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Chris Rodning Accolades

Wednesday, March 31, 2010

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Chris Rodning, assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology, spoke to the South Florida chapter of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) on March 24th, 2010, at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. His lecture, "Native American Towns and Spanish Colonists in North Carolina, 1540-1568," was sponsored by the AIA's Doris Z. Stone New World Archaeology Lecture Fund. His talk summarized recent finds from his collaborative archaeological investigations of Spanish contact with Native American groups in western North Carolina, and, specifically, excavations of a large Native American town that was also the location of the Spanish settlement of Fort San Juan. This town was visited by Hernando de Soto in 1540, and Fort San Juan was established in early 1567 by expeditions led by Juan Pardo. During this period, the southern Appalachians formed the northern edge of the Spanish colonial province of La Florida. The abandonment of Fort San Juan following attacks by Native American warriors in early 1568 led to major changes in Spanish colonial activity in the American South, and it created an opening for English and French exploration and settlement in the 1600s and 1700s.

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Along with his collaborators, David Moore (Warren Wilson College) and Robin Beck (University of Michigan), Chris Rodning is a corecipient of a History Medal from the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) in 2010. Moore, Beck, and Rodning were nominated for this national DAR award by members of the DAR chapter in North Carolina, in recognition of their ongoing archaeological research on early encounters and interactions between Native Americans and Spanish colonists in western North Carolina during the 1500s. They are excavating an archaeological site that they have identified as the location of the Native American town of Joara, dating from 1400 to 1600, and the Spanish colonial outpost of Fort San Juan, dating from 1567 to 1568. The Joara community had been visited by the Hernando de Soto expedition in 1540. Fort San Juan was built by members of the Juan Pardo expeditions, whose goals included the establishment of settlements along an overland route connecting the Spanish colonial provinces in the American Southeast (known as La Florida) with the Spanish colonial province in the American Southwest (part of New Spain). Following an attack by Native American warriors, Fort San Juan was abandoned in 1568-the focus of Spanish colonialism shifted from exploration and settlement to missionization and trade, and the interior of eastern North America became open to later French and English exploration and colonization.