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Charles E. Orser, Jr.
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**AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE ENGLISH ATLANTIC
WORLD, 1600–1700**

An Archaeology of the English Atlantic World is the first book to apply the methods of modern-world archaeology to the study of the seventeenth-century English colonial world. Charles Orser explores a range of material evidence of daily life collected from archaeological excavations throughout the Atlantic region, including England, Ireland, western Africa, Native North America, and the eastern United States. He considers the archaeological record together with primary texts by contemporary writers. Giving particular attention to housing, fortifications, delftware, and stoneware, Orser offers new interpretations for each type of artefact. His study demonstrates how the archaeological record expands our understanding of the Atlantic world at a critical moment of its expansion, as well as to the development of the modern, Western world.

Charles E. Orser, Jr., Research Professor at Vanderbilt University, is an anthropological historical archaeologist who investigates the modern world as it was created after about 1492. He has conducted excavations in the United States, Europe, and South America and is the author of over ninety professional articles and several books, including *Historical Archaeology* (now in 3rd edition) and *The Archaeology of Race and Racialization in Historic America* (2007). He is also the founder and editor of the *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*.

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Preface

This book represents the culmination of more than twenty years of personal research into whether historical archaeology, as a study of post-1500 CE history, can contribute to broad-scale analyses having global significance. The most salient inquiries of this archaeology revolve around the question of whether historical archaeology can make significant contributions to knowledge about the development of our modern, Western world. If the answer is in the affirmative, precisely how might this be accomplished? This book sets out to address these questions and to provide one path toward making historical archaeology relevant as a field engaged in examining the development of today's world. The breadth and depth of the subject, and the many obstacles to its investigation, mean that others may find other methods and perspectives to frame large-scale investigations. This book illustrates how I have set out to provide a globally sensitive historical archaeology of the modern world using an anthropologically influenced, largely North American point of view. The seventeenth-century English Atlantic World constitutes the focus of this study.

Worth noting at the outset is that this book is not intended as a historical narrative or an attempt to inform the way historians analyze the English seventeenth century. Nor is there an attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of all the archaeological research that has been accomplished to date. This would be impossible even for the English seventeenth century. Rather, I have approached this study as a work in archaeological social science. My perspective may be most obvious in my exploration of the ideological haunts, but I hope the plan is clear throughout. My reason for adopting this approach stems from experience. Years ago, I had an exchange with a well-regarded Irish historian who took serious issue with the way archaeologists choose to examine racism and racialization. His view was that scholars are misguided when

they start with the concept of racism and then go searching for it. He thought that researchers should allow the evidence to reveal racism as a social reality rather than to believe it exists preformed. His point is perhaps valid for historians, but I remain unconvinced where archaeological research is concerned. For me, the historian was simply illustrating the difference between humanist historians and anthropologically trained social scientists. Despite the dissonance in approaches, the works of many historians inform the present study because archaeologists have always had much to learn from historians. I have also strongly relied on texts written by seventeenth-century social observers, philosophical thinkers, and direct eyewitnesses. The humanistic perspective is relevant to this study, but the goal of a globally sensitive archaeology of the modern world is to understand the dimensions and impacts of the major ideological forces affecting the world today and to trace them backward in time using a combination of archaeological and textual sources.

In attempting to untangle the complexities of such a wide-ranging topic, I have concentrated on the seventeenth-century English Atlantic World for three reasons. Firstly, though I have not done extensive archaeological fieldwork in any of the regions on which I focus in this book, I am conversant with much of the pertinent literature, having been interested in English colonialism in the Americas for many years. In addition, my undergraduate degree in history concentrated on the study of English history and literature, and my interest in these subjects has remained strong throughout the years. I thus had prior knowledge about the era and its archaeology when I began this project, even though I still had a great deal to learn, especially about the findings of specific archaeological projects. Secondly, historical archaeologists have done extensive research into the English seventeenth century. This means that many skilled archaeologists have provided excellent studies for the period. I am grateful that so many talented archaeologists have preceded me in the English Atlantic World. For many years, American historical archaeology was practically synonymous with the eastern coast of the United States, with excavations at Jamestown and Colonial Williamsburg standing out as exemplary. The explosion of research in historical archaeology around the world beginning during the 1990s has now brought to light much more information about the material culture and physical features of settlements in England and the English colonies. The investigation of the English seventeenth century has remained an essential element of historical archaeology in North America, the Caribbean, and England. So much important research

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continues that I fully expect that this book could have contained many more examples if written just five years in the future. Thirdly, the seventeenth-century English Atlantic World is infinitely fascinating and relevant. When, in 1651, George Gardiner wrote the words “In this unquiet age,” he directed his comments to “The English Nation.” He undoubtedly meant to refer to the many events still fresh in English minds – the rise of Puritan authority, the trial and execution of the king, the deadly civil wars, and the many conflicts with other nations – but he could just as easily have been characterizing the entire century. The seventeenth-century world experience by English men, women, and children, and all the many peoples with whom they came into contact, was a time of great change. We still experience and even debate many of the transformations begun during the unquiet age of the English seventeenth century.

I have benefited from the kindness of many colleagues during the preparation of this book. Their selflessness in providing pertinent information, advice, ideas, and even reports of investigations has been extremely gratifying. This study would have been seriously flawed without their assistance. This does not mean, however, that they will all agree with my interpretations. These are mine alone. Individuals who have helped me in this project are, in alphabetical order: Joseph Bagley, Emerson Baker, Mike Barber, Ed Bell, Alasdair Brooks, Patricia Capone, Ann Coats, Heather Coleman, C. Jane Cox, Brent Fortenberry, Cheryl Fury, Jerome S. Handler, David A. Higgins, Corrine Hofman, Quatro Hubbard, Silas Hurry, Michael Jarvis, David Landon, Steve Lenik, Barbara Little, David Moore, Kathryn Ness, Charlotte Newman, Jacqui Pearce, Steve Pendery, Krysta Ryzewski, Patricia Samford, Kathryn Sampeck, Paul Shackel, Sam Spiers, John Thornton, Jane Webster, Hugh Willmott, and Samuel Wilson. Please forgive me if I have forgotten anyone. During the years of thinking about a globally sensitive historical archaeology of the modern world, I have benefited from numerous discussions with James Delle, Tom Dillehay, Bill Fowler, Mark Leone, Angela Middleton, Paul Mullins, Jonathan Prangnell, Elizabeth Scott, Ian Smith, Steve Wernke, and various other individuals too numerous to mention. What I have learned from these scholars may be quietly present in this book, and I am grateful for all their ideas and perspectives, though I cannot blame them for my interpretation.

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