

## BOOK REVIEWS

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*Cemochechobee: Archaeology of a Mississippian Ceremonial Center on the Chattahoochee River*, by Frank T. Schnell, Vernon J. Knight, Jr., and Gail S. Schnell. Gainesville: The University Presses of Florida, 1982. xiii and 290 pp., illus., biblio., index, appendixes. (cloth). \$18.00.

This title is the third of the *Ripley P. Bullen Monographs in Anthropology and History*, a young publication series that is rapidly gaining recognition as one of the finest dealing with Southeastern archaeology. The book describes the results of excavations that took place in 1977 and 1978 at the Cemochechobee site in western Georgia. This site once covered some 10 ha. on the east bank of the Chattahoochee River, and consisted of a central mound precinct (the "Nuclear Zone") surrounded by a large, albeit sparsely settled, village area. When the archaeological investigations began, a large fraction of the village area had already been destroyed by dam construction, and the mound precinct was rapidly washing into the river. Indeed, it was to mitigate the adverse effect of the latter that federal agencies had decided to fund the salvage effort in the first place. The resulting fieldwork was extensive, and understandably focused on the features most threatened by erosion. Two mounds were almost completely excavated, and a third was extensively tested. Relatively little attention was devoted to the adjoining village. Hence, the book is largely concerned with the content and history of the site's civic-ceremonial core.

This is at one level a conventional site report, with descriptive sections on the site and its environmental setting, stratigraphy, features, artifacts, and a concluding chapter which defines the local "Rood phase" and compares it to other Mississippian manifestations. Also included are appendices describing the radiocarbon dates, as well as the faunal, floral, and human skeletal remains which were unearthed. The descriptive sections are well written and nicely illustrated; and for this reason alone the book can be considered a solid

contribution to Southeastern archaeology. Yet the importance of this monograph goes far beyond its obvious value as a site report, for woven into its pages is one of the most erudite and stimulating discussions of Mississippian ceremonialism to appear in recent years.

The authors argue that the mounds at Cemochechobee, and at Mississippian sites in general, should not be viewed merely as architectural devices—the simple result of a utilitarian desire to build raised platforms. Rather, they can only be understood as the byproducts of community *rituals*, which were highly charged with symbolic meaning. Drawing heavily on ethnographic evidence from the Southeastern U.S., as well as archaeological data from Cemochechobee itself, the authors attempt to reconstruct the nature of the rituals that produced the mounds. Many of their interpretations are speculative, but on the whole their argument is plausible, because it accounts for many observable details of mound construction that would otherwise be regarded as uninteresting or inexplicable. At the very least, their analysis clearly demonstrates the value of studying archaeological remains from a symbolic perspective, and is likely to inspire future research along the same lines.

One other aspect of the book that merits special mention is the stratigraphic analysis of the ceramics. The available radiocarbon dates seem to indicate that the excavated deposits spanned some 400–500 years, between about A.D. 900 and 1400. Yet despite this considerable time depth, the authors conclude that pottery at the site shows very little change from the earliest deposits to the latest. If so, then Cemochechobee is a highly unusual case, because the rate of stylistic change in other regions during the Mississippian period has generally permitted the recognition of distinct ceramic phases lasting 200 years or less.

It should also be noted that a typographical error occurs in the geometric equation for estimating mound volumes that is presented on page 29. The fourth term of this equation should actually read “.667 ( $b \times c \times d$ ).”

Quibbling aside, *Cemochechobee* is a first-rate piece of scholarship that should be read by regional specialists and anyone interested in the growing field of “symbolic” or “cognitive” archaeology. This study is not only informative, but also provocative in the best sense of the term.

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*Tracking Ancient Hunters: Prehistoric Archaeology in Saskatchewan*, edited by Henry T. Epp and Ian Dyck. Regina: Saskatchewan Archaeological Society, 1983. xiii + 260 pp., illus., biblio. \$21.95 (soft cover).

The publication of this book marks a “coming of age” in Saskatchewan archaeology. Previously, overviews of the region have been confined, for the