CONFERENCE ON HISTORIC SITE ARCHAEOLOGY
PAPERS 1973 VOL. 8 pp. 129-138
1975 COLUMBIA, S.C.

37.

ARTIFACTS OF THE ADELANTADO

Jeffrey P. Brain

With a considerable portion of the plunder of Peru at his disposal, Hernando De Soto, Adelantado of Florida, could afford the best as he set about assembling an army of conquistadores for the exploration of his newly acquired governorship. So when this army traversed the southeastern United States in 1539-1543, it came as a well-equipped expedition. But ultimately, time and catastrophe took their toll and this same expedition fled a band of beggars, leaving more than their leader (and half their number) behind. It could thus be expected that, even though this event is barely retrievable in the immensity of time and space involved, some artifactual evidence of its existence should occasionally surface.

In keeping with the military character of the expedition, a number of swords, halberds, pieces of chain mail, even a cannon, have been reported from the states of Florida, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi, and have been touted as "De Soto relics." Few, if any, of these artifacts have been authenticated beyond doubt, due to questions concerning exact provenience or cultural ascription. In fact, most of this assorted military hardware usually only turns out to be of more recent French, English, or American manufacture. Although some indisputable articles may well exist, their actual rarity may perhaps be explained by the deleterious effects of the southeastern climate upon the preservation of iron and steel, and the documented conservation of these very materials by the army, itself, while it gave up nearly everything else. Therefore, as pointed out twenty years ago by John Goggin (1954: 161), it may be that the De Soto entrada might be traced with greater success by other, more mundane, classes of artifacts. It is the purpose of this paper to suggest such alternatives.

It was the policy of the Spanish explorers and conquistadores, in their confrontations with the American native, to temper force with largesse. Gifts were often given to allay suspicion, excite individual greed, or otherwise aid the particular Spanish objectives. The composition of a typical gift kit is indicated by chance references in many contemporary chronicles. Even from the very beginning, it is recorded that on October 12, 1492, Columbus handed out "red caps, glass beads. . .and hawk's bells" (Landström 1966:68). These remained the standard items of gift and trade throughout that first voyage, although the preference of the natives for the bells resulted in their being selected for the second voyage as the principal Spanish barter for gold and other valuables: "They would give nothing for beads, but they gave everything they had for hawks's bells, they did not want anything else" (*ibid.*, 145, quoting the official historian, Las Casas).

When the conquistadores began to penetrate the mainland, they took along similar trinkets. On his first march to Tenochtitlan in 1520, Cortez dispensed little bells and beads to various personnages along the way (Diaz del Castillo 1956: 41). And, slightly later,

De Soto's contemporary in the Southwest, Coronado, was even more generous: "The general gave them some glass dishes, and a number of pearls [beads?] and little bells which they prized highly, because these were things they had never seen" (Winship 1904: 38). Upon these precedents of the first explorers, the standard gift kit was established, although minor variations sometimes existed among secondary artifacts according to regional or cultural preferences. Thus, from later 16th century and early 17th century accounts of Spanish activities in the Southwest we learn that:

> Spanish explorers and missionaries to the Southwest sometimes distributed metal bells, presumably made in Spain. At Cochiti...the Espejo expedition of 1582-83 traded sleight bells and small iron articles for buffalo hides. Fray Estevan de Perea, reporting upon a visit to the Hopi pueblos in 1629, remarks that the priests gave the Indians'some trinkets which they had brought--such as hawk's bells, beads, hatchets and knives.' (Judd 1954: 110)

Among the experiences of Fray Alonzo de Benavides in the 1600's:

> Some Indians took me to their rancheria and [I] regaled them with bells, rattles, feathers, and beads of different colors, for the Catholic king orders that we be furnished with things of this kind so that we may convert them peacefully and that they will gladly hear the word of the Lord from us. (Hodge, Hammond and Rey 1945: 53)

And undoubtedly still in pursuit of these same objectives, it is recorded that supplies for twelve Franciscan friars sent to New Mexico in 1624 included the following gifts for the natives: "30 pesos of macaw feathers, one gross of little bells, and 12 bundles of glass beads" (*ibid.*, 119).

The common elements in all these accounts, and thus forming the core gift kit, are the "little bells and beads." The same core is evident in the earliest major Spanish entrada into the Southeast, that of Panfilo de Narvaez. While passing through Florida in 1528, as reported by the intrepid Cabeza de Vaca, "We gave him beads and little bells and other trinkets..." and, "They came, and we tried to quiet them the best we could and save ourselves, giving them beads and bells...they thought themselves very rich with the little bells and beads we gave them" (Bandelier and Bandelier 1922: 22: 56). Twelve years later De Soto distributed beads among the Indians of Alabama, as we shall have occasion to reference further below, but whether he also brought bells is not specifically mentioned in the narratives. However, if custom prevailed we may rather expect that he did, and there is now artifactual evidence to support such a likelihood.

A recent analysis of metal bells traded by the French and English during the 18th century resulted in the recognition of a number of

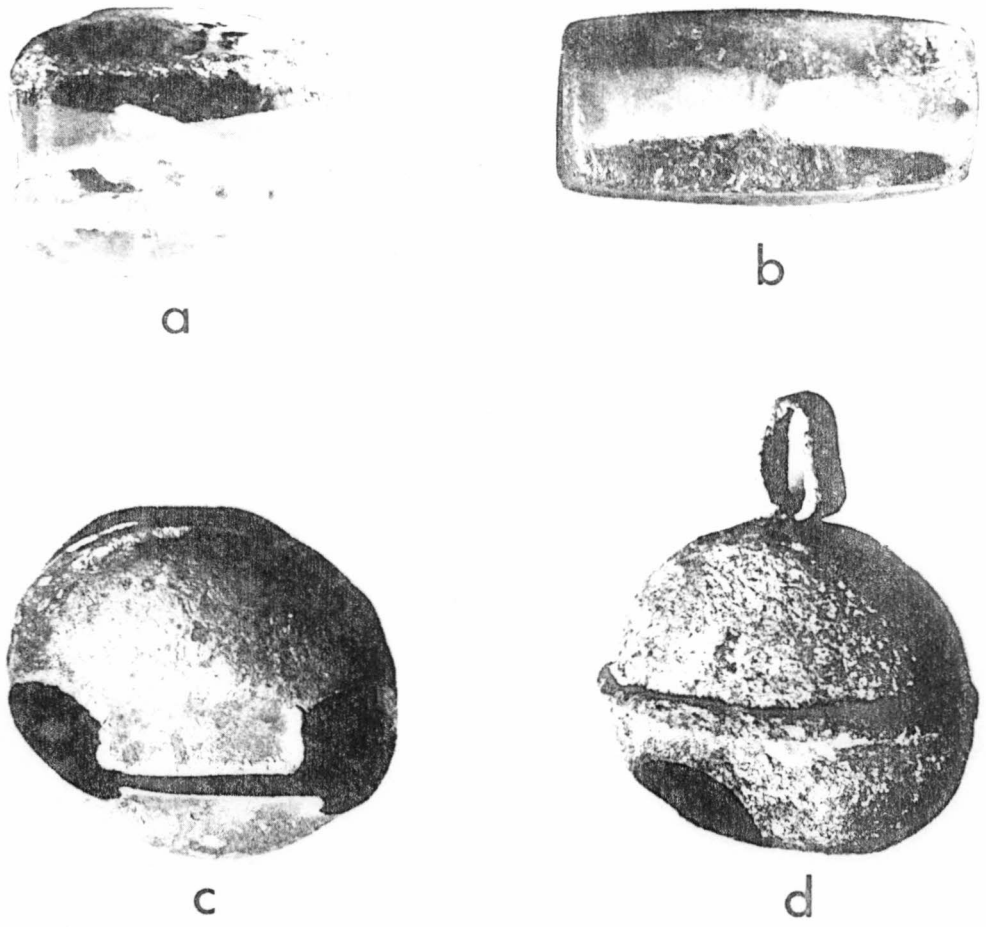

Figure 1. European artifacts, which are tentatively identified as being 16th century Spanish in origin, from the Oliver site in Coahoma County, Mississippi.
a-b. Cut rock crystal (quartz) beads. These are relatively simple examples with six and four facets respectively. The considerable wear sustained by these beads suggests that there may have been a slight interval between acquisition and final deposition.
c-d. Two examples of the sheet brass "Clarksdale" bell. Note the prominent equatorial seam, and the wide strap loop attachment.

(Photos by Alan Toth)

different types distinguished according to material, manufacture, and modes of attachment (Brown 1971). Considerable variation was observed within most of these types, but one stood out as being very uniform, as well as very different, from the other types. This bell, which we have named the "Clarksdale" bell, is illustrated in figure 1. The most significant feature of the Clarksdale bell is that it is made of sheet brass, all other types being either sheet copper or cast brass. Furthermore, in manufacture, the two hemispheres are joined by an equatorial seam that was folded, crimped, and soldered. Finally, the loop attachment is a strap of brass averaging 5mm. in width. None of the other 18th century bells have a loop like this. Other features of the Clarksdale bell are an overall diameter of ca. 3 cm., and two large holes in the bottom joined by a single cross-cut. Some later 18th - 19th century trade bells are quite similar in size and general form, but differ in being made of sheet copper, and having a simpler equatorial seam and narrow wire loops (*e.g.*, Wedel 1959: pl. 7f).

Once distinguished, the proveniences of the known Clarksdale bells in North America were then plotted and the distribution was found to be quite extraordinary in comparison to the other types. While most types were clustered in regional pockets corresponding to the general areas of colonial control exerted by the various European powers during the 18th century, the Clarksdale bell manifested a rather dramatic and quite unique distribution across the entire Southeast from Florida to Arkansas (fig. 2).

To date, six sites have produced examples of the Clarksdale bell, and most of these proveniences demonstrate very interesting historical aspects:

Dunn's Creek.

The Indian burials from this Florida mound have been dated to the 16th century period by Hale Smith (1956: 13-15). The Clarksdale bell was one of many types of European artifacts with diagnostic value.

Citico.

This exciting eastern Tennessee site is very important for our interpretations, as the four bells were the only European artifacts found among hundreds of burials beneath an otherwise "prehistoric" Middle Mississippian mound (Thomas 1894: 373-376). Although the site, itself, also had a later 18th century historic Cherokee occupation, the mound and burials within it seem definitely to have been a product of the Mississippian Dallas culture only (King, *et al* 1969: 53).

Satartia.

A partial bell was found on the surface of this site of unknown cultural affiliation in the Yazoo Basin region of Mississippi (Lower Mississippi Survey files, Peabody Museum, Harvard). It may be noted that Satartia is not far from the location of Sacchuma which was raided by De Soto at the behest of the Chicaca in 1540 (Swanton 1946: 105-106).

Clarksdale.

At least three bells were taken from a mound at this site before its destruction many years ago (Brown 1926: 358: fig. 352--only two of

the three illustrated are Clarksdale bells[1]). Clarksdale has been identified as the location of the first village of Quizquiz encountered by De Soto and his army in May 1541 (Brain, *et al* 1973).

Oliver.

De Soto remained in the vicinity of Quizquiz for a month while constructing barges with which to cross the Mississippi River. Only ten miles south of Clarksdale is the Oliver site, which had both late prehistoric and historic (late 17th - early 18th century) occupations. Because of the latter, the two Clarksdale bells found with burials in the principal mound (Peabody 1904) were assigned to the period of early French contact (Belmont 1961: 150). However, a reanalysis of the burial data suggests an intriguing alternative. While there certainly are French period burials in the mound, as well as strictly prehistoric, the two burials which had the Clarksdale bells in association cannot be placed confidently in either group. In one case, this is because the bell is the only association. However, it is the second burial which is especially interesting, for it is quite unique. In addition to the bell, there were two beads of quartz and a native pot. The pot was not a local product, but was the sole vessel from Oliver of Fatherland Incised, a Natchezan type which must have been imported from further south (Peabody 1904: pl. 14). Fatherland Incised was still in vogue among the historic Natchez Indians of the early 18th century, but it was also a type with a respectable antiquity stretching back into prehistory. On formal and stylistic grounds it is possible to assign this vessel with considerable confidence to the 16th or 17th century. The association of the quartz beads with these special artifacts shall be considered further below.

Parkin.

A final example of a Clarksdale bell was found with a burial at the Parkin site in northeast Arkansas (Davis 1966: 11: fig. 5). Parkin is a "late prehistoric" Middle Mississippian site with no other known historic artifacts[2]. The four native vessels which also accompanied the same burial are of types which may be identified as contemporary with the De Soto dateline (Brain, et al 1973: table 1 fig. 2).

---

[1]It has been reported, but not documented, that some years ago the collector sent these bells to Spain, where they were duly authenticated as having been made in Seville during the 16th century. We have no independent corroboration at this time. These same bells are presently on display at the Winterville Museum near Greenville, Mississippi.

[2]A bead found by the Arkansas Archeological Survey on the surface of the site in 1966 was brought to the attention of the author in January 1975, too late for inclusion in this article. This bead is a "faceted chevron" of a type which is known to occur with other Spanish contact beads (e.g., Nueva Cadiz) from mid-16th century Indian graves in Peru. The only other certain provenience we have for the type in the interior of the Southeast is a single example from a site near Chattanooga, Tennessee (Marvin Smith, pers. comm. 1/15/75), directly on the reconstructed De Soto route (see fig. 2).

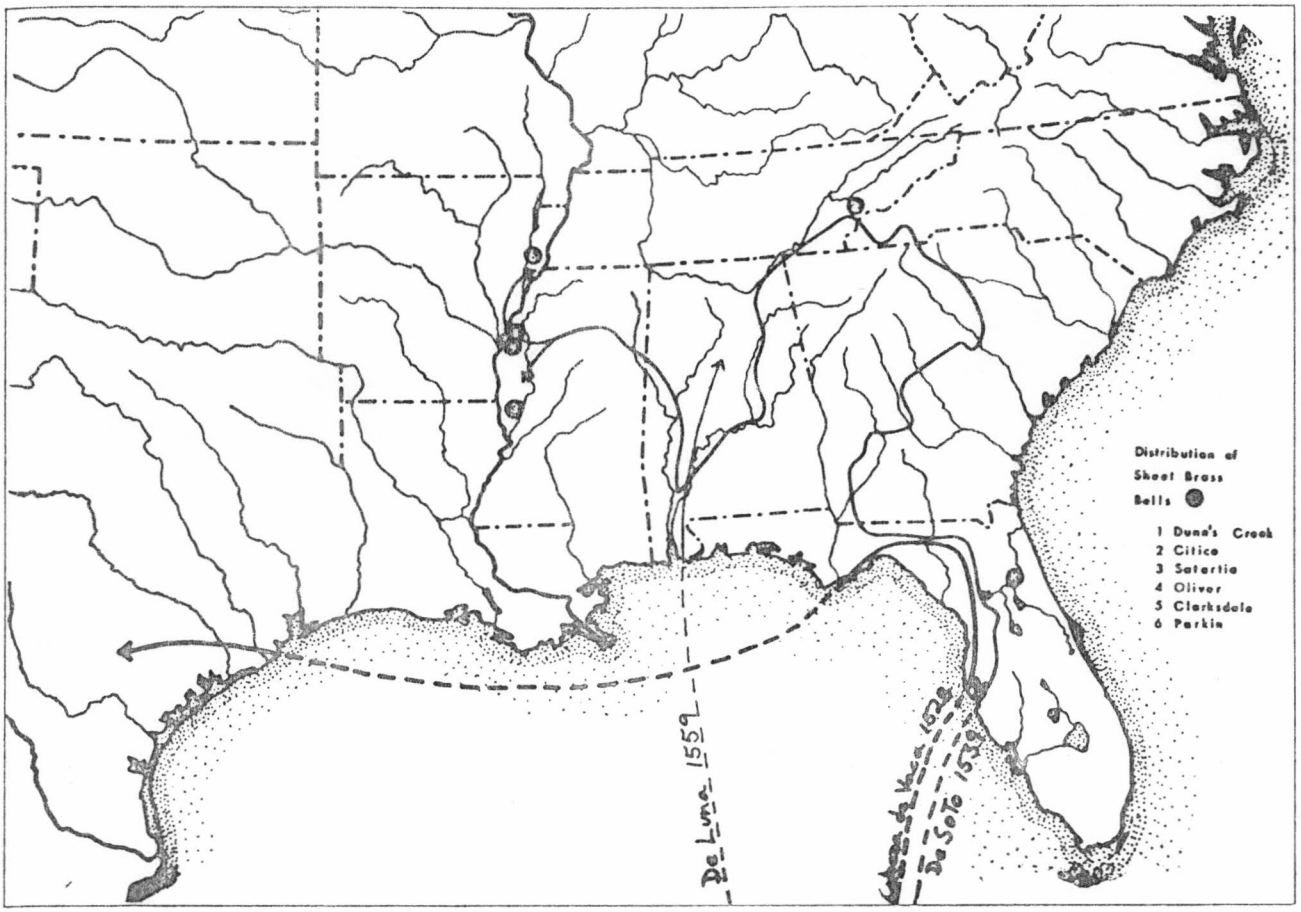

Figure 2. Distribution of the Clarksdale bell and approximate routes of the three principal Spanish expeditions in the Southeast during the 16th century.

(Photo by Alan Toth)

As plotted in figure 2, herin, the locations of these six sites fall remarkably close to the route of De Soto reconstructed by the De Soto Commission (Swanton 1939--slightly modified at the Mississippi River as a result of our own researches, op. cit.). In fact, granting that the Clarksdale bells are indeed 16th century artifacts, the coincidence clearly lies only with the De Soto expedition. For, while the earlyier Narvaez expedition could have accounted for the Dunn's Creek bell, the two routes diverged sharply after leaving Florida, the doomed Narvaez expedition actually taking to water and by-passing the rest of the Southeast proper. The only other major 16th century expedition (and the last significant European venture into the interior of the Southeast for more than a century) was that of Tristan de Luna in 1559-1560. However, as is clearly evident in figure 2, the region penetrated by de Luna is, at this writing, conspicuously devoid of Clarksdale bells. Thus, the identification seems secure with De Soto. The fact that proveniences are not always precisely on the conjectured route suggests areas of possible revision. Of course, it must also be considered that such highly desired and portable ofjects would stray some from the points of contact. With this caveat, it may be that the Clarksdale bell will provide a firm key with which to trace De Soto's route in the Southeast.

The Clarksdale bell may not be the only reliable key. With somewhat less confidence, I should like to suggest several other artifacts that may also be attributable to De Soto, but are not necessarily diagnostic as they have broader distributions in time and space. Nevertheless, where they lie along the proposed route, within tolerable limits, the case may be made, and in certain situations the case becomes a near certainty.

The artifacts to be considered all fall into a single class: beads. As has been noted, beads and bells were the standard items of gift and trade used by the Spanish explorers and conquistadores. And there is a specific reference in the De Soto narratives to this fact regarding beads. The Gentleman of Elvas recorded that when the army entered the province of Tuscaloosa, in present-day Alabama, "the Governor received and parted with the messenger graciously, giving him beads (which by the Indians are not much esteemed) and other articles, that he should take them to his lord" (Bourne 1904: 87)[3]. There is no indication as to what type of bead may have been given, although the most common category then, as later, was glass. The most diagnostic types of glass beads used by the Spanish in the 16th century, and found throughout their realms of activity in the western hemispher, are the Nueva Cadis Plain and Nueva Cadiz Twisted (Fairbanks 1968). In the Southeast, however, these beads have been reported so far only from Florida and the Gulf Coast, although a single bead from the otherwise prehistoric Rhodes site in northeastern Arkansas may be a Nueva Cadiz (Moore 1911: 415--this bead is not illustrated, but the

---

[3]It is tantalizing to think what the "other articles" might have been, although, of course, I should like to conjecture that they may have been bells--an item far more "esteemed" as Columbus had discovered.

general description fits; the Rhodes site was certainly occupied in the 16th century, and moreover was located within the province of Pacaha visited by De Soto in the summer of 1541 (Brain, et al 1973).

Another type of bead which seems to have achieved considerable popularity among the Spanish, themselves, in the 16th century was made out of cut rock crystal (quartz). These beads are highly variable in form and size, but their material makes them very distinctive (Fairbanks 1968). Cut crystal beads seem to be rather narrowly restricted to areas of Spanish activity in the Caribbean and Gulf Coastal regions, with the highest concentration being in Florida, although some have been found as far as Virginia (Bushnell 1937: 27-35; pl. 1). Curiously, Fairbanks reports that cut crystal beads are not found on sites with the Nueva Cadiz types, which suggests that different modes of interaction may be represented. Whatever the case, the fact is of no little interest in the light of our data: at the Oliver site, already discussed above, the second Clarksdale bell was found with the burial which also had two cut crystal beads as the only other European artifacts in association. These beads are relatively simple faceted examples (fig. 1), but similar ones have been found in Florida (Fairbanks, pers. comm.). In any case, these are the first of any kind yet recognized so deep in the interior, and that special burial at Oliver takes on even more particular significance.

But that burial is not alone in presenting possible artifactual evidence for the presence of De Soto. In addition to the burial with the other bell, there was a third burial at Oliver with a single association: a most unique bracelet of beads. These beads (and a pendant) are of turquoise, the only known occurence of this material from an Indian site east of the Mississippi River. Since the beads are identical to those characteristic of late prehistoric Pueblo craftsmanship in the Southwest (*e.g.*, Judd 1954: pl. 22), it had been thought that a single instance of aboriginal trade between these two regions was demonstrated (Belmont 1961). But the circumstances of the find, and presence of the other special artifacts, suggests alternative hypotheses: *viz.*, that the beads may have been brought in by a member of the De Soto expedition, someone who had had prior experience in Mexico or even the Southwest, itself. It is also conceivable, although perhaps less likely, that the turquoise could even have been a part of the official gift kit of the expedition. The 16th century chronicler Obregón recommended that gifts for natives include turquoise "to exchange for provisions and other things that may be found in new lands" (Hammond and Rey 1928: 237).

In this paper, I have attempted to demonstrate that little bells and beads formed the core of the gift kit used by the early Spanish explorers and conquistadores of the 16th century to dazzle, motivate, sometimes placate, the natives of the Americas. Moreover, it has been suggested that certain types of these artifacts may be diagnostic of a more closely defined time period or even particular event in a given context. In this instance, it is hoped that these and other artifacts will provide more exact clues to the perambulations of De Soto in the Southeast.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BANDELIER, AD. F (EDITOR) AND FANNY BANDELIER (TRANSLATOR)
1922 The Journey of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca. Allerton Book Co., New York

BELMONT, JOHN S.
1961 The Peabody Excavations, Coahoma County, Mississippi, 1901-1902. Unpublished B.A. thesis, Department of Anthropology, Harvard University, Cambridge.

BOURNE, EDWARD G. (EDITOR)
1904 Narratives of the Career of Hernando De Soto. A. S. Barnes and Co., New York

BRAIN, JEFFREY P., ALAN TOTH, AND ANTONIO RODRIGUEZ-BUCKINGHAM
1973 Ethnohistoric Archaeology and the De Soto Entrada into the Lower Mississippi Valley. The Conference on Historic Site Archaeology Papers, Vol. 7. Columbia.

BROWN, CLAVIN S.
1926 Archaeology of Mississippi. Mississippi Geological Survey, University, Mississippi.

BROWN, IAN W.
1971 Historic Trade Bells. Unpublished manuscript on file at Peabody Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge.

BUSHNELL, DAVID I., JR.
1937 Indian Sites Below the Falls of the Rappahannock, Virginia. Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, 96.4.

DAVIS, HESTER A.
1966 Introduction to Parkin Prehistory. Arkansas Archaeologist, 7.

DIAZ DEL CASTILLO, BERNAL
1956 The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, 1517-1521. Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, New York.

FAIRBANKS, CHARLES H.
1968 Early Spanish Colonial Beads. The Conference on Historic Site Archaeology Papers, Vol. 2.

GOGGIN, JOHN M.
1954 Are There De Soto Relics in Florida? The Florida Historical Quarterly, Vol. 32.

HAMMOND, GEORGE P., AND AGAPITO REY (TRANSLATORS AND EDITORS)
1928 Obregón's History. Wetzel Publishing Co., Los Angeles.

HODGE, FREDERICK W., GEROGE P. HAMMOND AND AGAPITO REY
1945 Fray Alonzo de Benavides Revised Memorial of 1634. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (Continued)

JUDD, NEIL M.
1954 The Material Culture of Pueblo Monito. Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, 124.

KING, DUANE H., DANNY OLINGER AND LAWR V. SALO
1969 Citico Site (40MR7). Archaeological Investigations in the Tellico Reservoir, Tennessee, 1967-1968: An Interim Report. L. V. Salo, ed. Department of Anthropology, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

" "
LANDSTROM, BJORN
1968 Columbus. MacMillan, New York.

MOORE, CLARENCE B.
1911 Some Aboriginal Sites on Mississippi River. Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, Journal, 14.

PEABODY, CHARLES
1904 Exploration of Mounds, Coahoma County, Mississippi. Peabody Museum, Papers, 3.

SMITH, HALE G.
1956 The European and the Indian. Florida Anthropological Society Publications, 4.

SWANTON, JOHN R.
1939 Final Report of the United States De Soto Expedition Commission. 76th Congress, 1st Session, House Document, 71.

1946 The Indians of the Southeastern United States. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin, 137.

THOMAS, CYRUS
1894 Report on the Mound Exploration of the Bureau of American Ethnology. Bureau of Ethnology, Annual Report, 12.

WEDEL, WALDO R.
1959 An Introduction to Kansas Archeology. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin, 174.

WINSHIP, GEROGE P. (TRANSLATOR AND EDITOR)
1904 The Journey of Coronado, 1540-1542. A. S. Barnes and Co., New York.