

EARLY SPANISH CONTACT ON THE FLORIDA GULF COAST:
THE WEEKI WACHEE AND RUTH SMITH MOUNDS

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INTRODUCTION

With the approach of the 450th anniversary of the arrival of Hernando de Soto's entrada in Florida (in 1492) and the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' first voyage to the New World (in 1492), interest in the early Spanish explorers and their activities in the New World has been heightened. During the past few decades, archaeological excavations at a number of sites in the Caribbean and the southeastern United States have yielded evidence of Spanish contact during the sixteenth century. These include: Nueva Cadiz, Venezuela (Rouse and Cruxent 1963:134-138; Willis 1976, 1980); Panama la Vieja, Panama (Long 1967); Isabela, Dominican Republic (Palm 1945; Goggin 1968:24); Convento de San Francisco, Dominican Republic (Council 1975); Puerto Real, Haiti (Fairbanks 1981, 1983; Fairbanks and Marrinan 1982; McEwan 1983, 1985; Williams 1985; Willis 1984); Santa Elena, South Carolina (South 1980); St. Augustine, Florida (Deagan 1978a, 1978b, 1983); and many others (Goggin 1968; Deagan 1985b).

In addition to these major sites, considerable research has been done in the Southeast on identifying sites visited by early explorers such as Soto, Pardo, and Luna (Brain et al. 1974; DePratter and Smith 1980; Smith 1975, 1976; Smith and Wilson 1985; Swanton 1939). Often, these latter sites are difficult to identify because of the fleeting nature of the contact and the small amounts of Spanish material present. Another complicating factor is the great number of sixteenth century Spanish shipwrecks, from which the aborigines often salvaged materials and traded them over wide areas. The effects of this are especially evident in Florida, where many aboriginal sites have yielded early Spanish artifacts (Smith 1956).

As recent interest in determining Soto's route from the landing site to Apalachee has increased, attention has been focused on the western half of the Florida peninsula. This is a particularly important region because documentary sources indicate that both the Narvaez (1528) and the Soto (1539) expeditions passed through the area (Bourne 1973:II:65; Cabeza de Vaca 1904). Various sites from the Tampa Bay area have yielded European materials (Bullen 1952), but these sites were excavated by WPA crews in the 1930s, and most of the reported European items have been lost. The region to the north of Tampa Bay received little attention from professional archaeologists until recently. However, these recent endeavors have been rewarded by the discovery of several sites with significant early sixteenth century European artifact assemblages. Two of these, the Weeki Wachee Mound (8He12) and the Ruth Smith Mound (8Ci200), are the subjects of this paper.

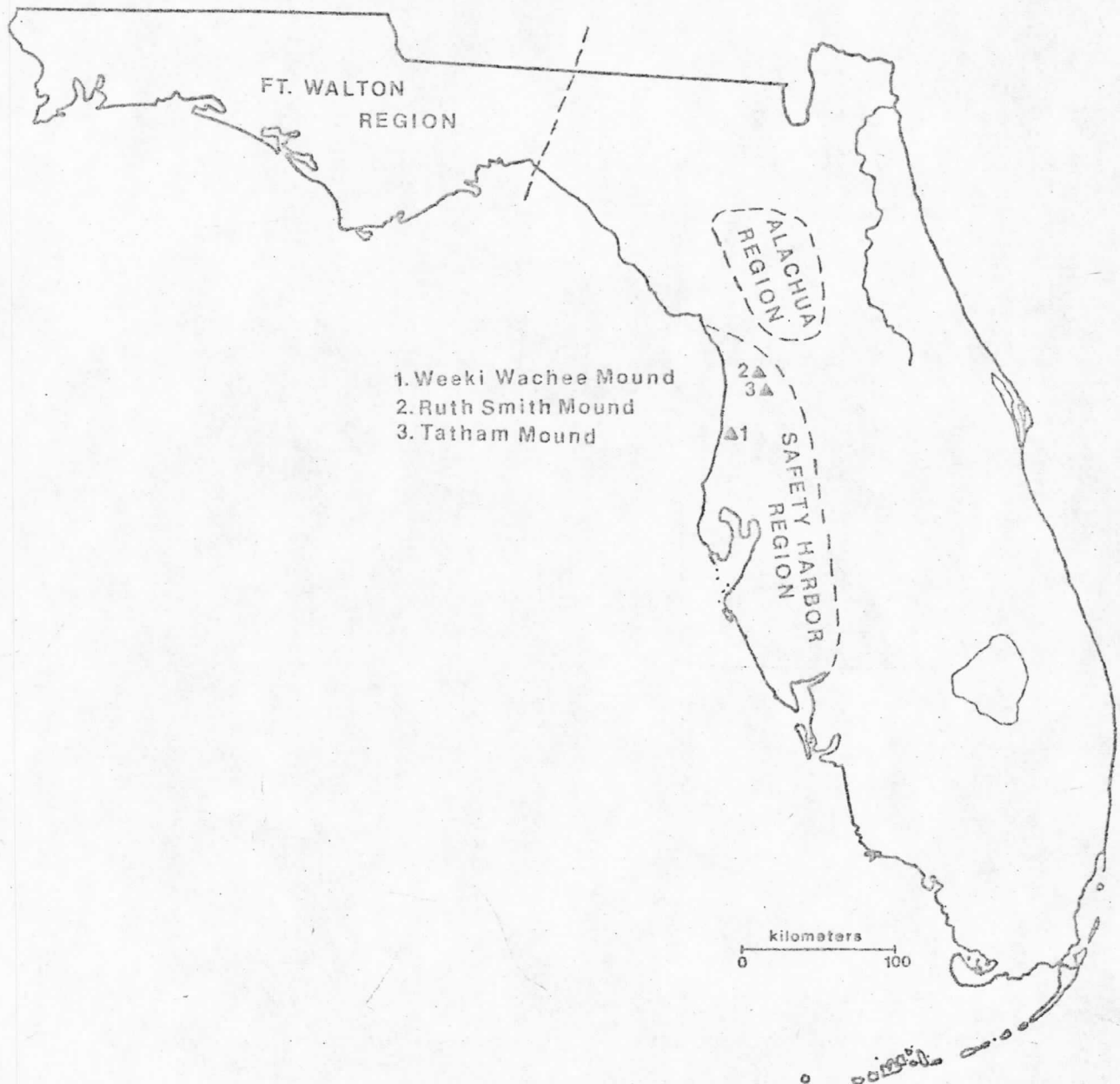


Figure 1. Map of Florida, showing approximate locations of the Weeki Wachee, Ruth Smith, and Tatham Mounds, with general boundaries of the Fort Walton, Alachua Tradition, and Safety Harbor culture areas (Portions after Milanich and Fairbanks 1980:168, 192).

DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION OF THE SITES

The Weeki Wachee Mound is located about 60 km north of the city of Tampa, approximately eight km from the Gulf of Mexico (Figure 1). It is presently on the grounds of a tourist attraction called Florida's Weeki Wachee, which is well known for its underwater mermaid shows. The mound is about 180 m from the Weekiwachee Springs, which form the headwaters of the Weekiwachee River.

In 1969, while clearing an area for enlargement of an orchid garden, a workman on a tractor exposed artifacts and human bones from the southern edge of the mound. Ripley Bullen of the Florida State Museum was contacted, and he put in a trench from which a small collection of artifacts was made. Sherds in this collection indicated a Safety Harbor cultural affiliation for the mound (see below for a discussion of Safety Harbor). The mound was originally about 13.7 m in diameter and 0.8-0.9 m high.

In the summer of 1970, Robert Allen, then an anthropology student at the University of Florida, was hired to conduct salvage excavations at the site. Using a crew of young people associated with the Youth Conference of the Presbyterian Church, he excavated about a third of the mound. In addition to a large number of aboriginal burials and artifacts, the excavations revealed a very large collection of European glass and metal beads. Unfortunately, a report on the excavations was not completed.

The Ruth Smith Mound is located about 1.2 km southwest of the Withlacoochee River and 0.7 km east of Lake Tsala Apopka in Citrus County (Figure 1). The site derives its name from the owner of the land upon which it is located, Mrs. Ruth Smith. Two of Mrs. Smith's sons discovered the mound sometime around 1955. They came upon the mound while searching dense undergrowth for stray cattle.

During the late 1950s and 1960s, numerous local collectors dug into the mound, recovering human skeletal remains, aboriginal artifacts, and a number of artifacts of Spanish origin. Some of these collectors have estimated that the mound was originally 10 to 15 m in diameter, and about 1.5-2.0 m high. They also mentioned that there was a depression which was probably a borrow pit on the west side. In the late 1970s, the mound was leveled with a bulldozer during clearing of the land for pasture. In 1984, University of Florida-Florida State Museum archaeologists supervised the excavation of a number of test pits on the site of the mound to determine if any undisturbed burials or features were present (Mitchem and Weisman 1984). These excavations revealed that the mound had been completely destroyed.

THE SAFETY HARBOR CULTURE

Aboriginal artifacts (especially decorated pottery) from the two sites indicated that both mounds were constructed by Indians of the Safety Harbor culture. Safety Harbor refers to the archaeological manifestation of aboriginal groups who occupied west peninsular Florida at the time of initial European contact in the early sixteenth century. The name is derived from the type site located on the west side of Tampa Bay (Griffin and Bullen 1950).

followed by a combined discussion of the European materials from both sites.

THE WEEKI WACHEE MOUND (8He12)

Approximately two-thirds of the Weeki Wachee Mound has been excavated, in 10 foot squares and six inch arbitrary levels. All the soil was screened through 1/4" mesh, except for the matrix around burials, for which 1/8" mesh or window screen was used.

Two factors made interpretation of the mound profile difficult. First, the mound was constructed of light grey/white sand, which, being well drained, did not form easily distinguishable strata. Second, there had been considerable disturbance of the upper portion of the mound from landscaping activities, tree roots, and the digging of a test trench before the 1970 excavation. However, careful drawing of profiles and recording of minute differences in soil color and texture have allowed basic interpretations to be made about the mound construction.

It appears that the mound was constructed in two episodes. The base of the mound was distinguishable in only a few places. This suggests that the original humus was scraped away before the initial mound was constructed. Sand from the surrounding area was subsequently used to raise a low platform (about 0.4 m high), in which a number of primary and secondary burials were placed. There is also evidence that one burial was later added by digging a small pit through this primary mound to the sterile soil below and placing a bundle burial in the hole.

It is possible that this initial platform was used as a base for a charnel structure, though the excavations yielded no direct evidence of this. At some point, burials were placed on this surface and covered with another layer (ca. 0.4 m thick) of sand. Apparently, many of the burials were placed higher up as this sand was added. The recovery of *Busycon* shells embedded in this upper and final cultural stratum but extending partly up into the modern humus suggests that ceremonies involving use of black drink may have occurred atop the mound after its final construction. Similar evidence has come from the Tatham Mound in Citrus County (Mitchem et al. 1985:38-39).

Human Burials

A complete analysis of the skeletal remains from Weeki Wachee has never been undertaken, but 63 burials have been delineated by Allen, many composed of more than one individual. The majority of the burials were secondary interments, with evidence of postmortem rodent gnawing on some of the bones. Several concentrations of long bones were recovered, suggesting the cleaning out of a charnel structure. Other mortuary practices are also evident with at least eight interments being flexed primary burials, and with extensive evidence of cremation also present. These methods of mortuary treatment have been observed at other Safety Harbor burial sites (Willey 1949:478). In general, it appears that ceramic vessels, whole shells, or shell dippers were not placed as grave goods with specific burials. However, several instances were noted in which skulls tended to be overlain by shells, vessels, or large sherds. Such a practice has been noted at Ft. Walton sites (Willey 1949:457). In fact, the excavations revealed that almost all of the vessels were intentionally broken, with sherds of some vessels spread over large

Three cut pieces of shell were recovered which had drilled holes and were apparently fragments of two gorgets. Both had sections cut out of them, but no design was recognizable.

The most numerous shell artifacts from the mound were the shell beads. Most of these were small disc beads, but a few were barrel-shaped or elongated. Many of them were found in direct association with burials, and evidence indicates that many were strung in necklaces or bracelets at the time of interment. When the right wrist of Burial 10 was uncovered, a large cluster of shell disc beads was found, the remains of a bracelet of at least 108 beads. These were coated with preservative in the field and carefully removed. The preserved mass (which unfortunately broke into three pieces upon removal) is shown in Figure 10, along with several other shell beads from the site. In Burial 17, shell and glass beads were found together near the skull. F.S. 48 (an infant burial) produced five beads (three shell, one glass, and one shell) lying in a row, which indicates they were strung. Burial 23 had a string of shell beads in situ in the neck region.

The two drilled columellae (one of which is incompletely drilled) probably represent beads in some stage of manufacture. The freshwater shell fragment (species unknown) and the large number of marine shell (mostly *Busycon* sp.) fragments are most likely pieces broken from artifacts in the mound, though they could also represent detritus from the production of shell dippers or other objects.

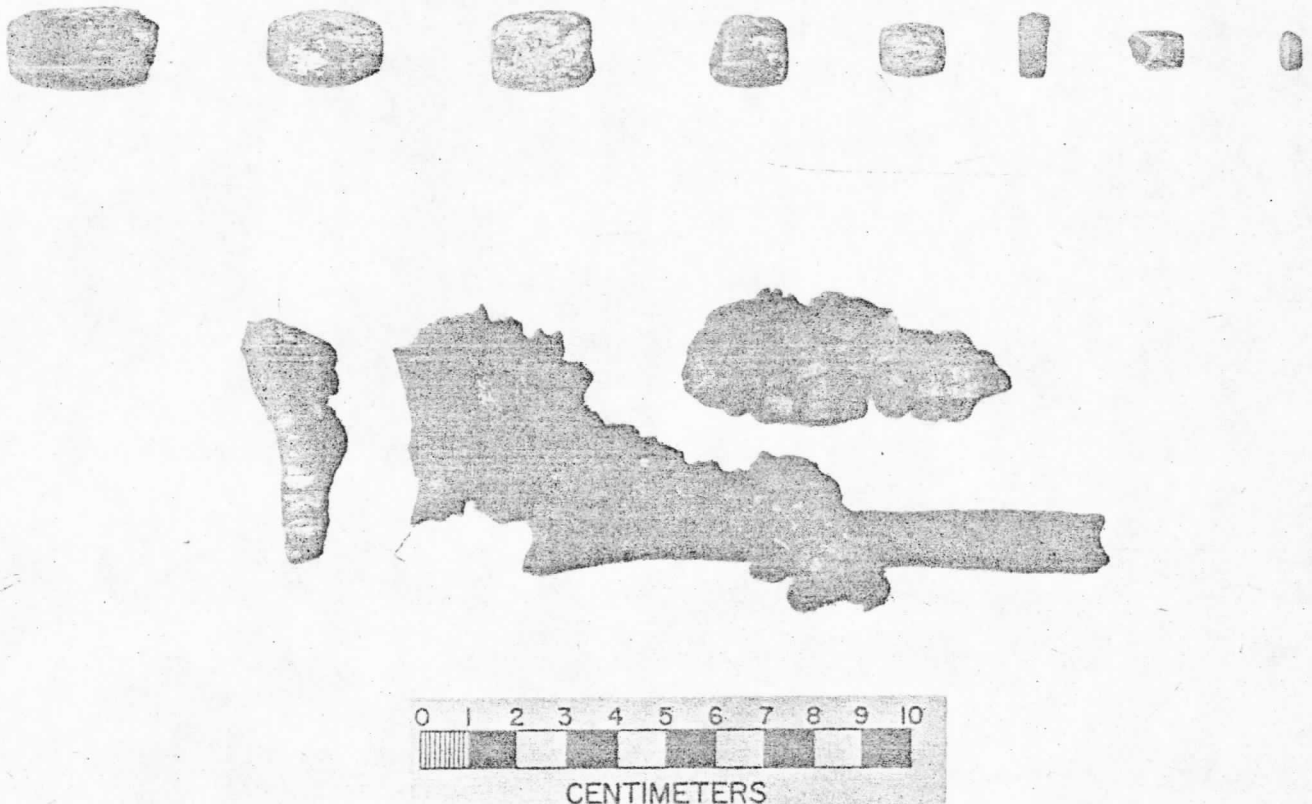


Figure 10. Top: Various shapes and sizes of shell beads from the Weeki Wachee Mound. Bottom: Wrist bones and associated shell beads from Burial 10.

built in two stages, with no data supporting a long time period between the episodes of construction. Some of the pottery and shells indicate contact with other Southeastern aboriginal groups, and imply that the Weeki Wachee residents may have been engaged in exchange networks, probably involving export of shells or shell products.

THE RUTH SMITH MOUND (8Ci200)

Unfortunately, the Ruth Smith Mound was not carefully excavated like the Weeki Wachee Mound, except for some test excavations in 1984 (Mitchem and Weisman 1984). For decades, various individuals dug into the Ruth Smith site, removing artifacts and skeletal material without keeping records or noting associations. The amount of data lost as a result is tremendous. Luckily, several informants have been located who have materials from the site and who know of others with collections. Many of these people have allowed us to study and photograph specimens in their collections.

Six collections from the site are described in the following discussion. These were collected as early as 1963, and as recently as 1984. Information concerning physical aspects of the site and unstudied collections is also included, based on discussions with people who visited the site. It should be emphasized that only a small portion of the artifacts from the mound are described here. Many more are in the possession of a number of collectors, and have not yet been studied by us. A test excavation of the site was performed in 1984 (Mitchem and Weisman 1984), and the data from this work are included here.

Human Burials

Very little information on burials from the Ruth Smith Mound is extant, but some of the excavators were able to recall various facts which give us some insight into the nature of the mound and the burials therein. Informants were not able to recall any stratigraphy in the sand mound, but did note that some well-preserved primary flexed burials were encountered at about 60-90 cm below surface in the center of the mound. Also, what may have been bundle burials consisting primarily of long bones were found close to the surface on the east side. Both primary flexed and secondary burials were therefore present in the mound, though it is impossible to accurately determine their stratigraphic relationship. The 1984 excavation did not reveal any intact burials (Mitchem and Weisman 1984:103-104).

Description of Aboriginal Artifacts

Since most of the artifacts described here were collected in uncontrolled excavations, no attempt will be made to discuss each collection individually. Instead, they will be combined and described by artifact class.

Ceramics. Table 4 lists the ceramics from the site. Most of the pottery types from the Ruth Smith Mound have been described in the discussion of the Weeki Wachee Mound, and will not be repeated here. However, several of the types were not found at Weeki Wachee, so a brief discussion of them follows.

rivers (Ursin 1977:35, 42-47). The fossil tooth and the second Sand Tiger tooth appear to be unaltered.

Table 6. Miscellaneous Stone and Bone from the Ruth Smith Mound.

Type	1984 Excavation	Other	Total
Pinellas Projectile Points	11	8	19
Archaic Projectile Point Fragment	1	0	1
Unutilized Chert Flakes	99	2	101
Worked Chert Flake	2	1	3
Utilized Chert Flake (Cutting)	1	0	1
Utilized Chert Flake (Scraping)	0	1	1
Stone Bead (Polished)	0	1	1
Steatite Bead	0	1	1
Sand Tiger Teeth (<i>Odontaspis</i> <i>taurus</i>)	0	2	2
Fossil Shark Tooth	0	1	1
Drilled Shark Tooth (Family: <i>Carcharhinidae</i>)	0	1	1

Discussion. The aboriginal assemblage from the Ruth Smith Mound is comparable to that from the Weeki Wachee Mound, and also to that from the only other excavated Safety Harbor site in Citrus County, the Tatham Mound (Mitchem et al. 1985). These sites differ from the Safety Harbor sites in the Tampa Bay area and those farther south primarily in terms of presence or absence of certain pottery types. For instance, some of the Alachua Tradition types (Prairie Cord Marked and Alachua Cob Marked) are exceedingly rare on southern Safety Harbor sites, as is Pasco Plain. But Pasco Plain is ubiquitous and Alachua Tradition types are more common on northern Safety Harbor sites. On the other hand, Pinellas Plain is rare north of Tampa Bay, but is plentiful in southern sites.

While it is easy to see that there are regional differences in Safety Harbor material culture, it is more difficult to determine the extent and nature of these differences through time. This is primarily due to the general lack of chronometric dates (alluded to above) for Safety Harbor sites, and the corresponding lack of tight sequences of pottery or other artifact styles with which to establish contemporaneity of sites. It turns out, however, that the Weeki Wachee and Ruth Smith Mounds may aid us in formulating such sequences, because of the presence of large quantities of datable European artifacts.

EUROPEAN ARTIFACTS FROM THE WEEKI WACHEE AND RUTH SMITH MOUNDS

Artifacts of European origin provide a narrow date range for the Weeki Wachee and Ruth Smith sites. Evidence will be presented which demonstrates that these sites were utilized during the first two-thirds of the sixteenth century, probably within the period 1516-1539. The European artifacts are among the earliest recovered from any Florida site, and are easily the largest assemblages of early sixteenth century trade material recovered from any North American site. In this section,

the European artifacts are described and compared to historical accounts and dated assemblages from the Caribbean to provide a date estimate. Finally, historical evidence for European exploration and trade in Florida is reviewed to put these artifacts into perspective.

The European artifacts from the Weeki Wachee site are all beads of glass, silver, and amber (Figure 13). Between 123 and 127 glass beads were recovered from the site. The discrepancy is due to the fact that a number of the beads are no longer in the collections at the Weeki Wachee attraction, and four more chevron beads are shown in Robert Allen's photographs than are mentioned in the field notes. A total of 151 silver beads and one amber bead came from the site. Although some iron remains are mentioned in the field notes, these artifacts are not in the present collections, and are probably recent intrusions. A large number of recent remains (flower pot sherds, sewer pipe fragments, etc.) were noted in the uppermost levels during excavation.

Most of the European beads from Weeki Wachee accompanied Burials 17, 19, and 57. A large quantity of beads was labeled F. S. 48 in the field. Upon laboratory analysis, F. S. 48 was found to be a full term human fetus or infant burial, but it was never given a burial number. A few other miscellaneous beads were found in various areas of the mound and received F. S. numbers. These beads had presumably accompanied burials. The provenience of all beads is presented in Tables 7 and 8. Evidence that the beads were strung when interred is provided by the recovery of beads clustered in the neck areas of Burials 6 and 17, and by the discovery of five beads in a row (3 shell, 1 glass, 1 shell) during cleaning of the fetus or infant burial from F. S. 48.

European artifacts from the Ruth Smith Mound include beads of iron, gold, silver, and glass (Figures 14, 15, and 16), an iron chisel, an encrusted iron fragment, brass rings, preserved twine, and a sherd of European pottery. There were 30 glass beads, 51 disc, rolled, and tubular silver beads, and two gold beads (one rolled and one spherical).

Unfortunately, there are no internal proveniences for most of the European artifacts from Ruth Smith, but collections assembled by Albert Goodyear, Leon Goodwin, and Richard McDonnell were studied, along with the two iron objects recovered in the 1984 excavations.

Glass beads have been classified (Table 7) according to the typology devised by Marvin Smith and Mary Elizabeth Good (1982). Interested persons are referred to that work for detailed type descriptions and color plates of the bead varieties. Most of the beads are varieties of Nueva Cadiz Plain and Nueva Cadiz Twisted types first described by Charles Fairbanks (1968) and the early type faceted chevron beads.

Smith and Good (1982) have assembled the relevant historical data for assigning dates to these types, and they suggest a date range of 1500-1560 for the assemblage represented at Weeki Wachee and Ruth Smith (see also Smith 1983). For example, both Nueva Cadiz Twisted beads and chevron beads are mentioned in documents written during the conquest of Mexico in 1519 (Smith and Good 1982:4-8).

Archaeological cross-dating can also provide excellent data on the bead assemblage. The best historically documented site is Nueva Cadiz, Venezuela (Fairbanks 1968; Willis 1980; Smith 1983). This site was first visited by Europeans perhaps as early as 1498, and became a thriving city during the first half of the sixteenth century. Following a

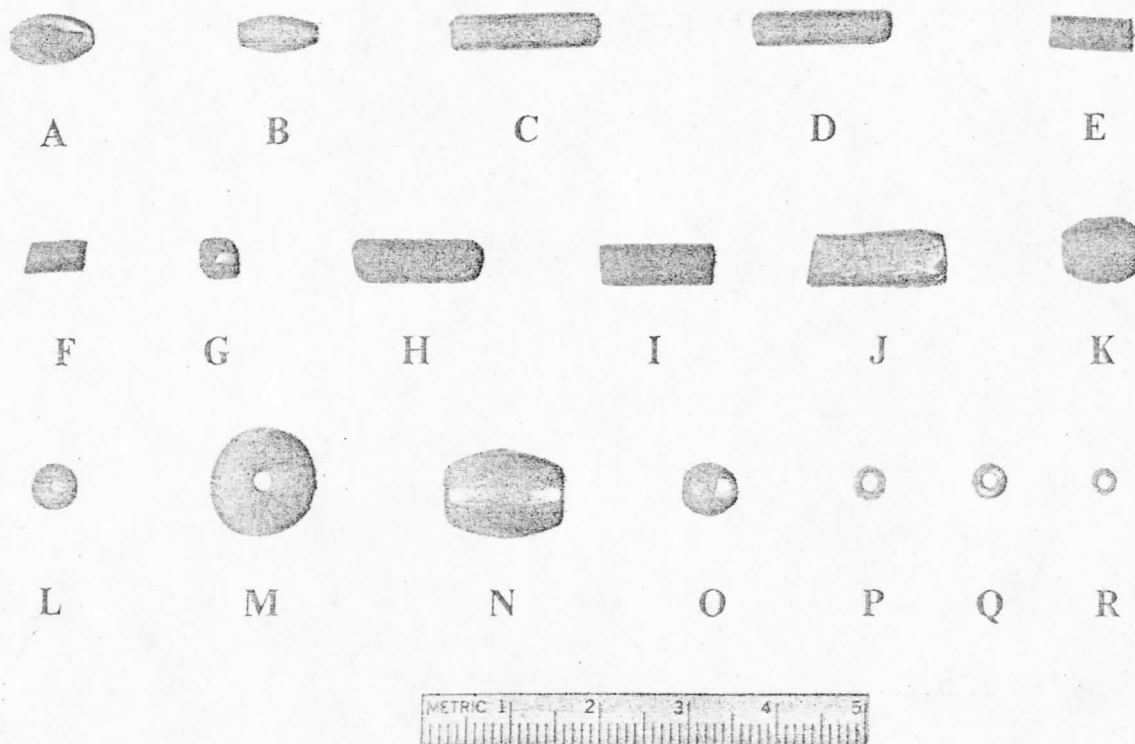


Figure 13. Spanish beads from the Weeki Wachee Mound. A. White oval w/blue stripes; B. Colorless oval w/white stripes; C.-H. Nueva Cadiz Plain beads (H is faceted); I. Simple Nueva Cadiz Twisted bead; J. Large Nueva Cadiz Twisted bead (faceted); K., L. Faceted chevron beads; M. Amber bead; N.-R. Silver beads.

hurricane in 1541, this island site was abandoned by 1545 and never reoccupied (Willis 1980:31). Thus artifacts from Nueva Cadiz are tightly dated to the first half of the sixteenth century, and many of the bead types recovered from Weeki Wachee and Ruth Smith are duplicated at Nueva Cadiz (Table 9). Particularly noteworthy is the new Nueva Cadiz Plain variety IIA2- (turquoise/white/purple) that occurs at Weeki Wachee and Nueva Cadiz, but was not seen in Peruvian collections used in developing the original typology (Smith and Good 1982). Several field seasons at the Spanish settlements of St. Augustine and Santa Elena, both founded in 1565, have failed to recover the distinctive Nueva Cadiz style beads. It has thus been suggested that these types predate 1565

Table 7. Bead Typology and Provenience.

Type* #	Photo* #	Description	Weeki Wachee Provenience	No.	Ruth Smith No.
IB3e	26	White oval with blue stripes	Bu 17 Bu 19 Bu 57 FS 23 FS 48	8 1 1 1 1	
IB4a	27	Colorless oval with white stripes	Bu 17	1	
IIA1d	36	Small simple blue Nueva Cadiz Plain	Bu 17 FS 48	36 1	
IIA2a	40	Large turq./white/navy Nueva Cadiz Pl.	Bu 17 FS 48	9 2	3
IIA2e	44	Small Nueva Cadiz Pl. navy/white/navy	Bu 57 FS 48 FS 51	2 6 1	
IIA2g	46	Small Nueva Cadiz Pl. cobalt/wh./med. blue	FS 48	1	
IIC2a	50	Large Nueva Cadiz Plain, faceted, turq./white/navy	Bu 17 Bu 19 FS 48	26 1 2	14
IIC2g	56	Small Nueva Cadiz Plain, faceted, cobalt/white/lt. blue			3
IIIA1a	57	Large Simple Blue Nueva Cadiz Twisted	FS 48	1	
IIIC2a	67	Large Nueva Cadiz Twisted, faceted, turq./white/navy	FS 48	1	
IVC2a	79	Faceted Chevron, bl./wh./red/wh./green/wh./green	Bu 57 FS 48	1 1	8
IVC2d	82	Faceted Chevron, bl./wh./red/wh./med. bl./wh./med. bl.	FS 48 FS 50	1 1	1
-----	--	Med. transparent blue spherical faceted seed bead			1
IVC2-		Faceted Chevrons (not available for study)	Bu 17 FS 48	15-19 1	
IIA2-	--	Nueva Cadiz Plain turq./wh./transparent purple	Bu 17	1	

* NOTE: Type and Photo numbers from Smith and Good (1982).

Table 8. Non-glass Beads and Non-bead Artifacts.

Type	Weeki Wachee Provenience	No.	Ruth Smith No.
Spherical Amber	Bu 17	1	
Spherical Silver	Bu 17	27	4
Disc Silver	Bu 17	41	ca. 35
	Bu 19	39	
	Bu 57	39	
	FS 48	3	
	FS 51	2	
Sheet Silver Rolled Tube			9
Tubular Silver (not rolled)			3
Sheet Gold Rolled Tube			1
Spherical Gold			1
Rolled Iron Sheet (1 from 1984 Excavation)		3	
Encrusted Iron Fragment (From 1984 Excavation)		1	
Iron Chisel or Celt			1
Brass Rings			3
Bacin Disc			1

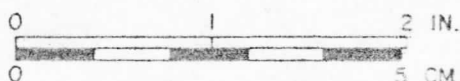


Figure 14. Rolled iron beads from the Ruth Smith Mound.

ERRATUM

Caption for Figure 15 should read:

Figure 15. Metal beads and brass rings from the Ruth Smith Mound.
A. Spherical gold bead; B.-E. Spherical silver beads; F., G. Tubular silver beads; H. Silver disc beads with preserved vegetal twine; I. 3 brass rings (chain mail?) with preserved vegetal twine; J. Silver disc beads and rolled silver sheet bead with preserved vegetal twine; K. Rolled silver sheet beads; L. Rolled sheet gold bead.

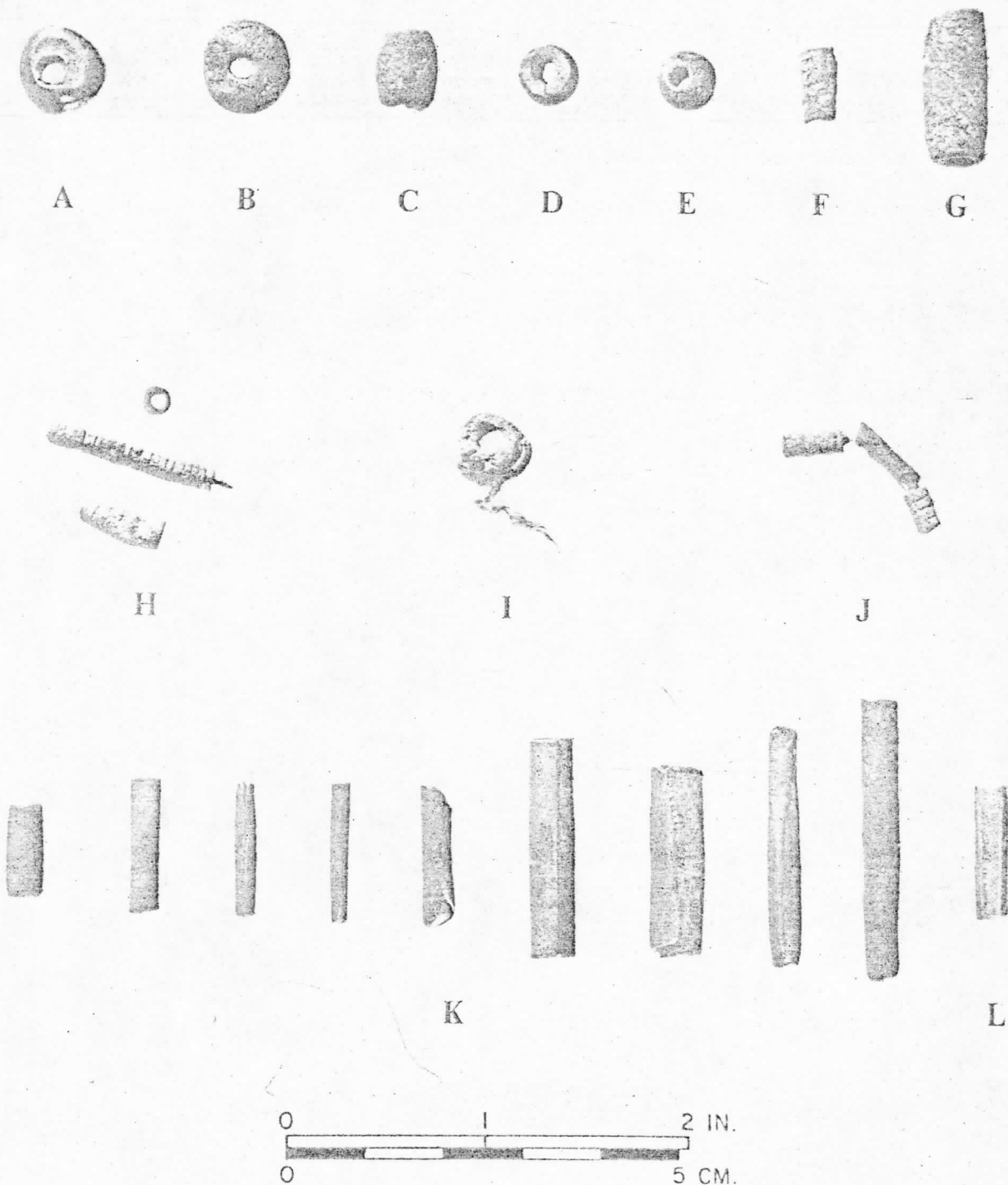


Figure 15. Metal beads and brass rings from the Ruth Smith Mound. A. Spherical gold bead; B.-E. Spherical silver beads; F., G. Tubular beads; H. Silver disc beads with preserved vegetal twine; I. 3 rings (mail?) with preserved vegetal twine; J. Silver disc and beads with preserved vegetal twine; K. Rolled sheet beads; L. Rolled sheet gold bead.

silver
brass
rolled

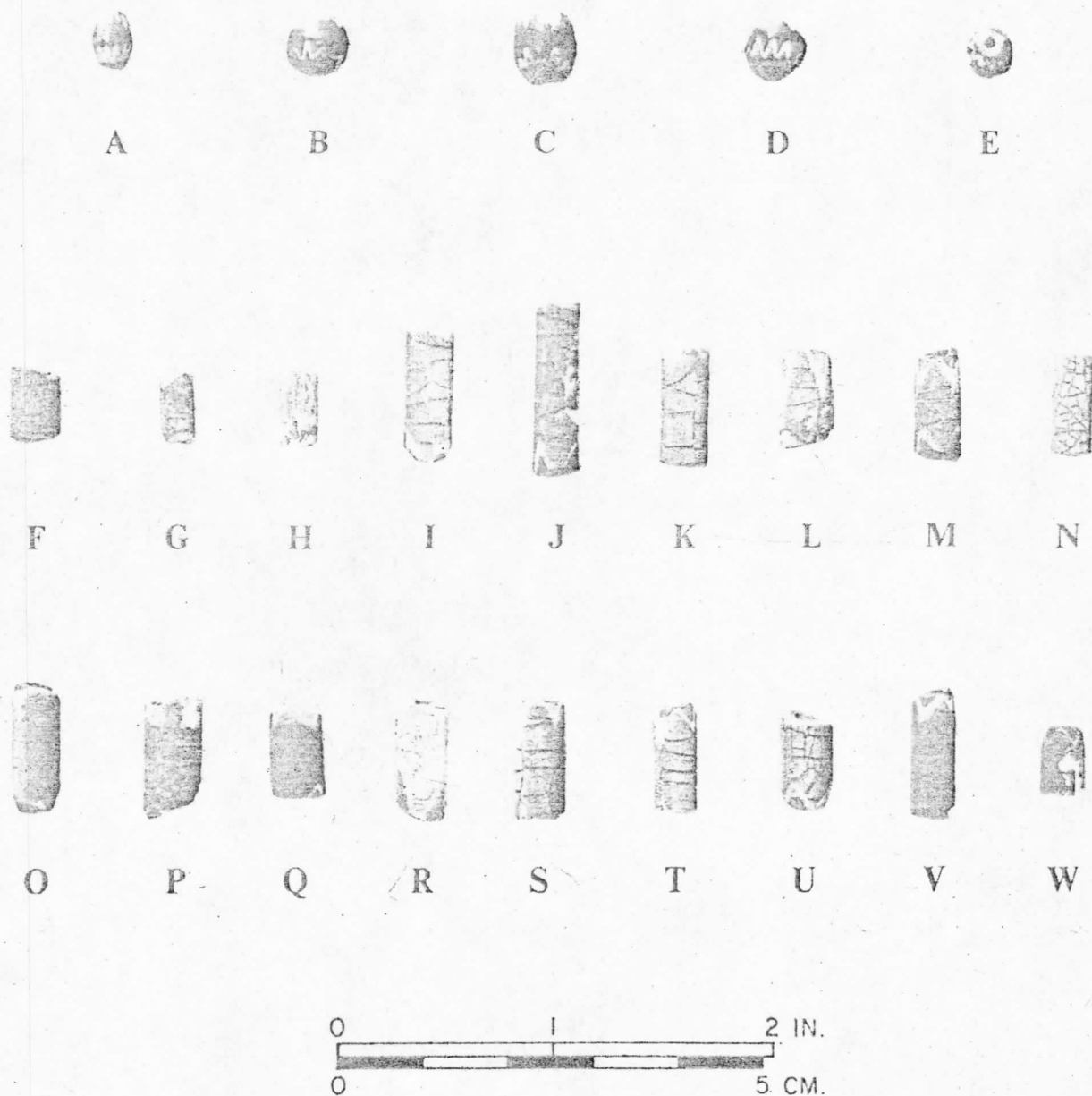


Figure 16. Spanish glass beads from the Ruth Smith Mound. A.-E. Faceted chevron beads. F.-W. Nueva Cadiz Plain beads.

(Smith 1983), and these are the most common forms present at Weeki Wachee and Ruth Smith.

The glass bead assemblages from Weeki Wachee and Ruth Smith are very similar. In fact, an attempt was made to cross-match beads from both sites to see if any had been snapped in two with the two parts ending up at the different sites, but no matches of broken ends were found. While the Ruth Smith Mound produced fewer types (mostly large beads were recovered by the collectors), the distinctive Nueva Cadiz varieties 40 and 50 (from Smith and Good 1982 plate numbers) were the most common, and both sites share the chevron bead varieties 79 and 82. The variety 50 beads from both sites have very long facets and are quite distinctive.

Small silver disc beads and spherical beads also occur at both sites, and other types of metal beads were present (Table 8). Jon Leader of the University of Florida has examined the silver beads from Weeki Wachee, and he reports that the main constituents of the beads were silver and copper, corresponding roughly with coin silver (.900 fine or less).

This is not meant to imply that the beads were made from Spanish coins, however. Careful examination of the beads indicates that most of them were made from thin silver sheets, probably drilled first, then cut out and ground or abraded into a circular shape. The second most numerous type appear to have been cut from a rod of silver, then drilled and abraded into an olive or spherical shape. The one large olive shaped bead (Figure 13:N) also shows evidence of abrasion. Leader suggests that all of the silver beads were most likely fashioned from parts of Spanish silver hardware (maybe pieces of horse gear or sword hilts) rather than from Spanish coins. This silver could have been obtained through direct Spanish contact, salvaged from a wreck or corpse, or from neighboring aboriginal groups. The important fact is the observation that the silver is not of native North American origin.

Latex molds of some of the silver beads and shell beads from Weeki Wachee were made by Robert Allen. These molds indicate that the drilling process used in both types of beads was the same. The drilled holes are invariably biconical, showing evidence of drilling from each end, meeting in the middle. According to Leader, such conical holes would be due to the use of aboriginal drills rather than European drills, which had a minimum of taper. These data support an argument for aboriginal production of the metal beads, using metal obtained from Spaniards.

The overall impression is that the bead assemblages from both sites are so similar that they probably represent contact with the same expedition. At the least, the sites are roughly contemporaneous.

Additional European artifacts from the Ruth Smith Mound include an iron celt or chisel, three brass rings, a small drilled fragment of Green-glazed Bacin (a lead glazed coarse earthenware), three tubular iron beads, and an unidentifiable encrusted iron fragment. The iron celt (Figure 17) is rounded in cross section and is 19.6 cm long with a bifacial bit. Iron celts are among the earliest European artifacts recovered in Florida sites (Smith 1956) and in the interior Southeast (Smith 1984).

Table 9. Comparison of Weeki Wachee and Ruth Smith Glass Beads with those from Nueva Cadiz, Venezuela.

Smith & Good Type	Smith & Good Photo	Weeki Wachee	Ruth Smith	Nueva* Cadiz
IB3e	26	12		1
IB4a	27	1		
IIA1d	36	37		
IIA2a	40	11	3	2
IIA2e	44	9		
IIA2g	46	1		
IIC2a	50	29	14	
IIC2g	56		3	
IIIA1d	57	1		9
IIIC2a	67	1		
IVC2a	79	2	8	1
IVC2d	82	2	1	
Untyped Chevron	--	16-20		
IIA2-	--	1		1
Faceted Seed Bead	--		1	
TOTAL		123-127	30	51**

* Nueva Cadiz data from Smith (1983:Appendix A).

** This number represents the total sample studied from Nueva Cadiz.

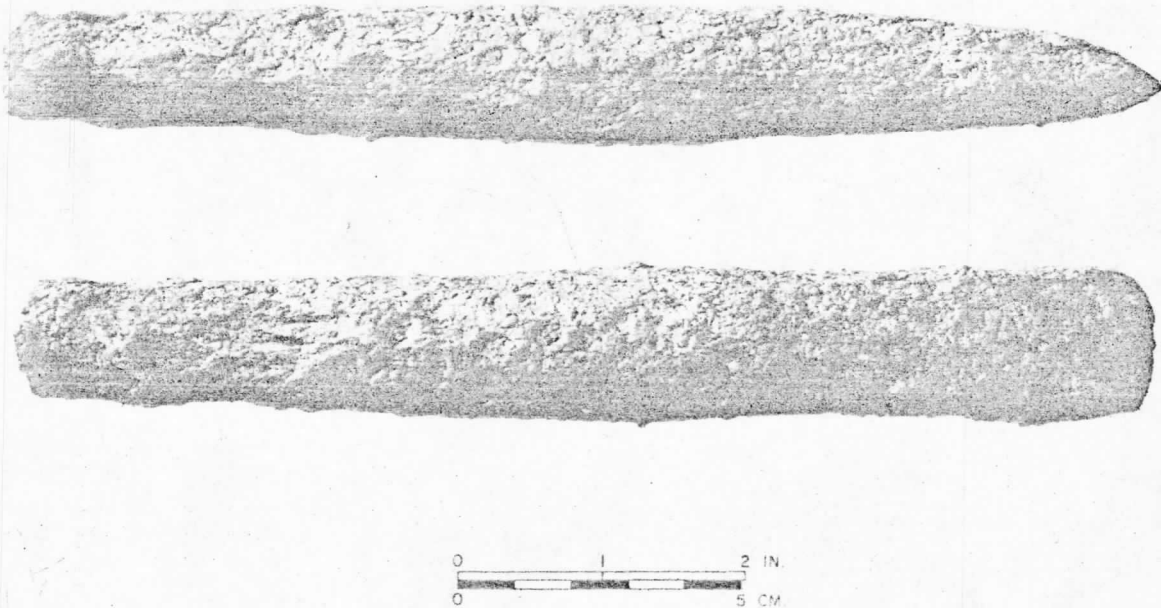


Figure 17. Iron chisel or celt from the Ruth Smith Mound.

hypothesize that that source was a coastal contact based upon the fact that the Weeki Wachee site located nearer the coast has produced more European material. If this was the case, the European artifacts from Weeki Wachee resulted from a coastal contact, with some material traded inland, eventually to be buried in the Ruth Smith Mound. We may eliminate some of the coastal contacts as being less likely sources since they took place too far away from the Weeki Wachee site for direct contact to occur. Of the documented contacts, either that of Diego Miruelo (1516) or Pineda (1519) could best account for the presence of European artifacts at Weeki Wachee. Undocumented coastal contacts or shipwrecks are also an equally possible source.

It might be argued instead that the persons represented in the Weeki Wachee site burials had more political power and were able to commandeer European artifacts from interior groups in contact with Soto or Narvaez. However, both the Weeki Wachee Mound and the Ruth Smith Mound were apparently small, isolated sand burial mounds without accompanying village areas. Neither seems to be part of any important political center.

The presence of iron artifacts at Ruth Smith and Tatham Mounds (Mitchem et al. 1985) and their apparent lack at Weeki Wachee might be a result of contact (by the Ruth Smith and Tatham residents) with the Indian settlement of Cale, where a cache of iron objects was buried by members of Soto's expedition (Smith 1968:40; Swanton 1939:145). If the Ruth Smith Mound is indeed located in the province of Tocaste, Cale would be most probably located north and/or east of the mound, across the Withlacoochee River (Jerald T. Milanich, personal communication, 1985). But this would still not settle the question of why there are so many more European artifacts at Weeki Wachee than at Ruth Smith.

The European artifacts from Weeki Wachee and Ruth Smith are important for two reasons: (1) They provide a firm early sixteenth century date for the sites and their aboriginal artifacts, a date undoubtedly more accurate than a radiocarbon determination, and (2) they represent the largest collection of early sixteenth century European materials yet recovered in any North American aboriginal sites.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the analysis of materials from the Weeki Wachee and Ruth Smith Mounds allow us to make some inferences about the nature of Safety Harbor culture north of Tampa Bay at the time of initial European contact. The aboriginal assemblages at the sites resemble each other, and in combination with data from the Tatham Mound in eastern Citrus County, should lead to the development of a clearer understanding of the nature of Safety Harbor occupation in this area.

Some specific hypotheses can be proposed about these groups, especially on the basis of the excavations at Weeki Wachee. Since European beads at the site were confined to a few individuals, we can assume that they were high status objects. The recovery of a very large number of such beads with the full term fetus or infant burial (F. S. 48) strongly suggests a system of ascribed status for the Weeki Wachee group. Obviously, a newborn or stillborn infant would not be alive long enough to earn high status, and if we assume that the European artifacts were high status objects, ascribed status through some sort of kin-based system would be indicated.

The Elliptio shepardianus shell necklace found with Burial 19 (along with such shells being found with two other burials) indicates some sort of contact with the Altamaha River drainage in Georgia. However, this contact may not have been direct. Since we have ceramic evidence (Alachua Tradition pottery types) which suggests that the Weeki Wachee and Ruth Smith inhabitants were in contact with Alachua Tradition groups, the Elliptio shells could have come to the Weeki Wachee people via indirect exchange, with Alachua Tradition entrepreneurs acting as part of an exchange network.

A major area of research in the Southeast has been the effects of European contact on the aboriginal inhabitants. Much recent research into this subject has been concerned with the routes and sites visited by Spanish explorers in the early sixteenth century. The devastating effects of European diseases have been investigated (Dobyns 1983; Smith 1984), but most emphasis in regard to archaeological evidence has been concentrated in the interior Southeast (DePratter and Smith 1980; Smith 1975, 1976).

Archaeological research on contact sites in the Safety Harbor area has been sporadic at best, with the most concentrated effort being the WPA work in Hillsborough County in the 1930s (Bullen 1952). Unfortunately, much of the archaeological evidence from this work was lost and little has been done to relocate and conduct more controlled excavations at the sites.

North of Tampa Bay, the situation is little better. We are lucky that we were able to study as much of the material from the Ruth Smith Mound as we have, and the excavation of the Weeki Wachee Mound by an anthropology student was certainly fortuitous. But even though we now have the beginnings of a corpus of data for northern Safety Harbor groups at the time of contact, we do not possess any knowledge of prehistoric Safety Harbor culture from the region. This situation, along with the lack of any data from Safety Harbor habitation sites in the area, severely limits our ability to study the effects of contact diachronically.

The situation is made more complex by the comparatively large number of explorers, traders, shipwrecks, and other agents of Spanish contact in the area in the sixteenth century. The probability that the aborigines were exchanging European materials over large areas also creates confusion in the archaeological record. We have not yet reached the point where we can identify a specific expedition by a particular assemblage of European artifacts in the Safety Harbor area. A good example of this problem is represented by the assemblage from the Tatham Mound (Mitchem et al. 1985), which is only a few kilometers away from the Ruth Smith site, but which varies considerably in terms of the European artifacts present (especially the glass beads).

The presence of gold and silver beads or other artifacts of precious metals is not of much use in studying effects of European contact, other than to observe that aboriginal techniques were applied to creating ornaments out of these materials. The problem with such metals is that Spaniards would probably not have willingly given or traded them to the Indians. One of their major goals was to obtain such metals to be sent back to Spain. The great majority of these metals found in Florida sites probably derive from shipwrecks which were salvaged by Indians, who then traded the material to other groups.

Both sites definitely date to the early sixteenth century, and the assemblages of aboriginal and European artifacts from the mounds should be very valuable in the study of Safety Harbor sites in the future. Other studies of early Spanish contact in the Southeast should also benefit from the description of the European assemblages from these two mounds.

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