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Cover Page Footnote

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EVIDENCE OF THE NIANITIC INDIANS IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

Anthony J. Puniello

The ethnohistorical record indicates that during the 17th century a group of Indians, called the Niantic, occupied the area of southwestern Rhode Island and southeastern Connecticut. The purpose of this paper is to determine if the archaeological record supports this observation. This is accomplished by the examination of the geographical distribution of several ceramic attributes identified with the pottery type "Niantic Stamped," which researchers have assumed was manufactured by the Niantic Indians.

Les archives ethnohistoriques indiquent que, au XVII^e siècle, un groupe d'Indiens, appelés Niantiques, ont occupé le Sud-Ouest du Rhode Island et le Sud-Est du Connecticut. Cet article vise à déterminer si l'archéologie appuie cette conclusion. A cette fin, l'article examine la répartition géographique de plusieurs attributs céramiques associés au type de poterie "Niantic Stamped" que, d'après les chercheurs, fabriquaient les Indiens niantiques.

Bert Salwen's mastery of southern New England archaeology was poignantly revealed to me the day that he suggested the topic of the historical identity of the manufacturers of what has been labelled Niantic pottery for my master's paper. To facilitate his explanation of the problem, Bert took my class notebook and traced, effortlessly, the southern New England coastline, starting north of Cape Ann and ending at Manhattan. To the south, with equal deftness, he sketched Long Island. This took several minutes. A typical graduate student, I later checked his accuracy: orientation and proportion were nearly perfect, and the detail included not only major features such as Boston, Plymouth, Cape Cod; and Buzzards, Narragansett, and Peconic bays, but also the rivers, inlets, and points that define these and other features as well as many small off-

shore islands. It was equally clear that this intimacy with southern New England geography was merely a by-product of his mastery of the archaeological and ethnohistorical record of the southern New England region. Upon this map Bert identified historical and ethnohistorical points of reference as well as the archaeological record. Two hours and many, many notebook pages later, Bert had provided an outline for an approach to determine if the geographic distribution of Niantic Stamped pottery and the Niantic Indians—assumed by most researchers to be the manufacturers of this pottery—could be linked by an analysis of the ethnohistorical and archaeological records.

The ethnographic identity of the Niantic Indians was established through the accounts of the Old World settlers and traders of the early and

mid-17th century and in the early archaeological literature of southern New England there is the implicit assumption that Niantic pottery was manufactured by the Niantic Indians of eastern Connecticut. Smith (1950: 108-109), referencing the ethnohistorical accounts and interpreting the archaeological record, proposed a reconstruction of the Native American culture history of the Connecticut and Long Island region. He stated that the entire area bordering Long Island Sound, after the introduction of pottery (and agriculture), was occupied by the cultural ancestors "of the Nehantic and other related groups" (Smith 1950: 109), that is, the people of the Windsor Tradition. Smith suggested the date A.D. 1100 for what he thought was the invasion of western Connecticut by the Delaware, Wappinger, and western Metoacs (groups identified with the East River Tradition) who thereby pushed the Windsor Tradition east, where it survived in relative isolation.

Smith further stated that the bearers of the Shantok Tradition, the Mohegan-Pequot, wedged into the eastern enclave of the Windsor Tradition at about A.D. 1600, with the effect of dividing the Niantic into two groups: the Western Niantic located between the Connecticut and Thames rivers; and the Eastern Niantic located to the east of the Pawcatuck River in southwestern Rhode Island (Smith 1950: 109). Salwen (1969), however, later suggested that the Mohegan-Pequot were not intrusive into the southeastern Connecticut area. By re-evaluating the ethnohistorical evidence and both the morphology and distribution of Shantok Tradition ceramics, he proposed an "in situ" hypothesis for the development of the Mohegan-Pequot.

It is difficult to pinpoint the reasons why Niantic Stamped pottery has

been assumed to be the cultural product of the Niantic Indians. This fact is never clearly stated by either Rouse (1945, 1947) or Smith (1946, 1950). The only primary source from which one may infer that the Niantic Indians occupied an area west of the Pawcatuck River is a map drawn by Roger Williams (1827, 1874) in May, 1637. The map depicts a fort of "Nayantic men, confederate with the Pequots" between the "River Connecticut" and the "Mohigadic River" (Thames River?); the area directly to the east of the Mohigadic River has settlements that bear the names of Mohegan-Pequot sachems. To the east of these locations, there is another settlement labeled "Nayantic." Williams makes no mention, however, in the text of this letter to Governor Winthrop of Massachusetts (in which the map appears) explaining the fort west of the Mohegan-Pequot. What Williams may have meant by this reference remains an enigma. It may be stated with certainty, however, that the Native Americans in southwestern Rhode Island, referred to as the Niantic by Williams, were similar to the Narragansett Indians, in terms of language and most likely material culture, and these Niantic Indians were not related linguistically to the Qui(v)ipi-Unquachog speaking Indians to the west of the Mohegan-Pequot (Salwen 1978; Goddard 1978).

The pottery type "Niantic Stamped" was defined primarily through the analysis of the extensive collections that were excavated at Niantic, Connecticut, which lies between the Connecticut and Thames rivers. Most likely, the coincidence of the assumed geographic locations of the Eastern and Western divisions of the Niantic Indians and the considerable quantities of Niantic Stamped pottery in the area where the Western Niantic

may have been located was the major factor influencing the association of Niantic Stamped pottery and the Niantic Indians.

The purpose of the present study is to define the maximum geographic distribution of the descriptive pottery type that has been labelled "Niantic Stamped" (Smith 1950; Rouse 1947; Pope 1953). The ultimate application of the results of this research is to determine if there is a discernable geographic boundary within which Niantic Stamped pottery is largely confined, and whether this boundary circumscribes a human population that is in other cultural aspects distinct from adjacent populations.

To provide the proper framework for the conclusions drawn here, it is necessary to discuss three factors: the method by which the data were obtained; the inherent assumptions that are built into the problem itself; and the vague and contradictory descriptions of Niantic Stamped pottery in the existing literature and the nature of the reports concerning many of the sites in which Niantic Stamped pottery has been identified.

The data for this study were obtained solely by reviewing the published literature for archaeological sites in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and coastal New York. Each of these reports was reviewed to evaluate whether the site(s) under discussion contained Niantic Stamped pottery. There was, however, no examination of the pottery collections nor was there any review of field notes for those sites that contain, or are expected to contain, Niantic Stamped pottery.

The most useful publications for this purpose were Smith (1950), Rouse (1947), McBride (1984), and Lavin (1980, 1987, and 1988). The bulletins of the archaeological societies of Con-

necticut, Massachusetts, and New York, with several exceptions, provided all the available information on excavated sites. It should be mentioned that the ethnohistorical material was reviewed but was not found useful for the identification of pottery types or the association of pottery types with historical Native American populations.

The assumption inherent in this study is that a pottery type, such as the "Niantic Stamped" type first described by Rouse (1947: 20-21), Smith (1950: 193), and Pope (1953: 7), is an accurate indication of the presence of a socially distinct population if it is demonstrated that the type occurs predominantly at sites within a circumscribed geographic region. This is not an assumption without its critics. Goodby's (1992: 14) analysis of ceramics of the Narragansett Bay drainage area led him to conclude "no single ceramic design was being used to mark what some anthropologists have regarded as 'tribal' territories, as ceramic designs do not exhibit spatial uniformity at any time during the Late Woodland or contact eras." Goodby (1992: 12) suggests that "we can dispense with the traditional 'type' concept and instead consider the possibility that no single decorative attribute or set of attributes typifies pottery from this period (Late Woodland)."

From my own research in the Mid-Atlantic region, I am fully aware that ceramic types, or sets of associated attributes, do not necessarily coincide with ethnic grouping. The Late Woodland ceramic assemblages of the Iroquoian groups of eastern New York are indistinguishable from those of the Algonquian inhabitants of northern New Jersey (Puniello 1980). Yet there are types, or sets of attributes, that do suggest differentiation, for example,

Overpeck Incised. Goodby's admonitions are well taken. This research, however, is meant to address his observation that "it is possible that some aspects of ceramic design mark the existence of pan-residential descent groups, as there are instances of recurrent style at different sites, although more research is needed before anything more conclusive can be said" (Goodby 1992: 14).

The above discussion leads to an additional observation: the assumption that the presence or absence of Niantic Stamped pottery correlates with the presence or absence at that site of a "Niantic" population presents many interpretive problems. One must first assume that Niantic pottery was used in activities that would not exclude its presence from areas that were occupied by the manufacturers (e.g., hunting groups) and, conversely, that the pottery was never involved in activities that would result in its deposition in regions never occupied by the manufacturers (e.g., trade). If, however, it is suspected that the activities of the manufacturers did involve the above-mentioned situations, there should be an adequate method for isolating these sites from the sample. Trade would account for one situation in which the pottery distribution would not reflect a population boundary. If the presence of Niantic Stamped pottery at some sites was the result of trade and this fact is not recognized by the investigator, then the geographic boundary will be erroneously extended. Another consideration is the correspondence of a pottery type with a socio-political group. If, for example, marital practices involved the recruitment of women (the assumed manufacturers of pottery) from neighboring areas, a correspondence between pottery type and socio-political group would necessarily

pertain. Another circumstance that might contribute to sample distortion (perhaps in a more limited manner) would arise if one elected to conclude that Niantic Stamped pottery was used solely for ceremonial activities and hence deposited only in contexts such as burials.

It would seem, however, that these considerations are not obstacles for the present study. Since Niantic Stamped pottery has been found in abundant quantities in middens, its use obviously was not confined to ceremonial activities. The reported occurrences of burials at supposedly Niantic sites (Rogers 1935; Russell 1947) indicate that there were no ceramics associated with the burials. Likewise, there is little reason to believe that Niantic Stamped pottery was primarily a trade commodity. Since trade implies some degree of economic value, one would not suspect such items to be so frequent in middens and scarce in other contexts.

The settlement system of a population might also introduce bias into the distribution of a pottery sample. Although little is certain concerning the settlement system of the late prehistoric Native Americans of southern New England, the ethnohistorical literature suggests the establishment of fairly stable villages, with movement from somewhat scattered summer sites near the coastline to concentrated winter sites in the interior regions (Williams 1827: 56; Wood 1865: 98, 106). If this were the situation, there is reason to expect that pottery would be present at most sites save the hunting camps, which would probably represent areas of exploitation rather than habitation. Although this might introduce error in the formulation of cultural boundaries, it is perhaps not as quantitatively crucial in terms of conclusions as would be the skewing that would re-

sult from trade since this factor would constrict rather than exaggerate the boundary and would not result in the inclusion of manifestations that are not directly related to the manufacturers of a particular pottery type.

A chronological assumption is also made in this study. According to Rouse (1947: 20), Niantic Stamped pottery occurs in association with contact period European-made, i.e., non-Native American, materials. It is therefore assumed that Niantic Stamped pottery represents the terminal stage of the Windsor Tradition ceramic series. McBride (1984: 147) disagrees with this interpretation. He feels that the association of Niantic Stamped pottery with "trade materials" has not been directly observed by a professional archaeologist: all evidence for Niantic Stamped pottery as a terminal type may be traced to one citation that is not substantiated.

Further, McBride believes that Niantic Stamped was succeeded by a collared, incised type, which he labels Hackney Pond. Much to the west of southeastern Connecticut and in the Mid-Atlantic region, there is a shift from stamping to incising as the dominant decorative technique that occurs from approximately A.D. 1300 to 1400. And, interestingly, Lavin (1988) notes incised variants of Niantic Stamped in the central Connecticut River Valley, an area closer to the influence of the Mid-Atlantic region. Lavin, however, also dates these incised variants to approximately the same time period as McBride for Niantic Stamped for the coastal Connecticut region, that is between A.D. 1400 and 1500, which is approximately two centuries before the contact period. The cultural significance of incision as a decorative technique in terms of Niantic Stamped has also been questioned by Snow (1980: 325)




who questions the validity of a Niantic Phase vis-à-vis earlier Late Woodland manifestations and interprets it as an overlay of Iroquoian influence.

It should also be noted that in southeastern Connecticut, the pottery of the Shantok Tradition, a documented contact ceramic series, is stamped, not incised (Williams 1972). Therefore, the decorative trends to the west may not have been operative in southeastern Connecticut. McBride does believe, however, that Niantic Stamped is a very late Woodland type. This conclusion is reinforced by the evidence that Niantic ware is often encountered in a stratigraphically superior position at sites containing other Windsor Tradition pottery types. The South Windsor Site and the South Woodstock (also known as Basto) Site are two loci where Niantic Stamped pottery is found in strata that overlie Sebonac ceramics. At the Muskeeta Cove 2 Site on Long Island Sound in Nassau County, New York, Sebonac Stamped pottery has been dated at A.D. 1300 \pm 300 years (Salwen and Ottesen 1972: 17). This combination of evidence allows us to believe that Niantic Stamped pottery represents a relatively late phenomenon, if perhaps not a terminal Windsor Tradition manifestation. It certainly would be reasonable to conclude that the transition from stamping to incision occurred sufficiently close to the contact period that ethnic continuity may be assumed.

The third factor concerns the problem of adequately identifying the Niantic Stamped pottery type because of the nonuniformity of the criteria applied to describe and define not only Niantic Stamped, but also other pottery types in southeastern New England; and the nature of the reports for sites at which investigators have recognized Niantic pottery.

Niantic Stamped pottery was first described in three published sources: Rouse (1947), Smith (1950), and Pope (1953). Lavin (1980) and McBride (1984) have modified and refined the definition of this type. Lavin described the Niantic series present at the Ben Hollister site (1980) and the Morgan site (1988). The criteria set forth below are those attributes upon which all three published sources agree. When considering these descriptions as a whole, one becomes aware that there are probably wide variations within the Niantic Stamped type to which there are vague allusions in the earlier accounts. For instance, Rouse (1947: 21) states that incisions and punctations are rare for Niantic pottery. Keener (1965: 30) also mentions the presence of incised and punctated pottery of the Niantic series at the Phillips Site, but again, no descriptions of these examples are provided in the report. Fortunately, at the Ben Hollister site and Morgan site, Niantic vessels with punctations are described (Lavin 1980, 1988). McBride (1984) also describes a "Niantic" pottery type that is incised. He reclassifies these examples, however, and assigns them to a later time period—Hackney Pond (see above).

For the purpose of this study, five criteria were employed for the recognition of vessels or sherds as Niantic: 1) a smooth or lightly brushed interior surface; 2) a globular body and rounded base; 3) a collar that is extruded rather than applied; 4) decoration that is achieved by stamping the edges of scallop shells (or facsimiles accomplishing the same effect) into the wet, unbaked clay that forms the vessel collar; 5) a decorative motif that, at least vaguely, resembles plats of parallel, diagonal impressed lines contrasting with each other through opposing

angle orientation or plats of impressed lines perpendicular to each other (e.g.,  or  or ).

An extruded, rather than an applied, collar is specified here because this is the most diagnostic distinction between Niantic and Clasons Point wares (Smith 1950: 191, 193). Lavin (nd: 28), in an analysis of 19 Niantic vessels at the Ben Hollister site, describes one vessel as having an applied collar. The inclusion of pseudo-scallop shell stamped motifs was necessary because the Ben Hollister site (Lavin 1980) and another inland site, the Phillips site (Keener 1965: 30), contain Niantic Stamped pottery that exhibits this characteristic. Scallop shell stamping differentiates Niantic pottery from the Van Cortlandt series of the East River Tradition that demonstrates a similar motif, but in which decoration is achieved by the application of a cord-wrapped stick (Smith 1950: 191). Although scallop shells were employed in the fabrication of Sebonac pottery, this type is distinguishable from Niantic ware because Sebonac vessels are uncollared and the distinctive decorative motifs of Niantic Stamped pottery are absent (Smith 1950: 194).

Also confusing is the fact that both Rouse (1947) and Pope (1953) describe the Niantic Stamped pottery type as including vessels that have castellations. Lavin (1980) also reports castellated vessels at the Ben Hollister site. Smith (1950) makes no mention of this attribute. This inconsistency, however, does not pose too great a problem since this characteristic is not addressed by Smith (1950: 191) for either the Clasons Point Stamped or the Van Cortlandt Stamped pottery types, which are the two pottery types that may most easily be confused with Niantic Stamped. It

should also be noted that Rouse (1947: 16) claims that castellations are found in all three ceramic traditions (East River, Windsor, and Shantok) during the later phase of their development in the study area. One may thus assume that the practice of castellating the lip portion of vessels is not a distinguishing criterion among the types.

It would seem therefore that the distinction between Niantic Stamped pottery and Clasons Point Stamped types is solely dependent upon the presence of an extruded (or channeled) collar for the former and an applied collar in the case of the latter. Van Cortlandt Stamped pottery is distinguished from either of these two types by the application of a cord-wrapped stick to accomplish the decorative motif.

The nature of the published material on the sites themselves is, perhaps, the most difficult aspect in terms of research for this problem since few sites containing Niantic Stamped pottery have been fully published. In the early published reports the ceramics are often discussed in oblique and indirect terms. Praus, when describing the pottery of the Old Lyme Shell Heap, segregates his material by temper and then states only that some of the sherds demonstrate "scallop-shell decorative impression" and that some rims are collared (Praus 1942: 47). Other attributes such as incising and cord-marking are also mentioned, but the reader has no method of determining which attributes in the collection occur as isolates or in combination, information that is crucial for this study. Even the following description, provided by Coffin (1946: 24), which is one of the more useful in the existing literature, is not completely satisfactory for our purpose. A small pottery vessel appeared in the black humus, 2 ft (60 cm) below the sur-

face. It was broken from the pressure of the earth, but most of the pieces were recovered, so that it could be restored. It measured 6 in (15.25 cm) in height and 5 in (12.7 cm) wide, and has a neck 2 in (5.08 cm) high, with a collar 1 in wide bearing a design composed of curved angular lines made by the impression of the edge of a scallop shell. It has the capacity of about 1.5 qts.

From this passage, it is impossible to determine whether the vessel described should be classified as Niantic Stamped or Clasons Point Stamped.

The formulation of the definition of Niantic Stamped pottery was the result of the examination of museum collections. Both Rouse and Smith relied heavily upon the study of ceramic materials that were never published. For example, no site reports have ever been published for the four sites—Davis Farms, West Mystic, Niantic, and Tubbs—that contained the greatest known concentration of Niantic Stamped pottery. The researcher is aware of these collections only by their reference in Rouse (1947) and Smith (1950), and the actual distribution of sites that have been reported to contain Niantic Stamped pottery is presented in Figure 1.

Discussion

The most compelling observation from the data presented in Figure 1 is the concentration of sites containing Niantic Stamped pottery in the lower Connecticut River Valley and Thames River area. There are incidences of Niantic Stamped ware, or variants of Niantic ware or the possible occurrence of it outside this core area, but the frequency is negligible and aberrant, and atypical elements increase in terms of decoration or form.

The Massachusetts coastal area (Luedtke 1986) demonstrates no true incidence of Niantic Stamped although there are sherds decorated with scallop-shell impressions. Likewise, ceramic characterizations for the Rhode Island area (e.g., Dowd 1986) indicate that the combination of traits used in this study for the identification of Niantic Stamped is rare. McBride (personal communication, 1992) at the RI 1000 Site only noted incised collar and Shantok Stamped ware. Mayer (n.d.) notes that of the little Native American ware recovered at the Fort Ninigret Site, none was Niantic Stamped. And Wiegand (1987) in his survey of southwestern Connecticut notes no Niantic Stamped pottery.

The largest and most prolific sites yielding Niantic Stamped pottery occur on the north shore of Long Island Sound in southeastern New England between the mouth of the Connecticut River and the present Connecticut-Rhode Island border. Approximately 20–30 mi (32–48 km) up the Connecticut River are four additional sites that also contained Niantic Stamped pottery, but the decorative motifs of at least three of these inland sites were not achieved by scallop shell stamping exclusively. To the west, there were three sites, two at the mouth of the Housatonic River and one medially situated between the Housatonic and Connecticut rivers, that exhibited Niantic ware. Five of the six Long Island sites identified in this study are located along the shoreline of Peconic Bay on the extreme easterly portion of the Island. These sites represent 16 of the 20 recorded sites at which Niantic Stamped pottery has been identified.

The sites located on Long Island, with the exception of the Old Field site, contain very little Niantic Stamped pottery. The primary type re-

covered from this area seems to have been Sebonac. Even at the Old Field site, where an appreciable quantity of Niantic ware was represented, the proportion of Niantic to Sebonac sherds is almost one to nine (34 Niantic vessels to 299 Sebonac vessels). Also, it has been noted that Niantic Stamped sherds were represented in a collection from Fishers Island in Long Island Sound (Funk and Pfeiffer 1988: 103).

The five coastal sites on the Connecticut mainland between the Connecticut River and the Connecticut-Rhode Island state border have received little attention in the literature. The Old Lyme site is the only site for which we have detailed information about the nature of the assemblage. At the Old Lyme Site an abundant amount of Sebonac pottery was found, especially in the western portion of the site. Here, all the pottery was Sebonac with the exception of two East River Tradition sherds (Rouse 1947: 19). Excavations at another part of the site yielded both Sebonac and Niantic Stamped wares. At the nearby Burwell-Karako site, Lavin and Russel (1985: 61) identified two Niantic stamped sherds.

The Laurel Beach and Indian River sites, at the mouth of the Housatonic River, also contained pottery other than the Niantic type. One component at Laurel Beach, like the Old Lyme site and the sites on eastern Long Island, contained Sebonac pottery almost exclusively. The Indian River site had a minority of sherds representing both the East River and Shantok traditions. Apparently, the number of these sherds was not insignificant; Rouse (1947: 20) states that the East River sherds form "a large minority" and that several of the sherds are of the Shantok Tradition. Smith (1950: 180) interprets the presence of these sherds as indicating the

contemporaneity of the Niantic "focus," the Shantok Tradition, and the terminal stage of the East River Tradition. Since the Indian River site is located at the most westerly boundary of the distribution of the later Windsor Tradition sites, Smith suggests that this mixture in the ceramic assemblage represents a confluence of East River and Windsor attributes.

Geographically, four sites containing Niantic Stamped pottery seem unrelated to the other sites. The Guida Farm site, Hampden County, Massachusetts, is some 25 mi (40 km) north of the Ben Hollister and Phillips sites in Glastonbury, Connecticut and the Morgan Site in Rocky Hill, Connecticut, (the latter three are approximately 60 mi (96 km) north of the Connecticut coast). The number of Niantic sherds recovered at the Guida site was only 13, a very small percentage of the total ceramic assemblage. It is, perhaps, justified to invoke the movement of women, trade, or a "creative" potmaker, as possible explanations for the presence of these sherds so far from the other sites containing Niantic Stamped pottery. The Ben Hollister, Phillips, and Morgan sites all contain Niantic Stamped pottery; however, variations such as incision and pseudo-scallop shell impression are observed (Lavin 1988).

The south Woodstock (Basto) site is equally isolated from the other sites that contain Niantic Stamped pottery. It is approximately 30 mi (48 km) to the east of the Glastonbury sites and 30 mi (48 km) north of the coastal sites. Although we are not supplied with any quantitative data for Niantic pottery at the South Woodstock Site by Rouse (1947), Smith (1950), or Praus (1945), it is most likely not negligible since Rouse (1947) defines a Niantic component at the site. As noted above, the only other site with late ceramics in the immedi-

ate area is the Charles Tyler site (Pope 1952), which did not contain any Niantic pottery. Perhaps, as knowledge of this area increases, sites will be discovered linking this northeastern Connecticut site to the others.

The Baker Hill site in western Long Island contained only pottery of the East River Tradition, with the exception of several Niantic sherds. Unlike the South Woodstock site situation, however, there are sites in the vicinity that do contain late pottery, but only the Baker Hill Site is known to have yielded sherds of Niantic ware. It would seem, therefore, that the explanation for the presence of Niantic pottery at this site should be sought through the examination of cultural processes other than those related to a shared tradition, such as trade.

With these considerations in mind, it would seem that the significant geographic extent of Niantic pottery distribution stretches along the north shore of Long Island Sound, from Milford, Connecticut, at the mouth of the Housatonic River, to the Rhode Island border, and up the Connecticut River at least to Glastonbury, Connecticut (FIG. 1 and Appendix). The reported sites containing Niantic pottery are confined to the area surrounding Peconic Bay (the Baker Hill site may be discounted for the purpose of establishing a population boundary). It should be noted that, with the exception of the Old Field site, relatively few Niantic ware sherds are represented in the ceramic inventories of sites in the Peconic Bay area. The percentages of Niantic Stamped pottery at these sites is more like those of the assemblages from the Guida Farm and Baker Hill sites than it is like those from sites located along the north shore of Long Island Sound and the southern Connecticut River Valley. While the

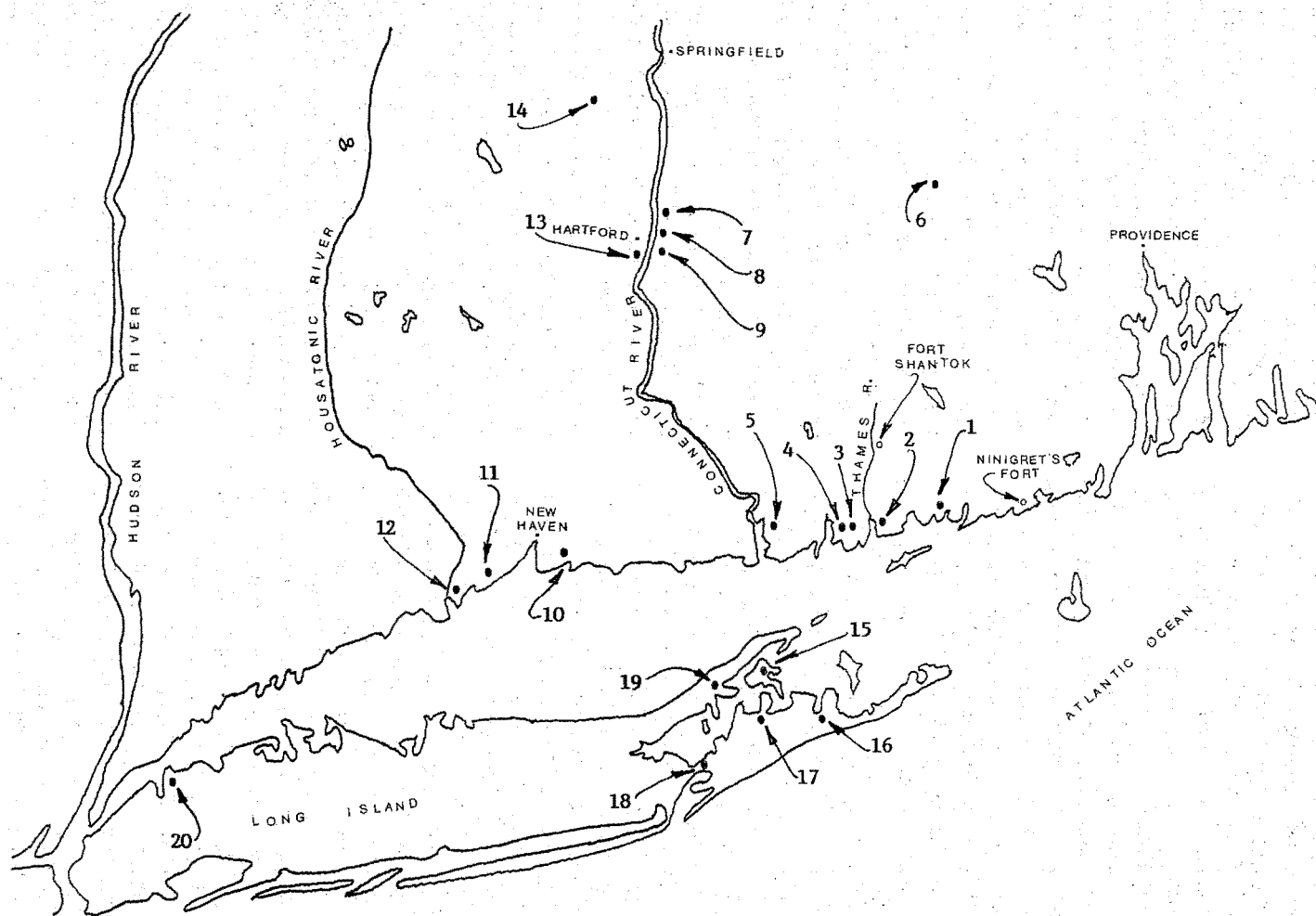


Figure 1. Sites containing Niantic Stamped ceramics. (Refer to Appendix for key.)

low percentage of Niantic 'Stamped' pottery was one of the reasons that the Baker Hill and Guida Farm sites were discounted in establishing a "Niantic" boundary (FIG. 1), this conclusion would not seem justified for eastern Long Island since, in this case, there is a concentration of sites yielding "Niantic Stamped" ware, albeit in low frequencies.

Three regional variations in assemblages containing Niantic Stamped pottery become apparent at this point:

1) sites along the Connecticut coast from the Connecticut River to the Rhode Island border are characterized by high percentages of Niantic pottery decorated by the technique of scallop shell stamping;

2) Niantic pottery found at inland sites along the Connecticut River is decorated with scallop shell impressions, but other decorative techniques, such as pseudo-scallop shell stamping, punctation, incision, etc., are also employed (Lavin 1980);

3) assemblages at sites on eastern Long Island display low percentages of Niantic ware, but the Niantic pottery type is consistently present at a number of sites within a confined geographic region.

This distributional study of Niantic Stamped pottery does demonstrate a geographical integrity. One may look at the southeastern Connecticut region as a "core area" that is tightly bounded on the east and evidences gradation to the north and west. Perhaps, the territorial description provided by Pfeiffer and Malcarne (1985: 65; figure 3) for the western Niantic best illustrates this distribution. One may still ask what political interpretations and observations may be derived from this distribution.

We know that the Niantic Indians were not the only Native American

group to occupy the southeastern and central Connecticut region. From ethno-historical accounts we know that in 1614 the Mohegan-Pequot occupied the Thames River drainage and the area between the Thames River and the Rhode Island border (DeLaet 1909: 42-43). Yet Rouse reports that articles of European manufacture are found in association with Niantic Stamped pottery (Rouse 1947: 20) and, as demonstrated above, it would seem certain that Niantic Stamped pottery is a very late phenomenon although it may not have been the terminal type for the Windsor tradition as postulated by Rouse (1947) and Smith (1950).

An interesting question then arises—why is there Niantic Stamped pottery at the West Mystic and Davis Farm sites, which are located in the middle of Mohegan-Pequot territory? There are at least two explanations. If Niantic ware is the cultural product of the Niantic Indians, then the Mohegan-Pequot are a later intrusion into the area. On the other hand, the Niantic ware may represent a regional development (not associated with only one population) that was shared by all groups living in the area and I feel that this later explanation is the more likely. The evidence is inconclusive for the linguistic identity of the Niantic (Goddard 1978: 72). Also, the social structure of Native Americans in terms of "identity" in southern New England at the time of contact was very fluid, seemingly dictated by political and economic expediency (Salwen 1978; Pfeiffer, personal communication, 1992). The lack of any conclusive evidence for the identification of the Niantic as a group and the fluid interchange of allegiance (and hence ideas and people) would argue against a single ware/single group interpretation.

I think that this study has demonstrated that there is a socio-political break during the Late Woodland at the present Rhode Island-Connecticut border, perhaps indicating a true distinction between the Narragansetts and groups farther west. This discontinuity also does not support the assertion that the Niantic were split into eastern and western groups, at least during the prehistoric period. If such a split occurred during the historical period, it was after the group ceased making its own ceramics.

Appendix: Sites Containing Niantic Stamped Pottery

Davis Farm Site, Stonington, New London County, Connecticut. Site said to contain Niantic pottery (Rouse 1947: 20). Smith (1950) does not mention this site and no other reference has been identified.

The West Mystic Site, Groton, New London County, Connecticut. Rouse (1945: 5; 1947: 20) has identified Niantic Stamped pottery at this site. There is no mention of this site in Smith (1950) and no site report has been published.

Niantic Site, Niantic, New London County, Connecticut. This is the type site for the Niantic Stamped series. No site report has been published. According to Rouse (1947: 20) and Smith (1950: 178), the site contained a considerable quantity of Niantic Stamped pottery. Both Russell (1947) and Rogers (1935) have reported burials at the site.

Tubbs Site, Niantic, New London County, Connecticut. The site is located adjacent to the Niantic site. Like the

Niantic site, the Tubbs site reportedly contained large quantities of Niantic Stamped sherds. The Rogers collection from this site is stored at the Gunnery School, Washington, Connecticut.

The Old Lyme Site, Old Lyme, New London County, Connecticut. A very heavily utilized site containing material dating from the Archaic to the Late Woodland periods. Two burials were located at the site (Praus 1942). Smith (1950: 180) states that Niantic Stamped pottery was found in the "B" component of the site whereas the "A" component contained Sebonac Stamped ware.

South Woodstock (Basto) Site, South Woodstock, Windham County, Connecticut. Praus (1945) identified three components at this site. Rouse (1947: 20) stated that at this site Niantic Stamped pottery was found in a stratum overlying Sebonac ware. Smith (1950: 179) also refers to Niantic Stamped pottery from this site. It is the most northeasterly "Niantic" manifestation thus far reported.

South Windsor Site, South Windsor, Hartford County, Connecticut. There is no published site report. References to this site are made in Rouse (1947: 20) and Smith (1950: 180). As at the Old Lyme Site, there is Niantic Stamped pottery overlying Sebonac ware.

Phillips Site, Glastonbury, Hartford County, Connecticut. This is a rock shelter containing Archaic and Woodland materials. The site contains pottery of the Windsor Tradition including Niantic Stamped, Incised, and Punctate. However, there is no description of the pottery provided in the published report (Keener 1965: 30). It is interesting to note that the only occur-

rence of Niantic ceramics demonstrating pseudo-scallop shell decoration is at the inland Phillips, Morgan, and Ben Hollister sites.

Ben Hollister Site, Glastonbury, Hartford County, Connecticut. Lavin (1980) has analyzed the pottery at the site and describes: 19 Niantic Stamped vessels bearing pseudo-scallop shell stamping; three Niantic Stamp and Drag vessels; three Niantic Linear Dentate vessels; and two Niantic Punctate vessels. As with the Phillips and Morgan sites, the Ben Hollister site seems to exhibit greater variation than the coastal sites in terms of the Niantic series. Lavin (1980) attributes this in Iroquois influence, since these decorative techniques are common at Iroquoian sites.

Juniper Point Site, Branford, New Haven County, Connecticut. Lawrence and Rowe (1953) describe the discovery of a pot that they assign to the Iroquois because of the shape of a collar. No further identification of this vessel is provided by the authors. Rouse (1947: 20) has identified Niantic ceramics at this site.

Indian River Site, Milford, on Milford Harbor at the mouth of the Indian River, New Haven County, Connecticut. Rogers (1943) describes sherds from collared and scallop shell stamped vessels. It was not stated whether the collars were extruded or applied. The illustrations indicate a Niantic design on the collar element of the vessel, but they are described as quahog (hard shell clam) rather than scallop shell impressions. Smith (1950: 180) states that the westernmost portion of this site contained Niantic Stamped pottery.

Laurel Beach (Eagle Hill) Site, Milford, New Haven County, Connecticut. Coffin dug extensively at this site. A globular, collared vessel with scallop shell impressions but no castellations has been reported from this site (Coffin 1946: figure 26). If the collar is extruded, this vessel would conform to the description for the Niantic series. Smith (1950: 179) has identified Niantic Stamped pottery at the Laurel Beach IV Site.

Morgan Site, Rocky Hill, Hartford County, Connecticut. Lavin (1988) states that Niantic Incised vessels are represented at the site in association with Niantic Stamped vessels in a context dating to the 14th century A.D. Niantic Linear Dentate as well as Sebonac ware are also represented.

Guida Farm Site, east of the city of Westfield, Hampden County, Massachusetts. The collection for this site is housed at the Springfield Museum. A small percentage, 13 sherds, of the total number recovered from the Guida Farm Site have been identified as Niantic by Byers and Rouse (1960). The only description provided by the authors is that the sherds came from a collared vessel. Since the Guida Farm Site is located in an area well removed from the region that contains the densest concentration of Niantic Stamped pottery and since the representation of Niantic ware is essentially incidental to the Guida Farm ceramic assemblage as a whole, one must be cautious interpreting these data: these sherds may represent phenomena that ranges from trade of material goods, population redistribution resulting from marriage practices to the capture of a female as a result of a raid.

Smith Site, Shelter Island, Suffolk County, New York. A total of 119 sherds were recovered from the Smith Site, 96 of which have been assigned to the Sebonac series and 21 to the Niantic series (Latham 1957: 5). The provenience of these sherds was not described in the report.

Three Mile Harbor sites, East Hampton, Suffolk County, New York. Latham (1961) reports that although Sebonac pottery predominates in the cluster of sites in this area, Niantic Stamped pottery was found at two sites—Hands Creek and Fresh Meadow. Smith examined a pottery assemblage stored at the Museum of the American Indian (Heye Foundation) from the Soak Hides Site, also located in the Three Mile Harbor area. Of the 339 sherds recovered, 267 were identifiable according to type. The East River Tradition was represented by one sherd, the remainder were assignable to the Windsor Tradition. Of these, only two sherds were classified as Niantic Stamped; 38 sherds were identified as Sebonac; and 226 sherds were classified as either Windsor Brushed, Cord-Marked or Fabric-Marked. There were 73 unidentifiable sherds, 24 of which were plain. It is probable that these sherds are fragments of a Niantic vessel (Smith 1950: 182).

Noyac Site, Southampton, Suffolk County, New York. It is stated only that Niantic Stamped pottery was found at this site (Latham 1959; 1960). Quantification was not provided.

Sebonac Site, Shinnecock Hills, Suffolk County, New York. Smith (1950: 180) examined this collection, which is housed in the Museum of Natural History. The site was excavated by Har-

rington in 1902 and a report was published in 1924. Smith identified 616 Windsor Tradition sherds among the 839 that were recovered from the site. Sebonac pottery is the majority type represented in the assemblage accounting for 611 of the sherds recovered and one complete vessel. Smith assigned only 4 sherds to the Niantic series. Three sherds of the Shantok Tradition were also identified.

Old Field Site, between Budds Pond and Saugust Creek at the point where Mill Creek enters Peconic Bay, Suffolk County, New York. The report of the excavations at this site is an unpublished manuscript written by N. E. Booth that is on file at the Long Island Chapter of the New York Archaeological Society. Smith (1950: 178) examined this collection and characterized the ceramic assemblage, according to Booth, as follows. A total of 333 individual vessels were identified, 34 of which were of the Niantic type and 299 were Sebonac. Booth's excavations uncovered 161 pits: 11 containing Niantic sherds only; 5 containing both Niantic and Sebonac sherds; and the remainder containing Sebonac sherds or no pottery at all. Booth stated that the Niantic pits were intrusive, and hence later, into those that contained Sebonac ware (Smith 1950: 179).

Baker Hill Site, in the center of Great Neck peninsula, Nassau County, New York. This site is associated with the East River Tradition. Smith (1950: 167) states however that "A few of the scallop stamped sherds are of the Windsor Tradition and are attributable to the type Niantic Stamped." This is the farthest west for any reference to Niantic pottery. Because it is represented at the site by only several sherds, and the site is geographically located out-

side the main concentration of "Niantic" sites in the eastern portions of Long Island and Connecticut, it is possible that the sherds represent some cultural process similar to that of Guida Farm.

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- Anthony Puniello
302 Harrison Avenue
Highland Park, NJ 08904