

by July, 1989. My only criticism, though, is aimed at the editorial and typographical errors which abound in this volume; most are annoying, but some defy comprehension. In this regard, I would have gladly waited for publication until August, 1989! Nonetheless, the volume is worthwhile and, if the Council of Virginia Archaeologists and the Archeological Society of Virginia can pull off the planned symposium for subsequent cultural periods and publish them in similar fashion, Virginia will soon have a comprehensive baseline study which will be the envy of every other Middle Atlantic state.

The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex: Artifacts and Analysis. Patricia Galloway, editor. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1989. xviii + 389 pages, figures, tables, references, index. \$50.00 (cloth).

Reviewed by Vincas P. Steponaitis
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Over the years, few aspects of Mississippian culture have stimulated as much interest as the craft items and symbols that comprise the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, or "Southern Cult." This was the subject of a 1984 conference--convened by L.B. Jones at the Cottonlandia Museum in Greenwood, Mississippi--whose proceedings were ultimately collected in this book. Apart from some brief introductory material, the book contains 17 substantive papers arranged in three major sections; it also contains the catalog of an artifact exhibition that was held concurrently with the conference.

The first section, "Definitions," consists of papers by Jon Muller and David Brose. Correctly, both authors stress the great regional and temporal diversity among manifestations of the Complex, and argue that it should not be treated as a unitary phenomenon.

The second section, "Regional

Manifestations," includes 10 papers, each of which describes and interprets the material from a single geographical area. Dan and Phyllis Morse briefly discuss northeast Arkansas and southeast Missouri; Thomas Emerson interprets some symbols from the American Bottom; Lawrence Conrad describes the ritual architecture and artifacts in the central Illinois Valley; Dennis Peterson reviews the history of research at Spiro, Oklahoma; Robert Neuman considers a couple of artifacts from Nebraska; Read Stowe describes the Mississippian complexes in the Mobile-Pensacola region; Lewis Larson discusses the spectacular mortuary complex from Etowah, Georgia; Marvin Smith outlines sixteenth and seventeenth century developments in the southern Appalachians; Fred Cook and Charles Pearson review the meager material from the Georgia coast; and, finally, Randolph Widmer discusses the ceremonial artifacts from south Florida and states that this area lacks human-animal composites--a rather puzzling assertion, given that the Key Marco "cat," perhaps the most famous artifact ever found in this area, is quite obviously human from the waist down. Although the papers vary greatly in detail, scope, and subject matter, they do provide a good overview of late prehistoric iconography and ceremonial artifacts in the Southeast and Midwest.

The third section, "Interpretations," contains some of the most interesting contributions in the collection. James Brown looks at the broader stylistic connections of the engraved shells from Spiro, and argues that artifacts of the Braden "school" were not made locally. Vernon Knight speculates on the nature of animal symbolism, and suggests that the fantastic creatures so vividly depicted in Mississippian art played a key role in helping to consolidate the power of elites. John Strong, paying sadly little heed to historical and stylistic distinctions, discusses an arbitrary selection of Mississippian

bird depictions and concludes that all do not look the same. Robert Hall attempts to reconstruct the meanings behind certain Mississippian symbols by looking for connections with ethnographic myths; some of the links--such as that between the "long-nosed god" and the mythic hero Red Horn--seem well-founded, while others are less so. Finally, Malcolm Webb advances the plausible notion that the similarities between Mississippian and Mexican art stem not from direct contact, but from an ancient substrate of shared ideology and ritual.

The exhibition catalog is the weakest part of the book. The photographs are small (about the size of postage stamps) and often so muddied that one cannot see the critical features of the objects depicted. The vagueness (not to mention occasional inaccuracy) of the accompanying descriptions further limits this section's utility.

In sum, the book presents a fair sampling of current thought on the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex in its many forms. As such, it is a useful and timely contribution.

Prehistoric Cultures of the Delmarva Peninsula. Jay F. Custer. University of Delaware Press, Newark, Delaware, 1989. 446 pages, figures, tables, references, appendices, index. \$57.50 (cloth).

Reviewed by L. Daniel Mouer
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Prehistoric Cultures of the Delmarva Peninsula is a considerably expanded and revised version of Dr. Jay F. Custer's (1984) earlier book, *Delaware Prehistoric Archaeology: An Ecological Approach*, although the earlier book contains more detailed descriptions of some of the Delaware data. The new book offers additional data from the "Marva" portions of the Delmarva (the peninsula which includes the state of Delaware, and portions of Maryland and Virginia on the "eastern

shore" of Chesapeake Bay). There is also quite a bit of new information from Delaware sites, particularly from a number of surveys, tests, and excavations undertaken in recent years, primarily under the sponsorship of the Delaware Department of Transportation. Those familiar with Custer's earlier work will probably experience a disconcerting alternation between the sensations of new discoveries and frequent bouts of *deja vu*. For those who are just becoming familiar with the archaeology of Delmarva, this is the only game in town.

And what a game it is! The bibliography alone is worth the price of admission. This is arguably the most comprehensive -- certainly the most timely -- review now available for the prehistory of any portion of the Middle Atlantic region. Within Custer's focus and perspective, his grasp and use of the literature is phenomenal. This book is packed with information and will probably remain a major reference work for students of Middle Atlantic prehistory for many years to come, unless, of course, Custer himself consigns the work to obsolescence with yet another larger and more comprehensive volume five years from now. The book is only slightly flawed by a few editorial or production problems such as typos, irritating line skips between paragraphs, and one or two references to non-existent artifacts in figures.

The major strengths and weaknesses of this volume come from Custer's highly individualistic -- some might say idiosyncratic -- perspective on archaeology. His profound interest in the relationships between man and environment permeate the work. To Custer, the prehistory of the Delmarva is largely told by charting post-Pleistocene climatic, hydrologic, and geomorphologic change and finding corresponding changes in the record of human existence in the area. The book is organized chronologically with an introduction followed by chapters on the Paleoindian, Archaic, Woodland I, Woodland II, and Contact periods.