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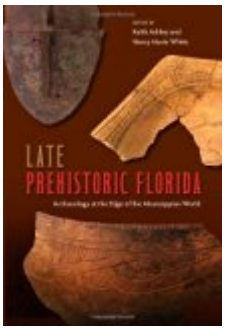

Keith Ashley, Nancy Marie White, eds.. *Late Prehistoric Florida: Archaeology at the Edge of the Mississippian World.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012. xii + 398 pp. $74.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8130-4014-1.

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"Syntheses in southeastern prehistory depict broad cultural patterns and sweeping historical trends. That is the nature of syntheses. Older syntheses emphasize culture history--culture origin and change. Newer ones integrate culture-historical and cultural-adaptational paradigms.... As useful as these syntheses are for revealing salient patterns and trends across the entire Southeast, they are not meant to substitute for detailed regional and local syntheses, which rarely fit the broad picture perfectly and sometimes deviate significantly from it," wrote Jon L. Gibson in 1996. [1] This quotation, from an essay on the Late Archaic period Poverty Point site in Louisiana, is decidedly relevant to the recently published ***Late Prehistoric Florida***, edited by Keith Ashley and Nancy Marie White.

Archaeology is a data-driven discipline and the data come from a multitude of sources--university and museum-sponsored research, legally mandated surveys and mitigation projects, local archaeological societies. The amount of new data, often published in limited distribution reports (the so-called gray literature), is sometimes overwhelming, making it difficult to stay abreast of every new discovery. As a consequence, the regional synthesis is an important, if not essential, vehicle for delivering new information to professionals and nonprofessionals alike. But large-scale archaeological syntheses tend to gloss over local variation in an effort to highlight general trends. They also become dated quickly, and the last statewide archaeological summary in Florida was published in 1994, Jerald T. Milanich's ***Archaeology of Precolumbian Florida***. This makes the current volume of essays especially valuable. Rather than attempting a complete synthetic treatment of twelve thousand years of Florida prehistory, it focuses on a specific period, AD 1000-1600, and uses Florida's "appendicular" geographic position as a means to explore how the histories of local Native American groups diverged from those of late prehistoric societies--those of the Mississippian tradition--in the greater southeastern United States.

Eleven of the chapters are based on papers presented at a 2006 symposium held at the 63rd

annual meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference. A twelfth chapter was solicited after the meeting to fill a geographic gap, southeastern Florida. In the opening chapter, the editors define terms and lay out the goals of the book. They define "Mississippian societies" as those that practiced maize agriculture, made shell-tempered pottery, maintained institutionalized social inequality, practiced a chiefdom level of political organization, and participated in long-distance exchange relations that involved the movement of exotic items and religious iconography throughout the Southeast. Some Mississippian towns and mound centers were surrounded by defensive walls to protect against raids that were meant to capture and control productive farmland, exact revenge, or build prestige. The Mississippian tradition had its origin in the Mississippi Bottoms, hence the name, and the Cahokia site east of St. Louis is the archetypal Mississippian site.[2]. The Mississippi period is the era between about AD 1000 and AD 1600 within which Mississippianization occurred; however, this process did not transpire uniformly nor was it universal. Indeed, one of the major goals of the book is to demonstrate that in Florida the Mississippi period and the Mississippian tradition are not always synonymous. A related goal is to illustrate with archaeological data how Florida's native cultures possessed their own unique traditions and histories, and how local traditions may (or may not) have been affected by interactions with contemporaneous societies in the greater Southeast.

So how was Florida different? For one, there is only limited evidence for maize agriculture, with the firmest coming from precontact sites associated with the Fort Walton culture in the eastern panhandle and, to a lesser extent, the Alachua culture of north-central Florida. The editors feel that the general absence of evidence for agriculture is one reason why peninsular Florida is often overlooked in southeastern U.S. regional summaries of Mississippian developments. Truncated pyramidal platform mounds are common primarily in the Fort Walton area and in the central Gulf coast region around Tampa Bay, but are less common or nonexistent elsewhere. Although mound centers existed, the idea of a planned village layout, with mounds and midden areas surrounding a central plaza, seems to have been limited and may have had its origin during the preceding Woodland period. Nor were any of these centers palisaded as far as is known, which is curious since, according to European written accounts, raiding between groups was a common occurrence. Finally, hierarchically ranked societies and political systems have not been shown to be definitively associated with many of the late prehistoric societies in Florida. The Calusa in southwest Florida are a notable exception, but they may not have achieved this type of sociopolitical organization until after the arrival of the Spanish, and chiefdom development there may have been a result of European contact, with local rulers utilizing captured Spanish gold, silver, and other exotics to help build prestige and exact tribute from neighboring groups. Thus Florida appears to have followed its own historical trajectory; but, the editors ask, "does being different render Florida societies irrelevant or culturally inferior and justify exclusion from the social landscape of the Mississippi-period Southeast?" (p. 1). Their answer, a resonant "We think not," presages the content of the essays that follow.

Only a few authors assert overt theoretical postures, but it is difficult not to appreciate the effect that Florida's geography had on the degree of Mississippian influence, which was both less intensive and increasingly different the farther south one moves. For example, only in northwest Florida, in the Red Hills surrounding modern Tallahassee, did the local Fort Walton culture adopt most of the trappings of the wider Mississippian phenomenon, including maize agriculture. But as Rochelle Marrinan observes in chapter 9, even here some time-honored interpretations are based on limited evidence and should perhaps be revisited, while the data to support a more de-

tailed understanding of local developments is lacking altogether. The Pensacola/Fort Walton culture in the extreme western panhandle did adopt shell-tempered pottery and some Mississippian iconography, but population sizes were smaller and there is no evidence for hierarchical social or political structure (Harris, chapter 11). Similarly, in the Apalachicola River basin, there is no evidence of maize, limited evidence for large mound centers, and no evidence for complex chiefdoms (White, Jeffrey Du Vernay, and Amber Yuellig, chapter 10). This begs the question, why did Mississippianization occur in the Tallahassee Red Hills but not to the immediate east or west? Harris believes that the interior of west Florida was abandoned during the Mississippi period, perhaps to better exploit marine resources and to have greater access to contemporary groups via barrier-island-protected estuaries. The lack of major rivers also may have been a limiting factor affecting access to Mississippi-period societies to the north. White, Du Vernay, and Yuellig also present possible explanations (population segmentation, limited land for agriculture, greater group mobility), but acknowledge that more research needs to be done to determine the true cause.

Moving to the interior, John Worth's contribution (chapter 7) illustrates the value of the documentary record as well as the limitations of the archaeological record. Archaeologically, the precontact Timucuan-speaking people of the Suwannee Valley culture appear to have been organized in small-scale, nonhierarchical societies. Yet Spanish documents tell us that they were organized as simple chiefdoms with each polity consisting of a small group of villages with a centralized administration, noble lineages, and inherited positions of authority. Just to the southeast, the archaeological record relating to the Alachua culture also displays a lack of clear evidence for long-distance exchange or chiefdom-level organization (Vicki Rolland, chapter 6). Whether this represents a true characterization of the societies that inhabited the hills and lakes around present-day Gainesville, or is a result of archaeology's limitations in identifying the material correlates of such societies is unclear at present. Both direct (preserved cobs) and indirect (cob-marked pottery) evidence for maize has been found in precontact Alachua contexts, but its importance has been debated and stable isotope studies of human bone indicates that these societies were dependent on hunting and gathering for food.

The other geographic factor of importance is Florida's large coastline. Not only are the soils in coastal areas not conducive to intensive agriculture, but the presence of productive marine ecosystems also offered local populations abundant fish and shellfish with which to feed growing populations and, in turn, provide a foundation on which complex social and political systems could develop. The importance of a maritime subsistence base is best illustrated in the central Gulf coast and Caloosahatchee regions. The former, centered around Tampa Bay, was home of the Safety Harbor culture. Interpreted as having a chiefdom level of political organization, Safety Harbor is characterized archaeologically by hierarchically ranked mound centers containing truncated pyramid mounds, but no agriculture and only limited evidence of Mississippian iconography principally on mortuary pottery (Jeffrey Mitchem, chapter 8). Farther south, in the Caloosahatchee region, the Calusa and their prehistoric ancestors represent an oft-cited example of a politically complex society that developed without agriculture. Understanding this development is the focus of William Marquardt and Karen Walker's multiyear, multidiscipline research effort at Pineland and other sites in the Charlotte Harbor area. In chapter 3, these authors present a detailed account of environmental, economic, and social changes in southwest Florida during the period from AD 800 to AD 1500. They argue that environmental fluctuations on a variety of different temporal scales (sea-level change, warm/cool climatic variation, severe weather events) would have affected coastal estuarine sys-

tems and influenced exchange relations, large-scale construction projects, and social structure, while historical contingencies, such as isolation from the major European efforts to colonize and missionize Florida Indians, enabled the Calusa to maintain their autonomy and exert greater political power.

Both regions had access to large gastropods, such as lightning whelk and horse conch, and shells of these species are common at Mississippian sites in coastally remote places, such as Arkansas and Missouri where they were engraved with Mississippian iconography or made into beads. A lucrative trade in marine shells is believed to have provided Gulf coast-dwelling Mississippi-period societies with access to the Mississippian Southeast, probably first passing through the hands of Fort Walton middlemen (or middlewomen). Such access is the likely source of Mississippian design elements on local pottery, and the occasional appearance at Gulf coast sites of exotica, such as galena, copper, and shell-tempered pottery.

To the southeast and north along Florida's Atlantic coast, Mississippian influence appears to have been minimal, although admittedly the data from these regions is not as plentiful. In chapter 3, Robert Carr discusses southeast Florida, an extremely large, environmentally diverse, and culturally varied area which includes the Kissimmee River, Lake Okeechobee, the Everglades, the southeast Atlantic coast, and the Florida Keys. Size alone makes the region difficult to characterize and the absence of sustained problem-oriented research in such areas as the Kissimmee River, Florida Keys, and much of the Everglades exacerbates the difficulty. Most data are the result of legally mandated surveys and excavations of varying quality. Still, Carr uses the available information to emphasize the relative absence of Mississippian-related features, even while major site complexes at Fort Center, Nicodemus Slough, Jupiter Inlet, and the Miami River, and others like them, bear evidence of large-scale construction projects in the form of mound and midden complexes, earthworks, shellworks, and canal systems based on a fishing-hunting-gathering subsistence economy. Any Mississippian influences are likely to have arrived in the region along trade routes established during the preceding Woodland period, he notes. In chapter 4, Thomas Penders discusses a similar absence of Mississippian characteristics along the Indian River Lagoon of east Florida. Known to archaeologists as the Malabar region, this area was home to the historic Ais and their ancestors. Penders's review of the region's late prehistory emphasizes its maritime subsistence base and posits a settlement pattern of evenly dispersed village sites along the coast, each with its own burial mound likely related to specific lineages. He also notes the absence of firm evidence for monumental architecture and a unique mortuary custom of radially oriented burials. Close proximity to the Gulf Stream, which was used by the Spanish as its primary shipping lane, benefited the Ais by providing them with shipwrecked goods, which in turn altered native alliances and the regional power structure, much as it did for the Calusa.

The St. Johns II culture of northeastern Florida is the subject of Ashley's contribution (chapter 5). St. Johns II people were nonagricultural fisherfolk, and the richness of marine resources leads Ashley to suggest that individual communities were self-sufficient with no need for central control and redistribution of food supplies. The absence of non-mound burials suggests that all members of society had access to burial in mounds. Ashley's interpretation of these data focuses on the communal nature of mortuary ritual and the desire to exhibit corporate identify in highly visible ways. Focusing specifically on the Mill Cove Complex, which contains the region's two largest sand mounds, Grant and Shields, he notes that both mounds contain typical Mississippi-period artifacts denoting participation in far-clung exchange networks (e.g., copper plates and

maskettes, spatulate celts made of non-Florida stone, and galena). St. Johns II communities participated in trade with neighboring communities to the north, exchanging marine shell for nonlocal goods. This in turn required the forging of alliances between exchange partners, which may have resulted in the gifting of iconographic items, such as the distinctive copper long-nosed maskettes, by Mississippian chiefs to St. Johns representatives. These goods were then integrated into mortuary and ritual activities. Rather than interpreting their presence as indicators of elite power, Ashley views their deposition in burial mounds as an indication that no living person was worthy of possessing them and considers the mounds in which they were interred as visual markers of corporate identity. Historical circumstances (e.g., the decline of Cahokia and abandonment of the Macon Plateau) made the alliances that channeled these material items to northeast Florida unsustainable. By AD 1250-1300, the major trade routes for marine shell had shifted to the Gulf coast, and St. Johns II societies depopulated the area and moved up the St. Johns River.

In the final chapter, John Kelly discusses Florida during the Mississippi period from the perspective of Cahokia, the epicenter of Mississippian development. Since his goal is provide a broader context for understanding what transpired in Florida, Kelly spends the first few pages defining the concept of "Mississippian" before proceeding to a discussion of how Mississippian societies were linked via different ***horizon styles***; that is, cultural traits (shell-tempered pottery, maize agriculture, mound centers, iconography, etc.) that spread over a wide geographic area rapidly. These traits had their ultimate origins in the Mississippi Bottoms. He concludes that with Florida serving as a major source of marine shell and shark teeth, especially for Cahokia, it would seem that "Mississippian societies to the north ... needed Florida, not the other way around" (p. 309).

The most effective chapters are the ones that cover regions of the state where long-term research has been carried out: southwest Florida, northeast Florida, the Apalachicola River valley, and to a lesser extent, the central Gulf coast. Where research has been limited or is dependent on cultural resource management projects, the quality of data is variable and the summaries less robust. Yet this is a critique of the current state of affairs, not the chapters that document it; the value of this volume is that it highlights those areas of research, geographic as well as topical, that require further investigation and analysis. In that regard, it is sobering to reflect on the inability of the material record to reflect certain levels of societal and political complexity, as documented by Worth, and underscores the necessity to heed Marrinan's call to question long-held assumptions based on limited archaeological data.

While this book will be of interest to professional archaeologists and students of prehistory, historians interested in the precursors of the Native American societies that occupied Florida at the time of European contact also will benefit from the information it provides. For those who do not have a background in Florida or southeastern prehistory, I recommend reading the introductory chapter by Ashley and White followed by the concluding chapter by Kelly before delving into the individual contributions. Reading both chapters first will provide the reader with a larger context for understanding how the different regional histories compare and differ from developments that transpired contemporaneously throughout the Southeast prior to European contact.

Notes

[1]. Jon L. Gibson, "Poverty Point and Greater Southeastern Prehistory: The Culture That Didn't Fit," in *Archaeology of the Mid-Holocene Southeast*, ed. Kenneth E. Sassaman and David G. Anderson (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 288-305, quotation on 288.

[2]. John E. Kelly, "The Emergence of Mississippian Culture in the American Bottom Region," in ***The Mississippian Emergence***, ed. Bruce D. Smith (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), 113-152; and Timothy R. Pauketat, ***The Ascent of Chiefs: Cahokia and Mississippian Politics in Native North America*** (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994).

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[2]. Jerald T. Milanich, ***Archaeology of Pre-columbian Florida*** (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994).

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