

**UNTHINKABLE ACTS OF VIOLENCE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF AN
INTENTIONAL RAID AND DESCECRATION OF THE MORTUARY COMPLEX AT
FORT CENTER AD 700 – AD 900**

Ted Ehmann 2018

INTRODUCTION

While conducting research for a publication about the prehistoric people of south Florida, the Fort Center archaeological site (G13) located on the Fisheating Creek in Glades County, Florida took on greater importance and scrutiny. The single most exhaustive study of the site lasting six years by William Sears (1920 - 1996) while providing questionable assumptions and anthropological theory, Sears' detailed scientific observations and chronologies provide a wealth of data, most of which has stood up to even recent work at the site by Thompson and Kluckhahn 2012 -14 and Lawres 2017. The purpose for this article is to offer a completely different conclusion based on the identical sets of facts as put forth by Sears and published in his book *Fort Center: An Archaeological Site in the Lake Okeechobee Basin*, 1982. This article will argue that the information gathered in the excavation of the mortuary mound complex, comprised of a pond, platform mound A, burial mound B, a public plaza and exterior low earthwork wall was attacked and deliberately desecrated by in an enemy raid ending the use of the complex around AD 700 – AD 900 a quite different interpretation of Sears' conclusion. Sears believed that an accidental fire at the eastern end of the charnel platform weakened the platform causing about one hundred and fifty individual remains and carved wooden animal effigies to end up in the pond below. Sears attributed the large number of bones, rubble and even human feces found in another level of the pond to reuse from housecleaning from atop the platformed mound. I will also include a discussion of trends in North American field work pertaining to acknowledging and documenting evidence for ritualized violence and warfare by native societies and how Sears' treatment of the events at Fort Center were the norm, rather than the exception.

A history of disagreement with Sears's Fort Center assumptions

After Sears first published his findings at Fort Center, his theories and assumptions were challenged (Carr 1985, Johnson 1991). Recently, new researchers have come to disagree that Fort Center represented an example of an early maize cultivating village in south Florida. Sears' assertions that the monumental earthworks comprising Fort Center served an economic rather than ritual or sacred function are now disputed with a growing number of anthropologists stating Sears' interpretations of the site do not stand up to rigorous testing (Johnson 1990, 1991; Lawres 2015, 2016, 2017; Lawres and Colvin 2016; Thompson and Kluckhahn. 2013, 2014). The second part of this article discusses the history of professional philosophical / political bias as it relates to the topic of ritualized violence and warfare among both hunter-gatherers and agrarian indigenous societies in North America pre and post contact. My views on Sears' archaeology of the Fort Center site pertaining to agriculture is that Sears could not accept that hunter-gatherers were capable of producing the monumental constructions at Fort Center. Logically proceeding, they had to be involved in agriculture, a theory that even in the late 1970's could not stand up to the existence of the Poverty Point site in Louisiana. In this decade, anthropologists have returned to the same site in the Lake Okeechobee Lake Basin and after their work have sites

nearby that functioned as large ritual and ceremonial spaces, surpass Poverty Point and represent one of the most extensively constructed built environments by hunter-gatherers in world prehistory” (Thompson and Kluckhahn 2014;178). Sears, in his book, regularly disputed his own statements. While arguing that the site was an agriculturally based village, he concluded that the mortuary complex was a sacred and profoundly religious complex inhabited by a few in the mortuary cult (Sears 1982:). Related to this article, Sears concluded that the lime resulting from the burning of shells, high on top of the mortuary mound by religious elites was used for fertilizing crops. Sears who like myself studied basic cultural anthropology had conclusions at Fort Center that continually and conveniently blurred the distinctions between the sacred and the profane.

Evidence of the deliberate raid and desecration of the Mortuary Complex

The inability of Sears to question his own assumptions pertaining to discoveries while excavating the pond portion of the mortuary complex came immediately to my attention while reading that section in his book. Sears while describing a “second deposit” excavated from the muck in the mortuary pond, that he found “a lot of human feces” (167). He went on to describe all the different types of human feces recovered or not able to be recovered. I have never read a description of an archaeological excavation of a pond at a religious site that had “human” feces, less alone “a lot of “human feces. Here is where despite Sears’ biases and flawed theories, he must be credited with exacting accounts. The fact that Sears later stated that most probably a lot of feces, bones and “stuff “were thrown down into the pond as the result of spring house cleaning up on the platform mound (167) implied that residents and or followers had knowingly desecrated the sacred place. With my training in history and anthropology, that the religious elite or their followers would allow such a conscious desecration of the pond, the blurring in the extreme of the sacred and the profane (human feces being the ultimate in profanity) could never be plausible. A major issue concerning the large number of bundled remains on top of the charnel platform equally requires analysis served. If one concludes from the event, that the answer is the people in the region had a particularly large population, Sears theorized that all burials were of the mortuary cult elite members only. This very assumption would be suspect when comparing the site to others. Regardless of who was represented in the up to three hundred individuals, to allow such a number to in essence wait for burial, could also be construed as negligence and malpractice. There is a second theory. The unusually large number of individuals, resulted from increased raids and tribal warfare prior to the platform falling into the pond. Finally, the assumption that the fire was accidental lack credibility due to the fact that there was a very large pond beneath and a part of the charnel platform. Had the charnel platform caught fire accidentally the specialists had an immediate source of water to use to extinguish the fire. Unlike the orderly and controlled mortuary practices revealed in the archaeology of the in the McKeithen mortuary mound, What the facts discovered by Sears at Fort Center revealed were chaos, disorder and duress, with one tragedy leading to another. Therefore, I conducted my own research based on the facts as stated by Sears realizing that it



FIGURE 1, 1591 Engraving published by Theodore de Bry

charnel platform and the mound structures were a deliberate act of violence consistent with raids by rival chiefdoms on mortuary mounds going back millennia.

The facts and events without interpretation

It is important when offering a completely different interpretation of what occurred to the mortuary mound complex at Fort Center to review the events without any interpretation as to cause. Dating suggests that construction began soon after the building of the Great Circle between AD 100 -AD 200. Sears emphasized the dedication of efforts at the Fort Center site on the mortuary complex, as signaling a major shift which he referred to as Glade II. We know that the structures that comprised the complex were all built at the same time. Six to eight centuries after the completion of the mortuary site which consisted of; two platform mounds with structures on top, a pond and charnel platform, a dense midden, and a low border wall, there was a fire on the northern portion of the charnel platform (167). At some point, the entire charnel platform collapsed (167). Sears discovered besides charred wooden effigies, approximately one

hundred and fifty hundred, possibly three hundred human remains (42) ended up in the charnel pond. (157). Mixed with the human remains in the pond were the parts of the wooden charnel platform including carved wooden effigies as well as human feces and debris (167). Traces of ceramic trade ware was also found at the bottom of the pond (157), as well as many lithic artifacts (76, 79-81). At some time, the mounds and pond ceased to be used. Dirt was brought in and the remains of humans that ended up in the pond were buried along with another article left on top of the adjacent Mound B and the mound was capped. (162). The complex was left as Sear's found it except for looting of grave goods and inadvertent disturbing of burials (150).

Sears' interpretations of the mortuary site and events.

Despite Sears' preoccupation with maize cultivation at Fort Center, he concluded that Mound A was a "ceremonial area dedicated to preparations of bodies for internment on the charnel platform" (160). Sears concluded that only a few families lived at the Fort Center site. Those families "operated the ceremonial center activities for a considerable number of people" in the environs around Lake Okeechobee (175). Those people were specialists and were responsible for all the burials on the charnel platform. (175). That they lived in several houses constructed on the platform top of Mound, A (174), and these residences resulted in the garbage associated with the mound and later in the pond (174). Sears further conclude from the graves, that there was no distinguishable rank or status evinced in the burials taken out of the pond (175). On this important point, Sears believed that all the bodies had status as "ceremonial "mortuary specialists (175). Sears concludes that these specialists were assigned the responsibility for producing lime from shells as fertilizer for the field. (175). Further, Sears gave no explanation for the reason the many remains that were pulled from the pond, were then placed in Mound B. Most puzzling is with all the garbage he concluded was put in the pond by the religious specialists, that the pond was a "ceremonial", hence sacred requirement (165). Regarding the dense midden he concludes that it probably also had a ceremonial function. Despite the incredible events at the complex and the site no longer used as a ceremonial mortuary complex, Sears believe there was evidence of the platform Mound A continued as a residence into the

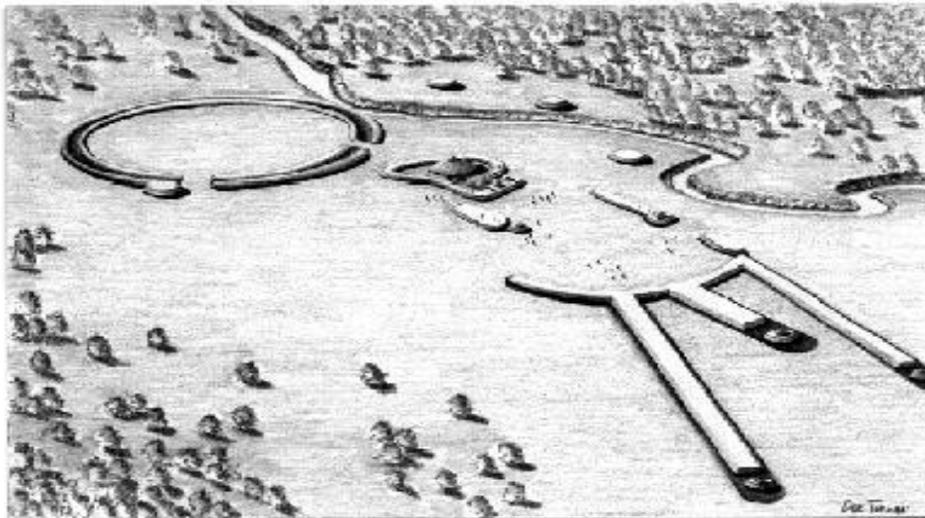


FIGURE 2, Artist conception of Fort Center site. Mortuary Mound/pond Complex center top.
The Illustrated History of Native America, 2009, Eagle Wing Publishing

Glade Period III, AD 1200 -AD 1400 (173)

Problems with Sears' assumptions and conclusions

Consistent with most descriptions of villages of hunter-gatherers related by kinship or other forms of relatedness, the people settled around Lake Okeechobee in the period AD 100 to AD 900 lived a life where ceremonies associated with the dead were central to their way of life. The caring for the dead and the ceremonies of the living as through all history were relegated to specialists. Protection of the remains, the burials and the mortuary specialist were a high priorities and a joint responsibility of all the people. Places that housed charnel houses, platforms and burial mounds were sacred and believed to have power. The fear of such power prevented the people from defiling or harming the site. Typically, temples were placed on top of mortuary mounds which contained sacred objects and often the burials of spiritual and or political leaders. In deconstructing the mortuary mound complex at Fort Center, first by comparison say to them northern neighbors, there were by Sears' estimation an extremely large number of ceremonial specialists at a single site for the population. It is also problematic his assertion of the entire number of remains (up to three hundred) were members of the elite cult of mortuary specialists. Repeatedly, Sears has these mortuary specialists defiling and desecrating the site. Two examples being the keeping of human feces on top of the mound near the fire and lime and the other of throwing house debris, midden debris and human feces into the charnel pond. Finally, the singular most important site to the people remained isolated from villages and undefended for centuries. This includes the intentional leaving of remains bundled on the unprotected charnel platform.

Comparison of Fort Center to Weedon Island McKeithen site

During the same time that Sears was excavating the mortuary mound complex at Fort Center, Jerald T. Milanich et al. were busy excavating a mortuary mound complex in north central Florida. Their excavation, charts and interpretations give a very detailed view of a mortuary complex, the activities and the resulting burial mound. Because the chronology matches that of Fort Center, McKeithen's being built AD 300 and completed by 480 AD, the site is appropriate for a comparison. Milanich found that the cleaned bones resulting from the charnel activities were stored in a designated charnel house erected on a separate smaller platform mound. In comparison to Sears's findings, there was no mention of a charnel house and Sears believed that while work on the bones was undertaken on the platform top of mound B, all remains were stored on the charnel platform. Milanich made no reference as to families of dedicated mortuary specialists, rather he reported finding a single grave of an adult with ceremonial grave goods buried in the floor of the main dwelling on top of the larger mound. The implication being it was a strong man or religious leader associated with the site. Regarding the burials in the mound,

Milanich et al. offer no comments regarding social ranking of those buried there. Of special interest was the fact that at AD 480, all the stored burials in the charnel house were removed and “the charnel house was burned to the ground”. No effort was seen of the people to remove the burned debris. Milanich saw that clean dirt was put on top of the debris and the bundles of bones placed around the edges of the platform. There was no mention of the mounds being used after those events. It would be fair to say, that this report from the McKeithen mounds excavation could be used to describe similar size societies in that region and at that time. Comparison for comparison, Milanich and his colleague’s conclusions on social organization of the early northern Weedon Island villages is significant for a look at Sears’ work at Fort Center. Only some villages had burial mounds. McKeithen burial mounds were for the related people in the villages. There were mortuary specialists, no more than two at a time connected to each burial mound. Those specialists were given special power and social status. Correspondingly, those villages that housed the burial mound and hosted the important burial rites were granted a higher status. In short ceremonies connected to burials was the central organizing facet of McKeithen life (169). By comparison, Sears concluded a dramatically different approach to mortuary practices and burial mounds further south in the Lake Okeechobee Basin. First, the mortuary activities and the burial mound are not a component of a village. But Sears stated they were a part of gardens and an immense circular drainage ditch used for agriculture. He concluded that two families of mortuary specialists lived and worked at the site and that the remains prepared and stored there were only members of this elite group of specialists. Finally, there was no charnel house, but rather remains were stored out in the open on a charnel platform suspended over a man-made pond. (Milanich 1994, 173-185)

Warfare in south Florida towards the end of the first millennium AD

Based on the evidence, the facts without interpretation at Fort Center, it is not only plausible, but most likely probable that the facts reveal the aftermath of a raid on the mortuary complex. Further, the number of human remains and lithic weapons, further indicates that the raid was one of many on the people in the region. Having taught both world and European histories, the centuries leading up to the first millennium was a particularly violent one. The region that would later become northern Europe was marked by Viking raids on Christian centers. Key to understanding the raids on the mortuary complex at Fort Center is not only the deliberate sacking of religious centers but the desecration of those holy places. When the Vikings set out to raid, they strategically selected centers that housed the burials of nobles and religious leaders as well as housing important religious articles. Archaeologist Cat Jarmon (2017) discovered a site, in Repton, England that was a monastery that was occupied by Viking raiders in 873 AD. The act of deliberate desecration was evident when the field team unearthed a mass grave of 264 dead Vikings at a consecration Christian burial site. In North America, anthropologist George R. Milner (2007) as a result of a systematic review of the literature discovered that beginning in late half of the first millennium, 500 AD, the period known as the Late Woodland, that inter-group relations “took a turn for the worse” (Milner 2007), Milner’s research that relied on evidence of skeletons with “conflict-related injuries in a single grave” (Milner 2004). His study

used all available evidence Midwest and eastern North America from the Middle Archaic Period to the historic. The study allowed to generalize based on the quantity of such evidence, periods with increased warfare as well as, periods with a decline in such violence. Milner used Webster (1999) to define Warfare as

“lethal fighting among separate communities that is viewed as a legitimate, even desirable means of advancing a group position relative to that of its neighbor”

Milner emphasized that in eastern North America such warfare between settled hunter-gathers and settled agriculturalist was predominantly a raid by a small band (Milner 2007) While Florida data were not included in the study and resulting data, this is most probably the result to two trends. First, especially in south Florida, very little research has been initiated (Milanich 1994). Secondly there has been a marked trend by professionals in the field in eastern North America to avoid evidence of violence by native groups based on personal philosophical and or political bias (Milner 2007). Milner’s study provides support for the dating of the construction of the Fort Center ceremonial complex (Sears 1982, Thompson et al. 2013). The research shows that the Middle Woodland Period, the period when attentions were focused on building the Great Circle and the mortuary complex, Sears’ Glades II, was a period characterized by a significant reduction in violence. This period was marked by increased contact and trade. Milner stated that “it is probably no coincidence” that this peaceful period occurred precisely when social group boundaries were “relatively permeable”. This is a very important point and a point once again supported by the imported artifacts unearthed and cataloged by Sears at Fort Center. In order for the attack on the center between AD 700 to AD 900, the mortuary complex must have been well known outside of the region. Florida anthropologists Thomas J. Pluckhahn (2010) believes that based on his research and the similar material record at three major ceremonial centers, Kolomocki, Chrystal River and Fort Center, that more than likely during the peaceful period of contact, long distance and trans regional pilgrimages were likely. When you consider the visual spectacle of the mound complex with the pond and the abundance of animal and bird effigies, Pluckhahn’s theory has merit. Further support for the attack scenario can be found in the work of Dye and King (2007). While their research focused primarily on raiding forces bent on the desecration of mortuary complexes and ancestor temple in southeast North America during a later Mississippi Period, desecration of religious sites was common then and continues around the world in present time. Dye and King characterized the large number of recorded raids of temple sites as inter-social conflict that

“was part of an elite-coordinated strategy for wresting prestige goods and followers from neighbors. A key ingredient of chiefly warfare strategy was the destruction of sacred temples and desecration of their contents to annihilate or appropriate a rival’s power”

Dye and King stated further that by desecrating the ancestral remains, a rival would destroy a key source or symbol of his authority. Examples in support of these assertions were numerous. Examples that included mortuary complexes also were plentiful and included: the Toqua Site,

Tennessee, AD 1200 (Polhemus 1987); The Jonathan Creek site, Tennessee, AD 1350 (Schroeder 2003); Etowah, Georgia AD 1450 (Brain and Phillips 1996), (King 2003), Moorehead 1932) and the Chucalissa Site, Tennessee (Milner 1999). One of particular support to this paper, the Towosahgy Site, Tennessee (Price and Fox 1990) had evidence of burning and destruction that included the large deposit cast down from the top of the mound. The evidence from Sears more than suggests acts of unspeakable violence intended to desecrate the religious complex and holy place at Fort Center. One only needs to read the news to witness such behavior continuing today. For years now, radical Islamic groups have raided, burned and desecrated Christian churches throughout the Middle East. Further east militant Islamic groups have raided and destroyed Buddhist shrines, religious antiquities of the only truly nonviolent world religion. Nor has North America been spared insults to injury, especially in the use of human feces to desecrate holy places. A simple online search produced countless articles of individuals using human feces in acts of desecration. Recent examples include: A swastika made from feces painted on a wall on the campus of the University of Missouri (2015), Feces and the tearing of the Koran, Pflugerville Texas Mosque (2015), feces used to desecrate a Santa Monica, California synagogue (2016) and feces used to desecrate the altar and statues, Catholic Church, Bowling Green, Missouri (2016). There has also been an increase in desecration of religious icons especially the Roman Catholic statues of the Virgin Mary. In 2015, Muslims destroyed and then urinated on a statue in a church in Perugia, Italy. In 2016, vandals decapitated a statue and severed the hands in Burlington, Massachusetts. Historically whether we are discussing the use of human excrement as an act of desecration in AD 700 at Fort Center, Florida, or AD 2016 in Bowling Green, Missouri, the intended purpose was to make a statement and to demoralize the people associated with the holy site.

Misunderstandings concerning Fort Center

A very understandable reason for William Sears and later archaeologists for viewing the events at the Fort Center mortuary complex as benign in cause and implications were the way they viewed the Mayaimi and the people around the lake in general. Much of what is believed to be so is based on a description by Escalante de Fontaneda. In 1565, besides drawing attention to these people as subjects of the Calusa chiefdom, he stated that:

“These Indian occupy a very rocky and very marshy country. They have no product of mines, or thing that we have.”

Sears referred to their skeletal remains as showing that they were “gracile”. Sears theorized and later Milanich concluded that the people characterized as Belle Glade came to occupied the area between BC 1000 and BC 500. That around BC 200 no more than 100 individuals lived in higher lands around Fort Center at approximately BC 200 (Milanich 1998). Correspondingly why would any neighbor perceive what appeared as a peaceful, simple and lacking in power? community as a “desirable” target for raids designed to destroy their reputation and source of power? My research has found ample proof that from Fort Center’s earliest beginnings as a

ceremonial complex it was a joint and cooperative effort by the Mayaimi and the powerful Calusa, this coming together for mutual benefit became first very noticeable in the very building of the mortuary complex. First the integration a man-made pond, the water feature being characteristic of Calusa beliefs, symbolism and engineering, a feature found no where else in southeastern North America. Second, another feature found nowhere else, the use and proliferation of carved wooden animal and bird effigies in a naturalistic style. It is true that the people around the lake lacked all the important exotic mineral resources so they benefited greatly through cooperation and trade with the Calusa. It would also be true that they lacked the qualities necessary to adequately defend themselves. Another invaluable service from alliance with the Calusa Chiefdom. In return, the Calusa became identified and gained both political, as well as spiritual power, real power in an area designated from the time of the Paleo-Indians as sacred, the Great Lake, Okeechobee. This being the case in AD 700, the raid on the mortuary complex from a rival neighbor was an attack on a very visible and increasingly more powerful Calusa polity that had extended its influence throughout the interior regions of south Florida. Me calculations in this area can be amply supported by math. The sheer scale of the Great Circle and adjoining mortuary complex could never find logic as well as support in Sears' or Milanich's views. The number of volunteers and their labors required to build both features while leaving many to their subsistence responsibilities would be the many hundred to a thousand plus. The size of the Great Circle, now believed to be a ritual center (Thompson et al) could have easily accommodated a thousand to fifteen hundred participants when it was completed. When you add to my assertions those of Pluckhahn's pilgrimages theory, it becomes increasing clearer how a rival neighbor would target Fort Center.

Could it have been the usual suspects?

While researchers have successfully surveyed the literature and documented the effects of raids and the effects of the violence using the skeletal remains, or in the case of Fort Center, the charred debris, rubble and desecrated dead, they cannot use such data to finger the perpetrator. The Florida peninsula during the Middle Woodland Period into the historic changed very little as far as the key regions, their cultures and polity. Even without considering the artifacts associated with the Fort Center mortuary complex, it is possible to use historical accounts of warfare and theorize that those rivalries had long histories going back centuries. As my research sows conversely that there is evidence of alliances and peaceful exchanges between tribes in all areas of south Florida for twenty-five consecutive centuries. Before employing historical evidence in the literature, on powerful and influential neighbor's ceramics were not found by Sears at the mortuary complex, namely Weedon Island (Sears 20-32). As soon as there are Europeans in the region, there are multiple accounts of warfare between the Calusa south central Indians and the Tocobaga and Indians in the Tampa Bay area. While there was for over twenty-five centuries a buffer zone between these dominant chiefdoms, the very beliefs and subsistence practices had no common ground. By virtue of their identities and inability to compromise, tensions lasted as long as they survived as a people.

Because archaeology provides conclusive evidence of warfare in prehistoric times and for

the purpose of this paper, excavations can also show evidence of desecration of religious sites, avoidance of such evidence robs us of a fuller knowledge of the human condition (Milner 2007). According to Milner in eastern North America,

“archaeologists for several decades prior to the 1990’s steadfastly clung to a romantic view of a peaceful prehistory, an idea with deep roots in Western thought about humankind’s natural state.”

My assessment is that this romantic view is much more pervasive and in terms of American anthropologists and archaeologists trained as they have been in our universities, what has resulted is not so much a romantic view of prehistoric people but rather a view of human history filtered through the lenses of civil rights and social and environmental justice. For support of my different view on the events at Fort Center, I have relied heavily on the collection of interdisciplinary papers on North American Warfare, edited by Richard J. Chacon and Rubin Mendoza, in their introduction they describe the current divide that exists both in academics as well as in the popular culture. Assumptions like those presented in this paper are viewed as an assault on the status quo and challenge the long-established archetype of the Noble Savage. They conclude that:

“For those attempting an impartial, or reasonably impartial assessment of Amerindian violence, the landscape of competing social, and nationalistic interests and agendas has become increasingly volatile and highly politicized. “

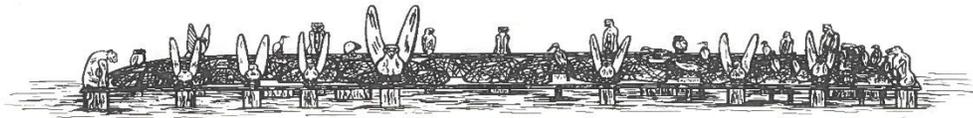
In 1968, anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon published his research from living with the Yanomani, hunter-gatherers in the Venezuelan rain forest. The book has sold a million copies and concludes that the Yanomani “lived in a state of chronic warfare”. He immediately became controversial and hated. Many of his peers attacked him and accused him of making up his entire study. The anthropologist I most often reference, Robin Fox created even more controversy and antagonism with the publishing of his work with Rutgers University colleague Lionel Tiger, *The Imperial Animal* (1972). Fox began a long, distinguished and unpopular career shedding light on the human urge to kill and to copulate in the past and the present. Fox and Tiger dedicated an entire chapter to “The Noble Savage “with discussions centered around the origins of and the biological directives involved with human ritualized violence and warfare. In 1989, Fox continued his investigations into human violence, in a chapter entitled *The Violent Imagination*, he continues his discussion of modern day preoccupation with social violence by illustrating that nature has no such problem or preoccupation. Prehistoric man lived in the context of nature and that in nature violence is never “a problem “. Any political responses to violence by prehistoric hunter-gatherers or agriculturalists lacks all reason and objectivity considering the people and cultures being investigated lived in the context for which these aspects of human nature were intended as the natural evolution of human adaptation. I agree totally with Fox’s assertions that humans are historically and culturally ill equipped to fit these parts of our nature into complex, industrialized, regulated and moral societies. Today the uproar over and admonishing of a

Parkland High School attack on students, or a sniper attack on concert goers in Las Vegas, both very organized and ritualized raids by individuals call attention to a persistence, but not a persistent problem. The vestiges of behaviors well suited for prehistoric life are a problem now, not then. Sears' dismissal of the causes for the evidence from the excavation of the mortuary complex at Fort Center was consistent with the archaeology of such sites at that time. Sears clearly believed in an evolutionary view of prehistoric cultures. This prevailing view saw all hunter-gatherers evolving to settled communities employing agriculture and more advanced technologies. His beliefs would not allow any data that would prove otherwise. Sears saw going into the project, based on the mounds and the intense engineering of the earthworks present at Fort Center, a parallel but substantially earlier Hopewellian expression (5). But as Chacon and Mendoza (2007) have charged Sears elected only the romantic view of a peaceful agrarian society. There was at the time considerable evidence of continual warfare between Hopewell that Sears' rejection of Calusa involvement with the building of Fort Center (5) was equally intended to distance the subject of his investigation from a group known from sources to be a fierce and fighting people.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the fieldwork by William Sears at the Fort Center site in the late nineteen sixties there is more than enough evidence that the mortuary complex was raided and deliberately desecrated between AD 700 to AD 900. This conclusion is supported by trends that have been verified by systematic research conducted related to occurrences of raids and ritualized violence by Milner (2007), as well as specific research related to raids and the desecration of mortuary temple sites in southeastern North America supplied by Dye and King (2007). There is ample evidence in the literature pertaining to the established hostilities between the Calusa and the Tocobaga in south Florida during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries AD (Goggin and Sturtevant 1964), (Hann 1991), (Matthews 1983). If so, the raid on and desecration of the site would represent one of the earliest in an epoch that would last another millennium. The large number of remains present on the charnel platform could indicate a period of attacks on villages in the area prior to the raid on the mortuary site. The event again based on Sears' chronology resulted in the closure and abandonment of the mortuary complex at Fort Center. Further, unlike attacks and desecrations elsewhere, the ritual center continued into historic times as supported by the building of new linear mounds nearby at the same site. The building of a second ritual center consisting of linear mounds across Lake Okeechobee referred to as Big Mound City was started around AD 1000 (Lawres and Colvin. (2017) further indicates that those responsible for and invested in the religious complexes around Lake Okeechobee, were not diminished by the attack and desecration, but rather rose from the ashes even long after the arrival of the Europeans. Sears' chronology does indicate that those responsible for the sacred site would not use the mortuary complex after the desecration and proceeded to take the remains and the rubble and secure them in the Burial Mound B. Further work will be required to determine with reason and evidence, whether the desecration of the mortuary complex at Fort Center was initiated by neighboring chiefs, such as the Tocobaga in south Florida opposing the rise in power and

influence of the Calusa polity in the region



Artist concept of Fort Center charnel platform with pantheon of animal and bird carvings.
William Sears, *Fort Center*, Gainesville, FL, University of Florida Press, 1982

REFERENCES CITED

- Brain, Jeffrey P. and Philip Phillips, Shell Gargets: Styles of the Late Prehistoric and
1996 Protohistoric Southwest, Peabody Museum Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts
- Dye, David H. and Adam King, North American Indigenous Warfare and Ritual Violence, edited
2007 by Richard J. Chacon and Ruben H. Mendoza, pp 160 -81
- Fontaneda, Do, d'Escalante, Memoir od Do d'EscalanteFonteneda Respecting Florida translated
1973 by Buckingham Smith, edited by David O. True, Miami, Florida, Miami Historical
Association of Southern Florida
- Fox, Robin, The Search for Society: Quest for a Biosocial Science and Morality, New
1989 Brunswick, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, pp 127 -49
- Goggin, John M. and William C. Sturtevant, Nonagricultural Society (with notes on sibling
1964 marriage in Explorations in Cultural Anthropology, Essays in Honor of George
Peter Murdock, edited by Ward H Goodenough. Pp 179 -219, McGraw Hill, New York,
New York
- Granberry, Julian, The Calusa: Linguistics and Cultural Origins, Tuscaloosa, Alabama,
University of Alabama Press, 2011

Hann, John H., Missions in the Calusa, University of Florida Press, Gainesville, Florida

1991

Jarman, Cat, New Research on Viking Army Camp at Repton, Periodical: Archaeology, March

2017 27, 2017

Johnson, William G., The role of maize in South Florida aboriginal societies: An overview, J

1990 Journal **article**: Gainesville, Florida, journal, The Florida Anthropologist Vol. 43 (209-14)

1991 Remote sensing and soil science applications in understanding Belle Glade cultural

Adaptations in the Okeechobee Basin, PhD. Dissertation, Gainesville, Florida,

University of Florida

King, Adam, Etowah, The Political History of the Chiefdom Capital, Tuscaloosa, Alabama,

2003 University of Alabama Press

Lawres, Nathan R. and Matthew H. Colvin, Presenting the First Chronometric Dates from Big

2017 Mound City, The Florida Anthropologist, 2017, 70 (1-2)

Luers, George M. Three Metal Ceremonial Tablets, with comments on the Tampa Bay Area,

2000 Gainesville, Florida, journal: The Florida Anthropologist, Vol. 53 (1)

Matthews, Janet S., Edge of Wilderness, A Settlement History of Manatee River and Sarasota

1983 Bay, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Caprine Press, (60-61, 393 -94)

Milanich, Jerald T., Anna S. Cordell, Vernon J. Knight, Timothy Kohler and Brenda J. Sigler-

1984 Lavelle, Mc Keithei, Weedon Island, The Culture of Northern Florida AD 200 – 900,
Orlando, Florida, Academic Press

1994 Archaeology of pre-Columbian Florida, Gainesville, Florida, University of
Florida Press

1998 Florida Indians from Ancient Times to the Present, Gainesville, Florida, University
Press of Florida

Milner, George R., North American Indigenous Warfare and Ritual Violence, edited by Richard

2007 J. Chacon and Ruben G. Mendoza, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, University of Alabama
Press, (182 -201)

Moorehead, Warren K., Description of Excavation Mound C, First Season in the Etowah Papers

1932 ed. Warren K. Moorehead pp 68 -87, Andover, Massachusetts, Philips Academy

Pluckhahn, Thomas J., The Sacred and the Secular Revisited, Tuscon, Arizona, University of

2010 Arizona Press, Becoming Villagers, Comparing Early Village Societies, ed.
Matthew S. Bandy and Jake R. Fox

Price, James E. and Gregory L. Fox, Recent Investigations of Towosalgy State Historic Park,

1990 journal: Missouri Archaeologist, 1:1 -71

Polhemus, Richard R., A Late Mississippian Dallas Phase Town, Knoxville Tennessee, University

1987 of Tennessee, Department of Anthropology Report, Vol 2

Schroeder, Sissel, Burning Down the House, Significant Dating a Configuration at Jonathan

2003b Creek, Carbondale, Illinois, Southern Illinois University, paper

Sears, William H., Fort Center, An Archaeological Site in the Lake Okeechobee Basin,

1982 Gainesville, Florida, University Press of Florida

Thompson, Victor D. and Thomas J. Pluckhahn, Constituting Similarity and Difference in the

2013 Deep South, the Ritual and Domestic Landscape in the Southeast, Gainesville, Florida,

The University Press of Florida, Early and Middle Woodland Landscapes in the Southeast

2013 Monomialization of the Ritual Landscape at Fort Center in the Lake Okeechobee

Basin in South Florida, Journal of Anthropological Archaeology, 31, 49-65

2014 The Modification and Manipulation of Landscape at Fort Center, Gainesville, Florida,

University Press of Florida, New Histories of Precolonial Florida, edited by Neill

J. Wallis and Asa Randall

