

FORGING

SOCIAL ARCHAEOLOGY, ETHNOHISTORY,

SOUTHEASTERN

AND FOLKLORE OF THE MISSISSIPPIAN

IDENTITIES

TO EARLY HISTORIC SOUTH



EDITED BY

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ARCHAEOLOGY / ANTHROPOLOGY / ETHNOHISTORY

Forging Southeastern Identities explores the many ways archaeologists and ethnohistorians define and trace the origins of Native Americans' collective social identity.

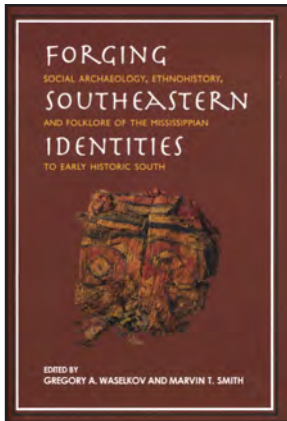
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Forging Southeastern Identities: Social Archaeology, Ethnohistory, and Folklore of the Mississippian to Early Historical South

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Reviewed by Alleen Betzenhauser, Illinois State Archaeological Survey, Prairie Research Institute, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Forging Southeastern Identities: Social Archaeology, Ethnohistory, and Folklore of the Mississippian to Early Historic South, edited by Gregory A. Waselkov and Marvin T. Smith, is a volume dedicated to Judith Knight and her contributions to archaeological publication. The editors focus on the topic of identity and, along with the contributors, demonstrate a variety of approaches employed to investigate Mississippian identities in the late pre-Columbian and early historic southeastern US. In their introduction, Waselkov and Smith provide a brief discussion of identity as approached in archaeology, relying on definitions put forth in relational sociology that point to identities as multiple, changing, and interrelated. The authors in the subsequent chapters engage with how identities were created, maintained, and/or changed to varying degrees. They rely on various lines of evidence, including a wide range of material culture, activities, and historic accounts in the search for southeastern identities.

Contributions from Marvin Smith (Chapter 5) and Adam King and Johann Sawyer (Chapter 1) focus on the production and distribution of engraved shell gorgets in the southeast during the 16th and 17th centuries and within burial contexts at Etowah, respectively. Penelope Drooker (Chapter 2) provides a thorough overview of textiles in the Mississippian and early historic periods and their role(s) in power and ritual throughout the southeast. Rebecca Saunders (Chapter 3) and Kandace Hollenbach (Chapter 8) hone in on diachronic changes to identities at single sites over time as evidenced through mound construction and potting practices at the Irene site on the coast of Georgia and changing foodways in South Carolina's Coastal Plain.

Two chapters review past research and new data from two sites featured prominently in historic accounts of the early contact and colonial periods. David Moore, Christopher Rodning, and Robin Beck (Chapter 6) review the past 14 years of archaeological research at Joara, a Mississippian principle town that Juan Pardo briefly converted into a colonial outpost (Fort San Juan) with accompanying town (Cuenca). Ian Brown and Vincas Steponaitis (Chapter 9) reassess the Grand Village of the Natchez (aka Fatherland site) based on recently rediscovered historic maps that indicate the presence of more mounds than originally thought and how they were usurped by the French-colonial military.

Chapters from John Worth (Chapter 7) and George Lankford (Chapter 10) are more methodological. Worth critiques phases as archaeological constructs, particularly when phases based on pottery styles are equated with historically documented ethnicities and

political identities. Lankford explores oral histories and narratives recorded during the historic period and how they can inform on past identities of Native Americans, African Americans, and Euro-Americans.

Three chapters stood out as particularly informative contributions that delve into different aspects of identity and weave together multiple lines of evidence to support their assertions. In the first chapter, King and Sawyer investigate the roles identities played in the reoccupation of Etowah around AD 1250. Shell gorgets in both local and non-local styles were concentrated within particular quadrants of the mound, but also interred together on a necklace worn by a woman interred in the mound. They posit that the burial of both local and non-local people and gorgets in Mound C was an integrative act that served to create a new community at Etowah.

In chapter 3, Rebecca Saunders indicates that the changes to the layout and pottery evident at the Irene site on the southeast coast of Georgia around AD 1300 exemplify revitalization. She describes the final construction episode of the platform mound that resulted in a drastic change in shape and size as “a provocative act” that “obliterated characteristics that made it a symbol of power” (p. 54). Simultaneously, there were significant changes in mortuary practices, diet, marital patterns, and pottery production. In particular, the changes to pottery involved the rejection of the style that was produced during the previous 150 years and the resurgence of complicated stamped iconography using a method that had not been employed for 2,000 years. She considers these “created traditions” (p. 83) as revitalized social identities rooted in the past.

Robbie Ethridge describes the Mississippian infrastructure Soto, Luna, and Pardo encountered and exploited during their expeditions into the interior southeast in Chapter 4. She paints a picture of the Mississippian southeast as a mosaic in which people and politics were interconnected through trails, roads, streams, guides, translators, and porters, often across cultural and linguistic boundaries. She indicates that competition and hostility alongside cooperation “served as binding agents” between polities.

Waselkov and Smith’s volume would have benefitted from a concluding chapter to draw together the common themes and summarize the various insights from each of the chapters. Some contributions only tangentially addressed identity while others were more explicit. However, the editors wisely chose to explore identity, a hot topic in contemporary archaeological research and other related fields. Also of interest is the temporal frame that bridges the late Mississippian and early historic periods, a contested time when dramatic changes occurred including long-term historical changes associated with the arrival of Europeans and their expeditions through indigenous territories. Archaeologists and historians interested in the southeastern US and the construction of identities during contested times will find this volume valuable.