

# NATIVE AND SPANISH NEW WORLDS

## SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ENTRADAS IN THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST AND SOUTHEAST

EDITED BY  
**CLAY MATHERS, JEFFREY M. MITCHEM,  
AND CHARLES M. HAECKER**



# AMERIND STUDIES IN ANTHROPOLOGY



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***Native and Spanish New Worlds***

***Sixteenth-Century Entradas in the American Southwest and Southeast***

Edited by Clay Mathers, Jeffrey M. Mitchem, and Charles M. Haecker

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Spanish-led *entradas*—expeditions bent on the exploration and control of new territories—took place throughout the sixteenth century in what is now the southern United States. Although their impact was profound, both locally and globally, detailed analyses of these encounters are notably scarce. Focusing on several major themes—social, economic, political, military, environmental, and demographic—the contributions gathered here explore not only the cultures and peoples involved in these unique engagements but also the wider connections and disparities between these borderlands and the colonial world in general during the first century of Native–European contact in North America. Bringing together research from both the southwestern and southeastern United States, this book offers a comparative synthesis of Native–European contacts and their consequences in both regions. The chapters also engage at different scales of analysis, from locally based research to macro-level evaluations, using *documentary, paleoclimatic, and regional archaeological data*.

No other volume assembles such a wide variety of archaeological, ethnohistorical, environmental, and biological information to elucidate the experience of Natives and Europeans in the early colonial world of Northern New Spain, and the global implications of *entradas* during this formative period in borderlands history.

*"This book represents the most comprehensive scholarly review of the sixteenth-century entradas yet written."* —Russell K. Skowronek, co-editor of *Beneath the Ivory Tower: The Archaeology of Academia*

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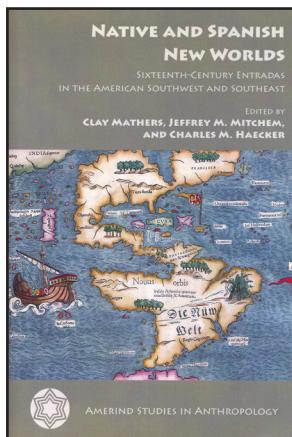
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## **Native and Spanish New Worlds: Sixteenth Century Entradas in the American Southwest and Southeast**

Edited by Clay Mathers, Jeffrey M. Mitchem, and Charles M. Haecker. 2013. University of Arizona Press. 400 pp., 26 figures, references, index. \$60 (cloth).

*Reviewed by Dr. Mark J. Wagner, Interim Director and Staff Archaeologist, Center for Archaeological Investigations, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois.*

This volume has its origins in a in a 2009 symposium at the *Society of American Archaeology* meetings in Atlanta, where it that won the *Amerind Conference* award for best symposium that year. It's goal is to compare the different types of interactions between sixteenth-century Indigenous and Spanish peoples in the Southwestern and Southeastern United States, primarily as the result of the Spanish *entradas* in those two areas. In particular, the organizers sought to place these encounters in a broader context by examining the “social, economic, political, military, environmental, and demographic components” associated with Native and European interactions in the two regions.

To facilitate comparisons between the Southwest and Southeast, the volume is organized into six thematic chapters—Native perspectives, historiography, climatic influences and impacts, disease, political organization, and conflict—usually with two to three papers presenting comparative data for the two regions in each thematic chapter. The single exception, unfortunately, is the chapter on native perspectives, which includes just a single paper examining the interaction that occurred between sixteenth century Zuni communities and Spanish *entradas*.

There is much to like in this book. In my view, the standard to which a study of this type should be held is: Does it present significant new information that alters our perceptions, either archaeologically or historically, of a particular place or event in time? The *Native and Spanish New Worlds* volume aims to do just that, and I believe it succeeds admirably. In particular, I would draw attention to Robbie Ethridge’s chapter on contact-period studies and the Southeastern Indians and the chapter by Ethridge and Jeffrey Mitchem on the interior South at the time of the first Spanish explorations (*Chapters 4 and 10*). Both studies do an excellent job of using archaeological and other data to bridge the conceptual divide between the prehistoric southeastern Mississippian chiefdoms and the Creek, Chickasaw, and other historic-period peoples who were their descendants. It is a mark of just how far southeastern studies have come—most notably as the result of the work done by Charles Hudson and his students—that we can now see how the lives of southeastern Native peoples were transformed during the sixteenth and later centuries. Ethridge and Mitchem thoroughly document how the encounters of late Mississippian peoples with the various *entrada*, introduced diseases, the fur trade, and slaving, led to the creation of the historic period groups of the same region.

In regard to the Southwest, Mathers (*Chapter 12*) presents a re-assessment of the celebrated Coronado expedition that contradicts traditional historical accounts of this *entrada* as a well-oiled military force of experienced *conquistadors*. Instead, his re-evaluation of the historical data suggests that it consisted of a motley crew of adventurers, merchants, and inexperienced young men led by a relatively small number of seasoned military officers. Rather than Spanish soldiers, the main military force of the expedition consisted of Native warriors from the Valley of Mexico who fought using traditional weapons for their own reasons (for instance, to achieve personal status through warfare). If anything, to my mind, Coronado's force appears to have resembled later French and British military forces in the Great Lakes region in which Native warriors and colonial militias comprised of largely inexperienced young men supplemented relatively small numbers of professional soldiers sent from Europe.

Also welcome is the attempt by many of the authors in the volume to provide a Native perspective or “voice” on many of the various culture-contact episodes that occurred between Indigenous and Spanish peoples in the sixteenth century. For example, drawing on their knowledge of Zuni lifeways, Dongske and Dongske (*Chapter 2*) posit that warfare broke out between the Coronado expedition and the Zuni when the Spanish unwittingly arrived at the summer solstice, a critical event in the Zuni calendar, threatening the religious well being of the community. The Spanish further misinterpreted Zuni efforts to inform them that they were unwelcome while the ceremony was in progress. This lead to what the authors call “the first known battle between Europeans and Native Americans in the Southeast.” John Worth (*Chapter 11*) similarly privileges the actions of Native leaders in sixteenth century Florida, noting that by the late 1500s Indigenous leaders had begun to co-operate with the Spanish as a means of gaining political power and access to Spanish goods and military protection. Although this Spanish-dominated political structure replaced the earlier “landscape of competing autonomous local and regional chiefdoms...it was built with the same building blocks that had characterized the later Prehistoric Period and maintained a considerable autonomy for its constituent chiefdoms.”

Van West et al. (*Chapter 5*) and Dennis Blanton (*Chapter 6*) also use climatological data for both the Southwest and Southeast to provide an explanatory framework or voice for the actions of Native peoples encountered by the various Spanish *entrada*. In the case of the Coronado expedition of 1542, tree-ring and other data suggest that the expedition arrived in the Middle Rio Grande Basin at “one of the few exceptionally warm and wet intervals of the sixteenth century.” Although these favorable conditions may have encouraged Indigenous peoples to attempt to replace their stores of corn, beans, and squash raided by the Spanish, the onset of a two-decade drought following the Coronado expedition resulted in decreased harvests that led to conflicts between Native peoples and later Spanish expeditions as they tried to protect their food stores. Blanton (*Chapter 6*) similarly suggests that tree-ring data indicate a combination of drought and cold winters plagued the route of the late 1530s to early 1540s De Soto Expedition, which may help explain the actions of both Native and Spanish participants in this event. As weather conditions worsened, the Spanish became more des-

perate and dependent on securing Native foodstuffs while Native leaders resisted their efforts to acquire supplies needed by the peoples of their own chiefdoms. I would agree with authors of both chapters that climatological data, while not definitively causal, provide yet another tool for explaining the reasoning and motives of both Spanish and Native actors beyond what is provided in traditional historical accounts.

Ramenosky and Kulischek (*Chapter 15*) and Hutcheson (*Chapter 16*) address the controversial subject of introduced European epidemics and their effects on Native societies in both regions, respectively. Using archaeological and historical data, the first two authors note that in contrast to eastern North America “the available evidence from the northern Southwest is indisputable. There are no descriptions of disease outbreaks from the sixteenth-century northern Southwest.” They posit a number of reasons for this variance, including the great distance separating Native peoples from Spanish centers of population, the small sizes of the various *entradas*, and the uneven distribution of Native peoples across the landscape, among others. Hutchison, similarly using a combination of archaeological and historical data, suggests that the evidence does not indicate a dramatic collapse in Native populations in the Southeast as the result of diseases introduced by Spanish explorers. Rather, he suggests that that population decreased over a period of 300 to 350 years as a result of multiple factors. Using Europe as an example, he notes that even “the Black Death, the most devastating epidemic in history, did not leave Europe completely depopulated”. Closer to home, another analogue might be the extremely high mortality rates suffered in the American Civil War by young men from rural backgrounds who had limited exposure to infectious diseases prior to joining the Army. Although these men died in the tens of thousands when exposed to smallpox and other infectious diseases in the Army camps, their deaths never spread to their relatives at home or decimated their entire societies. Although Hutchison does not say so, I would suggest that one possible survival strategy (or outcome) for the populations of highly-organized late Mississippian chiefdoms in the Southeast threatened by disease may have been to disperse into smaller political and family units scattered across the countryside, lessening their exposure to contact with infected individuals.

Commentators David Hurst Thomas (*Chapter 14*) and Charles McEwen (*Chapter 15*) conclude the volume by summarizing the different characteristics and outcomes of contact between Native and Spanish peoples in these two very different areas of the Spanish empire. Thomas in particular notes the varying experiences and actions of Indigenous peoples in different parts of the Southeast as they encountered the Spanish. As does Ethridge, Thomas characterizes the deep interior Southeast as a “Mississippian shatter zone” where infectious disease, military encounters with the Spanish, and the support of lesser leaders by the Spanish undermined the late Mississippian chiefdoms in the region. Over the next two centuries the descendants of these polities transformed themselves into the Creek and other historic period Native peoples of the Southeast as interaction with European merchants via the deerskin and slave trades resulted in the restructuring of their societies. At the same time Thomas, in agreement with Worth (*Chapter 11*), notes that a different experience played out in Florida itself

where traditional Mississippian leaders co-operated with Spanish colonialists to create a “hybrid Native-Colonial society...[in which] in effect, [*the Spanish town*] of St. Augustine became a colonial paramount chiefdom.” Yet a third form of interaction played out in the American Southwest, where Spanish attempts to missionize Native peoples, at a time of environmental and climate stress resulted in a Native rebellion designed to drive the Spanish from their lands and pueblos.

Ewen reviews each of the thematic chapters in turn, concluding that the primary value of the *Native and Spanish New Worlds* volume lies in its demonstration of the ability of archaeology and new avenues of historical research to challenge long-standing assumptions in the documentary record. I agree with Ewen wholeheartedly on this point. Rather than a noble band of highly-trained Spanish *conquistadors*, the Coronado expedition is shown to be a rather rag-tag band of Spanish adventurers allied with Native warriors from the Valley of Mexico who used traditional weapons to achieve traditional goals. And disease is suggested to have been just one of only many reasons that the highly structured late prehistoric Indigenous polities of the Southeast were transformed into the less centralized societies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some Native societies collapsed, others were transformed radically, and others continued on into the present day. And the change went both ways. The Spanish also changed, co-operating with Native peoples in the creation of a creole society in Florida that mixed elements of both Native and Spanish life.

In sum, the value of this book lies in its use of rigorously collected archaeological, historical, and scientific data to investigate the many types of cultural entanglement and colonialism that occurred between European and Native peoples in the New World and the varying outcomes these held for the peoples involved. It is an outstanding piece of research and I highly recommend it to your attention.