

#### 4. Images of Secotan

*Eventually, corn, beans, and squash made their way through the eastern woodlands of the future United States. When the Europeans first landed, they met people who had been part-time farmers for a few hundred years. The population relied to some extent on agriculture, but also continued to hunt, fish, and gather wild plants. In the 1580s, artist John White traveled to the English colony of Roanoke, in today's North Carolina, and painted the people of the village of Secotan. Fortunately for us, he brought his paintings back to London before the colony and all its inhabitants disappeared. In 1590 his watercolors were made into engravings by Theodor de Bry. (The engravings were used to illustrate a book written by Thomas Harriot, a selection from which appears in Chapter 3, as an example of the kind of preconceptions European visitors brought with them.) These images provide some of the most detailed information we have about pre-colonial Native American life in the region. Think about what we can and cannot learn from them. How did the engraver in Europe change the images that were given to him by the watercolor artist who had actually known the people?*

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Sources: All of John White's paintings and Theodor de Bry's engravings are available on the Jamestown website: [www.virtualjamestown.org/images/white\\_debry](http://www.virtualjamestown.org/images/white_debry)

Study: There are many studies of the ways the eastern woodlands Indians lived in today's southeastern United States, among them Helen Rountree, *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia: Their Traditional Culture* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).

Further exploration: Students can see all of the images on the Jamestown website (see above). To put these images in the context of their era, see Peter C. Mancall, ed., *Envisioning America: English Plans for the Colonization of North America, 1580-1640* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 1995). For a full-color facsimile of a sixteenth-century edition, see Thomas Harriot, "A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia": *The 1590 Theodor de Bry Latin Edition* (University of Virginia Press, 2007).

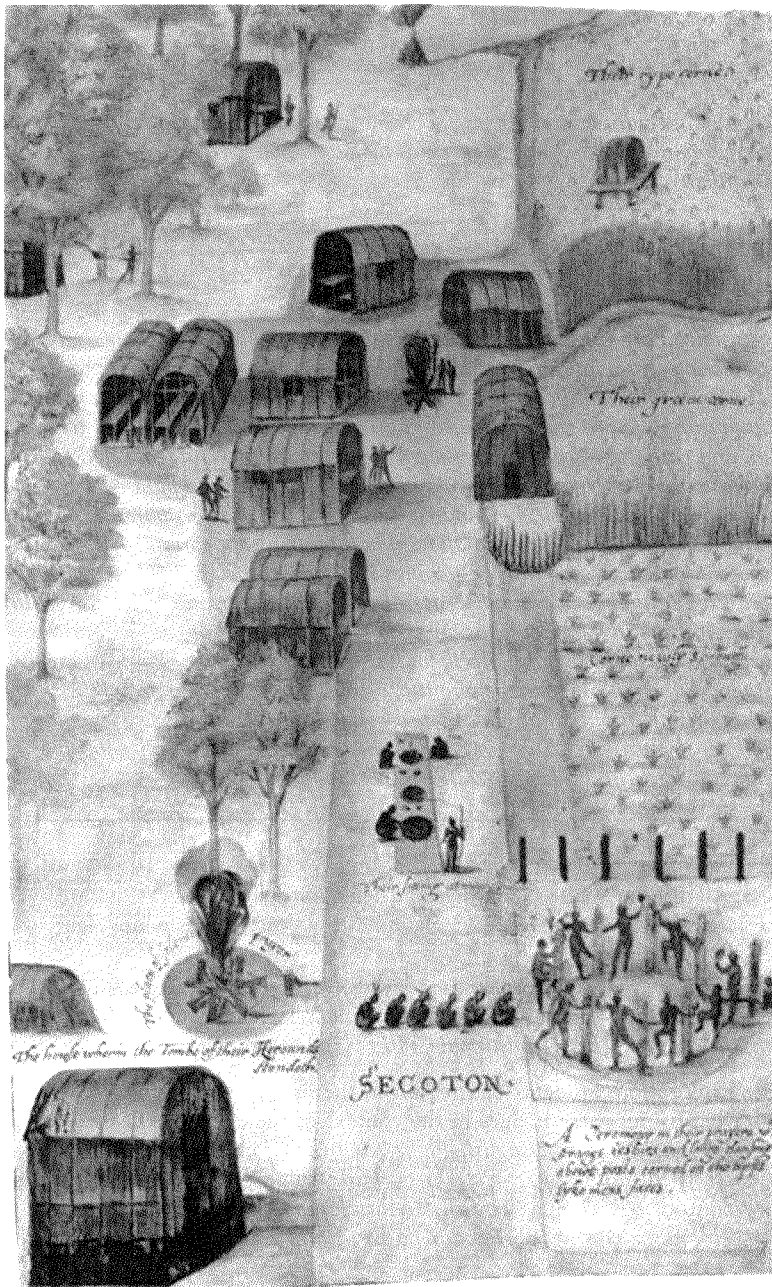


Figure 1.4.1 John White, *Indian Village of Secoton* (watercolor), © British Museum

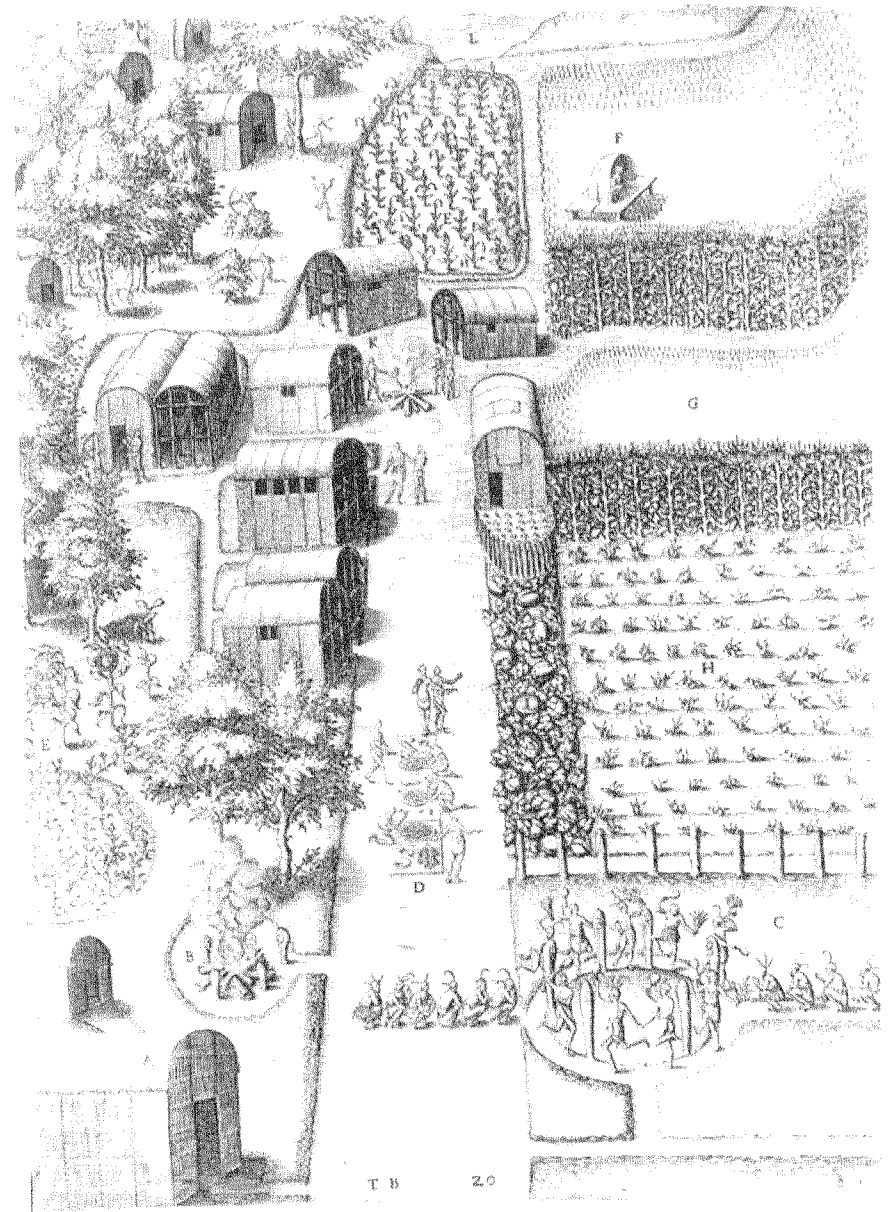


Figure 1.4.2 Theodor de Bry, *Indian Village of Secoton* (engraving), British Library

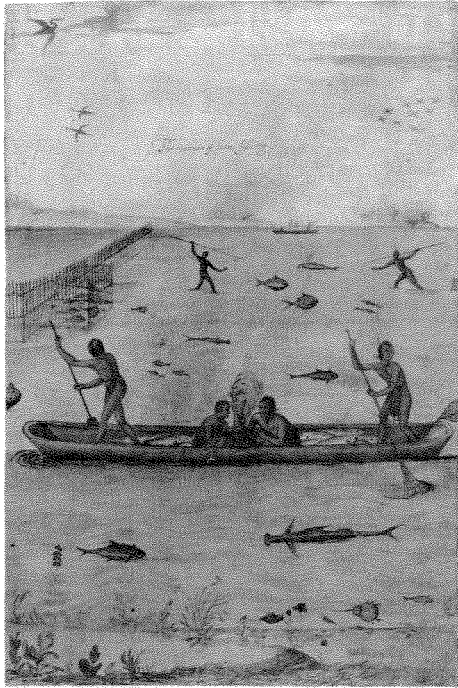


Figure 1.4.3 John White, *Indians Fishing* (watercolor),  
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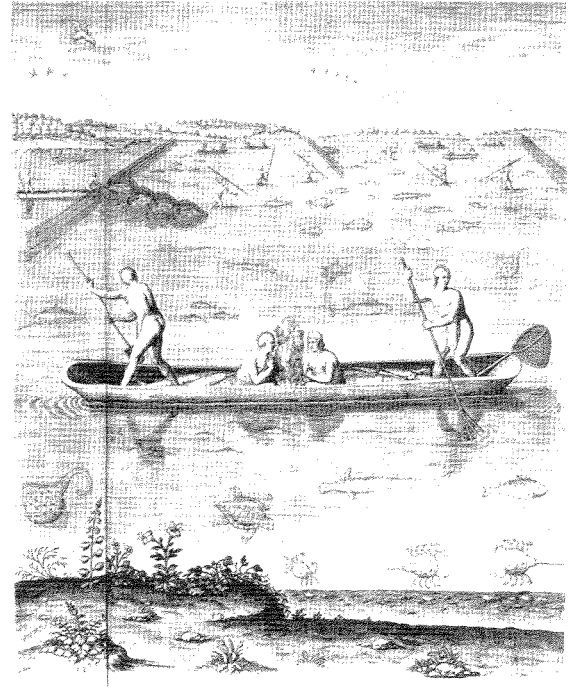


Figure 1.4.4 Theodor de Bry, *Indians Fishing* (engraving),  
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