

EDITED BY

Keith Ashley and
Nancy Marie White

LATE PREHISTORIC FLORIDA

Archaeology at the Edge of the Mississippian World

ARCHAEOLOGY/ANTHROPOLOGY

"The view often is clearer when one looks from the outside in rather than the reverse. Geographically situated on the edge of mainstream Mississippian cultural developments, Florida harbored an array of cultures whose study provides insights into the nature of the entire Southeast in the centuries before the European invasion. *Late Prehistoric Florida* is a seminal contribution to archaeology, one that allows us to see both the trees and forest."—Jerald T. Milanich, author of *Florida Indians from Ancient Times to the Present*

"Forces us to re-envision the Mississippian world with the Native polities of Florida as part of the broader cultural mosaic. It is not surprising that many of the areas represented in this book diverge from models and ideas developed in the 'core' areas in significant ways."—Victor D. Thompson, Ohio State University

"For a long time, Florida's late prehistoric societies have been viewed and explored through a lens developed to understand their Mississippian neighbors to the north. This book makes a strong case that the societies of late prehistoric Florida must be explored on their own terms."—Adam King, South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology



Featuring contributions from some of the most prominent researchers in the field, this collection describes and synthesizes the latest data from archaeological excavations throughout Florida. In doing so, it reveals a diverse and vibrant collection of cleared-field maize farmers, part-time gardeners, hunter-gatherers, and coastal and riverine fisher/shellfish collectors who formed a distinctive part of the Mississippian Southeast.

Keith Ashley is coordinator of archaeological research and instructor of anthropology at the University of North Florida. **Nancy Marie White**, professor of anthropology at the University of South Florida, is author of *Archaeology for Dummies* and editor of *Gulf Coast Archaeology*.

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Front, top: Copper long-nosed maskettes recovered from Grant Mound by C. B. Moore in 1895. Photograph courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian and the Smithsonian Institution. *Middle and bottom:* Fort Walton Incised partial vessels. Six-pointed open bowl from burial at Corbin-Tucker site (cat. no. 8Ca142-304) and casuela bowl from Perry collection, Curlee site (FW41).

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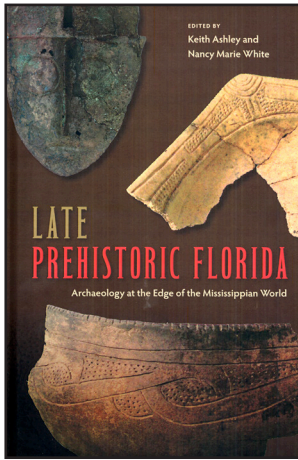
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Late Prehistoric Florida: Archaeology at the Edge of the Mississippian World

Keith Ashley and Nancy Marie White, Editors. 2012. University Press of Florida, xii+398pp., 52 figures, 22 tables, references. \$74.95 (Cloth).

Reviewed by Duane Esarey, Illinois State Archaeological Survey, Prairie Research Institute, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

From a Midwestern perspective, a volume examining the late prehistoric cultures of Florida in terms of the Mississippian world proceeds from an initially puzzling premise. For aficionados of Mississippian cultures, the edge of the

Mississippian world rather self-evidently falls just slightly inside of the northwestern border of Florida. Why examine the late prehistory of an entire state in terms of a unifying cultural tradition that it almost entirely falls outside of? Editors Keith Ashley and Nancy Marie White are, of course, well aware of this tension and put it to good service framing their volume's explorations of what they term the Mississippian Period as it relates to Florida. A focus on differences as well as similarities is highlighted in their passage "By lifting the veil of cultural uniformity frequently draped over Florida in Mississippian literature, we expose a diverse and vibrant collection of intensive maize farmers, part-time gardeners, hunter-gatherers, and coastal and riverine fishers and shellfish collectors" (p.2). In other words, if enquiry is largely channeled by the definition of what Florida late prehistoric societies are not (that being for the most part not Mississippian) then we stand to under-emphasize the heterogeneity that characterizes Florida societies and ties them to the often understated variation making up Mississippian societies of the broader Southeast.

That said, a major focus of this book, and the primary reason Midwestern archaeologists will be interested, is a treatment of evidence for interactions with Mississippian people to the north and northwest of Florida. Treatments of two southernmost peninsular regions (William H. Marquardt and Karen J. Walker on Southwest Florida and Robert S. Carr providing Southeast and South Central overviews) bracket two central Florida coastal chapters (Thomas E. Penders on the Indian River region and Jeffrey M. Mitchem on the Tampa Bay region). The remainder of the Florida regions covered here are restricted to the northern quarter of the state. Here we have chapters on Northeast Florida (Ashley), North-Central Florida (Vicki Rolland), Suwannee Valley (John E. Worth), the Tallahassee Hills (Rochelle A. Marrinan), the Apalachicola Valley (White, Jeffrey P. DuVernay, and Amber J. Yuellig), and the Western Florida Panhandle (Norma Harris).

These northern chapters in particular focus rather intently on the variable evidence for interactions with Mississippians. All treatments in the volume are couched comfortably within satisfying descriptions of material culture, chronological developments, and regional adaptations. This descriptive effort is, in fact, one of the most gratifying aspects of the volume, providing the reader with a sense of adequate geographic and temporal syntheses

while still indicating the parts of Florida where treatments are lacking (largely due to the distribution of programmatic or targeted research programs).

If there is a unifying theme to the volume's coverage of contact with Mississippian societies outside Florida, it is in the repeated assertions, assumptions, and actual demonstrations that these contacts were sustained on account of a very narrow range of exchanged resources. Foremost among the exported exchange items were whelk and conch shells. Indeed, this undercurrent is so strong that it is fair to say that were it not for the demand for these products to the north of Florida this volume would not exist at all. Even the southernmost Florida chapters—where the effort to show any evidence for actual Mississippian interaction begins to feel intent rather than substance driven—follow this theme, gazing steadfastly to the north and invoking the allure of marine shell. Yet, as Marquardt and Walker note in Southwest Florida, the movement of Florida marine shell north across the Midcontinent very probably has roots back well into the Archaic. Thus the unifying arc of the volume bends toward an exploration of this contact, with the premise being that Mississippian Period shell exchange is, in fact, different.

This premise is given voice in John E. Kelly's chapter illustrating a view of Florida from "the Mississippian World of Cahokia." Kelly uses the time-honored concept of temporal horizons to introduce a perfunctory list of contemporary pre-Mississippian societies; although in this he is hampered by our frequently inadequate contextual and chronological controls for these often-neglected baseline societies. Kelly explores the possibility of a connection between pre-Mississippian Southwest Illinois and Northeast Florida before turning to what he calls Pre-Classic Mississippian. Here an appeal to a broad network of emerging Mississippian centers across the middle continent keeps the focus from too overtly highlighting direct Cahokian connections to Florida. But in any case, Cahokia's prominence during the early Mississippian period would be difficult to gainsay. Kelly identifies a rapid and widespread increase in demand for marine shell across a spectrum of Southeastern Pre-Classic Mississippian centers as the quantitative driver for the connections seen in Late Prehistoric Florida. But after the end of the Pre-Classic at A.D. 1200, Kelly's discussion continues to suggest that Cahokia was a sustaining force of Mississippian interaction. The 12th century apogee of Cahokia is noted by Kelly, but is overshadowed by his reference to the site's 14th century final abandonment. Many readers will overlook this too-subtle glossing of the drastic waning of Cahokia's importance, and will mistake the ensuing detailed discussion of Cahokian interaction modes and Florida connections as applying full-strength to the 13th and 14th centuries as well. The rapid 13th century (not to mention 14th century) decline can be easily missed here. A host of post A.D. 1200 sites across the entire Southeast rightly dominate the Classic Mississippian discussion, but Cahokia keeps coming up, in spite of a hugely diminished role after its Stirling phase.

It is likely during the Classic Mississippian, with its proliferation of shell gorgets from the Appalachians to the eastern Plains, that the highest volume of marine shell is moving out of Florida. One has only to catalog the truly miniscule sample of marine shell gorgets (or for that matter, any other post A.D. 1200 exotic materials) at Cahokia

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to question the site's role in the Classic Mississippian discussion here. Since this latter stage of marine-shell exports to Mississippians accounts for a significant portion of the cultural interactions that drive this volume, one improvement would have been addition of another chapter acknowledging the foundational effects of early Cahokian-era marine-shell exchange (ca. A.D. 1000–1200), but more intently exploring the directions, loci, and exchange modes of post A.D. 1200 marine-shell use subsequent to the period of Cahokian dominance in the Mississippian world.