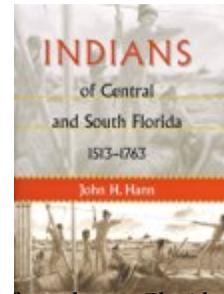


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

John H. Hann. *Indians of Central and South Florida, 1513-1763*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003. xiv + 249 pp. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8130-2645-9.

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John Hann is unquestionably the foremost historian of the peoples who lived in Florida at the time of the first contacts between Native and European. He is certainly the most prolific. In earlier volumes, Hann has addressed the Apalachee of northwest Florida, the northern Timucuan groups, and the Calusa during the Mission period. In this volume, he extends his investigations by examining the peoples of peninsular Florida (essentially from the Tampa Bay area south).

The peoples of South Florida did not interact with the Spaniards to the extent the Apalachee and Timucuan peoples of North Florida did, so the documentary evidence available in the Spanish archives does not offer the wealth of detail Hann brings to the northern groups. Nevertheless, the archival sources do contain valuable information regarding the south Florida peoples. The information that Hann has extracted from Spanish documents augments and enriches what we have learned about the south Florida peoples through archaeological investigations. In this volume, Hann attempts to combine the two sources of information to present (to the extent allowed) comprehensive pictures of the lives and societies of the peoples of south Florida.

Hann begins this volume by defining his region of interest and summarizing earlier discussions of the peoples of the area. While brief, this contextualizing is important. The discussion points out just how little we know about the people of the region, who were the first peoples of La Florida to encounter Europeans.

The next four chapters of the book provide pictures of the native peoples of the region. The chapters address the peoples of geographic regions: southwest Florida, the southeast coast, the Tampa Bay area, and the Miami-Keys area.

Hann first looks at the Calusa of southwest Florida. They were the most influential political group in South Florida, and consequently received considerable attention from Spanish secular and religious authorities. This attention is reflected in the amount of information available in the archival sources. Unlike his earlier volume on the missions to the Calusa, Hann focuses his attention on the Calusa themselves in this work. In particular, he addresses settlement locations and demography, subsistence practices, material culture, ritual practices, and language. He also briefly touches on the important question of contacts between the peoples of south Florida and peoples of the Caribbean.

Hann then turns his attention to the Ais and their neighbors of the east coast and nearby inland areas. With the Calusa, the Ais were the dominant native polity in south Florida during Spanish colonial times. The other societies of the region—the Jororo, the Mayaca, the Acuera, and the Surruque—appear to have been subordinate to the Ais. In his discussion of this region, Hann also addresses subsistence and material culture, bringing archaeological information into his discussion along with Spanish accounts. However, he devotes most of his attention to the relationship between the native groups and the Spaniards, beginning with the intermittent contacts of the sixteenth century and continuing through the seventeenth-century attempts to establish missions among the peoples of the region. This discussion focuses on the Surruque and Ais and is a relatively straightforward chronology of actions undertaken by the Spaniards and the reactions of the native peoples.

Hann next addresses the peoples of the Tampa Bay area, groups in the Safety Harbor Culture Area defined by archaeologists. Among the groups He discusses are

the Tocobaga, the Moscoso, and the Uzita. Of these, the best known are the Tocobaga. The archaeological remains of this region are better known than those of the east coast groups, but as Hann notes there is relatively little information in the historical sources. Nevertheless, Hann utilizes what information is available to provide descriptions of settlement patterns and lifeways. He also devotes attention to the linguistic affiliations of the peoples of the region, a subject of considerable importance. Unfortunately, the archival information does not resolve the question. Hann concludes this section of his study with discussions of the Tocobaga settlements among the Apalachee in the late seventeenth century and of two Spanish expeditions to Tampa Bay, one in 1680 and one in 1699. It is too bad that these expeditions took place so late, essentially after the demise of the native groups.

The last of the native groups that Hann discusses inhabited the Miami region and the Keys. The best known are the Jega and the Tequesta. Again, he describes settlement patterns and subsistence practices drawing on archaeological and documentary sources. He also presents a narrative account of contacts between the Tequesta and Spaniards.

The book ends with two substantive chapters on social organization (political and kin) and religious practices and beliefs. In both chapters, the bulk of the discussion focuses on the Calusa. This is not surprising as the Calusa are the group for whom we have the most information (both archaeological and historical).

Hann's account is not theoretically sophisticated. There is no discussion of the processes of construction or reproduction of the native societies. Nor is there a thorough discussion of the ways in which practice and structure shaped worldviews and goals and constrained native interactions with the Spanish colonists and missionaries. I am not sure that this is a flaw. Hann did not set out to interpret or explain. He presents and summarizes information that would otherwise be difficult to obtain and allows the consumer of this information the privilege of interpreting the evidence.

The native peoples of the Florida peninsula were the first native North Americans to enter into sustained contacts with Europeans. Unfortunately, their societies did not survive the colonization of La Florida and the resulting interactions. The archaeological record and the limited historical documentation contained in the Spanish accounts are the only sources of information on these people and their encounters with Spaniards. John Hann has done a great service to scholars by producing this account.

For anyone interested in the archaeology or early history of the native peoples of Florida, this book is essential reading. John Hann has compiled the available information from Spanish archival sources (much of which has not been readily available to scholars not familiar with those sources). He has combined that information with summaries of archaeological research to provide a clear and concise account of these poorly known peoples and their interactions with Europeans.

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