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CYRUS THOMAS AND THE MOUND BUILDERS

by

Bennie C. Keel

Introduction

Over the past ten years the author has been intimately involved in research in the Cherokee area of North Carolina conducted by the Research Laboratories of Anthropology under the direction of Dr. Joffre L. Coe. In reviewing the literature pertaining to this area, I have become greatly interested in the gradual growth of knowledge of the prehistory of the region and particularly interested in the individuals who, as pioneers, have contributed so much to our present understanding of the past cultures found here. Three facets of this interest have grown simultaneously: the investigator's basic contributions to knowledge, the theoretical foundation which influenced his interpretation of the data, and the biography of the investigator.

In view of these interests this paper will describe the major contributions of Cyrus Thomas to American archaeology, examine his theoretical position, and present some information about his life. To properly evaluate his contributions it is necessary to know something about the problem with which he was most intimately involved—the solution of the mystery of the Mound Builders.

The Mound Builder Myth

By the time Cyrus Thomas was engaged to supervise the Bureau of American Ethnology's Division of Mound Exploration the common concensus was that the mounds were the products of a vanished civilization which was superior to the Indians contacted by the early settlers of the continent. The interested reader may wish to consult Robert Silverberg's *Mound Builders of Ancient America* for a thorough presentation of the growth of the Mound Builder idea. The present account will only touch upon some of the more fundamental writings on this subject that seem to form the basis for much of the later dogmatic essays concerning the subject.

Suggestions that the constructors of the mounds, "sacred enclosures", and "forts" can be traced at least as far back as 1785 to John Fitch, a cartographer, who stated in his description of Wisconsin that the Northwest Territory "has been settled by a people more expert in the art of war than the present inhabitants, regular fortifications, and some of these incredibly large are frequently to be found. Also many graves and towers like pyramids of earth (Winsdor 1889:398)." Benjamin Smith Barton, as early as 1787, suggested that the authors of these works were the Toltecs. According to him the Toltecs were in fact Danes who had spent several centuries in the Midwest before migrating to Mexico. This was based on the fact that the Danes (Vikings) buried their dead in mounds similar to those explored in Ohio and according to native histories of Mexico the Toltecs had arrived from the north. In 1775 James Adair (1940) suggested that the Indians were descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. This claim was supported by Dr. Ezra Stiles, then president of Yale. Stiles suggested as feasible routes of migration an overland trek across Asia, or possibly across the Atlantic on Phoenician ships (Silverberg 1968:26).

As the number of accounts describing the mounds and their contents grew, so did the number of different Old World ethnic groups responsible for the construction. In a early synthesis of the available data Caleb Atwater (1820) concluded that the antiquities of the New World could be divided into three groups: "1. Those belonging to Indians. - 2. to people of European origin. - 3. Those of that people who raised our ancient forts and tumuli (Atwater 1820:111)."

Atwater (1820:120) correctly pointed out that the coins, medals, and tablets with alphabetic characters which had been found in ancient contexts were in fact trade goods of recent times or frauds. Despite numerous claims by others as to which people the mounds should be credited, Atwater chose the Hindu (Atwater 1820:207-215).

In 1833 Josiah Priest published *American Antiquities* in which he surveyed most of the conjectures which had been put forth and concluded:

As it respects some of the ancient nations who may have found their way hither, we perceive a strong possibility, that not only Asiatic nations, very soon after the flood, but that also, all along the different eras of time, different races of men, as Polynesians, Malays, Australasians, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Israelites, Tartars, Scandinavians, Danes, Norwegians, Welch, and Scotch, have colonized different parts of the continent (Priest 1833: iv).

Descendants of Jewish tribes were responsible for the mounds according to Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Latter Day Saints, who translated the golden plates given to him by angel Moroni. On their first encounter Moroni, according to Smith's testimony

... said there was a book deposited, written on golden plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the sources from which they sprang (Smith 1950:iv).

On September 22, 1827 the plates were turned over to Smith along with the necessary aids to translate them. By May 2, 1838 he had completed his translation and returned them to Moroni (Smith 1950: vi). The essential elements of the past history of the peoples of North America according to Smith's translation of the plates were that during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar a group of Jews fled from Jerusalem to the New World. After their arrival a schism occurred which divided them into two tribes; the Nephrites and the Lamanites. The Nephrites retained a high civilization and were the builders of the monumental earthworks. The Lamanites, because of their many abominations to God, were separated from the Nephrites and became the ancestors of the American Indians. Eventually the Nephrites also sinned and were destroyed as a nation by the Lamanites.

Perhaps the most famous source of the nineteenth century that promoted the theory that the earthworks of the United States were constructed by a vanished civilization was the first volume of the *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge*: "Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley". The authors concluded from the evidence they examined that the earthworks could not have been constructed by the Indians or their ancestors (Squier and Davis

1848:42). Although this theory had been posited by previous writers it now gained a broader following because it had been printed in an official government book. For the next half century this theory was held by all but a few serious investigators.

The preceeding paragraphs have attempted to show the development of the theory which explained the presence of thousands of earthworks in the Eastern United States by referring them to a vanished civilization much superior to the Indians who occupied the land during the period of white settlement. The proponents of this theory offered abundant, but often conflicting evidence to support this theory. The claims presented below were taken from a number of sources. The list does not reflect the position of any single writer but rather, reflects the range of evidence used by partisans of the vanished race theory to support their theory.

1. The mounds were of great antiquity and therefore could not be the work of Indians.
2. The works show engineering and uniformity beyond the competence of Indians.
3. The mounds served religious purposes as did the "high places" of the Old Testament.
4. The inscriptions on the Grave Creek, Gass, and other stone tablets proved that the Mound-Builders had writing, a skill not possessed by Indians.
5. No mounds were known to have been built by historic tribes.
6. The presence of the "elephant effigy mound" in Wisconsin, the Davenport elephant pipes, and Gass tablets found in Iowa indicated great antiquity and perhaps use of elephants in construction of the mounds.
7. The presence of copper, bronze, brass and iron implements indicated that the mounds belonged to a vanished race because Indians had no knowledge of metallurgy.

8. The technical level and aesthetic refinement of the Mound Builder artifacts far surpassed the competence and sensitivity of Indians.
9. The uniformity of mound forms over such a wide distribution was evidence of a central government; a phenomenon unknown among the Indians.
10. Such works must have been based on a highly developed agricultural base. Such economy was not known for Indians in the Mid-west during historic times. Consequently, Indians could not have been responsible for such grand developments.

The Bureau of Ethnology, Cyrus Thomas and the Division of Mound Exploration

Ethnographic research supported by the federal government had an informal beginning under the direction of Major John Wesley Powell and the United States Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region. Within the survey Powell developed a Bureau of Ethnology which was eventually transferred to the Smithsonian Institution on March 3, 1879 when the Rocky Mountain Region survey and three other surveys conducting investigations in the western territories were reorganized as the United States Geological Survey. Although Powell was eventually appointed director of the Geological Survey at a salary of \$3600 per year he also retained the directorship of the Bureau of Ethnology in an unsalaried accommodation with Secretary Baird of the Smithsonian Institution.

Powell's interest lay in ethnology and linguistics. He felt strongly that the mission of the Bureau was to record as much as possible about the living tribes of the west immediately. He had already observed the loss of cultural traditions among many of the tribes of the west. It is not unlikely that this concern for data collecting influenced Franz Boas, one of his assistants, who later at Columbia University and the American Museum of Natural History would see the gathering of information as more important than the development of anthropological theory.

Through the latter part of the nineteenth century Powell conducted the work of the Bureau on a very modest budget, even for that period of history of 20 to 50 thousand dollars per year (Rhees 1901:863-866).

Each session of Congress saw supporters of Powell and the Bureau unsuccessfully attempt to increase the budget, or at best keep it at the level of the previous appropriation (Rhees 1901).

About 1880 or 1881 certain archaeologists began to lobby for the inclusion of archaeological research as a budgeted item within the Bureau. This lobbying and its final results were, at least according to all official documents, unknown to Powell until the bill was passed by Congress. This amendment, attached to the Bureau's appropriation bill, was introduced by Rep. J. Warren Keifer of Ohio and stated concerning the appropriation:

Five thousand dollars of which shall be expended in continuing archaeological investigation relating to mound builders and prehistoric mounds (Powell 1894:xv).

Perhaps this is one of the earliest examples of scientific "pork barrel" in American history. The citizens of the Midwest and Mississippi Valley were naturally interested in the mounds in their neighborhoods. After all, by this time the Mound Builders had become widely known through the efforts of poets and novelists. The interest of Secretary Baird of the Smithsonian in building up the collections of the National Museum should not go unnoticed in this matter also.

At any rate, Major Powell reluctantly hired Willis de Haas to inaugurate the mound exploration project. It is difficult to understand why Powell chose de Haas for this job because de Haas had been one of the archaeologists who had influenced the appropriation bill for 1882-83. From the tone of Powell's writing such interference in the internal operation of the Bureau was deeply resented. However, in describing the development of the Division of Mound Explorations Powell later wrote "... Subsequently, in 1881, Mr. de Haas resigned, and Prof. Cyrus Thomas was put in charge of the work, . . . (Powell 1894:xli)."

Cyrus Thomas was born in Kingsport, Tennessee in 1825. He was educated in the local schools and as a young man studied medicine with a local physician for a time. He gave up his study of medicine to enter business with his father and studied law in his spare moments. He eventually moved to Illinois and in 1851 was admitted to the bar. In 1865 he gave up his practice to become the superintendent of the schools of Jackson County for a few years. Entering another career, he joined the ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church from 1865 to 1869. He served several congregations but "his intense independent thought caused him to abandon the ministry". His interest in science can be noted from the fact that he was one of the founders of the Illinois Natural History Society (1859). In 1869 he joined the Hayden Survey of the northern Rockies as an entomologist. He was appointed Professor of Natural History at Southern Illinois Normal University in 1873. He was appointed State Entomologist of Illinois and to the United States Entomological Commission in 1876. Finally, in 1881, at the age of 57 he was put in charge of the Division of Mound Exploration of the Bureau of Ethnology. He remained an employee of the Bureau until his death in 1910 (Anonymous 1910:337-343).

I have been unable to find any information that shed light as to how Thomas became associated with the Bureau or how he received his doctorate. But after leaving the U.S. Entomological Commission in 1877 he attached himself to the Bureau as an unpaid research associate. One might surmise that it was through his association with Hayden that he became acquainted with Major Powell. Up until the time he was put in charge of the mound exploration program he received only reimbursement for his expenses. His first salary was \$2400 per year, an amount he was still paid as late as 1890. (Judd 1968:13, 19 and Rhees 1910:1540-1541).

When Thomas embarked upon his final career he was of the persuasion that the mounds had been erected by a vanished race, a position directly opposite of Major Powell's who had been convinced as early as 1859 that the mounds were the work of recent Indians (Powell 1894; xxix).

From the background presented above, one would correctly

expect Thomas' publications to have dealt with entomological and theological subjects, but as early as 1873 he had published a short descriptive paper on the mounds of the Dakota Territory.

He began his research into the mound builder question with the help of one clerical assistant, three field assistants (P. W. Norris, J. D. Middleton, and Edward Palmer), and several temporary field assistants including J. P. Rogan and J. W. Emmert who later became permanent employees. Evidence indicates that Thomas personally did little, if any, of the actual field work although he did visit some of the sites. He was certainly supplied with copious notes and descriptions from his field assistants.

He outlined the program of investigation in "Work in Mound Exploration by the Bureau of Ethnology" in 1887. Here he stated that three plans were considered in attacking the problem. First, "a thorough and accurate survey of all ancient works in the country." This was to be followed by extensive digging. Second, a limited plan in which "all ancient works in a limited locality are thoroughly examined," then explorations would be moved to another locality. Third, a "comprehensive plan, . . . , in which the chief objects are to search for and study the various forms and types of the works and minor vestiges of art and to mark out the different archaeological districts." Consideration of time, finances, weather, personnel, and other matters led to the adoption of the last plan (Thomas 1887: 2-3). Thomas (1894) reported the results of ten years of research in the *12th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology for 1890-'91*. Here he described the plan of operation of his division, the methods of field work, gave a detailed summary of the data collected, and defined a structural classification of mound forms rather than following the functional categories of form developed by Squier and Davis. He was able from this data to define two archaeological sections; a northern section, divided into six districts and a southern section, divided into two districts. The last 235 pages of the report were concerned with a detailed interpretation of his data, a thorough examination of previous theories, and a final polemic which put the myth of a vanished race of Mound-Builders to rest for good.

Point by point, citing his own field data or historic accounts, he

dismissed each argument favorable to the vanished race theory. To the specific points cited earlier in this paper that supported the vanished race theory Thomas (1894) raised the following objections.

1. The assumed antiquity of the mounds could not be proven on the basis of ring counts of trees growing on their surfaces because trees in the humid east may add a number of rings each year (Thomas 1894:628-630). A fact that accounts for the lack of good dendrochronological studies up to this day for the east.
2. Indians were competent to build such structures. The supposed engineering problems are nothing but the fancy of some writers (Thomas 1894:631).
3. While temple mounds did serve religious purposes they also served political ones. In no case were they to be equated with the "high places" of worship as supposed by such writers as Squire and Davis or Atwater. The burial mounds were nothing more than special cemeteries and not sacrificial mounds or altar mounds as suggested by many (Thomas 1894:605-610).
4. The Grave Creek, Gass, and other engraved tablets which were examples of Mound Builder writings were in fact frauds (Thomas 1894:641).
5. The elephant pipes in the Davenport collection recovered by the Reverend Gass were frauds. Hence any association of elephants and mound construction was spurious (Thomas 1894:642-643). An excellent account by Marshall McKusick (1970) of the Davenport conspiracy is highly recommended reading.
6. Mounds were in fact built by Indians as recorded by the de Soto narratives, William Bartram, and many others (Thomas 1894:645-660).
7. Metal working was practiced by the American Indians. It

consisted primarily of cold hammering native copper into thin sheets from which artifacts were made. Most of the iron, bronze and brass found in the mounds was also associated with glass trade beads and other items of European origin (Thomas 1894:710-718).

8. In no case do the arts of the Mound Builders reach either the technical or aesthetic level of the high civilizations of Mexico or Peru. Ceramics recovered from many mounds were tempered with crushed shell, the favorite medium of most historic tribes. The manufacture of typical Mound Builder vessels was observed by early writers in the Caddo area. Some of the historic wares surpassed the best of the Mound-Builder types (Thomas 1894:681-683).
9. The supposed uniformity of forms of mounds over the area of their distribution which implied a central government must be discarded on the basis of new data (Thomas 1894:29).
10. Those who claim the Indians lacked an agricultural base sufficient to support mound construction have forgotten the abundant evidence to the contrary supplied by such writers as Romans, Raleigh, Smith, Harriot, and a host of others (Thomas 1894:613-620).

The marshalling of such a vast amount of evidence and the correct interpretation, as time has proven, of it in regards to the Mound Builder problem was Cyrus Thomas' most significant contribution to American Archaeology. But it would be unfair not to mention those who shared his views. In addition to Major Powell they included Henry W. Henshaw, Gates P. Thruston, and Fredric Ward Putnam. Earlier writers who had maintained that the earthworks were products of Indians were Thomas Jefferson, John Bartram, and John Haywood. Haywood in fact credited the mounds of the Midwest to the Cherokee, but denied that this tribe was responsible for the mounds present in eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina!

Thomas' Theoretical Position

I have been unable to find a clear statement of Thomas' theoretical position in regard to general anthropological matters. The closest that I came was a statement in *Prehistoric North America* (1905) which he co-authored with W. J. McGee. In this volume they admit to the evolutionary scheme proposed by Lewis H. Morgan (McGee and Thomas 1905:31). Yet in the chapters that Thomas wrote one does not get the impression that he actively used this scheme. I have the distinct feeling that Thomas was closer to Powell's and Boas' positions than Thomas might like to admit. It is clear that his experience with the Mound Builder problem made him cautious of broad theories. He insisted that field data collected with care was the only basis for solving many problems. His scheme of archaeological districts for the eastern United States was more diffusionist than evolutionary. Along this line it is interesting to note that at the time Thomas was working on his final report and formulating his archaeological districts two of his colleagues, Otis Mason and William H. Holmes, were arriving at similar schemes. Oddly enough, some of Thomas' archaeological districts coincide with Mason's ethnographic areas and with Holmes, ceramic areas. Thomas used the idea of migration for the spread of mounds over the east, but he also recognized that the idea for mounds also diffused between the various tribes.

In view of the above characterization of Thomas' theoretical position, if correct, would lead me to say that Thomas was a historical particularizing diffusionist who recognized the evolutionary process.

In his destruction of the Mound Builder myth Thomas used whatever theoretical position suited his purpose. He selected necessary theoretical attitudes from the evolutionist, diffusionist, or historical points of view. That a number of minor points in his final treatment of the Mound Builder problem (Thomas 1894) have subsequently proved to be in error are due to lack of data, or misinterpretations of data rather than to any theoretical blind spots.

Perhaps his greatest error was his failure to recognize that there

was a definite time difference between the early burial mounds of the Adena people and the platform mounds of the late prehistoric and early historic peoples. But even here we should not judge him too harshly because until the advent of radiocarbon dating authorities placed Adena from 500 to 900 AD (Martin, Quimby, and Collier 1947:260). Furthermore, Thomas had spent a great deal of effort in disproving the supposed very ancient age of the mounds favored by the myth makers. Once proving that the mounds were of Indian origin Thomas adopted the short chronology that remained in fashion for the next half century.

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EXCAVATIONS AT THE RED SPRINGS MOUND RB° 4, ROBESON COUNTY 1971

by
Bennie C. Keel

INTRODUCTION

Students enrolled in "Introduction to American Archaeology" at St. Andrews Presbyterian College are required to participate in field work. As a visiting professor at St. Andrews in the fall of 1971, the author supervised a limited investigation of the Red Springs Mound, Rb° 4, or 31 Rb 2 as the site is designated in the St. Andrews system. This mound is probably the same structure investigated by Mr. Hamilton McMillian in 1882 (Holmes 1966:53). The site is located about 2 miles southeast of Red Springs. Local informants reported that the mound had been explored over the years by a number of individuals and groups. The most recent exploration, prior to our work, was carried out by Archaeological Society of North Carolina. Even during our period of investigation, parts of the site were being dug by Mr. Jeffery Gordon, Pembroke State University. Unfortunately efforts to bring all of the data from these three excavations have been unsuccessful. Consequently, this paper will deal only with the investigation conducted by the author.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MOUND

The mound appeared as a low rise of about 2.0 ft on rather level ground overlooking a creek drained swamp. The height of the mound has been exaggerated by the accumulation of spoil dirt from previous diggings. The core was some 1.0 ft lower in elevation than the sides of the mound (Figure). The mound could be described as a large oblong earthen doughnut.

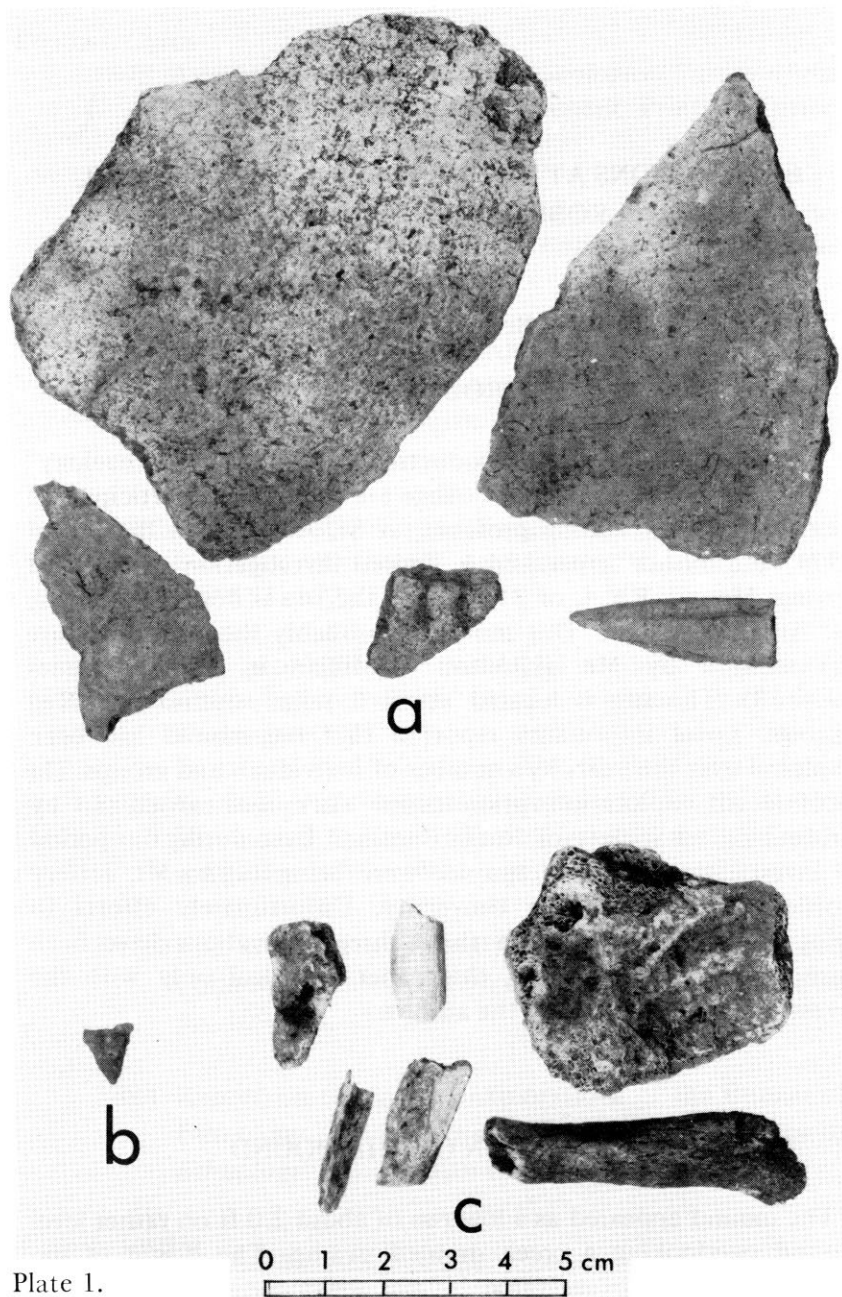


Plate 1.

Representative specimens recovered from the Red Springs Mound, Rb°4. A. ceramics, b. projectile point, c. human bone.

FIELD METHODS

Using the grid system established by the Archaeological Society a series of 5 x 5 ft squares were excavated by trowel. Excavated soil was sifted through ½ inch mesh screen. Square sheets, photographic data, and stratigraphic observations were made by the author.

STRATIGRAPHY

The stratigraphy observed in excavation is easily described:

- Stratum I. A thin layer of leaves, humus, trash, and black sand approximately 0.1 - 0.2 ft thick.
- Stratum II. Grey stained, fine sand grading into yellow sand. This layer was approximately 0.4 - 0.5 ft thick. It showed much evidence of being disturbed in the western section of the N100 trench. Most (76.1%) of the aboriginal material came from this layer.
- Stratum III. This was a layer of undertermined thickness of yellow sand. Our excavation of this unit was limited to the upper 0.5 ft but observations were collected from deeper cuts into the layer by other investigators. Only a small amount of cultural material (16.3%) was recovered from this layer. Evidence of prior digging was found.

Stratigraphic observations, as well as, Features 1 and 2, defined as backfilled pits originating from the surface, clearly indicate that much of the site has been disturbed.

CULTURAL REMAINS

Our excavations recovered a small amount of cultural material (Table 1). the fact bottle glass, tin cans, and a .22 caliber "short" rifle cartridge case were recovered from the excavations substantiates the interpretation that the site has been disturbed by previous diggers.

Table. 1. Cultural remains recovered from Rb° 4

Category	Number
Projectile point, triangular	1
Potsherds	60
Chips	7
Charcoal samples	12
Human bone samples	15

One small equilateral triangular shaped point (Plate I, b) made of slate was found in Sq. N100W120, Stratum II. This point measured 9 mm on each side. Seven stone chips, 6 of quartzite and 1 of conglomerate were recovered from various excavation levels.

Only 60 potsherds were recovered. These have been tabulated by surface finish in Table 2 and examples of plain and fabric impressed types are illustrated in Plate I, a. The ceramics can be characterized as being well fired in an oxidizing atmosphere. Pottery was tempered with small amounts of sand or crushed quartzite. Colors ranged from redish brown (2.5YR2.5/3, dry) to light brownish grey (10YR6/2, dry) or yellowish brown (10YR6/4, dry) (Munsell 1954). Two categories of surface finish were recognized in the collection—fabric impressed and plain. A third group of sherds consisted of spalled or eroded specimens. Plain surface sherds had a frequency of 80.9%, fabric impressed 13.3%, and eroded or spalled sherds 6.7%. The ceramics from the Red Springs Mound were very similar to pottery present at the McLean Mound (MacCord 1966: 30-33). However, at the McLean Mound MacCord reported that 87% of the ceramics were fabric impressed and 13% were plain surfaced—an almost exact reversal of the frequencies of surface finish present at Rb° 4.

HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS

A total of 15 samples of human bone was collected during our investigation. These samples were composed of very small fragments scattered throughout the excavation levels. No concentrations of bone were found. Elements of the skeleton present

Table 2. Ceramics recovered at Rb° 2

Provenience	Surface Finish			Total
	Plain	Fabric Impressed	Eroded	
Surface	1			1
N135W140, cleaning profile	3			3
N100W110, Stratum II	2			2
N100W110, Stratum III top	1			1
N100W115, Stratum II	5	8	2	15
N100W115, Feature 1	2			2
N100W120, Stratum II	14		1	1
N100W120, Stratum III			1	1
N100W120, Stratum III pit 2	2			2
N100W125, Stratum II	9			9
N100W125, Stratum III	2			2
N100W130, Stratum II	4			4
N100W130, Feature 2	2			2
N135W130, Stratum II	1		1	2
Total	48	8	4	60

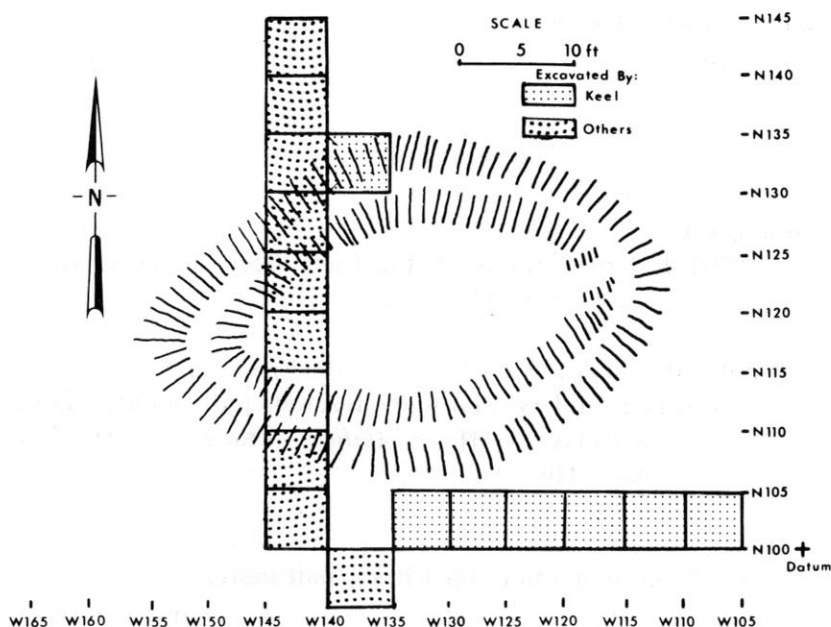


Figure 1. Plan of excavations at the Red Springs Mound, Rb° 4.

included skull, teeth, ribs, and long bones. Bone was both burned and unburned. Examples of the human bone recovered are pictured in Plate I,c.

SUMMARY

During the fall of 1971 seven 5 x 5 ft squares were excavated under the direction of the author at the Red Springs Mound. All evidence recovered suggests that this mound had been thoroughly dug previous to our exploration. Though possible, it is unlikely that any sizable area is present which has not been disturbed by the activities of relic hunters during the last century.

The Red Springs Mound is another example of the burial mound complex of the Carolina Piedmont. The best current summary of this complex is contained in *Southern Indian Studies*, Vol. XVIII.

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MORE NOTES ON SYMBOLISM*

by

Clemins de Baillou

The reoccurrence and variation of symbols invites comparison and speculation. The rather late appearance of the mound in various Indian cultures makes us wonder about its origin or about its appearance in our time. Here we remember the Hungarian coronation mound which was erected for the last time in 1917 for the coronation of King Karl IV in Budapest. It is an old Hungarian tradition, probably carried over from inner Asia as an Urgic-Magyarish custom. As it seems the mound represented the world, or at least the entire country. Therefore, it was built of soil taken from all parts of Hungary or the provinces Hungary dominated. The crowned king had to gallop his white horse to the top, and had to strike, with his sword, to all four cardinal points as a symbol that he will defend the country and retain it in its present state. Again it reminds us of the Indian mound, representing the world and tied to North, South, east and West.

Speculation about pipes: Indeed, pipes were used for a long time among Indians and in a ceremonial manner or symbolically. However, the late Indian cultures with their beginning of agriculture, developed religious symbolism and its artistic expression—strikingly it seems to us, in the use of the axe motif. Wherever we go we see the axe as a symbol of power, not only the monolithic axes of the “Southern Cult”. The axe occurs in Egypt and Asia. In Rome when it became necessary to appoint a dictator the 12 Lictors had to insert the axe into the Fasces, (up to recent years our dimes carried the symbol of dictatorship). It seems to us more than likely that Indians, like the Creek or also Cherokee, limited the “axe-pipe” to the chiefs, the man who had the judicial power. Smoking was largely a ceremonial act especially at a council. Others could smoke other symbols, the so-called “coffee-bean”

*Clemens de Baillou. “Notes on Symbolism.” *Southern Indian Studies*, Vol. XX, page 12, October, 1968.

probably a symbol for corn and, as such, fertility of the fields, or could enjoy smoking pipes which represented acts which our culture considers obscene. Striking to us is another form of pipe, namely the one where the smoker faces an animal. We know about the ceremony of adolescence in which a young man had to go alone in the woods and the first animal he met he had to kill and eat a part of it. This animal then became a part of him and his guardian spirit, or even his secret name. (Western Indians did not kill and eat it). Is the speculation going too far if we see, in such a pipe where the smoker faces an animal, a manifestation of his own secret personality?

The Bear symbol: Much was, and is being, written about the bear symbol. This animal or symbol, which we find from Malaysia over Asia to Europe and over the Americas to the island world of the Ainus, seems to be as old as mankind. The Cherokee—Tsalagee—distinguished them from the real people as bear-people, their brothers. He could even eat his brother after apologizing for killing him, and he ate him as a ritual act, an act with almost a touch of cannibalism. Even true cannibalism, in its symbolic implication, was occasionally practiced until the late period—the last case of reported cannibalism among the Cherokee seemed to be 1797. In our starred skies we have the most striking constellation of the Ursa Magna (Big Dipper). This seems to refer to the earliest time. The Ursa, the gray or white goddess, able to walk upright like man, who disappears and hibernates during the winter and brings forth her offspring—seemingly unrelated to sex—was the great symbol for fertility. At that time man, himself, did not relate sexual activity to pregnancy. (Still found among the most primitive people). The cave-bear died out with the last glacial period, but cave-bear skulls have been found in caves high up in the Alps. They were set on a slab facing east, and stones were inserted into the eye-sockets, also bones were put on top of the skull, including as it seems the penis bone. This anatomic feature is characteristic for the entire bear family down to the raccoon. The rites which were performed perhaps 70,000 years ago were most likely puberty rites. It seems that man was attracted by the anatomic feature of the penis bone and after having realized that sex relations lead to offspring he changed from the fertility symbol of the mysterious Ursa to the powerful Urs who was, so to say, always ready for

intercourse. Still in our times many names and places names refer to the bear, just to mention the well-known capitals as Berlin and Bern. We see also the bear frequently in heraldic symbolism as well as the Indian Medicine-man clad in the skin of a bear.

The symbol of the power and virility is still active in the mind of man independent of cultural levels. Again we find the unity of symbolism in the phallic symbol of the baton, the scepter or the thyrsos. We see Indian chiefs carrying it. It seems to be different from the axe, the symbol of legal power of life and death. The baton means superiority, whether it is a king or a field marshal, it is a sign of superiority more than fertility. It is perhaps different in the hand of a woman. The otherwise strict Greek women went on a rampage during the Bacchanlia, swinging the thyrsos topped by a pinecone with its seed and decorated with the evergreen ivy. A wreath of grapevines crowned the head and the rest of the body was scantily clad in the skin of a panther. A Menhir in Brittany or a towering Tmamsade in Turkestan has the same meaning.

We often do not realize that even in our days fertility rites are frequent. Our "cute" band majorettes in their uniforms emphasizing sex and twirling the phallic symbol of the baton while leading a band or a football team, represents a kind of fertility rite. And showering the bride and groom at the church doors with rice is another clear manifestation of it.

At the Green Corn dance of the Cherokee a pole was erected with a green branch. As the Moravian brethren (de Baillou: *Ethnology*, Vol. 8: No. 1, Winter, 1961) asked them to explain the texts of their songs they could not do so. They had learned them from their forefathers and had forgotten the meaning—perhaps that was true—but in any case the symbolism was still actively alive, although the green branch and the pole had no meaning to the Moravian!

Here we have to remember the May Pole as it is, still very much in use in England and on the European continent.

One of the most frequent symbols is probably the snake, but it offers various meanings and very often we cannot be sure about

the interpretation. To the Middle-American Indians it represents a divinity of ultimate power of death. It is always the rattlesnake which we find sculptured in stone, in reliefs or formed into a headress. The same rattlesnake was feared, admired and worshipped among the northern Indians too. It also occurs in rain-making ceremonies. But the feathered snake as we find it in Mexico reminds us of the flying snake of the Far East. There, it changes often to the dragon, the royal symbol which is astrologically speaking, equal to the lion. Certainly India with its abundance of poisonous snakes is full of snake symbolism and myths, and so was Egypt with its cobra. From the Bible we know of Adam and Eve with the snake—the devil—telling the difference of good and bad, or fertility and death to man. As such the snake became, in our Western culture, a deeply embedded psychological symbol. It is strange to find the snake again in the Bible by Moses. As the wandering Israelites suffered under a plague of snakes they erected a bronze snake on a pole in the desert of Sinai, and whoever looked hopefully and believing, to this effigy was cured. There are many interpretations of it but one point is striking, that this effigy was permissible while the golden-calf was the object of strict condemnation and fury by Moses the leader. Moses also, before Pharaoh, threw his staff to the floor and it changed into a snake, with that he wanted to prove that he had more power than the Egyptian magicians.

Strangely another Adam and Eve symbol was overlooked. We find this in the Chimera, wrongly described or interpreted by Homer. Homer was a fine poet but he was late and did not really know his symbolism. The best representation of the Chimera we find in the Etruscan Museum in Florence, the so-called "Chimera d'Arezzo". The lion bent on his front-feet is roaring and obviously troubled by the goat which has grown out between his shoulder blades (like Eve from the rib of Adam). The goat—Capra—the personification of the capricious female, has troubled the lion as a not quite obedient part of his body and also has wounded him slightly on the leg. But there, the tail of the lion is transformed into a snake which bites the Capra in the horn, with that, not wounding but forcing her to obey. Very different from those snakes is a kind of boa constrictor, as it seems, sent by a goddess Hera to overpower Laocoon and his sons. But the snake becomes

also the symbol of healing and of Asclepius, the god of medicine, This symbol, although it has lost its meaning, is still used in our days in the medical profession.

Strange but quite amusing and charming appears to us the Cretan snake-priestess or goddess. A woman's figure clad in an elaborate skirt with a crinoline, but exposing her voluptuous breasts while handling a snake in each hand. The snakes are wound around her arms and it is obviously the performance of a ritual related to fertility.

The Uroborus, the snake which forms a circle by biting its own tail, is the symbol of eternity. Modern psychology (Erich Neumann: *Ursprungsgeschichte des Bewusstseins*. History of the Origin of Human Consciousness.) has identified it as an embryonic or pre-natal memory. In Germanic mythology it is the snake which surrounds the world. So we see in the snake symbol combined all human fears and desires, life and death, the beginning and eternity.

The Augusta Richmond County Museum
Augusta
Georgia.