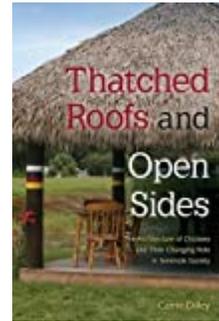


Carrie Dilley, Paul N. Backhouse. *Thatched Roofs and Open Sides: The Architecture of Chickees and Their Changing Role in Seminole Society.* Florida Quincentennial Series. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015. Illustrations. 216 pp. \$74.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8130-6153-5.



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The Seminole Chickee of the Past, Present, and Future

The *chickee* building tradition is one of the most durable material elements of the south Florida Seminole and Miccosukee cultures. More or less described exactly as simply as the title suggests, chickees are structures made of cypress or palmetto upright posts with roofing members made of cypress, pine, or palm, and generously thatched with woven and overlaid palm fronds. Their typically rectangular forms serve as cooking buildings and sleeping quarters. Chickees reflect elements of a pattern language that developed alongside the ethnogenesis of the Seminole and Miccosukee themselves as they adapted to life in the Everglades in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The chickee remained a part of *âcamp lifeâ* in the face of innumerable challenges faced by south Florida Indians in the twentieth century, and are a symbol of Seminole and Miccosukee identity today.

In *Thatched Roofs and Open Sides*, architectural historian Carrie Dilley presents a compelling examination of the chickee that is as much ethnohistory as architectural history. As Dilley describes it, the survey she undertook of chickees on Big Cypress Reservation in 2009-

10, as well as, arguably, her research into the history and cultural contexts for understanding these structures, was *ânot just about observing; it was certainly about experiencingâ* (p. 118). Where this book succeeds are in the many examples drawn from interviews with the Seminole on the significance of the chickee to them and in the many smaller details gleaned from personal contacts with Seminole and Miccosukee cultural informants and experts.

The book is organized into nine chapters with a foreword by Seminole Tribe of Florida THPO (Tribal Historic Preservation Office) Paul Backhouse. The book includes a robust index, endnotes for each chapter, and a bibliography. The grayscale figures are clear save for a GIS map of chickees showing distribution by function. Here, overlapping symbols (all the same-sized triangle) in largely indistinguishable shades of gray make this map less informative than it could have been. A heavier editor's hand was needed in chapter 8 (which summarizes the results of the recent survey on Big Cypress Reservation). Otherwise, the narrative is well structured and free of

technical jargon.

The work begins with an introduction to architecture and architectural history in general. This overview relies rather heavily on a few sources to briefly contextualize and anchor the topics explored throughout the book. Architect Amos Rapoport is relied on for cultural interpretations of architectural form and function. A few choice sources supply the underexplored roots of Seminole architectural patterns. For example, Peter Nabokov and Robert Easton's *Native American Architecture* (1989), a useful reference written for a more general audience, seems to be the primary source for situating chickee structures in the broader expanse of structures built by Indians throughout North America from prehistory to the present day. An overreliance on this source results in a brief but distracting caricature of the Ecological Indian with small, efficient huts derived from a nonmaterialistic, conservationist ethic. Of more interest are discussions of how prehistoric and early historic pattern elements were adapted to the environmental conditions of the Everglades.

Where Dilley's work truly shines are in her detailed descriptions of chickees: the methods and range of materials used in building chickees, the locations for harvesting materials, thatching patterns, variations in foundational and roof forms, and the placement and roles of

chickees within camps and throughout the region. Historical accounts and early studies, complete with reproductions of sketches and photographs, form the basis of this narrative. From these descriptions, testable models could be developed to evaluate via archaeological survey and excavation. Other well-documented and richly detailed sections include those on the evolution of the chickee and Seminole and Miccosukee cultures from 1840 to 1940 and during a period from 1930 to 1970 when federal recognition of the Seminole Tribe brought pressure to conform to "white" housing and standards of housekeeping, cleanliness, and safety. Here, Dilley expertly weaves local and national events and sources together with eyewitness accounts to depict a people adapting to modern changes with traditional chickee and camp life elements in tow. The closing chapter begins with a story about how non-recognized, Independent Seminole struggle to keep camp life traditions alive as illustrated by a legal battle with Collier County in the 1990s. This provides an interesting contrast to the current experiences of the Seminole Tribe of Florida as they incorporate modern variations into traditional chickee patterns and work to pass these vital cultural practices on to their youth. I highly recommend this book and hope it finds a place in the library of every southeastern archaeologist, architectural historian, anthropologist, and layperson with an interest in the intersection of architecture, tradition, and culture.

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