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"An excellent volume that demonstrates a more explicit, nuanced, and careful approach to interpreting the social lives of these past communities. An indispensable resource."

—**PAUL D. WELCH**, author of *Archaeology at Shiloh Indian Mounds, 1899–1999*

"Provides much-needed updated perspectives on the origins of the Mississippian archaeological cultural phenomenon in the Southeast. The contributions to the volume present new information including the results of recent fieldwork and investigations of legacy collections considered within contemporary interpretive frameworks that emphasize agency, social lives, and historical contingency."

—**SISSEL SCHROEDER**, University of Wisconsin–Madison

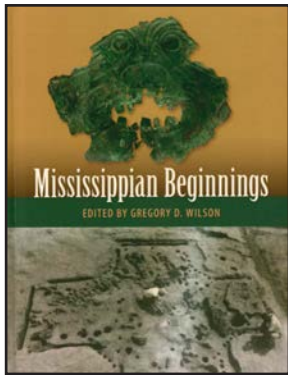
USING FRESH EVIDENCE and nontraditional ideas, the contributing authors of *Mississippian Beginnings* reconsider the origins of the Mississippian culture of the North American Midwest and Southeast (A.D. 1000–1600). Challenging the decades-old opinion that this culture evolved similarly across isolated Woodland populations, they discuss signs of migrations, missionization, pilgrimages, violent conflicts, long-distance exchange, and other far-flung entanglements that now appear to have shaped the early Mississippian past.

Presenting recent fieldwork from a wide array of sites including Cahokia and the American Bottom, archival studies, and new investigations of legacy collections, the contributors interpret results through contemporary perspectives that emphasize agency and historical contingency. They track the various ways disparate cultures across a sizeable swath of the continent experienced Mississippianization and came to share similar architecture, pottery, subsistence strategies, sociopolitical organization, iconography, and religion. Together, these essays provide the most comprehensive examination of early Mississippian culture in over thirty years.

GREGORY D. WILSON, associate professor of anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, is the author of *The Archaeology of Everyday Life at Early Moundville*.

A volume in the Florida Museum of Natural History: Ripley P. Bullen Series

Cover: top, frontal-facing feline copper plate, lower burial deposit, Mound B, Hollywood, (Acc. #135227) Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution; bottom, excavation photo of a Cahokian-style cruciform structure from the early twelfth-century Eveland site in the Central Illinois River Valley (courtesy of the Illinois State Museum).



Mississippian Beginnings

Gregory D. Wilson, editor. Florida Museum of Natural History: Ripley P. Bullen Series, [University of Florida Press](#). 2017. vi–322 pp., 55 figures, 13 tables, references. \$89.95 (hardcover).

Reviewed by Meghan E. Buchanan, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, Auburn University, Alabama.

Mississippian Beginnings, edited by Gregory D. Wilson, provides a much-needed follow up to a volume that most archaeologists studying Mississippian Period societies undoubtedly have on their bookshelves: *The Mississippian Emergence* (Smith 1990). More than a mere update, *Mississippian Beginnings* unpacks some of the theoretical deficits present in *The Mississippian Emergence*, includes parts of the Mississippian world left out of the 1990 volume, and orients the reader within current methodological and theoretical trends present in the greater Midwest and Southeastern US. Like *The Mississippian Emergence*, *Mississippian Beginnings* should be required reading for Mississippian scholars and for anybody interested in the archaeologies of culture contact, entanglement, and social transformation. Most importantly, this volume argues that the spread of Mississippian (religion, political/social/economic organization) was uneven, messy, complicated, and defies overly simplistic attempts at modeling change.

The volume begins with an excellent overview by Wilson and Lynne P. Sullivan (Ch. 1) who review previous research on the beginnings of the Mississippian Period and provide a snapshot of the themes and theories driving the necessity for revisiting Mississippian origins. Amber M. VanDerwarker, Dana N. Bardolph, and C. Margaret Scarry (Ch. 2) put the nail in the coffin of maize supremacy as the driving force behind the origins of Mississippian societies. Rather than a simple correlation between maize intensification and increasing political complexity, VanDerwarker, Bardolph, and Scarry show that there were complex histories of maize intensification intertwined with starchy seed cultivation and local social and political histories. The authors of this chapter provide case studies from the American Bottom, Illinois River valley, central and lower Mississippi River valleys, Black Warrior valley, and northern Georgia. One early chapter in the volume focuses on exclusively Cahokia and the American Bottom. Alleen Betzenhauser's chapter (Ch. 3) on the processes of urbanization associated with the formation of the Cahokian community and polity underscores the importance of large regional datasets and the analysis of social and political organization at multiple scales.

In two of the regional case studies, part of the processes of becoming Mississippian appear to have involved direct contacts between local Late Woodland societies and Mississippian missionaries/emissaries/immigrants traveling to distance places. Wilson, Colleen M. Delaney, and Phillip G. Millhouse's chapter (Ch. 4) explores culture contact and change in Cahokia's northern hinterlands. The case studies from the Illinois and Apple River valleys provide convincing evidence of both Cahokian immigrants and the emulation of Cahokian materials by local populations. Robert A. Cook's chapter (Ch. 5) draws on

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multiple lines of evidence (biodistance, strontium isotopes, radiocarbon dates, material analyses) to argue that Fort Ancient culture in the Miami River valley was kick-started by the presence of Mississippian migrants. Cook's chapter deviates from much of the volume emphasis on historicization by devoting part of his attention to the idea that the Miami River valley formed a Mississippian environmental niche, harkening back to evolutionary and environmentally deterministic themes from the earlier *Mississippian Emergence* volume and other studies on Mississippian settlement patterns. However, his environmental data on drought conditions in the Midwest merit further attention and analysis particularly with the rich archaeological and bioarchaeological data mustered throughout the chapter.

In contrast to direct-contact scenarios, other case studies in *Becoming Mississippian* emphasize local populations emplacing certain Mississippian practices and cosmological referents into local daily and ritual practices. Amanda Regnier's chapter (Ch. 6) on becoming Caddo and Mississippian reminds readers that Mississippian lifeways and ideologies were not simply overwritten onto local traditions. Drawing on assemblages and sites excavated under diverse conditions, Regnier argues that there was a new religious movement afoot in the Caddo region before Mississippian objects, ideas, and people (possibly) appeared. Edmond A. Boudreaux III (Ch. 7) argues that the establishment of the Mississippian Town Creek community involved public ceremonies (with Mississippian cosmological underpinnings) aimed at integrating household groups into the newly formed community; yet these household groups continued making earlier style, round houses, architecturally distinct from early, square-shaped Mississippian public buildings. The Hollywood site, discussed by Adam King, Christopher L. Thornock, and Keith Stephenson (Ch. 8), contains a mounded mortuary tableau that the authors argue links together local and Mississippian objects (from throughout the southeast) in order to (re)create the Mississippian cosmos as part of public ritual. The authors suggest that the linking of local and foreign objects, "created a new way of doing things...enshrined in the landscape of Hollywood and the middle Savannah River valley" (pg. 254). Jeffrey P. Du Vernay and Nancy Marie White (Ch. 9) see the presence of pottery with Late Woodland check stamping on Mississippian vessel forms and the presence of platform mound construction during the Fort Walton Period as part of the Mississippianization of the Apalachicola-Lower Chattahoochee River valley.

A major strength of this volume is the inclusion of regions that have typically been seen as existing on the fringes or peripheries of the classic Middle Mississippian world. Chapters by Cook (Ch. 5) Regnier (Ch. 6), Boudreaux III (Ch. 7), King, Thornock, and Stephenson (Ch. 8), and Du Vernay and White (Ch. 9) explore the diverse historical processes and entanglements between Late Woodland peoples and Mississippian peoples and beliefs. However, this volume's strength of expanding the Mississippian world also points to a geographical weakness. Aside from VanDerwarker, Bardolph, and Scarry's maize case studies (Ch. 2), Betzenhauser's exploration of Cahokian urbanization (Ch. 3), and Wilson, Delaney, and Millhouse's chapter (Ch. 3) on parts of the upper Midwest, we are missing views on the Mississippianization of major portions

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of the Mississippian world. Places like the central and lower Mississippi River valleys, the Moundville region, and the Nashville basin (for example) receive few mentions despite the large Mississippian populations present in these regions.

The volume concludes with a chapter from David G. Anderson (Ch. 10). Anderson's chapter provides one of the best syntheses on the directions of Mississippian archaeology to date. He highlights the value of large-scale, regional datasets, the utility of re-analyzing legacy (Works Progress Administration, Bureau of American Ethnology) and cultural resource management derived collections, and the importance of asking new questions within the frameworks of new theoretical orientations. *Mississippian Beginnings* should help to put to rest some of the lingering theoretical canards of Mississippian archaeology; Mississippian societies were not simply adaptations to floodplain environments and unilineal, evolutionary political typologies are poor explanatory devices for past complexities. This volume helps to unpack the "black boxes" of Mississippianization. The term Mississippianization has been used to paint a broad picture, often serving as an alternate term for "change" without delving into how or why change occurred. The chapters in *Mississippian Beginnings* exemplify the multiple kinds of processes behind the many Mississippianizations that took place across the pre-Contact Midwest and Southeastern US. I hope that volumes like *Mississippian Beginnings* will inspire other archaeologists to revisit the topics present in other formative volumes with new theories, questions, data, and methods.

References Cited

Smith, Bruce D., Ed. (1990) *The Mississippian Emergence*. The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.