

# Introduction

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*Methods, Mounds, and Missions: New Contributions to Florida Archaeology* consists of 15 essays that provide innovative ways of looking at extant and legacy data, and some compelling new data, about Florida's pre-Columbian and historic-period past. The volume's contributions are diverse in scale, topic, time, and regional focus, illuminating the late Archaic through Historic periods and covering much of the Florida panhandle and peninsula, with forays into the larger Southeast and circum-Caribbean area. This diversity reflects the breadth and scope of Jerald T. Milanich's diverse research interests. Yet the essays are also linked by common threads of improving upon old methods and culture histories, or providing new descriptions with new data, methods, and/or theories, building upon the cultural historical and early processual foundations of the discipline.

Modern Florida archaeology reflects contemporary archaeologies found throughout the United States in its dependence on the classifications of material objects to characterize archaeological cultures, and on relative and absolute chronologies to place them in temporal frameworks. It is largely from these basic building blocks, initially formulated in the mid-twentieth century, that Florida archaeologists were able to move beyond classification and description by implementing more processual approaches in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

In the early processual days of late twentieth-century Florida archaeology, the most widely read synthetic works included *Florida Archaeology* (Milanich and Fairbanks 1980) and later *Archaeology of Precolumbian Florida* (Milanich 1994). These volumes exemplify and reflect the transition all archaeologists were making at the time to elevate the then-dominant cultural historical approach of Florida archaeology to the more explanatory or processual approaches. This is especially evident in Milanich's big-picture

approach to archaeological research (Milanich et al. 1984: 197–199), which he describes as “old-fashioned culture history with a few sparkling dew drops of process” (see Weisman, this volume). This view stands in contrast to current big-picture approaches involving “grand challenges” (e.g., Kintigh et al. 2014), big histories (Robb and Pauketat 2013), macroevolutionary theory (Bettinger 2009), and Big Data (e.g., Anderson 2018; Anderson et al. 2015). Milanich’s “dew drops” illuminated the interconnected processes that produced the archaeological record.

During this time, those culture-historic foundations and prefatory typologies that enabled the New Archaeology produced important information on the relationships of cultures to environmental and social histories. But increasingly complex questions involving hierarchical and heterarchical relationships between settlements and societies required increasingly accurate artifact and settlement typologies and increasingly accurate absolute chronologies to set culture boundaries for comparison. Many issues and procedures that are commonplace today were rare or unthinkable then. For example, using clay sourcing to study trade relationships had not been developed for most Florida culture areas; not a single house type for any site, let alone for any pre-Columbian Florida culture, had been identified; and certainly reconstructions of the past environments that fostered Florida cultures were mostly guesswork to early processual or explanatory archaeologists. Today, archaeologists continue to update the established typologies and are developing new archaeological types to aid their interpretations of the agencies, histories, and meanings behind archaeological sites and cultures in Florida.

This is to say that cultural historic classification as part of archaeology is far from over, particularly in Florida, where many traditional typologies for pottery, lithics, other material cultures, and regional settlement patterns are still lacking in basic understanding and clarity. As such, much explanatory effort of the last few decades has not been spent in explaining as much as it has in fixing past classifications and developing new typologies and cultural materials traits. These fixes are crucial, and must be made before more sophisticated and nuanced interpretations can be proffered. New technologies have produced invaluable new data—data that inform the deeper questions—that previous archaeologists lacked; consideration of new theories has resulted in the identification of additional artifacts and ecofacts requiring order and classification for their use in interpretations.

Few archaeologists working in Florida would today call themselves processualists, at least not exclusively so, as newer approaches in interpretation linking material data to historical events, individual agency, and ritual meaning have gained favor in the discipline. But these newer approaches are

not disengaged from the processualist goal of placing material culture into the larger setting of environmental and social contexts, or from the basic cultural-history need to use and refine the classificatory typologies, cultures, and timelines first established in the mid-century. Description, placement in time, determination of processes, and the finding of meaning and the historical accounting of past events in the pre-Columbian past are still part and parcel of today's Florida archaeology.

All the chapters in this volume are linked by these varied approaches—using basic cultural historical data to connect particular sites and materials to larger processes of environmental and/or social interactions with the goal of interpreting meanings and history. Some contributors pay homage to Mila-nich's big-picture approach. Some chapters are strictly descriptive (Fradkin, Mitchem, Smith, Blakney-Bailey, Knight and Worth), whereas others (most of the rest) are inferential. The outcome is the updating and improvement of the state's culture history; the addition of new markers (e.g., clay sources, non-chert lithic tools) of culture history previously underexplored; and the development and use of these new and improved tools to answer broader and larger explanatory questions. In this volume, many of the chapters are written under the same constraints that have plagued earlier archaeologists who were dependent on cultural histories as the foundations for their interpretive problems. That is, as the reader may note, many identify a need to develop, improve, or refine basic culture history before explanatory archaeology can proceed.

## **VOLUME FORMAT**

As mentioned, the chapters in this volume are diverse in topic, time period, and regional focus, with 10 relating to pre-Columbian topics, although ethnohistory is sometimes invoked, and five devoted to the historic period. The essays are grouped into three categories on the basis of particular thematic foci. The pre-Columbian chapters are partitioned into Mounds and Middens and Methods and Material Analyses themes. One historic period chapter (Smith's) could be included in this second group, but it is enhanced by information from other chapters in the third theme, Spanish Missions and Seminole Settlements.

### **Part I: Mounds and Middens**

These chapters are united by a focus on mounds and middens, or other architectural manifestations of human activity and behavior. The first four provide reappraisals of aspects of existing culture histories, sometimes with

new data or different perspectives. The last two go beyond critiques of past cultural histories and processual models and offer updated models and approaches for future use.

The first chapter is by Brent R. Weisman, who revisits Jerald Milanich's 1978 Cades Pond Occupational Nexus Model of settlement patterning in north-central Florida in light of new data from additional archaeological sites. In refining ideas about Cades Pond mound-village complexes, Weisman places the model in historical perspective as an early expression of processual influence on Florida archaeology, which included an effort to define cultures and culture boundaries by more than pottery and lithic types. The various social units of the Cades Pond culture were originally unified by a common reliance on aquatic subsistence resources as well as by presumed similarities in pottery. This has not held up well under additional scrutiny. Some sites are situated close to ponds, but the wetland area was actually too limited to support intensive exploitation. Weisman uses a more historical processual approach to suggest that Cades Pond societies valued proximity to ponds because they were important to the ritual landscape.

Similar complaints about the limits of basic culture history are presented by Michael Russo in chapter 2. He suggests that the mid-century classification of large shell middens as villages (Willey 1949) has been a major hindrance to understanding the meaning of coastal Woodland ring middens. Russo provides a summary of Woodland ring middens (500 BC–AD 1000) in northwest Florida and tests Milanich's (1994: 145) hypothesis that coastal ring middens were year-round villages. Like other authors in this volume, Russo reappraises the old views in the light of ethnographic analogues and offers a compelling argument in favor of a model of village permanence despite the lack of complete house footprints. He proposes new ways to identify houses and their middens and suggests that the shape of ring middens developed from seasonal occupations, social organization, and both ritual and quotidian use of the middens themselves. These considerations may extend beyond Florida Woodland and prove useful strategies for investigating households in other regions and times.

There are many explanatory and interpretive models of Mississippian complexity (e.g., Anderson 1994; Cobb 2003; Pauketat 1997). In chapter 3, the late Claudine Payne (d. 2013) presents a model for the Lake Jackson polity located in north Florida near Tallahassee. Borrowing from regional models of Mississippian political processes, Payne suggests that Lake Jackson peoples migrated from the west and settled at Lake Jackson in a nearly vacant landscape in the late 1100s (also see Ashley, this volume, who discusses movement of peoples into vacant spaces). Clement weather and fertile

lands provided an agricultural bonanza and the settlement location facilitated trade between south Florida and the interior Southeast. Through the manipulation of trade, labor, ideology, and power (as evidenced in exotic goods), the polity enjoyed great success, only to be undermined in the 1400s when the favorable climate changed and distant sources of ritual goods that had supported chiefly authority dissipated.

While cultural historians were largely satisfied with simply cataloguing (e.g., Binford 1962), one of the hallmarks of the New or Processual Archaeology was the use of the ethnohistoric record to animate the archaeological record. In chapter 4, Karl T. Steinen discusses the tenets of ethnographic analogy and believes its use is appropriate in interpreting the Fort Center Mound/Pond Complex (AD 200–800) in the Lake Okeechobee basin. Using William Sears's (1982) conception of the site, Steinen places the mortuary/mound complex into the three-layer world of the Southeastern Indian cosmos (Hudson 1976) and uses elements of the Cherokee Earth Diver myth (Mooney 1992) to explain the construction sequence at the site. Aspects of mound stratigraphy, the placement of hundreds of burials on a post platform above a body of water, and the abandonment of ceremonialism at the site following a fire can all be understood in the framework of the myth.

Finally, two chapters, by Ashley on the coastal Grand Ring Site in the lower St. Johns basin, and by Kohler on mounds and monuments in the Southeast, go beyond critiques of past cultural histories and processual models. Their chapters offer models of the appropriation of the past at different relationships and scales. Both find that the meaning of mounds developed out of the social trajectories of the past, even if, as in Ashley's case, the past must be made familiar.

In chapter 5, Keith Ashley suggests that St. Johns II people made a large shell ring “to connect to an ancient shell ring building tradition as a way of laying ancestral claim to a foreign island.” The site is the Grand Shell Ring (8DU1) on Big Talbot Island, possibly the only Atlantic coastal shell ring postdating the Archaic period. Big Talbot was uninhabited when St. Johns II peoples constructed their shell ring and associated sand burial mound. He further argues that throughout its history, the Grand site served as a sacred space that likely held periodic social gatherings of varying sizes, as community members assembled to perform rituals and bury their dead. Through ritualized acts, everyday garbage and feasting debris were rendered appropriate materials for the reanimation of a past shell ring–building tradition that legitimized the St. Johns II presence on the island. The case of the Grand site is similar to the way the past is appropriated to legitimize power and authority during mission times (Saunders, this volume).