The Misusable Past

Facts and Fantasies in North American Archaeology

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Two of the most memorable incidents of my career in anthropology concern unusual visitors to my office. The first appeared unexpectedly at the door during a particularly frustrating moment of my dissertation writing, and his first action was to place in front of me a large paper grocery bag. Before I could compose a bewildered question he launched into a long monologue concerning his years of searching for particular sorts of stones, ones whose shape held cryptic and suggestive clues to the human past. It turned out that I was to be the privileged witness to an entire bag of such stones, which quickly appeared to be divided into two classes: those which, when maneuvered in proper fashion, manifested versions of the heads of Egyptian pharaohs; and those suggesting miniature versions of the African continent. All were further stated to have come from scuba dives off the Bahamas, and to be prehistoric relics of voyages from Egypt and/or other parts of Africa. I escaped after only four or five examples—only to have another visitor with another telltale bag a few days later. In this case the bag held “Egyptian” pebbles found in South Philadelphia!

This article traces some of the ways in which archaeology has been used, misused, and abused to provide solutions to questions and controversies concerning the New World and its early inhabitants. For Europeans and their descendants, the most important controversies have centered around two general issues. First, what was the origin of the peoples encountered in the New World, and how could their existence be reconciled with the lack of any explicit reference to America and Americans in the texts of the Bible, the writings of classical antiquity, and those of the church fathers? Second, what was the history of Native Americans in the area north of Mexico, and more specifically, had there been a decline in the level of their culture before the time of European contact? Put another way, could the North American Indians of the 18th and 19th century really have been responsible for the monumental earthworks and structures discovered by Europeans as they moved inland from the east coast?

The answers to these questions were frequently inventive, ingenious, and even downright eccentric—as illustrated by my own experiences with Egyptian stones. But while such fantasies are interesting and amusing in themselves as examples of human gullibility, they also have a more serious aspect. As myths or popular explanations of Indian origins and customs they show some remarkably persistent patterns, deeply revealing of the ways Europeans and immigrant Americans have perceived the cultural worth of Native Americans, both past and present.

Early Origin Theories: Eden and the Ten Lost Tribes

Speculation as to the origins of Native American populations began with Columbus. From the moment that he anchored in 1492 off a Caribbean island and discovered it to be inhabited, the successful navigator had to grapple not just with the task of describing his ventures into the unknown and the hazards of unfamiliar waters, but also with less tangible conceptual issues.

The most immediate of these was the problem of geography and cartography: was this island merely a previously unknown outlier of the distant fringe of eastern Asia—or had he discovered a place known to the West only through myth, or perhaps not known at all? During his third voyage to the New World (1498), Columbus discovered the mouth of a mammoth river, now identified as the Orinoco in Venezuela. Assuming that he had reached the eastern shore of Asia, he suggested that this was the fourth river of the terrestrial paradise (Eden) of medieval legend, the others being the Ganges, Tigris-Euphrates, and Nile. This identification of the new lands with Eden received some support from Columbus’s description of the islanders he initially encountered as wonderfully innocent, docile, and hospitable (Dickason 1984:xiv).

Such ideas stemmed from the “Primitivist” tradition that had emerged in Western thought during the Renaissance. Combining the concept of the classical Golden Age with that of the biblical paradise, the Primitivists dreamt of lands occupied by peoples with close positive ties to nature, “unsullied by the wiles, complexities, and sophistication of modern civilization” (Berkhofer 1978:72). The voyages of Columbus seemed to provide concrete examples of societies retaining virtues of simplicity and innocence lost long ago in Europe and adjacent lands.

That the newly discovered territories were not physically a part of Asia at all, but were in fact a separate world of unexpected extent and diversity, was demonstrated in 1513 when the Spanish explorer Balboa stood silent on a peak in Panama, viewing the vast Pacific. By the mid-1500s it was generally accepted by cartogra-
state persisting in some unknown land, gained popularity. According to
Christian sources, this state was headed by hostile leaders named
Ceng and Magur; their kingdom was successively located by theo-
logians and cartographers in the Caucasus, in northern Europe or
the Urals, somewhere deep in Asia, and finally in northeastern Siberia,
primaBarily in close proximity to the newly discovered lands. Hence
the Lost Tribes legend was easily transferred to the already mis-
identified "Indians."

During the 18th century, a systematic attempt to document the
Jewish origin of the southwestern Indians was undertaken by
James Adair. Adair had lived and traded with the tribes of the south-
east (including the Cherokees, Chickasaws, and Choctaws) for
over thirty years. In his History of the American Indians (1775) he
presented a series of twenty-three "arguments" comparing the cus-
toms of the Jews with those of the Indians. Elements of similarity
included: a division into tribes; worship of Jehovah; a belief in
angels; belief in resurrection; world to come; the law; the church;
ancestors; types of family; burial customs; and language (see box).

The decline and eventual demise of this theory began when it was
pointed out that customs similar to those shared by the Jews and the
Indians were to be found throughout the world and could not be
used as evidence for common ancestry. Nevertheless, Adair's ar-
duments did have a brief revival in the early 19th century, supported
by respected public figures (such as Elias Boudinot, a friend of
Thomas Jefferson), as well as by the eccentric English Viscount
of Kingborough, who died in a debtor's prison after writing nine
lavish volumes on the topic. One adherent who put his beliefs into
action was the philanthropist Mor-
dochael Noah, who in 1852 invited
American Indians into his reserve for
Jewish refugees at Grand Island, New York; none are rec-
corded as accepting (Ashe 1971:8).

Other speculative origin theories identified American Indians as
descendants of the Danes, the

Welsh, the Picts, the Canaanites, the Egyptians, the Polynesians,
habitants of the continent of Atlantis, and Asians. The ultimately
correct hypothesis of an East Asian origin was first proposed in 1500
by Father Jose de Acosta. He suggested that the Indians had
migrated from Asia to the New World, moving primarily overland
with "short stretches of naviga-
tion." As knowledge of geography
increased an Asian origin became increasingly likely, and was widely
accepted by the end of the 18th century (despite the revival
of Adair's theory described above).

A migration of hunting groups from Asia into the Americas during
the latter part of the last glaciation is now supported by studies of
genealogy, genetics, and the
archaeology of Siberia, as well as
North America. A shift in the
nature of the argument, from
speculation about origins to a
search for evidence concerning the
history of the Indians, began in the
late 18th century. Increasingly, this
evidence was provided by the
newly developed enterprise of
archaeology.

The American Indians: Recent Arrivals or Longtime Residents?

Although permanent European colonies had been established on the
Atlantic seaboard of North America by the early 17th century, it
was not until the 1790s that a significant discussion of either the
antiquity or the antiquities of this region appeared. This initial lack of
curiosity was not simply a reflection of prevailing European attitudes
and assumptions. On the contrary, in England as well as on the
continent there was an increasing focus on ancient things. Stonehenge,
monuments or barrows, stones monuments such as Stonehenge, and
classical ruins had become items for rumination and investigation by
poets, painters, and the educated gentry.

Nor was there a lack of suitable "ruins." French and Spanish ex-
plorers and colonists had reported the presence of large mounds lo-
cated in the central river valleys, particularly along the Mississippi.
These accounts were available to educated English colonists, even if
the mounds themselves still lay in foreign territory. While it is true that
the east coast of North America generally lacked such prominent
archaeological sites, the great Irish colonists' disinterest in the past is
probably better explained by the attraction of the new people toward
American natives.

"the Lost Tribes of
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identified "Indians."

"Portrait of an Allegroian Indian from Virginia by John White, ca. 1585. The
title of this painting illustrates the way in which Europeans imposed images
from their own cultures on the documentation of the newly found land. Both
the posture of "The Flyer" and the presence of the bird headdress (the
medieval monk's badge of office) call to mind the classical god Mercury (91
by 6 in. Reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum)"
The early New Englanders generally felt contempt for the Indians that they encountered. Cotton Mather, for example, described them as veritable "ruines of Man- kind" (1683, 1594). Even adherents of the Ten Lost Tribes hypothesis considered the Indians to be "villains in a sacred drama, consternation to the heathen tribes that Joshua conquered, children of the Devil who tempted Christ in the desert, forerunners of the legions of darkness that would gather at Gog and Magog for a last and furious battle against the elect" (Bercovitch in Segal and Stoneback 1877:17).

These attitudes had certain psychological and as material benefi- cits for the colonists. Since the Indians were heathens, their cu- stom's, need not be treated with respect—particularly when those customs ran directly contrary to the Europeans' own values. For ex- ample, the colonists observed great quantities of material wealth (guns)

Adventures on the Eastern Frontier

James Adair was born in county Antrim, Ireland, around 1700 and immigrated to South Carolina in 1735. He initially traded with the Cherokee in North Carolina and Tennessee, but in 1744 he took up residence with the Chickasaws in what is now northern Mississippi. There he established firm friendships which he used to extend the interests of the English colonies (specifically South Carolina) against the French and their Indian allies, the Shawnee and Chickasaw. His role was an active one. He partici- pated in Chickasaw raids against their French and English enemies, and on French settlements, he was given scalps. In the 1750s he led Chicka- saw scouts as part of an unsuccessful expedition of South Carolina- nian troops against the Cherokee. The bulk of his History of the American Indians was written in the following decade while he lived a relatively peaceful life among the Chickasaws.

His book consists of several discrete sections: his arguments for the Jewish origins of the Indians' descriptions of the southern tribes and their recent relationships with Europeans; and general comments on Indian life. It concludes with an appendix entitled "A Description of the Chickasaw Indians, the Mississippi Lands with their Provinces—The Bene- fits of Colonizing Georgians, and Civilizing the Indians—and the Way to Make All the Colonies More Valuable to the Mother Country."

Adair was clearly well educated, and his book contains much in- formation of value to historians of both the nation and the ethno- graphers. At the same time, it betrays a series of strongly held ideas and opinions. Some of Adair's ideas, including a belief in the superiority of Europeans and the importance of their expansion to the west, were products of his time and culture; others, such as his dislike of formal government and religion, may have been the product of his own upbringing. The following excerpts are in- tended to show the kind of information that this 18th century frontiersman provided, as well as the general tone of his writing.

The Indians are of a copper or red-clay colour—and they delight in every thing, which they imagine may promote and increase it; accordingly they paint their faces with vermilion, as the best and most beautiful ingredient. If we consider the common laws of nature and providence, we shall not be surprised at this custom; for every thing loves best its own colour and place in the creation, and is disposed to ridicule its opposite (1775:1).

"By a strict, permanent, divine institution, the Hebrew nation were ordered to worship at Jerusalem. Jehovah the true and living God, and who by the Indians is stilled Yahweh. The ancient heathens it is well known, worshipped a plurality of gods—Gods which they formed to themselves, according to their own liking, as various as the countries they inhabited, and as numerous, with some, as the days of the year. But these American Indians pay their religion devout to Lord Dhidhodi- Aba, the great, beneficent, su- preme, holy spirit of fire, who resides (as they think) above the clouds, and on earth also with unprofessed people. He is with them the sol of war, war, light, and of all animal and vegetable life (1775:17-19)."

[The Indians] pay no religious worship to rocks, or stones, after the manner of the old eastern pagans; neither do they worship any kind of images whatsoever... This is consonant to the Jewish observance of the second commandment, and directly contrary to the usage of all the ancient heathen world, who made cor- poral representations of their deities—and their conduct, is that of reproach to many reputed Christian temples, which are littered round with a crowd of idols, to represent God, spurious angels, pretended saints, and notable villains (1775:21).

[On meeting a group of Cherokee warriors in 1748] I observed instead of carrying their bow and quiver over their shoulder, as is the prevailing custom, they held them in their left hand, bent, and some arrows. I approached and addressed them, and endeavored to appear quite indifferent at their hostile arrangement. While I held my own ready in my right hand... [their leader] came and struck my breast with the bit-end of one of my pistols, which I had in my left hand: I told him with that vehe- mence of speech, which is always requisite on such an occasion, that I was an English Chikaskia; and informed by expressive gestures that there were two tens of Chik- askia warriors, and more than half that number of women, besides children, a little behind, just be- yond the first hill. At this news, they appeared to be much con- fused... (1775:257-258).

"The Choktoti flatten their fore- heads with a bag of sand, which with great care they keep fastened on the skull of the infant, while it is in its tender and imperfect state. Thus they quite deform their face, and give themselves an appearance, which is disagreeable to any but those of their own likeness. Their features and mind, indeed, exactly correspond together, for except the intense love they bear to their native country, and their utter contempt of any kind of danger, in defence of it, I know no other virtue they are possessed of: the general observation of the traders among them is just, who affirm them to be divested of every property of a humane being, except the shape and language (1775:283-284).

"In a dry summer season, [the Indians] gather horse chestnuts, and being half dried, which having pounded pretty fine, and steeped a while in a trough, they scatter this mixture over the sur- face of a middle-sized pond, and stir it about with poles, till the water is perfectly clear. The fish, then, are left to themselves, with the intoxicating bitters. The fish are soon inebriated, and make to the surface of the water, with their bellies uppermost. The fishers gather them in baskets, and bar- hice the largest... It seems, that fish caught in this manner, is not poisoned, but only stupefied; for the Indians, in making their decoction, were more intend- ed to us, who frequently use them. By experiments, when they are speedily returned to the water, they are in a few minutes (1775:402)."
kettles, axes, skins, and wampum belts) being placed in Indian graves—"rooting in the ground for no good reason" (Axtell 1981:117)—the reaction of the Pilgrims, recorded as early as 1610, was to "liberate" these goods by robbing the Indian graves. Grave-robbing could be justified as a religious act. When the Pilgrims despooled the grave of a Massachusetts chief's mother of "two great bears skins sewn together at fulllength," they were simply doing their best to eliminate a heathen superstition. In this case, the robbers were very fortunate to escape with their lives, for not surprisingly the Massachusetts warriors considered it "impious and infamous, to deface the monuments of the dead" (Rogers Williams, Key into the Language of America, 1643:203).

Such attitudes on the part of the Pilgrims and Puritans scarcely encouraged a healthy or sympathetic investigation of the past. A separate and more important factor in discouraging archaeological inquiry was the belief that the Indian was the past, conforming to a way of life long surpassed by European standards. In 1777, Edmund Burke in 1777 stated that to look at the Indian was to see "the antiquities of all nations" (Dickerson 1984:55).

Even if some historical development within the American Indians admitted, the chronological framework in use during the 18th and 19th century dictated that the present day associations of Indian groups on the continent was relatively recent. Interpretations of the Old Testament allowed less than 6000 years since the creation of the world. The linguistic diversity observed among Indian groups meant that they had migrated out of the Old World after the construction of the Tower of Babel and the origin of separate tongues. In terms of length of occupation, America was considered to be very much a "new world," even to its native people.

However, was the diversity observed among Native American populations to be explained? Until the late 18th century, anthropologists usually explained all variation between human cultures in terms of environmental causes. That had been formed physically and culturally "by the nature of the forest which he inhabits, and the variable temperature of the heaven under which he lives" (Smith 1862:219).

An extreme but influential statement of the supposed effects of environment on American animal populations was that proposed in 1781 by the renowned French naturalist, Comte de Buffon. Drawing general comparisons between the inhabitants of major geographical zones, Buffon claimed that all animal species native to the New World were smaller in size and fewer in number than related species in the Old World. As for the human species,

"though the American savage be nearly of the same stature with men in polished societies, yet this is not sufficient exception to the general conclusion, that animated Nature throughout the whole Continent. In the savage, the

organisms of generation are small and feeble. He has no hair, no beard, no arbour for the female. Though nimble than the European, because accustomed to running, his strength is not so great. His sensations are less acute, and yet he is more cowardly and cruel. He has no vanity, no activity of mind... The bonds of the most intimate of all societies, that of the same family, are feeble; and one family has no attachment to another. Hence cohesion, not courage, not social state can take place among the morality of their manners." (Clairmont 1847:31)

Buffon's views are easily contradicted by firsthand accounts written in his own time, as well as by modern studies of the historical record. Their importance within the context of this discussion lies in the fact that Buffon was again supplying a myth—an intellectual and "scientific" justification for European oppression. In his master, Ray Billington's words: "Buffon's passion was not to degrade the Indians, but to demonstrate that the Europeans were better equipped to occupy the American than the red men. Nurtured in a healthier environment, and hence stronger and more energetic, they were able to cut down trees, drain swamps, and improve the soil. The Indian had surrendered his birthright by over-long dependence on Nature: Nature was a ruthless destroyer unless man directed its aimless forces into productive use" (1984:18).

The real stimulus to a change in attitude toward the American Indians and a study of their monuments was supplied by the Romantic Movement in European literature and art. Twenty years after Buffon's wholesale dismissal of Native Americans as biologically inferior, there was a sharp negative response from intellectuals in the newly independent United States. Like the Europeans, the colonists placed the Indians at the bottom of the development scale of human institutions. Charles Willson Peale, with the new spirit of Romanticism, however, they considered Nature as a divine force, inspiring prodigious and desirable emotions. More over, as the frontier expanded across the Appalachians, "Our American forests lamented the lack of a usable past. Many... were educated men, aware of the archaeological treasures of Europe and the Near East. They expected to find in the green New World those traces of awesome antiquity on which fantastic myths could be founded; they did not like to feel that they were coming into an empty land peopled only by naked wandering savages" (Silverberg 1968:1). In the rural and geometric earthworks that dotted the Midwestern forests, unexplainable by contemporary Indians, the raw material of a romantic past seemed at last apparent.

Mound Builders and Myth Building

Enthusiastic investigation of archaeological sites within North America began in the 1770s when missionary David Zeisberger and others reported the spectacular earthworks of the Ohio Valley. Naturalist William Bartram, the son of botanist John Bartram of Philadelphia, journeyed through the interior of the southeastern United States from 1773 to 1777. He not only described magnificent ancient monuments, but also the construction of a new mound by Creek Indians. This information, which documented the ability of modern Indians to construct such works, and might have discouraged the idea that American Indians were a race of savages described below, was not made available to the general public until 1906 because of a series of mishaps described below.

Thomas Jefferson was one of the first to actively seek evidence for the nature of the Indian mound through archaeological fieldwork. As a philosopher of the Enlightenment, he wrote an eloquent rebuttal to Buffon and similar theorists (Notes on the State of Virginia, 1787). In this book he recounted his excavation of an Indian mound in order to determine exactly how it was formed and used. As president and, simultaneously, as head of the leading American scientific group, the American Philosophical Society, Jefferson also did a great deal to restore the geographical and ethnographic records of the Indians, particularly that dealing with the mysterious mounds.

Not everyone considered the
mounds in such a rational and logical way. Jefferson’s friend Benjamin Barton, also writing in 1787, suggested that the Mound Builders were Danish Viking lords, who eventually migrated to the south and became the Toltecs, leaders of the state preceding that of the Aztecs in the Valley of Mexico. Barton’s work is one of the earliest examples of the myth of the Mound Builders; a favored later version attributed the mounds to a group of white-skinned giants!

The Mound Builder “theory” postulated an ancient civilized race that had inhabited the forests of North America long ago and then vanished. It had one important underlying premise: that the Indians who were found residing in the vicinity of mounds, having remained in a timeless state of savagery since their first arrival, could never have been responsible for works that indicated a higher level of civilization. (The native populations of Mesoamerica and the

Old North American Fantasy

Archaeological misidentifications and outright frauds have been relatively common within North America during the past 100 years. The story of the Kensington Rune Stone is typical. This large slab carved with old writing was found in 1899 near the town of Alexandria, Minnesota. A Swedish immigrant farmer named Olof Ohman was removing a tree, and “discovered” the stone beneath its roots; a story quickly circulated that the writing was in Norse runes, the ancient script of Scandinavia.

Both American and Scandinavian scholars examined the “test” at this time, and every one of them pronounced it a crude fake. Yet instead of disappearing, the Rune Stone was “rediscovered” by Norwegian-American writer Halmar Holand, who became its owner and lifet ime publicist. Holand, despite a constant rejection of the test by runic scholars, won a major victory in 1912, when the Minnesota Historical Society accepted the stone as genuine. He and his supporters “translated” the inscription as the record of a voyage made by Norse seafarers to Minnesota via Lake Superior in the year A.D. 1362.

After World War II, the Kensington stone gained scholarly supporters. The wealthy Smithsonian put it on exhibit in 1948-49, and published a translation of a monograph by a Danish scholar who accepted the stone as genuine. A gigantic reproduction was soon unveiled in a Minnesota park. Yet the inscription had been repeatedly shown to include very bizarre spellings and at least one word not otherwise known from the 14th century. In 1959, a careful study of all the evidence was made by Erik Wahlgren, who concluded that the stone was a deliberate fraud: “Everything necessary to the fabrication of the stone existed in the immediate vicinity: an ample supply of stone; an atmosphere conducive to the hoax; a local population of Scandinavian immigrants; and textual material which can account for the more puzzling features.” (1959:29).

In 1974 a confession made by one John Gran to his children revealed the stone’s forgery. “The purpose of the hoax, Gran had said, was to be ‘a hell of a good joke’ and ‘the biggest laugh’.” (McKusick and Wahlgren, quoted in Carlson 1986:9).
American Indians, who had been punished by God with dark skins. The Lannantes destroyed the Neph- rites in the 5th century A.D. Silverberg (1968:150-56). Thus a version of the Mound Builder myth has survived to the present as part of the dogma of the major religions. This survival has in turn stimulated new archaeological research, since the Church of Latter Day Saints sponsors field projects in an effort to recover evidence related to its beliefs. This research, conducted by professional archaeologists, is objectively reported in scholarly as well as more popular publications.

Archaeological Beginnings

Archaeological speculation about the Mound Builders peaked in the 1830s. It is probably not coincid- ental that at this time the United States government had instituted a contro- versial policy regarding the eastern Indian tribes—their systematic rem-oval to territories beyond the Missis- sipi. In more recent times, fantastic origin theories still thrived, but there was also a new type of discussion, based on evidence re- covered through the systematic des- cription and excavation of mounds by amateur archaeologists. For example, Ephraim Squier (an Ohio newspaper editor) and his assistant E.H. Davis (a physician) made a comprehensive survey of sites in the Mississippi valley that was published by the newly estab- lished Smithsonian Institution in 1848. This work is still valuable today for its hundreds of pages of careful description and elegantly drafted maps of major mounds (in the Midwest, most of them now destroyed). Its conclusions are less durable; they illustrate the triumph that facts do not speak for them- selves, but are usually interpreted in terms of already existing theories. Squier denied mound-building ca- pabilities to the American Indians on the grounds of their insignificance: "aversion to labor"; the Mound Builders (presumably white but of unspecified origin) must therefore have been a distinct, peaceable race which migrated to Mexico.

The Mound Builder myth was finally demolished at the end of the 19th century. In 1879, the United States government created a new agency within the Smithsonian Institution, the Bureau of American Ethnology. Staffed by capable scholars and dedicated specifically to Native American studies, it was headed by Major John Wesley Powell—the first man to run the Colorado and Grand Canyon rivers in 1869. In 1881, Con- gress added an appropriation of $25,000 a year to be spent for "continuing archaeo- logical investigation relating to the Mound Builder and other prehistoric mounds." Powell chose an ento- mologist and botanist named Cyrus Thomas to head the new charge.

Year after year Thomas and several assistants labored to carry out the duties, often with a high pre- tention of North American mounds. At last, in 1894, the mass-ive report appeared, compiling in dry, detail descriptions of thousands of mounds all across the eastern United States. The report sets forth an attempt to show good archaeological as well as historical evidence for the continua- tion of mound building by many Native Americans after white con- tact, and for comparable tech- niques and materials among more recent Native American groups. This had important consequences for approaches to the old debates reviewed here—the origin and anti- quity of American culture, and the nature of contacts (if any) with the Old World after their arrival and before Columbus. In 1975, initial search for answers to these questions had produced rampant speculation and confluent data-gathering. By the end of the 19th century, sufficient information was available to enable rejection of many of the majority of origin and contact hypotheses. This information was first gathered by dedicated amateurs, followed by a small but growing cadre of professional archaeologists.

A more systematic approach did not, however, mean that the old questions were resolved to every- one's satisfaction. Indeed, one result of the development of archaeology and anthropology as scholarly disci- plines (as exemplified by the Smith- sonian Institution and the Bureau of American Ethnology) was the creation of a large generation faction outside these professions. To the present day, some members of this faction have supplied alternative theories that, if anything, are more exotic than those of the 19th century. They have placed themselves before the public as being in favor of continuous and continuous conflict with an increased awareness that the reconstruction of the Native Amer- ican past.

This despite archaeological searches of unprecedented scale, only one tiny site in the Americas has been found in Massachusetts that produced a prehistoric mound. Powell chose an ento- mologist and botanist named Cyrus Thomas to head the new charge.

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It has only been a century since professional archaeologists and anthropologists first granted sole cred- it for the architectural and cultural elements found in North America to the tribes native to this area, and the prejudices that denied that earlier still them in academia as well as in the American national consciousness. Immigrant Americans have long admired the valor of a Tecumseh, the deter- mination expressed in the legend of the religious fervor of a Black Elk. Perhaps in the next century, the remaining mounds and ruined pue- blos can finally prove equally evoca- tive, not of the imaginary deeds of Tecumseh and Black Elk, but of the special qualities of America's or- iginal and enduring peoples.