

Roanoke: The Past through the Present

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History

It is impossible to guess with certainty what may have raced through the mind of John White, the appointed governor of the Roanoke Colony, on the night of August 27, 1587 as he rapidly boarded the ship that was to take him away from his position, family, and possessions to make a hasty return to England.¹ Surely his thoughts were with his daughter who had recently given birth to his granddaughter, Virginia Dare, the first English person to be born on the new continent.² We also know that he was concerned about his personal possessions that he had been forced to leave behind at the colony. In fact his concern for his material goods was so great that he had only agreed to leave after securing a bond from the colonists that they would take care of his possessions in his absence.³ Perhaps he feared the lengthy voyages that he faced in making the round trip across the Atlantic Ocean since he knew that he would have to make the journey yet again after he obtained the desperately needed supplies for the colony. Perhaps White questioned why it was he who must leave, since he knew that the Colony's proprietor Sir Walter Raleigh would be infuriated that he, the governor, had left his post when he should have been providing leadership.

In truth, however, despite White's best intentions and previous experience with the first settlement attempt at Roanoke, he was not the best man for the job of governor. He lacked the natural authoritative callousness, courageousness, and quick-wittedness that were the backbone of the constitutions in men like Walter Raleigh, Ralph Lane, and Richard Grenville. His stint as governor had not gone well. A pushover from the start, he had allowed himself to be bullied into decisions that went directly against the best interests of the colony. Perhaps one of his most ill-fated decisions was to allow the captain of the fleet to return the colonists to the location of the first failed colony instead of continuing to sail up the Chesapeake where Raleigh had wanted them to settle.⁴ When facing tough decisions, White failed to act quickly and decisively, which made him vulnerable to attacks on his authority by the colonists who were supposed to be compliant to his commands.

¹ Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Roanoke, the Abandoned Colony* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld, 1984), 120.

² *Ibid.*, 118.

³ *Ibid.*, 119-120.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 113-114.

Without strong leadership, the necessary balance of strict political and judicial control that held the colony together was severely strained and the social structure of the colony began to falter. His convenient departure on a mercenary mission to secure supplies would allow the colonists to assess their position and restructure their settlement. Perhaps White thought about the previous settlement attempt at Roanoke that had ended in near-starvation and bad relations with the Indians. The settlers had fled back home to England aboard the ships of Sir Francis Drake in 1586. Drake had arrived unannounced to both check in on the colony and to assess the utility of its harbor to function as a deep water port so that the colony could ultimately be used as a base for English privateering.⁵ Instead of finding the flourishing colony he had anticipated, Drake discovered that the colonists were in dire straits and in an increasingly helpless situation, so he offered to take them back home to England. The colonists departed hastily, in part because Drake's fleet had just received a horrendous battering from an unexpected hurricane that blew up while he was in port, and also because of their desire to be done with the place.⁶ In one of the unfortunate incidents that resulted from their hasty departure, the trunks containing Lane's personal belongings, along with the invaluable volumes of notes taken by Thomas Hariot concerning the land and its inhabitants, as well as the sketches by John White, were thrown overboard by Drake's men who did not want to be burdened by their weight.⁷ The loss of their records and reports that might have made the whole wretched experience worthwhile was a particularly bitter ending to an already sour experience of the first settlement attempt. In an ironic twist of fate that came to be a hallmark of the Roanoke experience, less than a week after the colonists departed, a second fleet of ships under the command of Sir Richard Grenville arrived to resupply and to provide the colony with a military detachment of four hundred soldiers.⁸ Grenville and his men spent two weeks searching for the colonists, and after finding no one, decided that the colony had been abandoned. Not wanting to relinquish the English claim to the continent, Grenville left a detachment of fifteen soldiers under the command of Master Coffin with provisions for the next two years and orders to hold down the fort until the area could be re-colonized.⁹ Upon their arrival in 1587, White and his colonists found only one skeleton from these soldiers and determined that all had been murdered by Indians; it was certainly an ominous start to an already difficult

⁵ Ibid., 88.

⁶ Ibid., 89-91.

⁷ Ibid., 92.

⁸ Giles Milton, *Big Chief Elizabeth: The Adventures and Fate of the First English Colonists in America* (New York, New York: Picador USA, 2000), 168-169.

⁹ Ibid., 170.

arrival.¹⁰ What White did not anticipate when he left in 1587, nor could he have foreseen, was that he would be the last European to ever see the Roanoke colonists alive.

Twenty years passed between the time that John White left the colony and the next group of colonists arrived in 1607 to found Jamestown. White's intention of a quick return had been derailed by a war with Spain. The whole of the Armada had been sent to attack the shores of England, and Queen Elizabeth ordered that every ship stay in port to protect the nation.¹¹ The war ended with England triumphantly defeating the Spanish, but years passed and no one was sent to aid the colonists. In the meantime, Walter Raleigh had developed an interest in colonizing Ireland, so Virginia was temporarily forgotten. Furthermore, by this time it seemed unlikely that there would still be colonists alive, and the stipulations of Raleigh's land grants were such that if it could be proven that there were no colonists, he would lose the deed. As long as there remained the possibility that the colonists were alive, the land stayed in his possession. It was, therefore, in Raleigh's best interest that the fate of the colonists remain ambiguous and no genuine search was ever conducted.¹² The Jamestown colonists carried out a few half-hearted attempts to look for their predecessors, but soon became resigned to the evidence that the previous colony had failed and all were lost—a harsh reminder of their own tenuous position as they too sought to carve out their own foothold on the continent.

Two major lines of debate emerge when examining the Roanoke historiography. The first is the most obvious and enduring question: "What happened to the colony of 1587?" It has become one of the fabled stories of our nation's history that has intermittently captivated the interest of historians and the imagination of the general public since it was first confirmed that they had disappeared. The theories regarding the fate of the lost colonists had been brewing in the minds of those intimately involved with the settlement and had become fodder for tavern gossip during the twenty years since they had last been seen alive. These speculations emerged as part of a wider public discussion upon the conclusion of the Jamestown settlers' investigation. But how had they died, if that is indeed what happened to them? Had they been attacked and killed by the

¹⁰ David B. Quinn and Alison M. Quinn, ed., *The First Colonists: Documents on the Planting of The First English Settlements in North America, 1584-1590* (Raleigh, North Carolina: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources Division of Archives and History, 1982), 97-98.

¹¹ Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Roanoke*, 122-124.

¹² *Ibid.*, 134-135.

Indians, did they die of starvation and/or disease, had the Spaniards discovered and destroyed the colony, or did the colonists simply give up hope of the English returning and assimilate into the local Indian tribes? The colonists left behind a few tantalizing clues as evidence as to what might have happened to them and where they might have gone; however, none of these clues are decisive enough to allow for a definitive conclusion. These lingering questions have become part of a debate spanning centuries of literature and will most likely never be put to rest.

A secondary line of debate that emerges from the historiography is the certainly more subtle, though perhaps more interesting, question of how views of the Indians have changed throughout the telling of the Roanoke story. The juxtaposition began in the original documents of the colony and remained unresolved until the late 1970s. Throughout the accounts we see the colonists and founders wrestling with the complex image of the good Indian versus the bad Indian. The good Indian happily traded with the English, repeatedly came to their aid by providing food and shelter for their ill-prepared and unwanted guests, learned English, and embraced Christianity. The bad Indian stole from the colonists and refused to give them food when it was demanded; they were warriors, killers, and heathens. For John White, these opposing views became personified in Manteo, the good Indian, who learned English, was baptized as a Christian, and warned the colonists when they were about to be attacked. And then there was Wanchese, who after coming to England and learning the language failed to recognize the superiority of the European culture, fled back to his people, and helped to plot against the colonists. While the earliest works pertaining to Roanoke were written before the colonists had disappeared, once the colony was officially deemed lost, the English judgment of the Indians became inevitably tied to their possible role in the colonists' disappearance. Did the Indians kill them or adopt them? Again, it is a question we will likely never answer with certainty.

The historiographic record related to the founding of the Roanoke Colony actually began prior to its official establishment. Arthur Barlowe, who had been in charge of the first English exploration of the region, published a report entitled *Narrative of the 1584 Voyage* that emphasized the abundant wealth of natural resources and extolled the virtues of the region's healthy climate, with the express intent of encouraging further English involvement and eventual colonization of the region. As interest and involvement of the colony developed, other primary source accounts and narratives in the form of personal log books and letters by the officials came into the public's view. In 1589, Richard Hakluyt gathered many of these accounts together and published them for the first time under the title *The*

Principall Navigations...of the English Nation.¹³ The volume included accounts by Ralph Lane, Thomas Hariot, Richard Hakluyt, and John White. These documents were the sole sources of information concerning Roanoke for over a century and remain the starting point for all historical work on Roanoke. This volume of documents was more recently expanded and edited by historians David Beers Quinn and Alison M. Quinn in 1973 and published under the title *Virginia Voyages from Hakluyt*.¹⁴ In anticipation of the four-hundred-year celebration of the founding of Roanoke, the book was updated and reprinted under the title *The First Colonists* in 1982.¹⁵ Of the original documents, perhaps the most important are Thomas Hariot's *Briefe and True Account of Virginia*, first published in 1588 by Thomas Hakluyt, and John White's *Narrative of the 1587 Virginia Voyage*, which will be explored in greater depth in this paper. Thus, until approximately the 1970s, the history of Roanoke was most frequently examined from the perspective of the men who held leadership roles in the founding of the colony. Biographies abound on men like Sir Walter Raleigh, Thomas Hariot, John White, Richard Grenville, and Ralph Lane.

Beginning in the early 1800s, however, archeology emerged as a scientific field and by the end of the century was beginning to influence historians' conversations and debates. For a short time in the late 1930s and early 1940s, the discovery of a stone thought to be a message left by the colonists captivated the imaginations of both historians and the public until it was proven to be a hoax. Modern archeologists have conducted archeological digs of the portions of the Roanoke settlement that have not yet eroded, and their findings are now commonly incorporated by historians as a device to flesh out or corroborate claims in the narratives. The year 1984 marked the quadricentennial of the Roanoke experiment, and with it came a renewed surge of interest, research, and publication on the topic. Most of the modern historiography is linked to this occasion.

Soon after Lane and the Roanoke colonists returned to England in 1586, rumors began to circulate concerning the horrid experiences of the colonists in the New World. Former governor Colonel Ralph Lane soon published his own report

¹³ Quinn and Quinn, *The First Colonists*, xviii.

¹⁴ See David B. Quinn and Alison M. Quinn, ed., *Virginia Voyages from Hakluyt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

¹⁵ See David B. Quinn and Alison M. Quinn, ed., *The First Colonists: Documents on the Planting of The First English Settlements in North America, 1584-1590* (Raleigh, North Carolina: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources Division of Archives and History, 1982).

critiquing the viability of colonizing the new continent. His review was a complete reversal of the glowing accolades Barlowe had previously written about the territory after his initial exploration. To further complicate matters, the former colony members told their own tales of horror (some quite true and others highly exaggerated) to whoever would listen. As proprietor of the colony, Sir Walter Raleigh knew he had more than just a public relations nightmare; he also had financial concerns. Raleigh was certain that there was a fortune to be made from the fabled gold and copper mines in the new world, but he was unable to finance the colony on his own. The future of his investments was dependent upon the willingness of others to commit both vast financial resources and their lives to colonizing the new world. Vicious rumors of hardships would scare off potential investors and colonists, and his investments and the opportunity to accumulate great wealth were at risk. Raleigh recognized that he needed assistance and turned to his friend Thomas Hariot, who had also been a member of the first colony, to write an account that would serve both as a sales pitch for further involvement and as an antidote to counteract the malevolent rumors. Raleigh hoped that with Hariot's help he could put the rumors to rest and generate interest in a second colonization attempt.

The challenges Hariot faced in writing this document were immense—he had to find a way to walk the middle ground between Barlowe's report, which compared the new world to the Garden of Eden with plentiful resources and welcoming natives, and Lane's report, which purported that Virginia was devoid of useful natural resources, had no signs of valuable mines, and was filled with dangerous natives. But if anyone was capable of writing such a document, it was certainly Hariot. A leading scientist of the day, Hariot had been specifically recruited by Raleigh to go on this mission in order to professionally assess the land for minerals and other useful natural resources. For almost a year, Hariot, in conjunction with artist John White, took detailed assessments and notes about the natural resources, plants, minerals, and people of the New World. From these observations, Hariot produced *A Briefe and True Account of the New Found Land of Virginia and the Possibilities of Settlement*. It is likely that the account would have been substantially larger and more detailed had his papers survived the journey on Drake's ship. Unfortunately, the majority of his notebooks and the plant specimens he had so carefully collected were thrown overboard as they left the colony, along with John White's sketches and Lane's papers.¹⁶

Despite the profound loss of his carefully gathered information, Hariot produced a brilliant document in which he skillfully selected subjects that were

¹⁶ Kupperman, *Roanoke*, 92.

designed to focus the public's attention on the benefits of colonization. He paid special attention to the resources that could be used to support England's shipbuilding and cloth making industries. He noted that Virginia had a natural abundance of conifer trees that could be used to make pitch, tar, rosin, and turpentine.¹⁷ He noted that there appeared to be a native version of flax already growing in Virginia, and he was certain that the familiar English version would be transplantable. He assessed the climate and predicted what crops might grow well in that environment, including sugar cane and various fruit trees. He also suggested the potential to extract other products from Virginia, including alum and dyes, furs, skins, iron, copper, wine, and medicines.¹⁸ What is important to note about Hariot's recommendations is that they were not merely a laundry list of goods that could be extracted from the new world, but were also products that were either scarce in England or could only be obtained from places such as Spain and France, both countries that were in continual conflict with England.¹⁹ Hariot's descriptions were designed to be appealing both to the government as a way of circumventing relationships with unfriendly countries, and also to investors and merchants who wanted to find a cheaper source of goods. Hariot's arguments ran directly counter to Lane's, who claimed that there was "nothing worth fetching" in the new world.²⁰

In addition to addressing the overarching concerns about the availability of natural resources, Hariot was forced to deal with questions concerning the Indians and their willingness to accept the English presence. On this topic, there was probably no one more qualified at the time to make a fair assessment of the Native population. In addition to being a brilliant scientist, he was a gifted linguist. Barlowe had brought two Indians, Manteo and Wanchese, back to England from his exploration, and Hariot began working with them closely. In addition to teaching them English, Hariot became fluent in Algonquin and went on to develop a phonetic alphabet and dictionary of the Algonquian language so that future expeditions would be better able to communicate with the natives.²¹ Unfortunately his dictionary has been lost, although parts of his phonetic alphabet still remain. Hariot was not content to simply learn to communicate with the Indians; he seemed

¹⁷ Michael G. Morgan, "Inventing Virginia: Sir Walter Raleigh and the Rhetoric of Colonization, 1584-1590," in *Early American Literature and Culture through the American Renaissance*, Vol. 7, ed. Reiner Smolinski (New York, New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2007), 110.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 110-119.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 109.

²¹ John William Shirley, *Thomas Harriot: A Biography* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 107.

to have a genuine desire to learn about their cultural practices, especially their religious beliefs. However, Hariot's interest in learning about their religion should not be misunderstood; it does not mean that he viewed the Indian's beliefs as acceptable or valid. Europeans of the sixteenth century universally presumed that their own culture and race was superior to that of the Indians and Hariot, while perhaps more tolerant and willing to understand than others, was certainly not an exception to this dogmatic view. He viewed the Indians' beliefs as pagan and heathenish and actively sought to share the belief system of Christianity with Manteo and Wanchese in the hope that they would eventually convert (which Manteo later did). When talking with Indians, he drew similarities between the two religions where possible, and felt that if they were able to see Christianity as the logical progression of their own beliefs, it would be easier to convert and ultimately to control them.²² This information he almost certainly included in an effort to solicit the Church's support for continued colonization as well. As Catholic Spain had already achieved a foothold on the continent, church officials would not need much convincing as to the necessity of working to convert the Indians first.

When it came to writing about the Indian population, Hariot again found himself having to negotiate two opposite views between the existing publications of Barlowe and Lane. While Barlowe had assured the public that the Indians desired nothing more than to become enthusiastic trading partners with the English, Lane characterized the Indians as cunning and perfidious.²³ Hariot decided to portray them as harmless, writing that they "are not to be feared, but that they shall have cause both to feare and love us, that we shall inhabite with them."²⁴ Hariot went on to emphasize the inferiority of the Indians as he described their lack of sophistication in weapons, defenses and fighting tactics, political structures and, of course, religion. By doing so, he did not explicitly disagree with either Barlowe or Lane but instead discussed the Indians in terms that dismissed the fears that any future colonists may have of the Indians as unfounded. Despite some of Hariot's gross misconceptions of the Indians and their lifestyles, his ultimate view of them is perceptively human, especially in comparison to that of his compatriots.

Whatever human elements of the Indians that Hariot may have failed to capture in writing, John White caught in his paintings and sketches. This give and take was not the result of a happy accident—Hariot and White collaborated closely

²² Morgan, *Inventing Virginia*, 105.

²³ *Ibid.*, 104.

²⁴ Quinn and Quinn, *The First Colonists*, 67.

throughout their explorations, with Hariot directing White and urging him to be scientific in his approach.²⁵ This directive to utilize a scientific approach geared White to pay special attention to the Indians' apparel and activities as well as to portray them as factually as possible. In part, it is his commitment to portraying detail and accuracy that have made the images so enduring. Not much is known concerning White's training as an artist, though we do know that he was a member of the Painters-Stainers Company of London. To be admitted to this guild, White would have been required to complete a seven-year apprenticeship.²⁶ From his work, it is evident that he had been trained as a portrait artist and had been exposed to all of the major Renaissance art theories prevalent at that time, both in England and abroad.²⁷ Although most of his work was destroyed in the trunk mishap, enough survived that when Theodor de Bry decided to make a second printing of Hariot's work in 1590, he was able to make graphic plates of White's watercolors to intersperse throughout the text.²⁸ These depictions came to be the dominating images of the American Indian for over a century.²⁹

The images White created are immediately captivating and they depict the Indians with human qualities that, despite the exotic nature of the dress and body tattoos, would have seemed familiar to the Europeans. White did not stylize the Indians into Greek or Romanesque figures as later artists would, nor did he portray them as barbaric heathens. Instead, White captured snapshots of the Indians engaged in everyday activities. Men are seen fishing from a canoe, women are preparing meals and carrying small children on their backs, and men and women are seen casually gathered around a campfire with smiling faces and other visual innuendo that intimated music, storytelling, and lively conversation.³⁰ White also captured a few cultural events such as a religious dance and a burial house in which he could have portrayed the Indians in a barbaric manner (as later artists did) knowing that very few people would ever see Indians in person.³¹ It seems that he resisted this temptation, unlike John Smith's artist at Jamestown, who represented the same type of religious ceremony (probably a harvest ceremony), but who added major alterations to the scene to make it more warlike and barbaric in nature.³² It would have also been easy for him to capitalize on embellishing the

²⁵ Morgan, *Inventing Virginia*, 164.

²⁶ Ibid., 143.

²⁷ Ibid., 144.

²⁸ Ibid., 140.

²⁹ Ibid., 174.

³⁰ For color facsimiles of White's watercolors, see Stefan Lorant, *The New World: The First Pictures of America* (New York, New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1946), 185-224.

³¹ Morgan, *Inventing Virginia*, 175.

³² Ibid., 174.

burial house into a grotesque scene. Instead, White chose to capture the humanity of the Indians and portray them as he witnessed them. This is not to say that modern historians have no criticism of White's work. Michael Morgan points out that White did take some liberties in sexualizing his portrayal of female Indians. He portrays them both as innocent virgins and as caring mothers, in an attempt to appeal to European ideals.³³ However, when de Bry made White's paintings into plates, he took the liberty of anglicizing women's faces to make them more attractive by European standards, by etching them with more sultry stares, and by exposing more of their breasts.³⁴

In addition to his drawings from the first colonization attempt, John White left behind his own written narrative of the colonization attempts. Although White made few remarks regarding the Indians apart from his commentary on unfolding events, some of these statements spark intriguing debate. One of these references was in regard to Manteo's frame of mind upon returning to his home after having spent time in England. The colonists accidentally attacked his tribe who were friendly to the English. White observed that "although the mistaking of these savages somewhat grieved Manteo, yet he imputed their harme to their owne follie, saying to them, that if their Weroans had kept their promise in comming to the Governour, at the day appointed, they had not knowen that mischance."³⁵ It is one of the few insights we have of the struggle that Manteo must have been experiencing—of defending his new friends from a powerful and well-developed nation or falling back in with his fellow tribal members who were blissfully unaware of the world across the ocean. We know from White's next entry that Manteo ultimately decided to cast his fate with the Europeans and elected to be baptized. On August 13, 1587, Manteo was christened with the title of Lord Therof in recognition of his loyal service to the Crown.³⁶

The Europeans were soon to discover that Manteo's loyalty and willingness to accept the Europeans and their culture was to be the exception in the native population. In an act that went counter to the European belief that once the Natives would be convinced of the superiority of the European culture when they were exposed to it, Wanchese helped to plot an attack against the colonists after he had spent time in England. To White and others in the party, Wanchese's betrayal was a severe disappointment to their hopes for future converts.³⁷ Perhaps what is most

³³ Ibid., 173-174.

³⁴ Ibid., 173.

³⁵ Quinn and Quinn, *The First Colonists*, 102.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Kupperman, *Roanoke*, 115.

telling about White's account is that he does not emphasize the violent interactions with the Indians. He certainly discussed a few of their violent encounters, especially when men were killed on either side, but he did not dramatize the events. He described them in the same matter-of-fact style he employed throughout the narrative. When read alongside of Ralph Lane's *Narrative of the Settlement*, in which Lane focused on conflicts between the parties, White's narrative looks almost apologetically tame.

As time moved forward and the literature of the Roanoke colony accumulated, most of the interest in the lost settlement remained focused on the men who had founded it. The period from the 1800s to the early twentieth century was the last golden era in literature that focused on the glories of the dead, white, and politically powerful male. The speculation on what actually happened to the colony took a backseat to the biographies of men like Raleigh, Lane, Grenville, and White. Perhaps the next phase of interest in the lost colonists is best explained by the development of archeology into a scientifically recognized field during the mid-nineteenth century and its emergence as an area of tremendous interest in the early twentieth century. The public's zealous interest in the field facilitated one of the strangest twists in the Roanoke plot.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the Roanoke story once more sprang to the public's attention with an unexpected archeological finding that evolved into a rather bizarre incident. In 1937, a man arrived at Emory University with a stone he claimed to have found while walking in the woods along the coast of North Carolina, and he brought it to the researchers to get some assistance in deciphering the inscription.³⁸ The quartz stone weighed just over twenty-one pounds and was at most 2½ inches thick, and 13⅝ inches long by 9⅝ inches wide.³⁹ On the flattest part of the stone was carved a Latin cross and the following lines: "Ananias Dare & Virginia went hence unto heaven 1591" and further down "Anye Englishman Shew John White Govr Via."⁴⁰ On the back of the stone, there were an additional seventeen lines that seem to be brief summary of the state of the colony. At the end of the lines were the initials "E.W.D." which were assumed to stand for Eleanor White Dare, the adult daughter of John White.⁴¹ Together, the finder (who was still anonymous at the time the article was published) and the professors worked

³⁸ Haywood J. Pearce, Jr., "New Light on the Roanoke Colony: A Preliminary Examination of a Stone Found in Chowan County, North Carolina," *The Journal of Southern History* 4, no.2 (May 1938): 148-163, 150.

³⁹ Ibid., 148.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 149.

⁴¹ Ibid., 149-150.

together for about eight days in order to decipher the inscription.⁴² Had this been the only rock to turn up, the scholars who were initially skeptical of the stone's veracity might have eventually accepted the stone as evidence and the historiography of Roanoke from that point forward would read very differently. However, as more and more stones began turning up in what became a trail that led from North Carolina down to Georgia, skepticism rightly grew.

It appears that there was only one scholarly article written on the topic, and it appeared in the *Journal of Southern History* shortly after the first stone was found. In the article, Haywood J. Pearce, President of Brenau College, maintained his skepticism, but was clearly excited about the potentially significant finding that this stone represented. Pearce dedicated most of the pages of the article to discussing the background of Roanoke, which seems to suggest that the subject of Roanoke was essentially a dead topic even in academic circles by the 1930s. He used the final portion of his article to summarize five citations in the writings of the Jamestown colonists about their findings regarding the fate of the Roanoke colonists. He moved on to draw conclusions about what may have happened to them if (and he stressed this as only a possibility) the Eleanor Dare stone could be verified as genuine. He concluded the article by evaluating the spellings and word usages as found inscribed on the stone with how they compare to known Elizabethan writing characteristics, and also evaluated the purported narrative with respect to what few known and accepted accounts exist. It does not appear that Pearce ever wrote a follow-up article after the stones were proven to be forgeries, but he continued to be quoted in the popular press as the story developed. In August of 1940, Pearce, along with his son who was also a doctor of history, announced that they believed that a stone found along a ledge of the Chattahoochee River was the grave marker for Eleanor Dare.⁴³ By this point in the strange saga, twenty-seven stones had been found and the popular press both capitalized on the public's fascination with the subject as well as began to poke fun at the scholars like Pearce who seemed to be hoping against all possible rationale that these stones would put to rest their questions about the lost colonists.⁴⁴ The trail southward seemed to support one of the disappearance theories that after White's departure, the colonists had split up into two separate groups, and Eleanor had led a group settlers along with Indians, down a southwestwardly route.⁴⁵ On May 16, 1941,

⁴² Ibid., 150.

⁴³ *New York Times*, "Finds Stone Marked 1599: Georgia Educator thinks it was at Eleanor Dare's Grave," August 19, 1940.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Pearce announced that “some of the Eleanor Dare stones...are frauds.”⁴⁶ Yet he also maintained that “‘no evidence of fraud’ had been found in the case of several stones....”⁴⁷ This verdict eventually changed and all the stones were exposed as an elaborate hoax. Although this event did not create a huge wave in the academic world, it enjoyed substantial coverage in the public press and for a while, at least, the attention breathed life back into a forgotten topic.

The 1900s saw a great change in the spectrum of how Indians were viewed and understood. The extreme changes are perhaps most succinctly captured by looking at school textbooks from different decades. The textbooks from the earliest and middle decades reveal an overtly prejudicial and demeaning view of the Native Americans.⁴⁸ Consider the following view posed in this excerpt from a chapter in the 1927 textbook *History of the American People* by David S. Muzzey.

Other tribes were sunk in bestial savagery...dying by the thousands from ravages of the beasts and diseases against which they were powerless to protect themselves. Nowhere had they risen above the state of barbarism. It was for the European settlers to introduce civilization into the New World. ...since the days of the earliest settlers they have been an obstruction to be removed, by methods often unnecessarily cruel, from the path of civilization. They have contributed almost nothing to the making of America. The New World was a virgin continent for the European discoverers and their descendents to make of it what they would.⁴⁹

Clearly, the Indians were nothing but an inconvenience that had to be overcome by force before progress could be made. By the 1966 edition of Thomas A. Bailey’s *The American Pageant*, the most horrifyingly racial statements had been removed, but the idea of European superiority clearly remained. When explaining the foundations of the early republic, Bailey wrote:

It started from scratch on a vast and virgin continent, which was so sparsely peopled by Indians that they could be eliminated or pushed aside. Such a magnificent opportunity for a great democratic experiment may never come again, for no other huge, fertile, and

⁴⁶ *New York Times*, “Expert Says Some Dare Stones Are Fraud; Accuses Georgia Mason of a Playing Part,” May 16, 1941.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ John Hollitz, ed., *Thinking Through the Past: A Critical Thinking Approach to U.S. History*, vol. 1: to 1877 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 13-21.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

uninhabited areas are left in the temperate zones of this crowded planet...⁵⁰

Contrast the previous two excerpts with the ninth edition of *The American Pageant* published in 1991 that prominently features a photograph of a Native American on the front cover.⁵¹ No longer marginalized or disparaged, the discussion of Native Americans, their culture, and the important role they played in the early formation of the United States had finally been recognized as a central part of the American story. The text of the 2000 version of *The American Pageant* spends whole sections discussing various Indian tribes, cultures, and languages and goes on to discuss the aid the Indians provided to the new settlers, the clash of cultures, and how the Indians fought back against the colonists when too many bounds had been overstepped, and negotiations had failed.⁵² Far from being weak and insignificant pushovers with no culture, history, or contributions to claim in the founding of the nation, the complexity of their cultures is now appreciated and their many contributions acknowledged.

How did such a significant shift regarding the image and role of the Indians in the formation of the country's transition occur so relatively quickly in the modern historiographical debate? While a full explanation would require a complex and multifaceted answer, much of the transition can be explained by the changes in the national climate regarding race relations in 1960s and 1970s. The field also benefited from forward thinking and open-minded historians who recognized the faults in the existing histories and sought to correct the errors. There are several key historians who have taken up researching and telling the story of Roanoke, including: David Beers Quinn, Helen Rountree, Karen Ordahl Kupperman, Alden T. Vaughan, and James Axtell. More recently, Thomas C. Parramore published the article "The 'Lost Colony' Found: A Documentary Perspective" published in 2001, which provides a synthesis of these historians' arguments. Of these historians, Quinn and Kupperman are the ones who have devoted the most time to the Roanoke story, so they will be examined here as an example of the direction in which the field has moved.

Of all these historians, David Beers Quinn has been without a doubt the most influential contributor, and is held to be the father of the modern Roanoke historiography. An Irishman who grew up in a tiny town that Canny and Kupperman dubbed "a colony within a colony," Quinn became fascinated by the

⁵⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁵¹ Thomas A. Bailey and David M. Kennedy, *The American Pageant, Ninth Ed.* (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1991).

⁵² Hollitz, *Thinking Through the Past*, 17-20.

experience of the people like the Irish and the Indians who had been invaded and conquered.⁵³ As an historian, Quinn became extremely interested in the England's colonization projects—both of his native Ireland and of America. Over time, his focus became centered on the experience of the natives who lived there. Unlike most of his predecessors, Quinn recognized that the role the Indians played in assisting the settlers had not been adequately told or acknowledged. Still, Quinn should be viewed as a transitional historian, who, rather than departing completely from the established scholarship, worked instead to bridge the gap between the older and modern styles of writing history. One of his earliest works, published in 1949, was entitled *Raleigh and the British Empire*. While it is clearly still history written about a dead and formerly powerful white man, Quinn included commentary that was critical of Ralph Lane, who had earned the right to conquer Virginia based on his previous brutal and effective job of conquering Quinn's beloved Ireland. Quinn wrote, "The Croatoans explained that they had little maize and extracted a promise that it would not be interfered with. This is a sad commentary on Lane's relations with the Indians. The white man was feared as a stealer of corn."⁵⁴

By 1974, when he published the book *England and the Discovery of America, 1481-1620*, the plight of the Indians had become so central to his study of the subject that he acknowledged in the secondary portion of the title that the book was about the "Exploration, Exploitation, and Trial and Error Colonization of North America."⁵⁵ Within the book, he included a chapter called "The Lost Colony in Myth and Reality, 1586-1625," in which he concludes that all of the standard disappearance theories are be potentially accurate explanations, especially if Powhatan, as some sources suggest, ordered that the colonists and the Chesapeake Indians who aided them be killed.⁵⁶ His outlook and writings both reflected and certainly influenced the change in perspective as witnessed in the editions of the school textbooks. Every publication since has utilized his perspective as a starting

⁵³ Nicholas Canny and Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "The Scholarship and Legacy of David Beers Quinn, 1909-2002," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (October 2003): 843-860, paragraph 13.

⁵⁴ David B. Quinn, *Raleigh and the British Empire* (New York, New York: MacMillan Company, 1949), 112.

⁵⁵ David Beers Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America, 1481-1620: From the Bristol Voyages of the Fifteenth Century to the Pilgrim Settlement at Plymouth: The Exploration, Exploitation, and Trial-and-Error Colonization of North America* (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 480-481.

point, and every historian has acknowledged that their work in the field would not have been possible without Quinn's contributions.⁵⁷

Karen Ordahl Kupperman is Quinn's most clear successor. She has written several books concerning the interactions between the Indians and the earliest colonists, including: *Indians and the English: Facing off in Early America*; *Settling with the Indians: the Meeting of the English and the Indian Cultures in America, 1580-164*; and *Roanoke, the Abandoned Colony*.⁵⁸ Additionally, she collaborated with another historian and wrote a biographical article celebrating the life of David Quinn. Kupperman cites Quinn in the preface of her book *Roanoke*, identifying him as "Hakluyt's modern counterpart, whose contribution is no less valuable."⁵⁹ *Roanoke* was published in 1984 in conjunction with the 400th anniversary of Roanoke's founding. Although the book was well-received by reviewers, by far the largest complaint against it is that it contributes nothing new to the Roanoke story and falls very much in line with previous works. This, in my estimation, is a fair allegation not only in regard to Kupperman's work, but also to all the modern works regarding Roanoke since Quinn.

The greatest change in the modern historiography is that the experience of the natives and their perspectives are included with the story, and in some instances constitute the whole story; they are no longer relegated to separate chapters as an aside from the main event of the European conquest. For the moment at least, it seems that there is no new information to tell about the colony and the people of Roanoke. Short of the resurfacing of some long-lost documents or the discovery of conclusive archeological evidence that suggests how the colonists did or did not die, it seems that what there is to tell of the tale has already been told.

What sets modern historians like Quinn, Kupperman, Vaughan, and Axtell apart from their predecessors is that they have recognized and chosen to incorporate the Indians as equal participants in the story of Roanoke. Most importantly, they emphasize that these were people who had their own sophisticated culture, religion, political structures, networks, and ways of life. Short of finding a genuine

⁵⁷ Canny and Kupperman, "The Scholarship and Legacy of David Beers Quinn."

⁵⁸ For more information see: Karen Ordahl Kupperman. *Indians and the English: Facing Off in Early America*. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2000); Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians: the Meeting of the English and the Indian Cultures in America, 1580-1640* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld, 1980); and Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Roanoke*.

⁵⁹ Kupperman, *Roanoke*, vii.

Eleanor Dare stone, we may never develop a definitive answer of what happened to the colonists, but it has been through this quest that we have come to better appreciate and incorporate knowledge about the lives of the people whom the colonists invaded into the greater story of America.

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