THE JOURNAL OF THE JAMESTOWN
REDISCOVERY CENTER
VOL. 1 JAN. 2001

Foreward

Seth Mallios

Archaeological investigations are cumulative. None stand alone, no matter how remote or familiar the site location, how ordinary or extreme the interpretation, how grandiose or minute the endeavor. Just as the past defines the essence of archaeological inquiry, only the future holds the limits of what can be understood through these endeavors. Each new discovery contributes to the current knowledge of a given people, time period, situation, or condition. Insights from present excavations build on findings from past excavations. Although interpretations vary, the amount of evidence on which to construct one's narrative of the past grows with each new find. Archaeological finds may lead scholars to contradict previous beliefs, but they do not undermine past material finds; they merely add to the available evidence. These are the cumulative fruits of such labor, a growing knowledge of the material past that burgeons with each new question and blossoms with each new find.

Archaeological insight is not entirely dependent on material quantity. Assemblage size does not necessarily determine importance, yet excavations at relatively artifact-rich loci, like the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities' *Jamestown Rediscovery* site, offer uncommon opportunities to go well beyond specific archaeological information relating to the immediate area and its human past. Any such assemblage that boasts both large sample sizes and multiple confluent lines of chronologically discrete material evidence can enable deeper understandings of other sites with fewer artifacts and less control. Larger quantities of temporally distinct materials allow scholars to develop tools and refine technical precision with regard to an artifact's place of production, distribution, and use, and its chronology, identity, manner of change, and meanings. They offer a degree of control that smaller and less intricate assemblages cannot. It is for this reason that artifact-rich excavations inherit an additional analytical opportunity and onus. Their assemblage can contain patterns that can only be deduced through their fine resolution. Analytical techniques derived predominantly from these detailed patterns can then be extended to sites with fewer artifacts, a poorer recorded history, or an overall lesser degree of resolution.

Historical archaeologists in the past have often lamented the smallness of their samples in analyses of everything from individual tobacco pipestems to the interval between posthole bays of an earthfast structure. Over time, however, the archaeological accumulation of historical material culture is transforming these reservations. Calculations and interpretations based on hundreds of thousands of artifacts and hundreds of features markedly bolster analytical confidence over the certainty of a study based on dozens of sherds or isolated features. It is for this reason that each of the four studies presented in this second volume of the *Journal of the Jamestown Rediscovery Center* draws heavily on cumulative archaeological data and interpretations of previous scholars. These articles endeavor to stand respectfully on the shoulders of their predecessors yet simultaneously offer a unique intellectual contribution to the field.

Monroe, Mallios, and Q. Emmett identify a significantly high correlation between the temporal regression of ball-clay and Colono pipestem bores in the volume's first article. Drawing on data from John Cotter's 1958 Jamestown Report and ongoing Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities excavations at Jamestown Island, they demonstrate that like trends affected the production of both types of pipe. Thus, analytical techniques that have been used for decades on ball-clay pipestems--including mean date formulas and occupational histograms--can be effectively extended to Colono pipes, as long as certain chronological restrictions and formal nuances are respected.

In the second article, Schmidt and Haven pinpoint a likely harvest location for oysters consumed by the earliest European colonists at James Fort. On the basis of oyster shell size and associated ecological attributes from a Fort-Period faunal sample, they suggest the existence and exploitation of an old intertidal oyster reef twelve miles east of Jamestown Island. A comparison of different predatory marks on these shells--holes from various boring sponge, oyster drills, etc.--with hydrographic salinity restrictions on the species isolates a probable historical locus for harvesting oysters.

Mallios and S. Emmett examine fluctuations in the supply and demand of copper in an intercultural setting at early Jamestown in the third article. Their synthesis of historical evidence, archaeological evidence, and general economic principles offers insight into the demise of copper as a

paramount spiritual good for the indigenous Powhatans in the 17th-century Chesapeake. In the process, Mallios and Emmett develop a dating tool based on the amount of copper in an archaeological assemblage. This technique is then successfully extended into analyses of colonial Jamestown's contemporary hinterland.

In the volume's final article, Hudgins also focuses on the copper from James Fort, but his analysis emphasizes the potential industrial role the fledgling colony played for historical brass manufacturing in England. Uniting investigations of select physical characteristics of the copper waste with associated metallurgical remains leads Hudgins to examine industrial and biographical connections between the Virginia Company and the copper companies of England. He concludes that interrelated aspects of these economic enterprises produced common colonial and industrial objectives.

The relative enormity and tight temporal control of Jamestown's early colonial copper assemblage fuel significantly different yet complementary interpretations of the often disparate socioeconomic intentions and actions of individuals in the Chesapeake colony during the first decades of the 17th century. Historical archaeologists have long appreciated the analytical and interpretive benefits of large assemblages and the redoubtable opportunities that these endeavors provide for sites with significantly lesser degrees of resolution. However, collaborative intellectual efforts based on widespread data sharing and synthesis rarely characterize the current output of the field. The *Journal of the Jamestown Rediscovery Center* strongly supports inclusive and synthetic studies. Its use of explicit data sets, its accessibility on the web, and its emphasis on rigorous analyses encourage further collaborative and collective insights.

Seth Mallios

Founding Editor