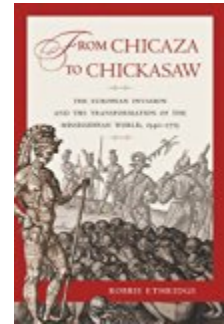


**Robbie Ethridge.** *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540-1715.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. xii + 344 pp. \$37.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-3435-0.

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## Forgotten Centuries Remembered

The recently late, all-time great, Charles Hudson coedited a collection of essays, with Carmen Chaves Tesser, titled *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704*, which appeared in 1994. The volume's central premise was that southeastern Native American history in the period between early Spanish entradas and the arrival of large numbers of English settlers was little known. The contributors to Hudson and Tesser's book laid out the most recent work in anthropology, archaeology, and history, hoping to point the way toward a deeper understanding of this crucially important period. Robbie Ethridge carries this work forward admirably. She dedicates *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540-1715*, to Hudson, her mentor, and proceeds to illuminate the forgotten centuries powerfully and beautifully in a work of lasting scholarly value. It deserves wide readership among specialists in Native American and early American history, in graduate seminars, and in advanced undergraduate classes as well.

The book's introduction promises a volume at once regional and specific to the fascinating history of the people who greeted Hernando de Soto's expedition in 1540 as Chicaza and whose descendants introduced themselves to European visitors in the 1600s as the Chickasaws. How the Mississippian chiefdom of Chicaza dispersed and how its former denizens remade their world and reorganized themselves as the colonial-era Chickasaw na-

tion serve as the broad themes of the work. Undergirding these themes is a sophisticated theoretical framework largely of Ethridge's own creation: the Mississippian shatter zone (more on this later). Ethridge freely admits the fragmentary, incomplete, and frequently tainted or otherwise biased nature of many of her sources. She deftly weaves together archaeology, history and historiography, and archival research, and her combination of French, Spanish, English, and Chickasaw perspectives is remarkable. Ethridge organizes *From Chicaza to Chickasaw* along chronological lines, though each chapter also contributes to the larger argument. Readers pass through various phases of southeastern Native American history, from the Mississippian world in full flower, through the violent encounter with Soto, the long aftermath of Soto's entrada, the arrival of the English, the increasingly deleterious effects of the Anglo-Indian slave trade, and the emergence of the colonial South, itself about to suffer a violent political realignment in the form of the Yamasee War, which erupted in 1715.

A chapter-by-chapter analysis of the book is beyond the constraints of the review format. Suffice it to say that each of the chapters offers crucial insights to relative newcomers to the field, and has plenty to offer specialists as well. The chapter on the Mississippian era, for example, portrays a reasonably diverse and dynamic world, familiar to specialists but largely unknown among laypeople. Some archaeologists, notably, Timothy Pauketat, have questioned the utility of the label

“chiefdom.” Ethridge considers Chicaza a chiefdom, but recognizes it as a relatively egalitarian variation on a general theme, not an amber-encased caricature. Another quick example: experts in southeastern Native American history understood for some time that disease was one of a number of factors that contributed to the collapse of Mississippian towns, and functioned differently in the Southeast than in Plymouth or Tenochtitlan. Ethridge explains clearly how disease, disruption of food supplies, and the violence emanating from slaving worked in concert to remake the indigenous South.

*From Chicaza to Chickasaw*'s most valuable contribution to the larger scholarly literature lies in Ethridge's elucidation of the Mississippian shatter zone idea. Ethridge first explored the shatter zone in a 2006 essay, but elaborated on it in her introduction to *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian*

*Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South* (2009), a volume she edited with Sheri Marie Shuck-Hall. Mississippian polities were inherently unstable, especially when confronted with alien diseases. These factors combined with a violent brand of merchant capitalism and a raging slave trade to destabilize a wide swath of the South in the years after Europeans arrived. It is possible to argue that Europeans in a certain age wrought havoc wherever they were able, but the Mississippian shatter zone could only have existed in places that were Mississippian prior to colonization. Mississippian-derived polities tended to coalesce in certain ways to adapt to the new colonial realities while preserving some deep structures like red/white dualism, matrilineality, and a three-tiered cosmogony. In doing so, the descendants of Mississippians created new worlds that influenced American history profoundly and persist in some ways to the present.

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