

***Shaman, Priest, Practice, Belief: Materials of Ritual and Religion in Eastern North America.* Stephen B. Carmody and Casey R. Barrier, editors. 2019. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa. ix + 333 pp. \$69.95 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0-8173-2042-3.**

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Religion is a hot topic in the archaeology of the Eastern Woodlands of North America, in a way few would have expected 20 years ago. Unsurprisingly, we do not all necessarily agree on what religion is or how to study it, because religion is itself a concept that twists out from one's grip even as one tries to define it. Or does it? In this volume, it has a tightly bounded definition: the material traces of ritual. The editors stress almost immediately that they intend to focus on the aspects of such practices that exist at the interface of the human and the material, because this is the domain that archaeology can directly address. Many writers in the volume show ambivalence regarding this guidepost: Chapter 1 jumps directly into uncertainty about separating ritual from quotidian practice at all, and others devote space to exploring (and in one case, rejecting) the messy theoretical tensions of religion and ritual. But this ambivalence is more contextualization than disagreement. The volume delivers on its promise to show us case studies at the meeting point of the material and the ritual. The meeting of the data in the ground with the interpretive lenses we bring to bear is the undercurrent of the volume.

The book includes an introduction and 12 chapters arranged in chronological order based on the case studies they consider. In their introduction, Casey R. Barrier and Stephen B. Carmody take the reader on a swift and sweeping tour of the last 15 years of literature on religion and ritual in archaeology, recognizing along the way that there are competing ideas about whether ritual represents a distinct expression of religion in practice or is inseparable from practice. This range of ideas about religion and ritual means that some authors write about dramatic and showy events and materials, whereas others write about absolutely normal everyday doings that have elements of religion and ritual embedded within them. Examples of both approaches to religion and ritual are present in this volume, but contributions here tend to lean toward the dramatic.

Chapter 1 (Thomas A. Jennings, Ashley M. Smallwood, and Charlotte D. Pevny) is about the difficulties and rewards of identifying ritual contexts from the earliest Paleoindian sites in the region. Renee B. Walker (Chapter 2) addresses caching and burial ritual at Dust Cave, a Late Paleoindian and Early Archaic period site in northern Alabama. Aaron Deter-Wolf and Tanya M. Peres (Chapter 3) connect bundling, tattooing, and body ritual as early as the Late Archaic of Tennessee using a great deal of historic ethnographic data on the subject. Carmody and Kandace R. Hollenbach (Chapter 4) address the ritual landscapes of a broad geographic swath emphasizing the Mid-South, created by gardening during the Early, Middle, and Late Woodland periods. Bretton T. Giles (Chapter 5) provides a diachronic exploration of early falcon iconography in ceramic tablets, carved pipes and boatstones, bone, copper, and mica. This is the least consistent with the theme because iconography has often been studied divorced from material context, but Giles moves the needle far back toward the target. Alice P. Wright and Cameron Gokee (Chapter 6) attempt new ways to think about "Hopewell" ritual materials dating to the Middle Woodland period, emphasizing sites in southern Appalachia rather than the Ohio Valley. Megan C. Kassabaum and Peres (Chapter 7) show the social and economic roles of bears in the Late Woodland community associated with the Feltus mounds in Mississippi. Sierra M. Bow and colleagues (Chapter 8) show us petroglyphs with a surprising material diversity of artifacts deployed at the Cumberland Plateau Mississippi period Griffin Rockshelter in central Tennessee. Barrier (Chapter 9) explores the role of powerful plants and animals at Washausen, a small Mississippian mound site near Cahokia. Sarah E. Baires and Melissa R. Baltus (Chapter 10), followed by James A. Brown and John E. Kelly (Chapter 11), give us two distinct approaches to materialization at Cahokia; these effectively illustrate the advantages of both micro- and grand-scale

applications despite explicitly contrasting theoretical assumptions characteristic of the respective authors. Finally, David H. Dye (Chapter 12) explores the relationship between head pots and sodalities in Late Mississippian societies. Chapters 3, 4, 7, and 9 are the strongest explorations of materialization, putting materials or nonhuman actors at the forefront of interpretation, but other chapters are thoughtful and interesting treatments of their respective topics as well.

The guiding lights of theory for this work—on materiality, assemblage, bundling, relational ontology, and the archaeological study of religion—were written some 15 to 20 years ago. Some of these authors have been writing on this subject for over a decade, and this is not even the first set of case studies from the Eastern Woodlands to specifically and explicitly pursue religion as ongoing material practice. Rather than being the first, it represents progress and success. This volume nicely demonstrates mature growth in archaeological thinking and writing about materiality and religion. Scholarship today often enlivens the archaeological enterprise by privileging Indigenous ways of knowing and the historical processes and material elements by which they operate and came to be. Religion has become a primary focus rather than an afterthought. The achievement is uneven, and it does not necessarily yet reflect what Indigenous peoples themselves might advocate for in the archaeology of religion. There is further to go, but we have taken some of the right steps.

Although I am cited incorrectly (as “Christopher” Pursell, apparently writing my master’s thesis on the subject of “Colored Lund Architecture” rather than “Colored Mound Architecture” of the Mississippian Southeast), which I fear is a sign of other editorial errors, I highly recommend this book. It is a must-have for specialists in the archaeology of religion due to its variety of well-written pieces with distinct and up-to-date theoretical and methodological approaches. It also makes a valuable addition to a library covering the archaeology of the Eastern Woodlands, and it can specifically guide students well in contemporary approaches to religion and ritual in eastern North America.

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***Garden Creek: The Archaeology of Interaction in Middle Woodland Appalachia.* Alice P. Wright. 2020. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa. xii + 195 pp. \$54.95 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0-8173-2040-9. \$54.95 (e-book), ISBN 978-08173-9270-3.**

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The Middle Woodland period (ca. 200 BC–AD 600) in eastern North America has long been recognized as an era of extensive interregional connectivity, most famously in association with the Hopewell Interaction Sphere that was centered on present-day southern Ohio but that spanned much of the continent. Understanding how widespread interactions and practices influenced diverse “local” cultures and, in turn, how various far-flung communities contributed to the greater Hopewell phenomenon, has proved challenging. With *Garden Creek*, Alice Wright brings to this problem a fresh perspective, new data, and a masterful synthesis of existing data, making for a landmark study in the southern Appalachian region and an exemplary case to emulate in investigations of similar phenomena in other areas of the world.

The book counters the commonly perceived marginality of southern Appalachian peoples as compared to population centers outside the region, drawing parallels between the recent and ancient past. In both cases, Wright argues, people pursued connections with distant communities and made significant—and sometimes unintended—contributions to greater North American history.