

The book offers a background and context for the project, detailed summaries of the excavated sites grouped by period from the Archaic (5000–1300 BC) to the Post-Puebloan (AD 1300–1776) period, summaries of the analytical results of categories of recovered material culture, and finally seven chapters that place the project research results into a larger context. If we combine the research presented in *Far Western Basketmaker Beginnings* with Phil Geib's *Foragers and Farmers of the Northern Kayenta Region: Excavations along the Navajo Mountain Road* (University of Utah Press, 2011), we can see that the transition to agriculture is both sudden and gradual, depending on where and when we look for early agricultural communities.

As with any edited work that brings together chapters by more than a dozen authors and summarizes the research of three archaeological firms, there is an unevenness in the quality of some of the chapters and the reporting. In addition, I would wish for a few additional architectural maps to complement some of the first-rate color photos. Nonetheless, this report is remarkable and surpasses those contract reports I am most proud of coauthoring. It offers a fundamental revision to what we know about an area that has been on the periphery of our maps of the US Southwest for far too long.

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***The Nine Lives of Florida's Famous Key Marco Cat.* Austin J. Bell. 2021. University Press of Florida, Gainesville. xi + 241 pp. \$26.95 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0-8130-6699-8.**

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This book is an exuberant account of one remarkable artifact. The 6-inch-tall carved wooden panther that is the star of the tale has attracted the kind of attention that builds on itself and makes the object ever more captivating. *The Nine Lives of Florida's Famous Key Marco Cat* explores how this Native American sculpture has become a “truly transcendent” object in North American archaeology. Austin J. Bell offers archaeologists an interesting case study of preservation, heritage, and connections between past and present. Those outside the profession will also enjoy Bell's detailed history of the Key Marco Cat and his insights into the ways that objects and their meanings are contested and created through processes of excavation, curation, and exhibition.

Bell is curator of collections at the Marco Island Historical Society (MIHS) and a consulting scholar at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. His successful effort to have the Key Marco Cat loaned to the MIHS by the Smithsonian Institution informs his perspective on it and its apparent power to compel people to possess and understand it. He acknowledges how historical and idiosyncratic circumstances elevated it to a position of esteem and mystique, but he also conveys a genuine sense of wonder at the object and invites readers also to become enthralled with the Cat.

The Key Marco Cat is one of the carved wooden items recovered by Frank Hamilton Cushing and his crew in 1896 during excavations at an unusually well-preserved, waterlogged site on Marco Island, Florida. It and other artifacts from the site likely date to between AD 500 and 1500. In this book, each of the nine chapters represents one of the Key Marco Cat's lives. These nine lives are organized into three main phases: the artifact's production and use by Indigenous South Floridians, the archaeology of its discovery, and its curation and exhibition.

Chapters 1–3 summarize the culture and history of the Calusa Indians of South Florida and their predecessors and consider what is known and unknown about the artifact's original production and

purpose. In Chapter 2, Bell introduces the theme of “transformation” that continues throughout the book; here, it has to do with the literal process of rendering the cat figure from wood. Readers will learn about South Florida toolkits and items like shell tools and shark teeth. In Chapter 3, Bell considers the Cat’s original purpose primarily through the lens of cat imagery.

Chapter 4 begins a middle section of the book that focuses on archaeological knowledge. Chapters 5 and 6 contain particularly engaging accounts of the Pepper-Hearst Expedition (sponsored by philanthropists William Pepper and Phoebe Hearst) and the excavations that uncovered the Key Marco Cat, including a deep dive into the various connotations of the excavators’ favored term “muck” and an explanation of the extraordinary efforts needed to bring preserved artifacts like the Cat back to Philadelphia and to Washington, DC, in good condition. Bell discusses how much of the record of the site was lost at the same time as artifacts like the Cat were discovered. Indeed, throughout the book we learn that the story of the cat is not finished, and it may never be; some avenues for further research are limited by the circumstances of curation and by the ethics of preservation.

In Chapters 7–9, Bell focuses on the Key Marco Cat as an object to be collected and exhibited. Chapter 8 best demonstrates the author’s passion for the artifact and explains how he became entwined with its history. As the MIHS has grown and developed under his leadership, local residents have remained focused on the Cat’s return to the place where it was found, revealing “the true power of the Cat” (p. 155).

As for that power, at times Bell writes about the Key Marco Cat as something with an inherent energy that captivates and enthralls. This force may result not only from the artistry of the object but also from something more elusive—the Cat’s “charisma” (p. 160). But there is a recursive quality to the artifact’s appeal; Bell acknowledges that the cat’s contemporary symbolism as a cultural icon emerged from history and social context as much as from any intrinsic extraordinary quality. Is the Cat’s true power inherent, contextual, or necessarily both? And what connection really exists between our recent adoration for the Cat and its historical and archaeological significance?

In Chapter 9, Bell acknowledges that we cannot know what the Key Marco Cat meant to its makers and focuses instead on its contemporary importance. For current residents of Marco Island, the cat is uniquely meaningful as a “source of pride and identity” (p. 155). But, in Bell’s narration, even those whose first encounter with the Cat is decontextualized are struck by its aesthetic; this appeal then offers an entry point for public education and outreach. As a symbol, the Key Marco Cat has been transformed in meaning and purpose, and as Bell writes, through this process it has become transformative.

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***Ouachita Mountains Archaeology: Researching the Past with Two Projects in Arkansas.* Mary Beth Trubitt. 2019. Popular Series 6. Arkansas Archeological Survey, Fayetteville. x + 108 pp. \$20.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-56349-109-2.**

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The organization and writing style of *Ouachita Mountains Archaeology* effectively relay concepts, methods, and findings that are meaningful and interesting both to archaeologists and the public. The foreword describes how the research presented in the book is the result of a long-term joint research program by the Arkansas Archeological Survey at the University of Arkansas, the Ouachita National Forest, the Arkansas Archeological Society, and other groups. The level of institutional support and the organizational capacity for public archaeology in Arkansas are remarkable.