

## Chapter 5. NORTH FLORIDA, 2500 B.P.-A.D. 1700

During the post-Archaic period the northern portion of peninsular Florida can be divided into two regions, north and north-central Florida. In each region ceramic assemblages have been used to define culture sequences. Following the Deptford culture (2500 B.P.-200), poorly represented in both regions, the two sequences of ceramic assemblages are different enough to allow recognition of separate, but related regional cultures. In north Florida these post-Deptford cultures are McKeithen Weeden Island (A.D. 200-700); a post-McKeithen Weeden Island assemblage tentatively called Indian Pond which appears to last into the late prehistoric or early historic period (A.D. 700 to ca. 1585); and a mission period assemblage associated with the Leon-Jefferson ceramic complex (ca. A.D. 1585 to ca. 1700). No Mississippian culture, such as Fort Walton, is present in north Florida.

At the time of European contact in the sixteenth century, Timucuan-speaking peoples organized into chiefdoms lived in north and north-central Florida. But unlike contemporary chiefdoms in northwest Florida and much of the Southeast United States, the late prehistoric societies in northern Florida were not associated with Mississippian archaeological cultures. The evolutionary trajectories of the two northern Florida regions were not the same as that present among Mississippian peoples, although the northern Florida societies did share some Mississippian traits with their southeastern U.S. neighbors. The anthropological significance of north and north-central Florida derives in part from this uniqueness. By studying exceptions to the rule (i.e., the evolution of non-Mississippian archaeological cultures in northern Florida versus the development of Mississippian societies elsewhere), we have the potential to better understand and explain the appearance, nature, and evolution of the Mississippian culture pattern.

### The Setting

North Florida lies east of the Aucilla River (and northwest Florida), north of the Santa Fe River, and west of the St. Johns River drainage. The latter eastern boundary is placed along an arbitrary north-south line drawn from Macclenny down to Lake Santa Fe, about halfway between Lake City and the St. Johns River (Milanich and Fairbanks 1980:22, 32-33; Milanich et al. 1984:26-27). Lower, wetter topography is found both on the eastern side of north Florida (e.g., in the Osceola National Forest and portions of Baker, Union, and Bradford counties) as well as on the southwestern side of the region (San Pedro Bay in Lafayette and Taylor counties).

The central area of the eastern portion of this region (east of the Suwannee River) is part of the Middle Florida Hammock Belt, a zone characterized by hardwood forests mixed with pines. These higher, hammock lands were located in a north-south band between Lake City and Live Oak. Soils tend to be loamy and reasonably good for agriculture. Similar forests are found in the western portion of the region (west of the Suwannee River) across northern Madison County.

A number of modest streams drain these highland forests, flowing eventually into the Suwannee or Aucilla rivers and their tributaries. Numerous lakes, ponds, and other wetlands dot the landscape, and probably were more extensive in the past than they are today.

Within the hammock areas the resultant pattern is a mosaic of forests and wetland habitats cross-cut by rivers and streams. Such a mosaic of resources presented aboriginal peoples with many potential village locations. The lower, wetter forested areas were less suitable, but still offered resources and attracted aboriginal settlement, especially within the pockets of mesic forest adjacent to water sources. An overview of the north Florida environment can be found in Milanich et al. (1984:29-35).

Deptford (2500 B.P.-A.D. 200)

Almost nothing is known about Deptford sites in north Florida. The only site with a Deptford component that has been studied is the McKeithen site (8CO17) (Milanich et al. 1984:62). Most likely, Deptford in north Florida is very similar to Deptford in north-central Florida, but that remains to be proven.

#### McKeithen Weeden Island, An Early Weeden Island Period Culture (A.D. 200-700)

McKeithen Weeden Island was first described as a result of the Florida Museum of Natural History's research in north Florida in the late 1970s (Milanich et al. 1984). Prior to that time almost no archaeological work had been done in north Florida, excepting small surveys and tests at riverine sites.

Material culture. The ceramic assemblage of the McKeithen Weeden Island culture is early Weeden Island, as originally defined in the 1940s (Willey and Woodbury 1942; Willey 1949a:407-448) and subsequently used and refined by a host of archaeologists. Ann S. Cordell (1984) has published the results of a detailed analysis of Weeden Island ceramic technology, comparing different ceramic types as well as samples from different social contexts (i.e., village middens versus ceremonial mounds).

In north Florida, Weeden Island pottery is found both in village sites and in mounds, as it is also in northwest Florida (see Milanich et al. 1984:195-196). The Weeden Island ceramic series in both regions are, at least at this time, indistinguishable from one another; other cultural similarities also exist (e.g., horseshoe-shaped villages). The biggest difference is that in northwest Florida, Weeden Island develops out of the Swift Creek culture (which is not present in north Florida), while in north Florida Weeden Island apparently is derived from Deptford. Both McKeithen Weeden Island (in north Florida) and northwest Florida Weeden Island have been designated "heartland region" cultures (Milanich et al. 1984:16, 22), as opposed to "Weeden Island-related" cultures that exhibit a classic Weeden Island ceramic assemblage in mounds but not in village middens.

The north Florida Weeden Island lithic collections from the McKeithen site have been studied by Tim Kohler (in Milanich et al. 1984:69-75) and in detail by G. Michael Johnson (1985). The latter is the most comprehensive study of lithic artifacts available for any Weeden Island culture. Lithics and other artifacts are mentioned in Willey (1949a:449-450).

Settlement patterns. Our knowledge of settlement patterning traits comes from the work at the McKeithen site and from archaeological surveys carried out by Brenda Sigler-Lavelle (1980a, 1980b; see also Milanich et al. 1984:37-44, 187-195). In north Florida seven types of sites have been recognized: continuous use sand burial mounds with no adjacent village evident; continuous use sand burial mounds with adjacent village; mound-village complexes (two or more mounds associated with a village); villages with a mound within 4.5 km from a mound (which, together with the mound, form a community); task-specific sites apparently associated with hunting or another activity; lithic quarries; and clay quarries (probable sites).

The densest distribution of mounds, mound-village complexes, and communities is within the central hardwood hammock belt that runs north-south from the Santa Fe River between Lake City and Live Oak extending southward. Presumably, the largest Weeden Island populations were also in this zone.

All of the Weeden Island sites, both those in the central hammock and those in the lower areas to the east and west, shared similar localities: access to water sources; location in mesic forest; within 0.8 km of aquatic habitats (including ponds, creeks, lakes, wet prairies, swamps, or marshes; good site drainage; within 1.6 km of the total range of vegetation diversity present in north Florida (i.e., easy access to multiple forest habitats); and, within 3-5 km of a burial mound. Many locations fulfilling these prerequisites exist in north Florida, and each offers a potential village location. As would be expected, the McKeithen Weeden Island peoples tended to select the best of such locations, those with the best access to

hardwood hammocks and wetland habitats and their respective resources. The distribution of such prime locations is much greater in the central hammock zone.

Social organization. Much has been written about Weeden Island political and social organization and whether or not the Weeden Island region was organized as a chiefdom or a more complex society (e.g., Sears 1952, 1954, 1962), or was a series of independent groups of small villages, each made up of households and organized along lineage ties. In the latter model each group of villages and lineages functioned as a community. Within a community, because of control of resources, one lineage might become dominant for a time. Its lineage head would function as a big man whose village served as an interlineage center. The importance of lineages, big men, and villages rose and fell as a lineage and its big man were able to garner (or lose) resources and status. Within such communities, as lineages increased in size, groups of people (portions of lineages) budded off, forming new villages (Milanich et al. 1984:41-43, 188-192). Such tribal level societies were not of the same scale as the later, complex chiefdoms of the Mississippian period.

Subsistence. A major piece of knowledge concerning McKeithen Weeden Island that is missing is subsistence data. Acidic soils and an almost complete absence of charred plant remains at every Weeden Island site studied in north Florida, including McKeithen, have made it very difficult to present any syntheses. Timothy Kohler's work in the McKeithen village middens produced a very limited amount of food bone, shellfish remains, and floral remains (in Milanich et al. 1984:75-76). Identified animal species that were present include *Busycon*, oyster, mussel, several species of freshwater fish, alligator, several turtles, bird, squirrel, and a relatively large amount of deer. The mound excavations similarly produced a large amount of deer bone, as well as duck and rabbit. The only food plants identified (from the village) were hickory and persimmon. The overall assemblage is what one would expect from the north Florida hammock and freshwater habitats, except for the marine shellfish that must have been brought to the village from the coast.

#### Post-A.D.700 Cultures in North Florida

As noted above, our knowledge concerning the archaeological cultures that follow McKeithen Weeden Island in north Florida is still being developed. Some information was gathered during the 1970s from sites in Columbia and Suwannee counties (e.g., Leslie Mound and Village, Johnson Pond (8SU128), and Carter Mound I Village; see Milanich et al. 1984:201-208). Those sites were tested as a part of the Florida Museum of Natural History's north Florida Weeden Island project. Consequently, research questions were centered on their relationships to the McKeithen Weeden Island culture.

Recently other post-A.D. 700 sites in north Florida have been located and tested as the result of research projects that are focusing on the sixteenth and seventeenth century occupations of that region. The Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research's project in Ichetucknee State Park directed by Brent Weisman located such sites, as has the Florida Museum of Natural History's Hernando de Soto Trail project (Johnson 1987; Johnson, Nelson, and Terry 1988). Pertinent sites include Fig Springs (8CO1), a site immediately south of Fig Springs, Indian Pond (8CO229), and Baptizing Spring (8SU65) and several small sites in the immediate vicinity. We may now have a sample of sites that span the temporal range from the end of early Weeden Island, ca. A.D. 700, to the time of Spanish mission efforts in north Florida that begin in 1585. These sites all exhibit a similar ceramic assemblage, which is tentatively called Indian Pond. The assemblage follows early Weeden Island and lasts until it is replaced by the mission period Leon-Jefferson (mission Lamar) ceramic complex. There is no Fort Walton-related Mississippian period culture in north Florida. Indian Pond, consequently, is contemporary with the late Weeden Island and Fort Walton cultures in northwest Florida, the St. Johns II period in east Florida, and the Alachua tradition in north-central Florida.

Material culture. Milanich et al. (1984:201) have described the late Weeden Island/Indian Pond ceramic assemblage as "characterized by large amounts of undecorated pottery with varying amounts of check stamped, cord marked, incised, and Lochloosa Punctated-like pottery . . . . Some potsherds have a simple stamped-like motif that occasionally resembles brushing or incising (and may be). At times, the eroded surfaces of some sherds make distinguishing simple stamping, brushing, and incising almost impossible." Cob marked sherds are also a part of the assemblage.

Some of the cord and cob marked and Lochloosa Punctated-like sherds of the assemblage greatly resemble sherds of the Alachua tradition. However, relative frequencies and the total assemblages are quite distinct. The work by Weisman and his associates and by Kenneth Johnson of the Florida Museum of Natural History promises to define the Indian Pond assemblage formally and to begin to order it temporally for use as a chronological tool.

Pinellas points and other small bifacial tools or points have been recovered from sites. Definition of the lithic assemblage associated with the Indian Pond ceramic complex, however, remains to be done.

Several mounds believed to be associated with the Indian Pond complex have been tested. Leslie Mound and Carter Mound I (Milanich et al. 1984:202-207) both are believed to date closer to A.D. 700 than 1585. Leslie Mound, a small continuous use mound, contained several sherds from a Weeden Island Incised vessel that was red-slipped on the interior. All human remains were bundle burials or disarticulated. Carter Mound I contained two greenstone celts, a Carrabelle Punctated bowl, and a collared Carrabelle Punctated bowl with pinching encircling the collar. It also contained bundle burials.

Settlement patterns. There appears to be little or no difference between the environmental settings of the McKeithen Weeden Island culture and the sites associated with the Indian Pond ceramic assemblage. However, if the post-A.D. 700 population of north Florida was agricultural (and cob marked pottery is known to be present), we would expect differences to exist. Obviously there is much to be learned about early Weeden Island and post-early Weeden Island subsistence and settlement systems in north Florida.

#### Previous Research

As noted above, almost nothing is known about the Deptford occupation in north Florida, except its temporal position relative to the McKeithen Weeden Island culture.

The definitive work on Weeden Island in north Florida resulted from the Florida Museum of Natural History's (then the Florida State Museum) surveys and excavations carried out in the late 1970s. An overview of the results of the research has been published (Milanich et al. 1984) and contains a complete bibliography of papers, articles, and dissertations that resulted. To that list should be added Johnson's (1985) study of the lithics from the McKeithen site.

At the same time that the Weeden Island research was ongoing, L. Jill Loucks (1978) carried out a survey of areas around a mission-period site in southern Suwannee County. Included among the small sites found were several from the Weeden Island period.

More recently Kenneth Johnson (1987) surveyed mission-period sites in Columbia and Suwannee counties and, in the process, located late prehistoric sites as well. His work, as well as that of Brent Weisman at and in the vicinity of the Fig Springs site, is beginning to define the post-McKeithen Weeden Island and pre-mission occupation of north Florida that has tentatively been labeled the Indian Pond assemblage.

#### Important Sites

The dearth of archaeological research in north Florida prior to the present makes almost any sites located and tested important to the archaeological record. Such sites include McKeithen (Milanich et al. 1984), which contains information on the Deptford and McKeithen Weeden Island cultures. The site also is important because it extends just into the late Weeden Island period, past the A.D. 700 date that is so important through Florida and the Southeast because it represents the point at which cultural changes apparently occur, changes reflected in new archaeological assemblages. Other important sites are Indian Pond and the Leslie Mound and village as well as the complex of sites surrounding Fig Springs in Ichetucknee State Park. No prehistoric sites in north Florida are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

## Research Questions

Chronology. Chronological concerns are of particular importance for the period after A.D. 700 for which we have little data. Moreover, the Weeden Island chronology, based primarily on the McKeithen site, needs to be further refined. Radiocarbon dates are needed for all periods.

What is the evolutionary relationship of Deptford to the succeeding McKeithen Weeden Island? Why, at ca. A.D. 200, is there a seemingly rapid change from a small Deptford population to the larger populations and villages of the early Weeden Island McKeithen culture?

Can we refine the three-fold temporal scheme derived by Kohler for the McKeithen site, providing tight chronological controls against which other data can be compared?

Does the Indian Pond assemblage indeed last from the end of early Weeden Island times, ca. A.D. 700, to the sixteenth century? What artifact-related attributes can be used to establish intra-period phases? The basic temporal and spatial taxonomy remains to be defined.

Economy. We have very little data on subsistence in north Florida. This is a result of the extremely limited number of excavations in the region.

What was the economic base of the interior Deptford peoples in north Florida? Were they hunter-gatherers?

Did Deptford peoples occupy the northern forests on a seasonal basis? Are they the same Deptford population that inhabited the Gulf coast to the west?

What was the subsistence economy of the McKeithen peoples and was it unchanged through time?

Was horticulture practiced and, if so, what was its importance?

What was the economy of the human occupation associated with the Indian Pond assemblage and how does it differ from that of the earlier McKeithen Weeden Island period?

Were these post-A.D. 700 peoples maize farmers?

Do the changes in the archaeological assemblage that occur at ca. A.D. 700 reflect economic changes?

Settlement patterns. As with subsistence, our knowledge of settlement patterns in north Florida is constrained by our limited data. So little data exists for Deptford that almost any information, even on the presence of sites, would be welcomed. We are much better informed about Weeden Island, as a result of the excavations at the McKeithen site and related surveys, but the period after A.D. 700 is almost as unknown as Deptford.

What is the range of site types at different time periods?

How do settlement patterns differ temporally and regionally?

What is the post-A.D. 700 settlement system and how is it alike or different the early McKeithen system? Does it change through time?

Social and political organization. The model developed for Weeden Island in north Florida is important to our understanding of the nature of Woodland stage cultures in the Southeast and their relevance to the development of the later Mississippian societies with their complex social and political organization and extensive horticultural practices. McKeithen Weeden Island studies should thus focus on two areas: testing and refining of the settlement-subsistence-social organization model developed out of the North Florida Weeden Island Project and gathering data that allows comparisons between McKeithen Weeden Island and contemporary and later societies. The macro-question might be stated as: Why did not Mississippian societies develop in north Florida? How was the evolutionary trajectory different than in northwest Florida?

What additional evidence exists for lineages, lineage ranking, the presence of village big men, village ranking, lineage mound interment, and village fissioning?

Is there any evidence, i.e., in burial mounds, to suggest that women held status positions? If not, how is the transition to historically-documented matrilineal systems and cacicas explained?

When Hernando de Soto passed through north Florida in 1539 it is clear that chiefdoms were present.

When did they appear and what are their archaeological correlates?

How do they resemble Mississippian chiefdoms?

Why is north Florida different from regions of the southeast where Mississippian archaeological cultures developed?

Can the Uzachile (west of the Suwannee River) and Aguacaleyquen (east of the Suwannee River) chiefdoms be distinguished archaeologically? What are their respective configurations?

Health and nutrition. Few skeletal remains have been recovered from north Florida. We have data only from Mound C at the McKeithen site. This is unfortunate, because bioarchaeological studies nicely complement subsistence and social complexity studies. Should the opportunity present itself, biological anthropologists should gather pertinent data from burial sites as part of studies that also focus on other aspects of Weeden Island culture, e.g., information on lineage burial. Comparative studies among early and late Weeden Island period populations and post-contact populations are needed to help answer questions regarding presence or absence and relative importance of maize within the diet, and the impact of European diseases on health.

How does the health and nutrition of farming peoples compare to that of the earlier non-agricultural peoples of the early Weeden Island period (or early portion of the period of the Indian Pond assemblage)?

Are there differences related to social status among the people of the Indian Pond-associated chiefdom?

Preservation Goals

Some archaeological sites have been preserved on state-owned lands, such as within the Ichetucknee State Park and at Peacock Springs. Others are included in lands now being considered for state-purchase (e.g., localities on the Suwannee River in Suwannee County). Still other sites are preserved within the Osceola National Forest. Those state and federal-owned lands that have not been inventoried should be inventoried in order to draw up a list of preserved sites to see if a cross section is represented.

Locate unrecorded sites, especially in Madison, Taylor, and Lafayette counties.

Excavate various types of sites to evaluate their significance and obtain interpretive data.

Nominate to the National Register key sites, including the McKeithen site, Indian Pond site, and Fig Springs site(s).