

BOOK REVIEWS

The Prehistory of the Chickamauga Basin in Tennessee (2 volumes), by Thomas M.N. Lewis and Madeline D. Kneberg Lewis. Compiled and edited by Lynne P. Sullivan. The University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, 1995. iv + 681 pp., illus., tables, appendices, biblio., index. Volume I: \$50.00 (cloth), \$25.00 (paper); Volume II: \$50.00 (cloth), \$25.00 (paper).

Reviewed by Christopher B. Rodning

It is interesting and enlightening to reflect not only on the archaeological past but also on the past of archaeology itself. Originally assembled by Thomas Lewis and Madeline Kneberg in the 1930s and 1940s, and masterfully compiled and edited by Lynne Sullivan in the 1990s, *The Prehistory of the Chickamauga Basin in Tennessee* contains several previously unpublished reports of investigations at sites along the Tennessee and Hiwassee rivers in southeastern Tennessee. These sites were excavated prior to the construction of the Chickamauga Dam, which inundated most of them. The report also includes several synthetic essays on the archaeology and ethnohistory of native settlement in the region. As Sullivan notes in the foreword, Lewis and Lewis' *The Prehistory of the Chickamauga Basin in Tennessee* (1995) really represents a companion monograph to their *Hiwassee Island: An Archaeological Account of Four Tennessee Indian Peoples* (1946), a classic in Southeastern archaeology and a presentation of research at this important site in the basin. The authors envisioned these books as stepping stones to more interpretive questions about the actual experiences of Native Americans in the centuries prior to European contact. This initial step in their anthropological project, of course, came through amassing and synthesizing all the relevant archaeological evidence. This evidence is presented in *The Prehistory of the Chickamauga Basin in Tennessee*, a collection of very readable reports, essays, charts, and illustrations.

Although these essays, reports, and appendices were written decades ago, this compilation positions the original research and writing in the context of contemporary archaeology. This pair of volumes constitutes a carefully edited and thoughtfully designed presentation of an old and valuable monograph in archaeology, formerly cited by researchers as a “manuscript on file” at the University of Tennessee's McClung Museum

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in Knoxville. As Sullivan observes in her foreword, the original manuscript and project notes were archaeological artifacts of sorts, inasmuch as they hail from a different era in the history of the discipline. Consequently, many editorial decisions balanced commitments to keeping true to the original manuscript and to filling gaps left in unfinished chapters. The editorial remarks which preface each chapter of the current book identify which parts of the current text are originals and which were drawn from maps, tables, and illustrations in project files. These editorial comments further note how archaeology in the intervening years has confirmed, rejected, or modified the conclusions which were drawn here.

The first section includes a pair of essays introducing the cultural and natural history of the region. Describing the direct historical approach taken by directors of this archaeological project, Thomas and Madeline Lewis outline the presentation of archaeological findings presented later in this report. They describe the diagnostic material-culture traits of Mississippian-period Hiwassee Island, Dallas, and Mouse Creek components, and those of the Woodland-period Candy Creek and Hamilton components. Nowadays, archaeologists have a much better understanding of the chronological relationships of these material-culture groups and better appreciate the time depth of Woodland and Mississippian traditions in the region. However, many of the artifact types diagnostic of these groups recognized during the 1930s and 1940s remain part of current culture-historical definitions. Following the introduction to prehistoric settlement in the region, Thomas Lewis and A. J. Sharp describe the regional environment, carefully noting which species of plants and animals and which geographical features would have benefited native residents. Together, these chapters provide a good background for the discussions that follow.

The second section includes discussions of artifact typology. As an introduction to chapters on individual crafts and technologies, an essay by Thomas Lewis outlines the approach to archaeological materials collected by members of the Chickamauga project. As he argues, the best archaeological typologies follow as closely as possible item categories which might have been used in the past. The primary goals in the project's field and lab efforts were to generate and arrange archaeological assemblages for comparative studies. Developing classifications of different kinds of artifacts represented an important step in these efforts.

Following these introductory remarks are individual chapters on architectural, pottery, stone, bone, shell, metal, and weaving industries. The chapter on architecture compares dwelling house and community building designs and materials from different periods of settlement and is

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a comprehensive inventory of the kinds of architecture identified at sites in the basin. The chapter on pottery provides good illustrations and detailed lists of attributes that are common to ceramic groups now identified with the Candy Creek or Hamilton phases of the Woodland period, and the Hiwassee Island, Dallas, or Mouse Creek phases of the subsequent Mississippian period. The chapter on the stone industry provides similarly helpful illustrations and attribute lists of chipped-stone and ground-stone assemblages from sites in the basin, although contemporary archaeologists have significantly different understandings of the chronological associations of different kinds of stone implements. Then as now, projectile points are seen as especially important in identifying different cultural traditions. Several chapters concentrate on more esoteric components of the archaeological record, including settlement patterns, domestic life, subsistence strategies, mortuary customs, and trading practices.

Originally written as separate sections of the typology chapter, commentaries on community plan and domestic life comprise a single chapter. Thomas Lewis views archaeological opportunities to examine domestic life as limited, although chipping stations, grinding tools, stone-tool caches, and rows of household vessels preserved in place provide some clues about domestic customs. Although taking care to make sure that all forms of architecture, burials, palisades, and other features of the built environment of prehistoric communities are represented in interpretations of community plans, he considers these patterns as reflections of group social structure. The notion of a social *community* often extends well beyond the bounds of excavated archaeological *sites*, and Thomas and Madeline Lewis acknowledge this fact in their writing. It is interesting that they describe reconstructions of community organization based on spatial layouts of prehistoric settlements as difficult interpretive steps, since fieldwork during their day often involved the excavation of extensive areas, sometimes far exceeding the spatial coverage of many current excavation projects with similarly ambitious questions.

The third section includes classificatory and comparative essays. Madeline Lewis describes the classificatory approach taken by the Chickamauga archaeologists and presents the trait lists for the several cultural components that were identified through this fieldwork. The text describes the purposes and logic of the old Midwestern taxonomic system and defines such archaeological designations as "focus" (i.e., the basic unit of the classification system) and "component" (i.e., the manifestation of a focus at a particular site). Her essay further draws a clear distinction

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between an archaeological "component" (i.e., an archaeological dataset) and a "community" (i.e., an historical and social entity which archaeologists study through assemblages of material culture). Her point is to demonstrate that basic archaeological classification, which requires typological distinctions, represents an important, but only an initial, step in archaeological research. Ultimately, the ambition of archaeology is not to tally checklists of traits from different components of various sites and to compare them, but rather to understand the cumulative experiences of diverse communities in the past. For this and other contemporary projects, checklists of the subsistence strategies, community plans, architectural traditions, lithic craftsmanship, ceramic manufacture, and mortuary customs represented an initial step towards this ambitious goal. Attempting the next step, Andrew Whiteford links material-culture assemblages dating to different episodes of settlement in northeastern Tennessee, southeastern Tennessee, and northwestern Alabama, demonstrating the checklist approach common in archaeology at that time. Building on these preceding essays, Joseph Bauxhar seeks to connect specific material-culture traits to historically known native groups of the Southeast. Although neither the trait checklists nor the specific affiliations of archaeological and ethnic groups as presented here are accepted anymore, these chapters nevertheless present valuable archaeological and historical information.

The fourth section of the book, comprising most of Volume II, includes the individual site reports. All of these sites are located in the Chickamauga Basin and are now submerged under Chickamauga Lake, except for the Ocoee site in extreme southeastern Tennessee at the edge of the Appalachian range. The other Chickamauga sites included in this report are: Candy Creek, Sale Creek, Dallas, Hixon, Davis, Rymer, Mouse Creeks, Ledford Island, Varnell, Spivey, and McGill.

Archaeological highlights include discussions of: burial clusters associated with household compounds and community buildings at the Mouse Creeks, Ledford Island, and Rymer sites; the diversity of engraved designs on shell gorgets from the Hixon site; the careful dissections of the Mississippian mound and both dwelling houses and community buildings at the Dallas site; a Hiwassee Island phase mound built to incorporate two earlier truncated earthworks at the Davis site; the community building compound at the Sale Creek site which includes multiple structures in a pattern resembling townhouses at Overhill Cherokee and Middle Cherokee settlements; Woodland and Mississippian burials concentrated in two distinct clusters at the Candy Creek site; and a unique Overhill Cherokee log stockade at the Ocoee site. Of course, it is difficult to

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summarize briefly all the lessons awaiting analysis of the excavated material. Now that this report has been completed and published, that material is widely accessible in its original form.

Several appendices form the last part of the text. The first appendix is a list of plants which probably would have been available to native communities in the Chickamauga Basin, as well as their possible roles in human consumption. The second appendix includes an annotated bibliography of early maps drawn of the Southeast, especially those related to the sites discussed in these volumes and to the historical residents of this region. The third appendix represents a handbook for the Chickamauga Basin archaeological project, written as a guide for all the personnel involved in the field investigations. This essay describes protocol and the philosophy behind the organization of this major archaeological project.

The Prehistory of the Chickamauga Basin in Tennessee is an outstanding contribution to Southeastern archaeology. For making available site reports and syntheses which until now were only accessible as a manuscript on file in the Knoxville museum, archaeologists owe Sullivan great thanks. For filling gaps in original text and illustrations by drawing from tables, maps, sketches, and notes in Chickamauga project files, and for insightful editing, archaeologists owe Sullivan great compliments. The first volume includes general essays which are very readable introductions to the original archaeological investigations on native settlement and material culture in the region. That and the second volume, which includes the site reports and the appendices, belong on the shelves of specialists interested in Tennessee and Cherokee archaeology and anyone interested in the history of archaeology in the Southeast. The editor, museum, press, and the Tennessee Valley Authority, who funded the recent publication effort, are commended for taking this report from the gray literature and transforming it into a pair of very handsome volumes (available in hard-bound or paperback format) which provide valuable information about the archaeological past and meanwhile lend some insights into the past of archaeology itself.