the colonists approached the highest point their boats could travel toward the fall line. There they engaged in a half-hour of hostilities with some Piedmont Indians, which resulted in one, named Amoroleck, being taken captive. Amoroleck became part of a most significantly detailed exchange with John Smith, made possible by the presence of Mosco, an Algonquian interpreter and guide. Smith wrote of his interaction with Amoroleck:

We asked him how many worlds did he know, he replied, he knew no more but that which was under the skie that covered him, which were the Powhatans, with the Monacans, and the Massowomecks, that were higher up in the mountains. Then we asked him what was beyond the mountains, he answered the Sunne: But of anything else he knew nothing; because the woods were not burnt. These and many such questions wee demanded, concerning the Massawomeks, the Monacans, their owne Country. . . . The Monacans he said were their neighbors and friends, and did dwell as they in the hilly Countries by small rivers, living upon rootes and fruits, but chiefly by hunting. The Massawomecks did dwell upon a great water, and had many boats, and so many men that they made warre with all the world. [Barbour 1986:II:175–176]

A third encounter occurred in late September 1608 when the colonists finally crossed over the fall line into Monacan country. The Virginia Company was pressuring the colonists to step up the exploration for minerals, and while a supply boat lay at Jamestown waiting to return with goods and information to England, Captain Newport proceeded upriver. John Smith described this venture as follows:

Captain Newport with 120 chosen men . . . set forward for the discovery of Monacan. . . . Arriving at the Falles we marched by land some fortie myles in two days and a halfe, and so returned downe the same path we went. Two towns we discovered of the Monacans, called Massinacak and Monhemenchouch, the people neither used us well nor ill, yet for our securitie wee tooke one of their pettie werowances and led him bound to conduct us the way. [Barbour 1986:I:238]

After some meager testing and digging for minerals, the colonists returned to Jamestown “being contented to leave this faire, fertill, well-watred countrie” (Barbour 1986:I:238).

These three passages from ethnohistoric texts form the substance of what we know of the Monacan, circa 1607. There were other contexts in which the Monacan were mentioned to the colonists by Powhatan, but they are scattered and fragmentary, and refer typically to the enmity between the neighboring cultures.

These relations were enough, however, to allow John Smith to write what has become the definitive statement on the Monacan in his *Map of Virginia*, published in England at the Oxford University Press in 1612. In the lengthy text accompanying the map, Smith described in some detail the structure and political organization of the societies that occupied the rivers west of the Tidewater, and who were enemies to Powhatan. He first described the James River Monacan people and villages, followed by a separate description of the Rappahanock River Mannahoac people and villages. Having done that, however, he is clear that the Mannahoac villages are confederated with the Monacan. Aspects of the information gathered in the colonists’ explorations west of Jamestown and outlined in the encounters described above are clearly evident in his description. But here, Smith also embellishes upon those encounters, and gives a rather authoritative and synthetic description of the interior polities. The word choices made by Smith are of utmost sig-

nificance, and so the text is presented in its complete form below. A lexical analysis will follow the text.

Upon the head of the Powhatans are the Monacans, whose chiefe habitation is at Russawmeake, unto whome the Mouhemenchughes, the Massinnacacks, the Monahassanuggs, and other nations pay tributs. Upon the head of the river of Toppahannock is a people called Mannahoacks. To these are contributors the Tauxsnitanias, the Shackaconias, the Outponcas, the Tegoneaes, the Whonkentyaes, the Stegarakes, the Hassinnungas, and diverse others, all confederats with the Monacans though many different in language, and be very barbarous living for the most part of wild beests and fruits. . . . [Barbour 1986:I:165]

### Smith's Monacan Ethnography: A Lexical and Contextual Analysis

Reconstructions of Monacan culture have been based almost exclusively on the single paragraph from Smith's 1612 ethnographic description. Beyond the archeological relocation of the named villages (Bushnell 1930, 1935), most attention has focused on the final 27 words of that passage. Anthropologists and historians have continually read the words/phrases *diverse*, *barbarous*, *living for the most part of wild beests and fruits*, and *different in language*, to mean a political organization less complex, an economy less intensive, and a society less unified and centralized than the polity Powhatan had constructed (Custer 1986:157; Mooney 1907:131; Mouer 1983:23; McCary 1957:13). An examination of these four phrases assessing their meaning in the historical context of early 17th-century ethnography brings this interpretation into question. Each is reviewed in turn below.

#### *Divers(e)*

The word *diverse* is an excellent case with which to illustrate the contextual issue in reconstructing Monacan culture through ethnohistoric texts. In modern English, *diverse* signifies such concepts as "different" or "unlike" (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1988). The word *diverse* is inherently appealing to anthropologists. We tend to look for variation and therefore respond instinctively to this word, in the rhetorical manner in which we have been trained as anthropologists, as meaning varied or different. When Smith refers to the towns of Monacan and diverse others, the influence of cultural pluralism and ethnic diversity in the land west of Powhatan is triggered in the modern anthropologist's mind.

The inference is an inappropriate one, however. *Diverse* is perhaps the most common adjective used by the colonists in their writing. Smith (Barbour 1986) used *divers(e)* to refer to the Powhatan ("diverse out of the woods would meet us with corn" [Barbour 1986:I:33]), to game ("plenty of swannes, cranes, geese . . . and divers sorts of fowles" [Barbour 1986:I:43]), as well as to the colonists themselves ("Captain Newport and my selfe with divers others" [Barbour 1986:I:29]). In Smith's writing, *divers(e)* denotes sheer number as often as it does variety or diversity. The *Oxford English Dictionary* confirms this particular archaic use of *diverse* in certain contexts to mean "an indefinite number, several, or sundry." It is entirely plausible that this was the context in which Smith used the term when referring to people, including the Monacan. Rather than implying a group of varied and distinct social groups, the term may have been an innocuous reference to an indefinite number of people or villages whose names were unknown to Smith.

#### *Barbarous*

The use of the word *barbarous* must also be understood contextually. In modern parlance it signifies "uncultured" or "crude," and it is clear that this word was read as a pejorative by scholars from Mooney (1894) to Barbour (1964) when they described the Monacan as "ruder" than the Powhatan. But *barbarous* in its 17th-century context is a value-laden term only in the most generic sense in which Europeans viewed all non-Western people during the colonial era. All people who were not "civilized" were "barbarous," or the equivalent term, "savage" (Clastres 1987). This point has been made so

often by historians and anthropologists in recent years that it requires little elaboration. What is worth noting here is that the terms *barbarous* and *savage* were used to describe the Powhatan as well as to describe the Monacan (Barbour 1986:I:173; Sheehan 1980). It is true that the English eventually came to respect the “civility” of aspects of Powhatan life, and particularly the complexity of their government (Sheehan 1980). That no similar, explicit acknowledgment exists in writing for the Monacan reflects only the paucity of their interaction with the Monacan. At the same time, Smith’s limited description of the Monacan does include some of the same lexicon found in the lengthier descriptions of Powhatan’s sociopolitical structure, including reference to Monacan “kings,” “chief towns,” and hierarchical tributary relations. In summary, as an adjective with meaning specific to the Monacan, the term *barbarous* has no significance beyond placing the Monacan in the European’s inclusive category of Indian. Furthermore, it has no meaning specific to Powhatan-Monacan social and political relations.

#### *Living for the Most Part of Wild Beests and Fruits*

This particular phrase should be readily recognizable as a part of the cultural baggage, or trait list, that invariably accompanied the “barbarian” label in 17th-century ethnography. In the European mind of that era, the practice of European-style agriculture, with bounded fields and predominantly male labor, was equated with civilization itself (Cronon 1983). Those who did not practice agriculture in that manner were, simply, not civilized, and fell into the opposite category of barbarian or savage.

It is likely that the Monacan, like their neighbors the Powhatan, engaged in subsistence practices based in some part on hunting “wild beests” and collecting “fruits.” That point is not in question here. It is also likely that in the particular discourse between men, and depending on the season of the year, any discussion of male activities would be stressed at the expense of the description of the female task of agriculture. However, the absence of mention of domestication is not a denial that the Monacan practiced agriculture, but instead reflects Smith’s lack of direct observation and his acceptance of the barbarian label. In fact, William Strachey in his 1612 *Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania* wrote of the Piedmont, “Poketawes, which by the West Indians (our neighbor) call Maiz, their kind of wheat, is here (in the high land) said to be more plenty than below” (Wright and Freund 1953:34). Another colonist, Captain Peter Wynne also described Monacan country as “very high ground and fertill, being very full of very delicate springes of sweet water” (Wright 1945:10). Thus, the region of Virginia occupied by the Monacan was, at least in two characterizations, a potentially rich agricultural area (cf. Mouer 1983), and the observation by Strachey suggests agriculture was a part of the Monacan world. The phrasing used by Smith should be read more as a cultural epithet than as an accurate portrayal of the Monacan economy.

#### *Different in Language*

The reference to linguistic diversity is seemingly the strongest evidence supporting a model of the Monacan as a loosely organized, diverse polity at the time of the Jamestown colony. Yet, perceptions of cultural superiority and inferiority in a colonial context are frequently expressed, in part, with reference to language. Such metaphors are cultural expressions of power and domination, inevitably equating the failure to speak a singular “correct” language (whether it be English, Greek, Nahuatl, or Algonquian) as a measure of cultural inferiority and political subordination. Todorov makes this point most elegantly when he writes, “each of us is the other’s barbarian, to become such a thing, one need only speak a language of which that other is ignorant: it is merely babble to his ears” (Todorov 1984:190–191). In such a configuration, where language both symbolizes and creates sociopolitical relations, it is expected that the Powhatan would describe their Siouan-speaking neighbors and enemies as some form of “mute,” “ignorant,” or “speakers of strange and unintelligible tongues.” That Smith found a gloss for such Algonquian categories in the phrase “different in language” is perfectly understandable in the context

of 17th-century ethnographic convention. His depiction of linguistic diversity in the region west of the fall line should be understood as the culturally charged, sociopolitical comment that it was, and not an accurate reflection of the unity of Monacan culture.

In summary, Smith's ethnographic depiction of the Monacan may be seen as a rhetorical statement, reflecting cultural biases and perceived relations of power. It follows then that the inference of Monacan inferiority in political and social relations vis-à-vis the Powhatan should be called into question and reevaluated. The similarity in lexicon briefly used by Smith to describe internal sociopolitical affairs and hierarchical relations for both the Monacan and the Powhatan is striking, and hints that the two groups may have been each other's equal, however much year-to-year relations must have fluctuated. Returning to the question posed at the outset of this article, understanding the Jamestown event requires that new light be shed on the Monacan. The contextual reevaluation of the ethnohistoric text provides some of that light, but the resulting image remains blurred. Archeological data offer a unique perspective to help in resolving that ambiguity. These data are discussed in the following section.

### Monacan Archeology

In this section I focus on three aspects of the Monacan Late Woodland (ca. A.D. 800 to A.D. 1607) archeological record in Virginia: (1) settlement history and pattern, (2) evidence for agriculture, and (3) mortuary ritual and mound construction. The data derive principally from systematic archeological research conducted in the region previously by Holland (1978), MacCord (1986), and Mouer (1981, 1983), and studies undertaken in the region by faculty and graduate students at the University of Virginia since 1984 in a research program focusing on Monacan prehistory (Catlin 1986; Dunham 1989; Hantman 1985, 1991; Hantman and Klatka 1989; Klatka et al. 1986; Klein 1988).

#### *Settlement Patterns and History*

A clear pattern in the history of settlement in the Piedmont region is the settlement shift (ca. A.D. 800 to A.D. 1000) to the large, permanent rivers (Holland 1978; Klein 1986). Whereas previously village sites were distributed more evenly across the landscape, following this transition, village sites are found disproportionately on the major drainages. For the Late Woodland period, the James River, for example, appears in archeological context as if it were one continuous site, suggesting an intensive, though shifting, village settlement pattern. This pattern of settlement is reminiscent of that illustrated for the Monacan by Smith in his *Map of Virginia*, based on information supplied by his Powhatan guides, and hints at a Late Woodland-contact era continuity. Most critically, systematic survey suggests that the density of Late Woodland sites in the Piedmont region (Hantman 1985; Klatka et al. 1986; Klatka 1988) is similar to that described for the Tidewater area (e.g., Potter 1982). Of course, many factors affect archeological site density, but to the extent that site density figures may infer population density in Late Woodland Virginia, the two areas (Tidewater/Powhatan, Piedmont/Monacan) appear to have been similar.

#### *Monacan Economy: Evidence for Agriculture*

Archeological survey data demonstrate a correlation between late prehistoric/contact era settlements and particularly high-yield agricultural soils in the Piedmont (Hantman 1985; Holland 1978). The inference of an agricultural economy for the Monacan has been strengthened with the archeological recovery of maize (Butler 1988; Mouer 1983) and squash (Butler 1988) from Late Woodland sites. In addition, analysis of human bone from the Rapidan Mound site (440R1) revealed a  $C_{13}/C_{12}$  ratio indicative of a diet heavily dependent on maize (Holland, Spieden, and Van Roijen 1983:30).

The archeological data base is still extremely small, and any conclusions are inherently, at this point, testable hypotheses. Yet, the combination of the limited ethnobotan-

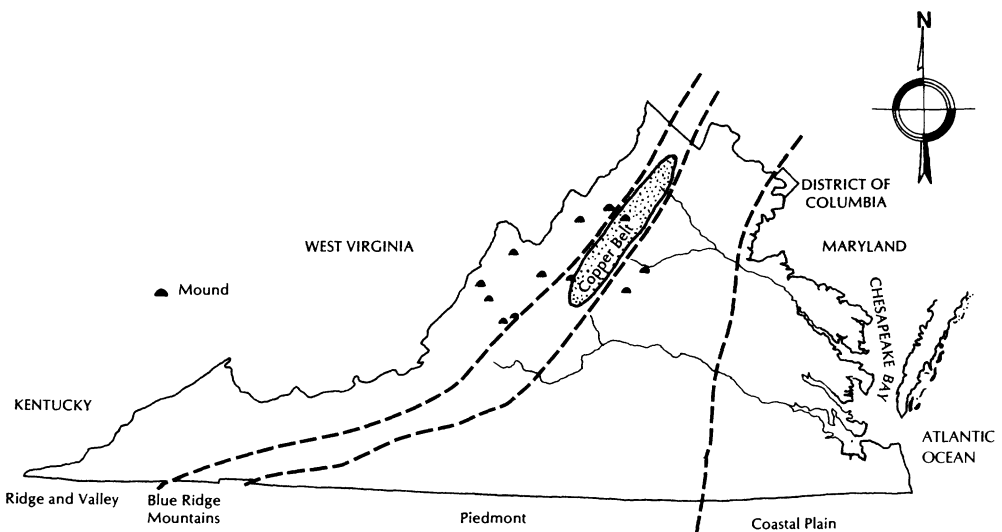


ical and bioarcheological data, with the more abundant settlement pattern data, allow one to hypothesize that the Late Woodland Monacan may have been a relatively numerous and agricultural people. The social and political organization of that population is best explored in a consideration of the mounds that mark the cultural landscape they inhabited.

*Monacan Mounds: Cultural Continuity, Unity, and Hierarchy*

A complex of 12 accretional burial mounds was constructed between the Piedmont and the Ridge and Valley physiographic provinces of Virginia during the Late Woodland period (Figure 2) (Fowke 1894; MacCord 1986; Schmitt 1952). The mound known to virtually every student of American archeology—that excavated by Thomas Jefferson in the 1780s—is one of these 12 mounds. A limited sample of five radiocarbon dates available for four of the mounds places the complex minimally between A.D. 1070 and A.D. 1440 (MacCord 1986:26), but I hypothesize that the two easternmost Piedmont mounds may have been used well into the 17th century. Two lines of evidence lend support to this interpretation. First, Jefferson (1787) wrote of observing a group of Indians pay a ritual visit, circa 1750, to the mound he would later excavate, suggesting the continuing historical and ideological significance of the mound into the postcontact era. Second, an 1835 *Gazetteer* reference (Martin 1835:253) to the latest dated mound, the Rapidan Mound, indicates the presence of upper levels, which were gone by the time contemporary archeologists began their studies in the area. Such a pattern, wherein more recent levels of the mound have been obscured, or removed, is commonplace. Additional archeological testing of this hypothesis is needed and is currently in progress at the Rapidan Mound site (Dunham 1989). In sum, I suggest that the mounds are the product of mortuary rituals conducted by the Monacan before and after 1607, and that they were “the emotional heart of the proto-historic and historic Siouan speakers” (Holland 1978:31) of the region.

As a group, the mounds are relatively homogeneous in form and content (see Fowke 1894; MacCord 1986). They are typically located in floodplains, range in size from 400 to 625 sq m, and originally stood up to five meters in height (Martin 1835:253; MacCord 1986:4). The mounds are frequently adjacent to a large village, and Custer (1987) notes that the mounds are centers of regional settlement systems. Their primary defining characteristic is that they are additive (accretional), with episodes of burial deposits alter-



**Figure 2**  
The distribution of the Monacan mounds (after MacCord 1986).

nating with fill and rock added on over several years or generations (MacCord 1986). The mounds contain a preponderance of secondary bundle burials, although some also have individual interments as well. Systematic excavations in the Rapidan Mound (Dunham 1989; Holland, Spieden, and Van Roijen 1983) lead me to project that there may have been as many as 2,500 individuals buried in that particular mound. Elsewhere, projections of individuals in the mounds range between 50 and 1,000 (MacCord 1986:4).

It is my hypothesis that the homogeneity of the mounds is the physical evidence of a shared ideology and cultural continuity that underlay and defined the Monacan world. This unity included not only the Monacan east of the Blue Ridge Mountains, but also the related (or ancestral) groups on the immediate west side of the Blue Ridge (see Figure 2), a cohesion that is supported as well by studies of lithic exchange (Parker 1988). Dispelling the image of a diverse polity, the mounds can potentially be seen as testimony to a cultural cohesion and continuity. While ethnographic analogs (Bloch and Parry 1982; Huntington and Metcalf 1979) are predictably inconclusive on this point, I suggest that these particular mounds may also reflect a hierarchical political organization with fundamental divisions between chiefly lineages and nonchiefly lineages, as well as between individuals. The logic of this assumption is outlined below.

Archeologists working in the southeastern United States have long postulated that mounds, and the mortuary ritual represented by them, may reflect ancestor cults in which "the bodies of elites were maintained in honored status in shrines that were often physically and symbolically elevated above and maintained apart from the surrounding populace" (Anderson 1990:6; see also DePratter 1983; Knight 1986; Sears 1958). That "the elevation of the bodies of the elites" is not observed in the case of the ossuary-style secondary burials of the Monacan mounds does not preclude an inference of hierarchy. First, secondary burial is a long-term ritual process wherein the ultimate disposition of the bones does not reflect all aspects of post-death treatment, including the common "elevation" of elites in charnel houses and special temporary burial plots (Brown 1979; Hertz 1960; Huntington and Metcalf 1979; Thompson 1986). Further, secondary burial of disarticulated bone bundles has elsewhere been argued to serve the ideological "function" of masking recently derived social inequality behind a symbolic ritual that emphasizes communal equality in the afterlife (Shanks and Tilley 1982).

Whatever the method of final burial, the accretional nature of the Monacan mounds may reflect a hierarchical political system, wherein power is rooted in historical association with ancestors and territory. Accretional mounds have been elsewhere described as serving a role in the maintenance of chiefly lineages and the succession of power and authority (Anderson 1990). As has been described for Mississippian societies, mound stages are thought to represent communal rituals associated in at least some cases with the death of a chief, and the sacred recognition of his successor (Anderson 1990; DePratter 1983:179-180; Knight 1986:675; Schnell, Knight, and Schnell 1981; Steponaitis 1986). The labor in the act of mound building, demanded or contributed, can serve to legitimate and sanctify the elite. Such action is a symbol of domination without which the elite have no power. In chiefdoms based on sacred and ancestral authority, the ideological legitimization of inequality serves to defuse the inherent tension of that inequality. In the Monacan world, which archeological settlement pattern and economic data suggest may have undergone a relatively dramatic social transformation from circa A.D. 800 to A.D. 1000, such mortuary rituals could well have functioned in that manner.

In summary, one plausible interpretation of the extant archeological data is that the Late Woodland Monacan were an agricultural people, characterized by a dense population, whose mortuary ritual may imply the presence of a centralized and hierarchical sociopolitical system. This is admittedly a hypothetical reconstruction at this point, and will require years of future archeological and historical evaluation. However, this reconstruction allows us to consider new perspectives on the role of the Monacan in the aboriginal cultural matrix, and especially in the contact event at Jamestown. "Suddenly, there are all kinds of new things to consider" (Sahlins 1985:72).

## Conclusions

Why did Powhatan allow Jamestown to survive? The reconstruction of Monacan culture and history outlined above provides a new perspective on this historical enigma. We can now see the Monacan as potentially equal participants in processes and events in the native world that the colonial settlers may never have understood, and that generations of historians have failed to appreciate (Axtell 1987:981). It is also possible to see why the Monacan were the potent political force that occupied the thoughts of Powhatan as he precariously, and not always successfully, attempted to maintain and expand his sphere of control in the Tidewater region (Potter 1982).

However, I think the main factor may yet prove to be one that has been only briefly mentioned. That factor is, in a word, copper. In Powhatan's world, copper was a key symbol, if not the source, of power and authority in matters secular and sacred (Potter 1989). Before the arrival of the English, Powhatan's source of copper was "to the west." Recall the curious conversation that occurred at the edge of the fall line in May 1607 when the Powhatan guides refused to take the English farther west into Monacan country. Colonist Gabriel Archer reported that late into the evening a Powhatan Indian guide whispered to him that copper was obtained at Quirank, or the Blue Ridge (Barbour 1964:89). In fact, these copper sources are well documented (Allen 1963; Silliman 1855), and were actively exploited between 1848 and 1944 (Perdue and Martin-Perdue 1988). These copper sources are located in the very center of the Monacan world as I have defined it by the spatial distribution of the accretional mounds (see Figure 2). Geological studies vary widely in their assessment of the richness and quality of the copper in those sources (e.g., Allen 1963; Silliman 1855). Nevertheless, the copper is (and was) there, and was most probably the source of a significant portion of Powhatan's and his petty chief's copper (Rountree 1989:55). The Great Lakes region, as well as North Carolina (Quinn 1985), provided other likely sources as well. Goad (1979) illustrates a similar pattern of maintaining both local and distant (Great Lakes) sources of copper in the Copena area of northern Alabama. Strachey (Wright and Freund 1953:35) notes that Powhatan was aware of Great Lakes copper.

Thus, the Monacan, who were a potent political and military threat to Powhatan, were at the same time a probable source of that which conveyed symbolic power and authority in his own domain. Such a tenuous relation leaves Powhatan, the paramount chief, potentially dependent on the Monacan, who, some ethnohistoric texts suggest, may have been becoming increasingly hostile to the Powhatan. Whether the Monacan were a direct source of copper, or whether they were a conduit of copper obtained from more western sources (Lurie 1959:13), they may well have played a key role in the pre-1607 native copper exchange sphere.

When the English arrived in 1607, they brought European copper for trade. Strachey observed that Powhatan "monopolized all the copper brought into Virginia by the English" (Wright and Freund 1953:107). In return, the English received corn from Powhatan. Even as Powhatan proudly rebuked frequent English offers of a military alliance against his supposed enemies (Barbour 1986:1:236), he eagerly accepted the more economically and symbolically potent gift exchange of copper. Whereas Powhatan previously may have been, in part, dependent on and indebted to the Monacan, with the English arrival and the establishment of the Powhatan and English alliance, the Monacan would have become superfluous.

With that new rich source of copper in place, Powhatan could and did attempt to extend his control over the local petty chiefs by parceling out some copper in exchange for surplus goods, thus enhancing local chiefs' power while making them increasingly indebted to him. At the same time, these new relations with the Europeans allowed him to cut off the neighboring Monacan, who may have been an unpredictable and perhaps dominating exchange partner, one that always loomed as a potential threat that could

upset Powhatan's world in short order. Could it be that herein lies the reason that Jamestown was allowed to survive?

### Postscript

Powhatan's strategy of dealing with the English in 1607 was to engage them in a variety of traditional alliance-type behaviors. In return, Powhatan temporarily benefited politically, and earned himself and his people a vaunted place in American history. Within two years, however, private English traders would circumvent Powhatan's control of the copper trade, and would literally flood the region with copper, reducing its prestige value and eliminating its meaning as a symbol of power (Fausz 1985:239; Potter 1989). Peaceful relations broke down, the nascent tobacco trade soon required the taking of larger amounts of land, and the paramount chiefdom of the Tidewater was gone by 1644, although not without struggle (Fausz 1985). The Monacan kept their distance from the English, or were perhaps kept from them by the Powhatan. As a result, the Monacan have, in general, been cast into the shadows of history (Houck 1984; Merrell 1982). Archeological research currently in progress, including intensive excavations, bioarcheological studies, and a chemical and geological sourcing study of the Virginia copper trade, will continue to evaluate many of the hypotheses outlined in this article. This research will continue to provide a new anthropological perspective on the Jamestown encounter—an event whose understanding requires a far broader cultural and geographic focus than the immediate area in which it occurred.

*Acknowledgments.* Funding for the archeological survey and excavation conducted by the University of Virginia was provided by grants from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. I thank H. Bryan Mitchell, E. Randolph Turner, Catherine Slusser, Robert Carter, Keith Egloff, and Dave Hazzard for their assistance in that regard. Additional support for the preparation of this paper was provided by a University of Virginia Summer Research grant.

I am especially indebted to Gary Dunham, Tom Klatka, and Michael Klein for their efforts on the Monacan archeology program at the University of Virginia. Special thanks to David Anderson, Gary Dunham, Richard Handler, C. G. Holland, Thomas Klatka, Michael Klein, Howard MacCord, Susan McKinnon, Rachel Most, Charles Perdue, Nan Perdue, Steve Plog, Stephen Potter, Don Rice, David Sapir, Carmel Schrire, E. Randolph Turner, and three anonymous reviewers who read and commented on an earlier draft of this article.

### References Cited

- Allen, Rhesa M., Jr.  
1963 Geology and Mineral Resources of Greene and Madison Counties. *Bulletin of the Virginia Division of Mineral Resources* 78:81–85.
- Anderson, David  
1990 Stability and Change in Chiefdom Level Societies: An Examination of Mississippian Political Evolution on the South Atlantic Slope. *In Lamar Archaeology: Mississippian Chiefdoms in the Deep South*. Mark Williams and Gary Shapiro, eds. Birmingham: University of Alabama Press. (In press.)
- Axtell, James  
1987 Colonial America without the Indians: Counterfactual Reflections. *Journal of American History* 73:981–996.
- Barbour, Philip L.  
1964 *The Three Worlds of Captain John Smith*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.  
1969 [ed.] *The Jamestown Voyage under the First Charter, 1606–1609*. 2nd series, Vols. 136–137. London: Hakluyt Society.  
1986 [ed.] *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith (1580–1631)*, Volumes 1–3. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Bloch, Maurice, and Jonathan Parry  
1982 *Death and the Regeneration of Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Brown, James  
1979 Charnel Houses and Mortuary Crypts: Disposal of the Dead in the Middle Woodland Period. *In* Hopewell Archaeology. David S. Brose and N'omi Greber, eds. Pp. 211–219. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press.
- Bushnell, David I.  
1930 The Five Monacan Towns of Virginia, 1607. *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections* 82(12).  
1935 The Mannahoac Tribes in Virginia, 1608. *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections* 94(8).
- Butler, Coleen  
1988 A Botanical Study of Feature 86-3 from the Spessard Site, Fluvanna County, Virginia. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Anthropology, University of Virginia.
- Catlin, Mark  
1986 Regional Research Designs in the Study of Prehistoric Cultural Change: An Analysis of Late Archaic Adaptations in the Middle Atlantic Piedmont. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms.
- Clastres, Pierre  
1987 *Society against the State*. New York: Zone Books.
- Conrad, Geoffrey, and Arthur Demarest  
1984 *Religion and Empire: The Dynamics of Aztec and Inca Expansionism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cronon, William  
1983 *Changes in the Land*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Custer, Jay F.  
1986 *Late Woodland Cultures of the Middle Atlantic Region*. Newark: University of Delaware Press.  
1987 Late Woodland Settlement Diversity in the Middle Shenandoah Valley: Some Thoughts on MacCord's "Lewis Creek Mound Culture." *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Virginia* 42:146–149.
- Deetz, James  
1988 American Historical Archaeology: Methods and Results. *Science* 239:362–367.
- DePratter, Chester B.  
1983 Late Prehistoric and Early Historic Chiefdoms in the Southeastern United States. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms.
- Dunham, Gary  
1989 Salvage Excavations at the Rapidan Mound Site, 1988. Final Report Submitted to the Virginia Division of Historic Resources, Richmond.
- Fausz, J. Frederick  
1985 Patterns of Anglo-Indian Aggression and Accommodation along the Mid-Atlantic Coast, 1584–1634. *In* *Cultures in Contact*. William Fitzhugh, ed. Pp. 193–224. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.  
1987 Indians, Colonialism, and the Conquest of Cant: A Review Essay on Anglo-American Indian Relations in the Chesapeake. *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 95:133–156.
- Fowke, Gerard  
1894 *Archaeologic Investigations in the James and Potomoc Valleys*. Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 23. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- Goad, Sharon I.  
1979 Middle Woodland Exchange in the Prehistoric Southeastern United States. *In* Hopewell Archaeology. David S. Brose and N'omi Greber, eds. Pp. 239–246. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press.
- Gradie, Charlotte M.  
1988 Spanish Jesuits in Virginia: The Mission that Failed. *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 96:131–156.
- Hantman, Jeffrey L.  
1985 *The Archaeology of Albemarle County*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Archaeological Survey Monograph 2.  
1991 "When a People Came from Under the World": Archaeology and Ethnohistory of the Virginia Monacan. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia. (In press.)

Hantman, Jeffrey L., and Thomas Klatka

1989 Social History and Archaeological Survey in Virginia. *In* *Archaeological Survey in Virginia: Towards a Preservation Plan*. J. M. Wittkofski and E. R. Turner, eds. Pp. 13–31. Richmond: Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks.

Hertz, Robert

1960 *Death and the Right Hand*. New York: Free Press.

Holland, C. G.

1978 Albemarle County Settlements: A Piedmont Model. *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Virginia* 33:29–44.

Holland, C. G., Sandra Spieden, and David Van Roijen

1983 The Rapidan Mound Revisited: A Test Excavation of a Prehistoric Burial Mound. *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Virginia* 38:1–42.

Houck, Peter

1984 *Indian Island in Amherst County*. Lynchburg, VA: Lynchburg Historical Research Company.

Huntington, Richard, and Peter Metcalf

1979 *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jefferson, Thomas

1982 [1787] *Notes on the State of Virginia*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Klatka, Thomas

1988 *Archaeological Survey in Fluvanna County*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Archaeological Survey Monograph 5.

Klatka, Thomas, Michael Klein, Jeffrey L. Hantman, and Gary Dunham

1986 *Archaeological Survey in Buckingham County*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Archaeological Survey Monograph 3.

Klein, Michael

1986 *Settlement Patterns in Central Virginia Prehistory*. M.A. thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

1988 *The Montpelier Periphery: An Archaeological Survey*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Archaeological Survey Monograph 4.

Knight, Vernon

1986 The Institutional Organization of Mississippian Religion. *American Antiquity* 51:675–687.

Lewis, Clifford M., and Albert Loomie

1953 *The Spanish Jesuit Mission in Virginia, 1570–1572*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Lurie, Nancy

1959 *Indian Cultural Adjustment to European Civilization*. *In* *Seventeenth-Century America: Essays in Colonial History*. J. M. Smith, ed. Pp. 33–60. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

MacCord, Howard A., Sr.

1986 *The Lewis Creek Mound Culture in Virginia*. Richmond: privately printed.

Martin, Joseph

1835 *A New and Comprehensive Gazetteer of Virginia and the District of Columbia*. Charlottesville, VA: Moseley and Tompkins.

McCary, Ben C.

1957 *Indians in Seventeenth-Century Virginia*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

Merrell, James

1982 *Natives in a New World: The Catawba Indians of Carolina, 1650–1800*. Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms.

Mooney, James P.

1894 *The Siouan Tribes of the East*. *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin* 22. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

1907 *The Powhatan Confederacy, Past and Present*. *American Anthropologist* 9:129–152.

Morgan, Edmund S.

1975 *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia*. New York: W. W. Norton.

- Mouer, L. Daniel  
 1981 Powhatan and Monacan Settlement Hierarchies. *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Virginia* 36(1).  
 1983 A Review of the Archaeology and Ethnohistory of the Monacans. *In* *Piedmont Archaeology*. J. Mark Wittkofski and Lyle E. Browning, eds. Pp. 21–39. Special Publication No. 10. Richmond: Archaeological Society of Virginia.
- Parker, Scott  
 1988 Lithic Exchange in Prehistoric Virginia. M.A. thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.
- Perdue, Charles L., Jr., and Nancy Martin-Perdue  
 1988 To Build a Wall around These Mountains: The Displaced People of Shenandoah. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Anthropology, University of Virginia.
- Potter, Stephen  
 1982 An Analysis of Chicacoan Settlement Patterns. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms.  
 1989 Early English Effects on Virginia Exchange and Tribute Systems in the Seventeenth Century: An Example from the Tidewater Potomac. *In* *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*. P. Wood, G. Waselkov, and T. Hatley, eds. Pp. 151–172. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Quinn, David B.  
 1985 Set Fair for Roanoke: Voyages and Colonies, 1584–1606. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Rountree, Helen  
 1989 The Powhatan Indians of Virginia. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Sahlins, Marshall  
 1985 Islands of History. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Sears, William H.  
 1958 Burial Mounds on the Gulf Coastal Plain. *American Antiquity* 23:274–284.
- Schmitt, Karl  
 1952 Archaeological Chronology of the Middle Atlantic States. *In* *Archaeology of the Eastern United States*. James B. Griffin, ed. Pp. 59–70. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Schnell, Frank T., Vernon J. Knight, Jr., and Gail Schnell  
 1981 Cemochechobee. Gainesville: University of Florida Press.
- Schrire, Carmel  
 1988 The Historical Archaeology of the Impact of Colonialism in Seventeenth-Century South Africa. *Antiquity* 62:214–225.
- Shanks, Michael, and Christopher Tilley  
 1982 Ideology, Symbolic Power and Ritual Communication: A Reinterpretation of Neolithic Mortuary Practices. *In* *Symbolic and Structural Archaeology*. I. Hodder, ed. Pp. 129–153. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sheehan, Bernard W.  
 Savagism and Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.
- Silliman, Benjamin  
 1855 Report on the Mineral Property of the Madison Mining Company. Brooklyn: Carroll Printer.
- Smith, Marvin  
 1986 Culture Change in the Post-Contact Era. Gainesville: University of Florida Press.
- Steponaitis, Vincas  
 1986 Prehistoric Archaeology in the Southeastern United States, 1970–1985. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15:353–404.
- Thompson, Stephen M.  
 1986 An Exploratory Study of Rites of Secondary Burial, Ritual Structure, and Social Structure. M.A. thesis, Department of Prehistory and Archaeology, University of Sheffield.
- Todorov, Tzvetan  
 1984 The Conquest of America. New York: Harper and Row.
- Turner, E. Randolph  
 1985 Socio-Political Organization within the Powhatan Chiefdom and the Effects of European Contact, A.D. 1607–1646. *In* *Cultures in Contact*. William Fitzhugh, ed. Pp. 193–224. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Woodward, Grace S.

1969 Pocahontas. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Wright, Louis B., ed.

1945 *Newes from the New World*. Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press.

Wright, Louis B., and Virginia Freund, eds.

1953 *The Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania (1612)* by William Strachey, gent. London: Hakluyt Society.

## *Prehistoric Burial Mounds*

# Edward Palmer's Arkansaw Mounds

*Edited by Marvin D. Jeter*

During the 1880s a massive effort was launched by the Smithsonian Institution to discover who had built the prehistoric burial mounds found throughout the eastern United States. Arkansas was unusually rich in prehistoric remains, especially mounds, and became a major focus of the study. *Arkansaw Mounds* tells the story of this exploration and of Edward Palmer, one of the nineteenth century's greatest natural historians and archeologists, recruited to lead the research project.

376 pages, \$40.00 cloth

 ARKANSAS

The University of Arkansas Press, Fayetteville 72701 1-800-525-1823