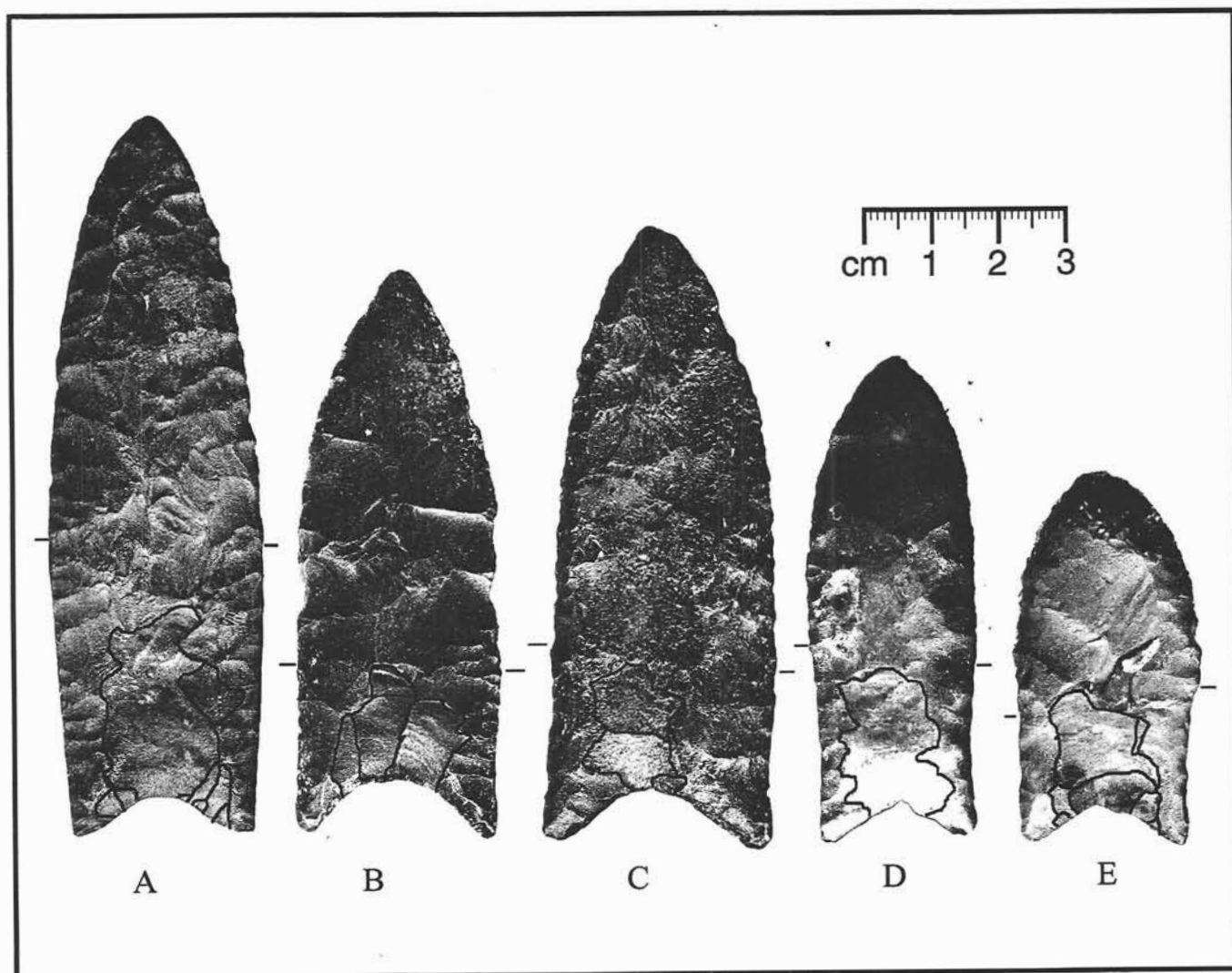


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BOOK REVIEWS

People of the Shoals: Stallings Culture of the Savannah River Valley. Kenneth E. Sassaman. With a Foreword and series edited by Jerald T. Milanich. 2006. University Press of Florida, Gainesville. xxi + 194 pages, with 48 figures (maps, site photographs, diagrams, artifact plates, schematics, and tables), a glossary, a further reading section, and an index, \$ 39.95, (cloth covered).

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This volume, which represents the latest edition to the *Native Peoples, Cultures and Places of the Southeastern United States* series from the University Press of Florida, details, and arguably for the first time synthesizes, the results of several decades of research within the Savannah River Valley. The subject of this book is a Late Archaic period population that once thrived upon Stallings Island, a 26-acre island located approximately 13 km upstream of Augusta, Georgia. Over the last 16 years, much of this Archaic period research has been spearheaded by Ken Sassaman, first as a student at the University of South Carolina, and later as a member of the of the Savannah River Archaeological Research Program (SRARP) of the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (SCIAA). Drawing upon the work of others and his voluminous research, which includes probably the finest radio-carbon seriation of any Archaic population along the South Atlantic Slope, Dr. Sassaman has produced a text which appeals to the professional archeologist and the public alike.

Following an extensive preface and acknowledgements, the text opens with a prologue which starts on the day the People of the Shoals abandoned Stallings Island due to social strife (inter and intra-group), the partial depletion of available natural resources, and the desire to associate with either the Peoples of the Coast along the lower coastal plan, or the Peoples of the Hills within the middle Savannah River. This prologue segues into Chapter 1 (of 7 total chapters), which provides an introduction to the Stallings people from a chronological and material standpoint; Stallings, series fiber tempered pottery is their "calling card." Chapter 2 provides a preface to the Stallings sequence, tracing the entry of Paleo-Indian populations into the area, and describing their subsequent discovery of chert and soapstone resources, which led to the advent of fired pottery. In this chapter, and really throughout the whole book, Sassaman is particularly diligent at mentioning (and crediting) all the cast of characters who have contributed

so much to Archaic period research within Georgia, South Carolina, Florida and throughout the Southeast. Chapter 3 describes the relative archaeological setting for the People of the Shoals by describing in detail the Paris Island phase and the Mills Branch phase (the People of the Hills); this chapter contains an in depth look at soapstone banner-stones and chert cruciform drills. Chapter 4 describes the classic Stallings ceramics; the two high-lights of this chapter are the discussion of the handedness of Stallings series ceramic potters, which leads to an extrapolation of kinship patterns (pages 82-90), and the discussion of intra-site organization (pages 92-104).

Chapter 5 is the subsistence chapter, and was the most unified chapter in the text, concentrating upon sources of nutrition (deer, nuts, freshwater clams, and fish) and the means to extract these resources. Of particular graphical interest within this chapter were previously unpublished photographs produced as a result of Sassaman's examination of Stallings artifacts in the Peabody Museum in 2003; these artifacts included soapstone fishing weights (Figure 5.5; page 119), as well as bone pins and implements (Figure 5.8 through 5.10; pages 124 through 127). Chapter 6 address addresses the social aspects of feasting, as represented by coastal shell rings in Georgia, Florida and South Carolina, as well as food storage pits, and mortuary practices, although the data on mortuary practices is limited by factors outside the control of the author.

Chapter 7 discusses the demise, or more appropriately, the departure, of the Stallings Island culture. Possible reasons for its termination include, catastrophe (considered unlikely), the depletion of local natural resources (also considered unlikely, but examined more deeply), or dissolution along kinship lines due to its own social rules (considered most likely). Warfare, while mentioned briefly, is not discussed, and overall, I noted that competition for resources, or conflict, does not ever really enter the world of the People of the Shoals. Chapter 7 concludes with a theory of where the People of the Shoals migrated to / integrated with. The epilogue closes the text out with an image of Chief Redstalk burying his daughter in 1439 A.D., followed by a flash forward to the Peabody Museum in 2003. A glossary, a further reading section, and an index close out the book.

Overall, I found the text to be fairly well illustrated with excellent black and white (only) photographs and diagrams. While initially reading the chapters, I started to wonder why the subject matter appeared to jump around somewhat, with ceramic data and lithic data and past archaeological data occurring in each chapter, rather than being classified into

monolithic chapters, as a technical reader would need. Then it occurred to me that the author is particularly adept at not cramming all the techno-functional data into one chapter, which would, of course, make for some rather dense chapters. The flow of the text is also not interrupted by the use of footnotes, or in-text (AA style) citation. The book is well designed for public reading, with manageable-sized chapters, and overall the book avoids the "telephone book" feel that so many archaeological books emanate. When I finished the book, I realized I had comfortably read the book on my couch, rather than at my desk, with a notepad. To be fair, I must admit some bias for the source material, however, as I visited at least a few of those sites along the Savannah River in the 1990's in my younger days.

While an excellent "read," there are a few trade-offs for such readability. The text is sometimes quite detailed, which on occasion sent me to use the index for referential purposes. Considering the complex interweaving of kinship studies, past archeological excavations, data concerning cultural material, radio-carbon dates, and archaeological information, I did find a four page index rather brief, and it was occasionally difficult to relocate and compare data regarding something I had previously read. I found myself using a pack of stickies to mark pages. While there is a "For Further Reading" section, it should be noted that there is no bibliography. That being said, I would strongly recommend the addition of this text to anyone's library. While it is easy to pick at the weave of any fabric, there is no doubt that this is one, serious, hand-woven quilt of a book. It is certainly kind amazing to see all the radio-carbon dates, archaeological sites, artifact collections, and a complex set of other data sets all woven together into a book that thematically holds it together. I have a feeling that this text will ultimately sit on the book shelves of many professional and avocational archaeologists between the numerous, fading, technical reports that generated all the data that made it possible.