

Florida's Indians from Ancient Times to the Present

Jerald T. Milanich

Algonquin (Sep 30, 1998)

\$45.00 (224pp)

978-0-8130-1598-9

The interpretation of archaeological discoveries and written records of a certain time period is a reliable method to use to arrive at a reconstruction of historical events. Lacking a written record, the process becomes speculation, conjecture, opinion, at best, a personal interpretation. In Florida's Indians, author Jerald Milanich's opinions might be highly credible, but in all fairness to the reader, he should clearly identify them to the reader as just that?opinions. Also troubling is how Milanich relates events as though someone had witnessed and recorded the occasion as they occurred 1,000 to 2,000 years ago and he had read that report. Since there is no written history from that time period, stating how people may have felt or thought is only conjecture.

Most likely the archeological facts presented are reliable. Milanich, curator in archaeology at the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville, is the author of Florida Indians and the Invasion from Europe and Archaeology of Pre-Columbian Florida. As he nears present day in his narration and can refer to documents of the day, the story presented as fact becomes more plausible. But the general audience should be able to trust the source if, in fact, they ordinarily would not have the knowledge to judge for themselves. Even though the use of footnotes, chapter notes and citations may be associated in the public mind with dullness, such devices definitely serve a purpose. Without them, readers have no option but to accept the information as stated. Not recommended for general collections.

No index seen. Interesting sidebars are sprinkled throughout the text, including a late 16th century recipe for acorn cakes.

MARLY WYCKOFF (July / August 1998)

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