

EARLY HISTORIC AMERICAN INDIAN TESTIMONY CONCERNING THE ANCIENT EARTHWORKS OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA

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Abstract

This study reports the results of a review and analysis of the historically documented views of American Indians relating to the mounds and enclosures of eastern North America with a focus on the Ohio valley. The earliest and most reliable sources indicate the American Indian tribes who occupied this region in the historic era had no traditions elucidating who built the mounds or why they had been built. The most common explanation given for the presence of these structures was that they were ancient forts. This interpretation may have been influenced by the idea once prevalent among European Americans, or it may have been one source of that popular, but largely erroneous conception. There is no consistent evidence that American Indians in eastern North America uniformly regarded the earthworks as sacred or religiously significant. American Indian testimony provides no reliable support for any particular claims of cultural affiliation between any modern/historic tribe and any prehistoric earthwork in this region.

Introduction

Increasingly, archaeologists and others are looking to American Indian oral traditions for insights into the prehistoric past (e.g., Deloria 1995; Echo-Hawk 2000; Hall 1997). This continues a long-standing practice among archaeologists working in particular regions, especially the American Southwest where continuity between aboriginal and contemporary Indian populations was clearly indicated (e.g., Fewkes 1898). The importance of American Indian oral traditions for archaeology has grown in recent years, partially due to the legislative requirements of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which allow oral traditions to be used in arguments for cultural affiliation.

The purpose of this paper is to review the earliest documented statements made by American Indians to European and European American pioneers, missionaries, soldiers, and scholars who made specific inquiries regarding the mounds and enclosures of eastern North America (Figure 1). This testimony can be used as one means for evaluating the extent to which the American Indian tribes of the his-

toric era shared a cultural affiliation with the archaeologically defined cultures that built the earthworks.

Methods

This study reports the results of a survey of the literature pertaining to historic American Indian knowledge of and attitudes towards the ancient earthworks of eastern North America, with emphasis on the Ohio valley. The compilation includes claims made for both mounds and enclosures. It includes traditions relating to particular mounds and enclosures (e.g., the Grave Creek mound) as well as to earthworks in the most general sense. The earthworks referred to include those built by the Adena, Hopewell, Late Woodland, and Late Prehistoric (or Mississippian) cultures and structures as varied as conical burial mounds, geometric enclosures, hilltop enclosures, animal effigy mounds, and temple mounds. I do not include accounts related to the southeastern mounds still being built and used at the time of DeSoto's entrada because the historical connections in those cases are relatively clear.

As a result of the temporal, morphological, and

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Figure 1. Ancient works, Marietta, Ohio; frontispiece to Ephraim Squier's and Edwin Davis' 1848 *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley*. The ancient earthworks of the Ohio valley appear to have been nearly as much of a mystery to the American Indians as they were to the European American pioneers.

functional diversity of earthworks considered, one could expect a concomitant diversity of traditions regarding their origin and use. One might also expect the oral traditions of American Indians to more accurately comprehend the later phases of mound-building at places such as the Mississippian site of Cahokia (e.g., Clark, G. R., quoted in Schoolcraft 1854:135-136), since these events were less remote in time from the lives of the historic American Indians.

I make no attempt in this analysis to test the accuracy of traditions relating to particular earthworks. For example, if an American Indian tradition asserted that Mound x was a burial mound, I have not attempted to determine if subsequent archaeological investigations corroborated that interpretation, nor if, as was the case at the Grave Creek Mound (Schoolcraft 1851:301), the exposure of burials by

archaeological excavations elicited the relevant statements. Such an exercise would not be devoid of interest, but it was beyond the practical scope of the present study. I consider the current archaeological evidence for the function of the earthworks in general, but mainly I have attempted here merely to survey, as thoroughly as practicable, the range of traditions relating to mounds and enclosures circulating among American Indians in eastern North America during the period of European contact. I make no claim for completeness or comprehensiveness and I would welcome any information that would supplement this compilation.

This survey considers three interrelated questions:

1. To whom did American Indians living in eastern North America at the time of contact with Eu-

ropean peoples attribute the construction and use of the ancient mounds and enclosures?

2. What purpose did American Indians believe the earthworks served?
3. How did American Indians behave towards the ancient earthworks?

In considering the answers American Indians provided to such inquiries, it is also important to assess the motivations of the Europeans who were asking the questions and recording the answers. Moreover, it is necessary to attempt to establish the reliability of the interviewer as well as of the American Indian informant. For example, William Pidgeon's principal alleged informant, De-Coo-Dah, likely appears to have been a literary invention.

Pidgeon's (1858) best-selling book, *Traditions of De-Coo-Dah*, purports to be the distilled knowledge of the last prophet of the now extinct "Elk nation." The Elk nation was presented by Pidgeon as a people unaffiliated with any modern tribe of Indians. There is some suggestion that they were supposed to represent a "lost tribe" of Eurasians (Silverberg 1986:107). T. H. Lewis, after revisiting many of the sites purportedly described by De-Coo-Dah (through Pidgeon) and interviewing many "old settlers" who remembered Pidgeon, concluded that De-Coo-Dah "never had any objective existence" and that his traditions represented "modern myths" (1886:69; cf. Salzer [1993:96-112] and Lepper and Frothingham 2003:152, 157).

The *Walam Olum* (e.g., Voegelin 1954) is another case of an apparently deliberate fabrication and misappropriation of American Indian traditional knowledge for the self-aggrandizement of a non-native. Although it appears to incorporate authentic strands of Delaware Indian oral tradition (see Heckewelder 1881:48-50; cf. Harrison 1839:236-237 and Schoolcraft 1847:315-316) and is accepted as authentic by some contemporary tribal leaders (e.g., Poolaw 1993), Oestreicher (1994, 1995) has convincingly argued that the *Walam Olum* is a nineteenth century hoax (see also Kraft's [1995] review of a recent translation of the *Walam Olum*). Thus, while both the *Traditions of De-Coo-Dah* and the *Walam Olum* may contain some useful information, they are compromised by the inclusion of spurious material. For this reason, the traditions recounted in these documents are not included in the present study.

For the most part, the Europeans (and European-Americans) who consulted American Indians about the earthworks of the Ohio valley did so in the course

of sincere efforts to learn about the mounds and earthworks. The relatively few individuals who bothered to ask the American Indians usually did so with the expectation that the Indians would be likely to know something about the origin and purpose of this ancient architecture.

It is nearly impossible to establish the reliability of the American Indian informants consulted by the various authors represented in this study because, with very few exceptions, the authors did not record the identities of the particular individuals they interviewed. They may, or may not, have been the most knowledgeable and trustworthy representatives of their tribes. Indeed, it is often impossible to distinguish, in many sources, whether the tradition had been reported by a particular individual or whether the report represented a distillation of conversations with numerous individuals from several distinct groups, if not different tribes.

There are, however, some indices to the overall reliability of the person who recorded the information and the person, or persons, who provided that information. The "Reliability Index" (RI in Table 1) developed for this analysis reflects the degree of the author's familiarity with American Indian culture and language in so far as this is determinable from the existing documentation. It is also useful to consider the date of the report. Generally, but certainly not invariably, the earlier the reference, the more likely it is that the information conveys authentic traditional knowledge relating to events preceding the living memory of the group. Earlier accounts have passed through fewer hands with consequently fewer opportunities for loss or corruption of the information. Also, earlier European inquirers generally had fewer preconceptions about the answers they wanted or expected to hear from the American Indians. Such expectations are likely to have influenced what they heard or, at least, what they recorded.

Results

American Indian responses to the inquiries regarding ancient earthworks assembled here reflect a diverse collection of informants with widely varying tribal affiliations. Cherokee and Delaware traditions are especially well represented as are those of several Iroquoian tribes. The persons who made these inquiries and recorded the responses comprise an equally diverse lot with varied interests and motivations. Several reflect a strong ethnocentric bias in their ready

Table 1. American Indian oral traditions concerning the earthworks of eastern North America.

Tribe(s)¹	Source	Date²	RI³	Origin	Purpose	Proper Attitude
Delaware	McClure (Dexter 1899)	1772/ 1899	2/3	unknown	unknown	-
Delaware/Shawnee/ Ottawa	Cresswell (1924)	1775/ 1924	4	unknown	-	-
Kaskaskia	Clark, G. R.(Schoolcraft 1854)	1780/ 1854	2	ancestors	military	-
unspecified	Jefferson (1975)	1787	2/3	-	[burial]	"sorrow"
unspecified	Castiglione (1787)	1787	0	unknown	-	-
unspecified	Heart (1787)	1787	0	-	-	-
Chippeway/ Dela- ware/Wyandot	Steiner (1878)	1789	2/3	ancestors	military	-
Delaware	Heckewelder (1881)	1790	2	"Alligewi" (giants)	military	-
Cherokee	Bartram (1791)	1791	2/3	unknown	unknown	-
Creek	Bartram (Squier 1849)	1790	2/3	unknown	unknown	-
unspecified	Harrison (1839)	1795	2	unknown	unknown	-
unspecified	Baily (1856)	1796/ 1856	0	unknown	unknown	-
unspecified	Chateaubriand (1801)	1801	2	unknown	unknown	-
Wyandot	Williams (Schoolcraft 1847)	1802	1	ancestors	military	-
Chippeway	Nuttall (Graustein 1951)	1810	2/3	ancestors	military	-
unspecified; presumably Shawnee (?)	Rotch (1811)	1811	4	unknown	unknown	disinterest
Cherokee	Haywood (Mooney 1900)	1823	2	ancestors	-	-
Shawnee	Trowbridge (Kinietz and Voeglin 1939)	1824	2	ancestors	military	-
Ottaway	Stickney (Dick- son 1999)	1825	2	-	military	-
Tuscarora	Cusick (1825)	1825	1	"foreign peo- ples" from the south	military	-
Mohawk	Stone (1838)	1838	2	"white men" from a for- eign country	"trading houses" set- tlements	-
Mohawk	Stone (1838)	1838	2	an ancient people	military	-
unspecified	Taylor (1843)	1843	2/3	no knowledge	-	-
unspecified	Taylor (1843)	1843	2/3	"the great 'Manitou'"	ceremonial	reverence
Pembina/(Selkirk)	Taylor (1843)	1843	2/3	Chippeway	ceremonial	-
Cherokee	<i>Wheeling Times</i>	1843	4	-	[burial]	reverence

Tribe(s) ¹	Source	Date ²	RI ³	Origin	Purpose	Proper Attitude
	(Schoolcraft 1851)					
Iroquois	Schoolcraft (1847)	1847	2	ancestors	defense against supernatural monsters	-
unspecified (Iroquois)	Schoolcraft (1847)	1847	2	unknown	unknown	-
Seneca	Schoolcraft (1847)	1847	2	ancestors	military	-
Seneca	Schoolcraft (1847)	1847	2	ancestors	burial	-
Iowa	Irwin & Hamilton (Schoolcraft 1853)	1848	2/3	ancestors	military	-
Iroquois	Morgan (1848)	1848	1/2	unknown	unknown	-
Onondaga	Clark (1849)	1849	2	-	military/burial	avoidance
Winnebagoes	Schoolcraft (1853)	1853	4	ancestors	military	-
Sacs/Foxes	Davenport (Pratt 1876)	1876	2	unknown	unknown	disinterest
Cherokee	Mooney (1900)	1890	2/3	"strange white race"	military	-
Cherokee	Mooney (1900)	1890	2/3	ancestors	"townhouse foundations"	-
Cherokee	Mooney (1900)	1890	2/3	-	dwelling for supernatural beings	-
Shawnee	North (Moorehead 1908)	pre-1900	4	unknown	-	homage/respect

1 Tribal designation used in original source retained.

2 Date of communication with Native American informant/Date of publication.

3 RI = Reliability Index. 0 = Reliability presently undetermined; 1 = Person reporting the claim was a Native American or lived with Native Americans and spoke their language; 2 = Person reporting the claim spoke directly with Native Americans; 3 = Person spoke through an interpreter; 4 = Person is repeating second or third hand information.

extrapolation from contemporary American Indian ignorance about the earthworks to the unwarranted conclusion that American Indians were inherently incapable of building them. Very few of the sources included in this study, however, reflect such blatant racism. And few or none used these traditions explicitly to advance the so-called "Mound Builder myth" (Silverberg 1986).

Proponents of the most popular version of the Mound Builder myth claimed a lost race of white people, the unimaginatively named Mound Builders, lived in the Ohio valley during an earlier, more civilized epoch. The "warlike and fierce" American Indians came later, sweeping out of Asia to overwhelm and slaughter the Mound Builders in their earthen-walled citadels (see William Cullen Bryant's influential poem, "The Prairies" for one of the most elegant expressions of this fantasy).

It is interesting that while none of the traditions assembled here were collected and published expressly to champion this blood-drenched vision of American prehistory, many of the major elements of what would become the myth of the Mound Builders appeared as elements of American Indian oral traditions. For example, these traditions included the idea that the ancient earthworks served as fortifications. Indeed, this is the most commonly reported interpretation of the purpose of the enclosures offered by American Indians (Table 1). Moreover, two apparently independent traditions link the earthworks with a "strange white race" (Mooney 1900:22) or "white men" from a foreign country (Stone 1838:484). The point here is not to suggest that the discredited Mound Builder myth should be regarded with any renewed credibility, although no less an authority than the late Vine Deloria (1995) appeared to accept these stories at face value. It is, however, interesting that the basic themes underlying the myth may have been derived from the testimony of American Indian informants rather than from the overactive imaginations of racist Europeans. Alternatively, American Indians may have become acquainted with the theories of Europeans at an earlier date and either incorporated elements from them into their oral traditions or simply offered them up as what they assumed the Europeans wanted to hear.

On the Origin of the Earthworks

The most frequent response given by American Indian informants to European and European Ameri-

can queries regarding the origin of the mounds and enclosures was a claim of ignorance regarding the identity of the mound builders (36%: 14 of 39 responses indicated no knowledge of the origin of the earthworks). For example, in 1772, David McClure visited several "very ancient artificial works" in the vicinity of the Delaware Indian village near modern Newcomerstown, Ohio (Dexter 1899:92). He noted that "the present inhabitants can give no account of the builders, or the design of them" (Dexter 1899:92). McClure's statement is the earliest reference in the present compilation. Extreme in this regard is Thomas Rotch's (1811) secondhand report that the Indians living in the vicinity of Chillicothe at around 1800, presumably Shawnee, knew nothing about the earthworks and did not even appear to recognize that they had been built by people.

The next most frequent response was that the ancestors of the American Indians had built the earthworks (28%: 11 of 39 responses). One of the strongest statements for an ancestral origin was reported by George Rogers Clark concerning Mississippian era earthworks in Illinois. It is worth quoting at length:

The Indian traditions give an account of these works. They say they were the works of their forefathers; that they were as numerous as the trees in the wood; that they affronted the Great Spirit, and he made them kill one another. The works on the Mississippi near the Caw river (Kaskaskia) are among the largest we know of. The Kaskaskia chief, BAPTIST DUCOIGN, gave me a history of this. He said that was the palace of his forefathers, when they covered the whole (country) and had large towns; that all those works we saw there, were the fortifications round the town, which must have been very considerable.... I think the world is to blame to express such great anxiety to know who it was that built those numerous and formidable works, and what hath become of that people. They will find them in the Kaskaskias, Peorias, Kahokias (now extinct), Piankashaws, Chickasas, Cherokees, and such old nations, who say they grew out of the ground where they now live, and that they were formerly as numerous as the trees in the woods; but affronting the Great Spirit, he made war among the nations, and they destroyed each other. This is their tradition, and I see no good reason why it should not be received as good history – at

least as good as a great part of ours." (Clark c. 1789, quoted in Schoolcraft 1854:135)

It is interesting to note, however, that Clark's report is one of only two claims for American Indian ancestors having built the earthworks considered in this study to predate 1800. And it refers to the relatively recent earthworks of the Mississippi valley. On the other hand, 50% (or seven out of 14) of the claims for no knowledge of the earthworks date to the eighteenth century. One possible explanation for this is that, across much of the region, claims for ancestral ties to the earthworks developed only later, perhaps in response to the need to establish more secure territorial claims to the lands in question.

Finally, the mytho-poetic nature of at least some of the claims that the ancestors had constructed the earthworks is exemplified by Schoolcraft's record of Iroquois traditions claiming that "...in the older periods of their occupancy of this continent, ...they were ... obliged to build coverts and forts to protect themselves from the inroads of monsters, giants and gigantic animals" (1847:173).

On the Purpose of the Earthworks

The most frequent explanation given for why the earthworks had been built was the former need for military fortifications (36%: 14 of 39 responses). In 1789, Abraham Steiner described a series of circular and semi-circular enclosures along the Huron River east of Sandusky, Ohio. He wrote that the Chippewas, Delawares, and Wyandots who lived in the vicinity claimed that "...the Works, and many others, were formerly made by Indians, before any White People came to the country; at a Time when the Nations always were at War with each other" (Steiner 1878:72).

Although a military interpretation for the geometric enclosures of the Middle Woodland period long has been dismissed as implausible (e.g., Lepper 1996:226-227), many writers have argued that some or all of the hilltop enclosures did serve as forts (e.g., Pruffer 1964) or fortified villages (Mason 1981:324). Others find the militaristic interpretation doubtful, even for the large Middle Woodland enclosures bearing martial names such as Fort Hill and Fort Ancient (e.g., Essenpreis and Moseley 1984). Recently, Riordan (1995, 1996) uncovered convincing evidence that the Middle Woodland era Pollock Works in Greene County, Ohio did, indeed, serve as a fortifica-

tion for at least a part of its long and complicated history. And many of the Late Prehistoric enclosures of the lower Great Lakes are, indeed, best understood as defensive works (Mason 1981:324-325). Moreover, even a brief military episode at such a site, regardless of its broader socio-political impact, might have figured prominently in the oral traditions of the group much as the exploits of Davy Crockett and Jim Bowie have loomed so large in the history of the Alamo Mission. Schoolcraft (1853) makes this point in regard to a tradition of the Winnebagoes (Ho-Chunk):

They have a tradition that they once built a fort; an event which appears to have made a general impression on the tribe, and which may without improbability, be connected with the finding of the archaeological remains of an ancient work on the Red River" (1853, Vol. 3:278).

Even so, most modern archaeologists tend to be skeptical of interpreting the Woodland Tradition earthworks in general as ancient forts. Most of the enclosures would not have been suitable for use as forts and their frequency and size do not correspond to the prevalence and scale of warfare indicated by the archaeological record for this time and region.

Although the interpretation of the earthworks as military structures is the most prevalent view expressed in the testimonies considered in this study (14 of 39), it is noteworthy that only two of the 14 were recorded in the eighteenth century. The claim of no knowledge concerning the purpose of the earthworks was the next most frequently cited response and most of these were recorded in the eighteenth century.

Proper Attitudes and Behavior towards Earthworks

There are far fewer data relative to how historic American Indians behaved in regard to prehistoric earthworks, but several of these accounts have the advantage of being based on direct observations of behavior rather than on claims that may or may not have been truthful. In one of the earliest and most well known reports, Thomas Jefferson described seeing a small group of American Indians go out of their way to visit a mound in Virginia where they "...staid about it some time, with expressions which were construed to be those of sorrow" (Jefferson 1975:142).

Warren K. Moorehead reported a similar attitude in a story about Shawnee Indians visiting the Fort Ancient earthworks in southwestern Ohio. He claimed that, although the Shawnee Indians "had no traditions of the builders of Fort Ancient" they never-

theless "visited the place en route to the Ohio [river] and did homage to the spirits of its makers" (1908:31). Moorehead's account is a third hand report so its reliability is somewhat suspect.

Stephen Taylor (1843:22) reported that whereas many Indians of unspecified, but various tribal affiliations expressed "total ignorance on the subject of the origin of the mounds," some regarded animal effigy mounds, in particular, as productions of "the 'great Manitou'" and were "indicative of plentiful supplies of game in the world of spirits." Therefore, they looked upon effigy mounds "with reverence, and ... seldom molested ... them" (1843:22). Other groups seem to have given little if any thought to the earthworks (Davenport, quoted in Pratt 1876; Rotch 1811), while still others actively avoided such places. In one case, the earthwork was regarded as a place of dread because it had been a "theatre of blood" (Clark 1849:263).

Accounts of American Indians' behavior towards earthworks, or even the barest mention of ancient mounds in relation to historic American Indians, are extremely infrequent. This would tend to support the idea that historic American Indians generally either were not interested in these sites or did not exhibit that interest with the frequency or openness that would have brought it to the attention of outsiders.

An account I did not include in this survey due to its vagueness may still be relevant in this regard. The Rev. Henry Bushnell (1889:14) reported that in 1804 some local boys "led by information obtained from Indians," presumably Wyandots, dug into a mound and recovered a string of bone beads. It is impossible to know exactly what information these Indians shared, but they evidently alluded to the potential for the mound to yield treasures of interest to the boys. Such a suggestion and the apparent encouragement of casual looting suggests they did not regard the mound as sacred and felt little or no sense of kinship with the people buried therein (Lepper 2004:2).

Conclusions

This review of American Indian testimonies recorded during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries indicates most native peoples living in the Eastern Woodlands at the time of European contact did not know who built the earthworks that formed such a prominent part of the landscape of the Ohio valley and its tributaries (Figure 1). The interpretations they offered to Europeans and European Americans sug-

gest that most informants had no certain knowledge of why most earthworks had been constructed, but some had developed folkloristic explanations to account for their presence. The predominance of militaristic interpretations in these accounts came as a surprise to me, since the received view has been that the notion that the enclosures served as forts was an invention of Europeans who advanced the so-called "Mound Builder myth" as a means to justify the appropriation of American Indian lands. In the light of this survey, it would appear that the idea that some of the enclosures served as fortifications may have originated with American Indians. On the other hand, since most of the traditions considering the earthworks as forts were not recorded until the nineteenth century, perhaps these views reflect the recent adoption by American Indians of elements of the Mound Builder myth devised by Europeans and European Americans for their own purposes.

The increasing reliance of American Indians upon folkloristic explanations for these remarkable architectural features is indicated by their attribution to increasingly esoteric agents including a "lost race" of white people (Mooney 1900:22; Stone 1838:484; see also, DeLoria 1995:153, 167) or supernatural beings (Mooney 1900:22; Taylor 1843:22).

It is certainly possible that particular earthworks were built or used recently enough for the events that transpired there to have been a part of the living memory of at least some members of some of the historic era tribes. The majority of the earthwork sites in eastern North America, however, are so ancient that this is not a plausible general explanation.

It is possible and perhaps likely that some Indian informants were not being truthful or were withholding information they regarded as sacred or otherwise secret (see Mason 2000:242). However, expressions of ignorance concerning the mounds and enclosures are consistent with the archaeological record at most of these sites, which indicate that most of the earthworks had been abandoned for at least several centuries prior to the arrival of Europeans into the region. Moreover, statements about ancient earthworks are notable for their absence from most accounts of historic American Indian life in this region. Even detailed narratives of white captives who lived as adopted members of various tribes in this region seldom include any references to visits to earthworks or to special ways of treating these structures.

It might be argued that knowledge concerning

the earthworks was considered sacred and was not to be shared with outsiders. This claim has dubious merit given the depth and variety of sacred knowledge shared with Europeans and European Americans by Christianized American Indians who had largely abandoned their traditional beliefs, and therefore presumably had little compunction about sharing them with their supposed benefactors, and by white adoptees and captives of various Indian tribes who had shared in all facets of the lives of their adopted families. Even if the claim that information regarding the earthworks was withheld or falsified to protect sacred knowledge is true in some cases, that would effectively remove the testimony from consideration in discussions based on empirical evidence (see Mason 2000 and 2006). If the earthworks actually were used for some sacred purpose forbidden for outsiders to know, and if an American Indian informant subsequently provided misinformation about the purpose of the earthwork, for example, claiming it was a fort in order to misdirect the inquirer away from the sacred truth, then the entire enterprise of relying upon American Indian oral traditions for knowledge about the earthworks would be compromised. Any tradition reported by an American Indian would be subject to doubt, since we would not know whether the individual was speaking the truth or if they were dissembling to protect sacred knowledge.

Some American Indians treated certain mounds and enclosures as places to be revered or feared; but such attitudes might relate to the relatively recent incorporation of these prominent and mysterious sites into the oral and ritual traditions of the group. Many people feel varying degrees of awe and dread towards the unknown or inexplicable.

The lack of oral traditions among the historic American Indian tribes reliably referring to the purpose and meaning of the mounds and enclosures of eastern North America is readily understandable simply given the great antiquity of this earthen architecture (Mason 2006). Moreover, the early and devastating disruption of American Indian peoples and cultures due to disease, warfare, migration, and acculturation resulting from the European conquest of Native America undoubtedly has helped to erase traditions that might otherwise have survived into the late pre-contact era (e.g., Brose 1978:577; Hunter 1978).

Whatever the cause, the documented testimony of American Indians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries relating to the mounds and enclosures of

eastern North America is consistent with the archaeologically derived conclusion that the prehistoric cultures who constructed these earthworks cannot be reliably culturally affiliated with any of the historically documented tribes who occupied this region. There certainly are strong biological connections between the mound-builders and the historic American Indian tribes indigenous to the Eastern Woodlands (e.g., Mills 2001), but the cultural connections are insufficient to justify most claims of a shared cultural affiliation between any particular earthwork and any particular modern tribe.

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