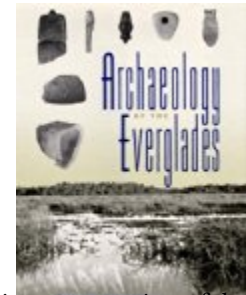


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

John W. Griffin. *Archaeology of the Everglades*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002. xx + 399 pp. \$55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8130-2558-2.

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The Florida Everglades is one of the last frontiers left in America. Explorers of today's frontiers are not mountain men and prospectors, but scientists. For decades, the Everglades has drawn botanists, ornithologists, ichthyologists, herpetologists, and specialists from other fields to study its wonders. One additional group of researchers that has been especially interested in this region is archaeologists. One of the key figures in archaeological research of the Everglades was John W. Griffin. Originally published as *Archaeology of the Everglades National Park: A Synthesis*, Griffin's report on the findings of three years of research in the Everglades remained in the grey literature, unseen by most. With the help of Patricia C. Griffin, this invaluable work has been released to the public, nine years after the author's passing. *Archaeology of the Everglades* represents a major contribution to the field of Florida archaeology and prehistory for professionals and the general public alike.

The archaeological record in the Everglades dates back nearly 5,000 years. According to Griffin it was around this time that the estuaries along the shore began to develop, thus increasing their appeal to human populations. Griffin goes on to say that the first pottery was produced around 4,000 years ago, which marked the beginning of a long sequence of datable pottery types. The Everglades saw the rise of the Calusa, which dominated the region politically and religiously, at least until the arrival of Europeans, according to the author.

Griffin divided his book into five sections comprised of twelve chapters. Chapter 1 of section 1 discusses the attempts to delineate the boundaries of south Florida using climate, physiographic regions, distribution of plant life, marine systems, resource abundance, and disruptive (stochastic) factors such as freezes, hurricanes, fire, and

red tide. In chapter 2, the author gives an overview of the development of the landscape of south Florida. He starts with the rapid postglacial sea-level rise witnessed during the Holocene and ends around 2700 B.P. when a number of factors such as the sea level reaching its present range, increased precipitation, vegetation reaching its present distribution, and the formation of highly productive estuaries all came together to form a cornucopia for human populations.

Section 2 begins at chapter 3 which covers the previous archaeological work conducted in the Everglades. Chapter 4 documents the material culture of the Glades area, including typologies of ceramic, shell, bone, and stone artifact classes. There are an adequate number of clear photos and illustrations to go along with the descriptions of most of these categories. The fifth chapter deals with established temporal and spatial parameters of prehistoric south Florida. Included in this are discussions of the definitions of areas and subareas, building and dating of pottery sequences, and the determination of a prehistoric chronology for south Florida using the available archaeological data. Chapter 6 discusses the impacts European contact had on indigenous populations of the area.

The third section starts with chapter 7, which discusses archaeological data from the Bear Lake site. The chapter is essentially a site report and starts with a breakdown of the excavation and the particulars of the different tests. Also discussed are topics such as the ceramic stratigraphy, C-14 determinations, artifacts, midden contents, and molluscan and vertebrate remains. Chapter 8 continues along a similar vein by discussing the excavations of eight other Everglades sites located within the Everglades National Park. The au-

thor gives a brief, but adequate, summary of Onion Key (8Mo49), the Turner River Site (8Cr2), Walter Hamilton Place (8Mo57), Hamilton Garden Patch (8Mo56), Rookery Mound (8Mo118), Cane Patch (8Mo42), Panther Mound (or Cabbage-Rattlesnake Site [8Da125]), and the Anhinga Trail Site (8Da 3451).

Section 4, which consists of chapters 9 through 11, starts with a presentation of settlement types, site and settlement size, site distribution, temporal distribution, sites and seasonality, site plans, and structures. Chapter 10 discusses what is known archaeologically concerning the use of faunal (vertebrate and invertebrate), floral, and water resources by prehistoric humans in the region. The last part of the chapter discusses the exploitation of coastlines by indigenous peoples in south Florida.

The eleventh chapter discusses the political, social, and religious organization of the indigenous cultures of the Everglades. Ethnographic accounts of European priests and soldiers are tempered using archaeological data and there are discussions of the chiefdoms and the Calusa, the Calusa hierarchy, and the chief and other high-ranking members of Calusa society. Hierarchical social organization and religion are touched upon by revealing some of the archaeological evidence of organized labor, distribution of burial goods, and religious artifacts.

The final section and chapter provide the reader with an overview of the information covered in the previous chapters. The author condenses the previous 327 pages of information into 10 pages discussing broad topics such as the timing, development, and direction of culture, subsistence, settlement distribution and patterning, social re-

lations, and the effects contact with Europeans had on indigenous populations and cultures.

Accessibility to the general public is definitely the greatest positive attribute of the release of this publication. Instead of languishing in the obscurity so common with grey literature, broader publication has made this work obtainable to a wider audience. Of secondary importance is the facelift the work received. Maps, charts, and graphs have been redone and are easier to read in comparison to the original. Photographs from the original were lost, so a combination of scanned copies and illustrations had to be utilized. This resulted in clearer, more discernible plates. The text itself has also undergone some revision including deletion of sections of the report that included management data for the National Park Service.

The only negative trait of this work would have to be the generality of its contents, but this is only an issue for the professional audience. The author states, however, that the value of a synthesis of this sort “lies in summarizing, to the best of our ability, what we now know and what we, based on the work of others, think it means.” With that in mind the reader should know what to expect in regards to the depth of the book’s information.

All things considered, this book is an extremely informative and important addition to any professional’s library, especially those with an interest in the region. For the general public, the book offers a vivid glimpse into a rich cultural past in an oftentimes misunderstood and overlooked region of our country.

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