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Jerald T. Milanich, Florida Indians and the Invasion from Europe

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Florida Indians and the Invasion from Europe. By Jerald T. Milanich. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995. xix + 289 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, references, index. \$29.95 cloth.)

When the first Europeans reached the shores of present-day Florida in the early sixteenth century, they encountered hundreds of thousands of native peoples whose ancestors had resided in these lands for over ten thousand years. Yet over the course of the next two-and-a-half centuries, a combination of imported European diseases, warfare, enforced cultural change, and enslavement completely eradicated these people and their cultures. As author Jerald Milanich notes, "the Spanish conquest of Florida proved catastrophic for the native groups" (p. xiv).

Milanich demonstrates that the native cultures occupying Florida at the time of contact were as varied as their environment. For example, Spanish explorers found great temple mound complexes, towns, and canals constructed in southwest coastal Florida by the Calusa people, whose culture was supported not by agriculture but by the collection of shellfish in the rich marine estuary of today's Charlotte Harbor. The Hernando de Soto *entrada* discovered towns in Apalache of several thousand inhabitants along Florida's coastal uplands panhandle that subsisted on maize agriculture. Hundreds of small Timucuan villages subsisting on farming and hunting and gathering were

observed along the St. John River in northeastern Florida by early French and Spanish colonists, while small groups of hunting and gathering peoples lived in the more marginal areas of the Florida Keys and the Everglades in south Florida's subtropical environment.

Unlike in the western and southwestern United States, where a tangible legacy of standing structures, living populations, and original cultures remains, scholars studying the historic native peoples of Florida encountered by colonial Europeans have at their disposal only the incomplete physical evidence of earth and shell mounds, buried architectural remains and artifacts, and historical documents. In spite of the lack of structural remains, Milanich correctly points out that Florida was an area of intensive Spanish colonization, for "as many as 140 mission churches were established in La Florida in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, a number that dwarfs the double handful of California missions that followed in the next century and which are so well known today" (pp. 7-8).

With such fragmentary evidence, the search for the colonial past in Florida has evolved into a multidisciplinary endeavor. Historical and laboratory research routinely precedes field investigation of historical sites in Florida in order to identify site locations, research goals, and artifacts and features likely to be encountered. The most interesting aspect of this volume is the author's synthesis of the history and archaeology of colonial Florida. He includes information on the latest archaeological and historical discoveries, such as the location of sites of lost Florida missions, the impact of Spanish trade on native groups, and that all-time favorite endeavor, tracing the route of the De Soto expedition. All this is placed within the context of individual chapters on the voyages and expeditions to Florida, early failed colonization efforts, French and Spanish conflicts and successful colonization at St. Augustine, the missionization period, and the final destruction of Spanish Florida and the native people under its dominion by the British.

Jerald Milanich's book is an excellent overview of colonial Florida, and should be of interest to all students of the period. Based on the latest historical scholarship, as well as recent archaeological finds, *Florida Indians and the Invasion from Europe* offers a rich understanding of the culture and people of Spanish Florida. Scholars interested in Florida should note that in 1994 Milanich published an equally fine volume on the prehistoric cultures of Florida, also from the University of Florida Press.

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