



## **From Frontier to Contact Zone: Recent Historical Archaeologies of Colonialism in**

### **The Chesapeake Region of North America.**

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In addition to being the location of Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in the New World, the Chesapeake region has the distinction of being the birthplace of American historical archaeology. If restoration-oriented excavation began at Jamestown and Williamsburg, Virginia's second colonial capital, in the 1930s, true scholarly work began in the 1960s. Since the 1970s, Chesapeake historical archaeology has been in the forefront of both theoretical and methodological developments, ranging from historical particularism to critical theory. With reference to the development of both early urban and plantation spaces in the Tidewater, this paper examines how the processualist formulations dominant in the 1970s have given way to a social archaeology that repudiates an essentialized Eurocentric construction of American history in favor of an interpretive framework that examines the specific contributions of all who participated in the process of becoming colonial during the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century Chesapeake. The influence of this new "postcolonial" understanding of the early Chesapeake on the current 400<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the founding of Jamestown is especially revealing about the process of historical revisionism at work in America today, and the role that archaeologists can be expected to play.