

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The field and laboratory research described in this chapter was funded by the National Geographic Society, the Bowditch Fund of Harvard University, and the Research Committee of Trent University. Obsidian samples for analysis were provided by S. B. Wyss and by the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. We wish to thank the directors of the National Museum of Nicaragua (Managua) and the Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History (Tegucigalpa) for their assistance and cooperation. Figure 13.1 was prepared by R. Fischer and R. Granda (Trent University).

14.

El Salvador and the Southeastern Frontier of Mesoamerica

KAREN OLSEN BRUHNS

THE MESOAMERICAN FRONTIER AS GENERALLY DEFINED AND THE WORK OF WOLFGANG HABERLAND

Since the beginning of scholarly study of the indigenous civilizations of Mesoamerica, people have tried to define what it is that sets these off from their less developed, or at least different, neighbors to the north and south. Most archaeologists use the elaborate trait list definitions of Lehmann (1920) or Kirchhoff (1943) to delineate Mesoamerica. These lists, which were based upon trait distributions at the time of the European invasions, include such disparate entities as chocolate, maize agriculture, ball courts, and hieroglyphics—things that, in general, were found among the core Mesoamerican peoples. Better put, a lot of these traits were found among some of the time. One should bear in mind that not all Mesoamerican cultures exhibited all these core traits; what is usually found is some selection, often changing over the centuries. For example, the lowland Maya ignored tortillas for eons; then they stopped playing the rubber ball game, although they did, belatedly, take up tortillas (after the European Conquest, when Mexican mercenaries may have brought this bizarre form of sustenance to the Yucatan). The question is, then, how many of these traits are necessary to be classified as a Real Mesoamerican Culture? The following thoughts on this subject concern the cultural affiliations of the ancient inhabitants of what is now the Republic of El Salvador, an area that was peripheral in location, at least, to both Mesoamerica and the Intermediate Area. These thoughts have been profoundly influenced by the works of Wolfgang Haberland who, although best known for his seminal studies of lower Central American prehistory, has made important contributions to the study of the cultures of southern Mesoamerica as well, especially in the frontier regions of El Salvador and Honduras. Moreover, Haberland's work concerning ethnicity and ethnic and cultural frontiers in the more southern regions has much to add to our understanding of the vexing questions concerning the southern frontier of Mesoamerica and its fluctuations through time. His

investigations in El Salvador have been especially pertinent to questions of just what it is that sets the frontier cultures off from their less developed, or at least different, neighbors to the north and south. Haberland's work is most valuable in this field because, unlike most Mesoamerican scholars, he has firsthand experience with the ancient remains of both Mesoamerica and the Intermediate Area. He has thus been in an excellent position to consider the basic differences between these two commonly accepted "culture areas" and the cultural exchanges between them. The word *exchange* is important, for many writers (cf. Willey 1971; Coe 1962a) have considered the Intermediate Area to be but a pale and flaccidly accepting reflection of the richer, more energetic societies to the north and south. Haberland's concern with the integrity of the Intermediate Area societies as well as those of the frontiers has thus provided a valuable platform from which to consider cultural affiliations, interactions, and exchanges.

In any event, by utilizing some version of the widely accepted trait lists, the southwestern frontier of Mesoamerica has generally been drawn along the Río Lempa, more or less in the middle of El Salvador.¹ This river has some useful characteristics, among which is the fact that it is big enough to show on most base maps and the spelling is simple enough not to further horrify nonspecialist students and readers (Figure 14.1). But like most approximations, this one is just about good enough for government work; it is not good enough for archaeological interpretation. This is especially the case, given the widespread acceptance of the ideas of Lewis Binford and his peers concerning the necessity for reconstructing the sociopolitical structure of ancient societies.

A SHIFTY FELLOW

The southwestern frontier has evidently shifted through time, so that an "average" for a boundary is not particularly useful, save in the most general usage. There are, moreover, serious methodological problems in delineating a frontier in an area that is as poorly known archaeologically as are El Salvador and its neighbors to the east and south. Just as serious a problem is our general tendency to think of the frontier as a sharp boundary. If one looks at the archaeological data, however, what one sees is a shading off of similarities in general, with discontinuous occurrences of foreign items, often luxury goods, on either side of this gray zone. For most of prehistory the region in which the majority of the gray zone was located was El Salvador. This was perhaps not true at the Lempa River, which, as Wolfgang Haberland has so trenchantly remarked, is highly unlikely to have formed any sort of a political or ethnic border. Broad valleys with high agricultural potential tend to be firmly in the hands of someone or other and seldom form a cultural mix. Haberland sees, inasmuch as one can actually draw a sharp line and say "here is the border," the small valley of the Río Jiboa, just to the west of the Lempa, as being a much more likely frontier zone (Haberland, personal

communication 1991). In addition, some years ago Howard Earnest remarked, in the context of reporting his salvage work within the inundation zone of the Cerrón Grande, that in this area, at least, the Lempa was more likely to have been a route of communication rather than a cultural barrier (Earnest 1976:60). That this was the case is shown by the abundant evidence of Honduran and other northeast Maya ties with El Salvador, at least during the Classic period. It may well be that it was the Lempa that served as the conduit for Mexican influence in eastern El Salvador and beyond, for this route would avoid the Maya states and chiefdoms of the Pacific Piedmont of Guatemala.

The prehistory of El Salvador is quite complex, to judge from those excavations that have been carried out and published since the 1940s, when John Longyear wrote his short summary of the prehistory of that unhappy republic (Longyear 1944). Even 50 years ago it was noticeable that the political instability of the present had extended not simply through the colonial period but also far back into prehistory. El Salvador is in an equivalent position to similarly troubled lands in the Near East—that is, in the middle. Whatever the time frame under discussion, one thing is certain: politics can be changed, geography just sits there. This locational instability of El Salvador has impeded archaeological investigation. In spite of the valiant efforts of personnel from the Museo Nacional "David J. Guzmán" and a fair number of foreign-led investigations, any detailed knowledge of cultural dynamics in this region is hampered by the incompleteness of the archaeological record and by the serious depredations of looters. These latter have greatly increased in numbers during the present civil war, as many Salvadorans sought to get something to sell for a nest egg when leaving their native land. Even the signing of a (limited) bilateral treaty with the United States, restricting the traffic in precolombian art, has had limited effect. Galleries and antiquities shows in the United States and Canada are filled with material recently ripped from unknown sites in El Salvador. The result is that there is really only a fairly general archaeological record for the zone in which the southwestern frontier of Mesoamerica was located. Moreover, this record has a number of key parts missing.

EARLY AFFILIATIONS OF EL SALVADORAN CULTURES

The earliest epochs of Salvadoran prehistory are little known. The rockshelter of Espíritu Santo in the Department of Morazán has traditionally had the best claim to being the earliest known site in El Salvador. Haberland's excavations there in the 1970s have indicated that the Zunceyo Complex may well be of considerable antiquity (Haberland 1991a). Other finds at the cave, however, indicate that this was an outpost of hunters who had some affiliation with the site of Quelepa (Haberland 1991a). This discovery is one of considerable importance because Haberland, I myself, and others have long

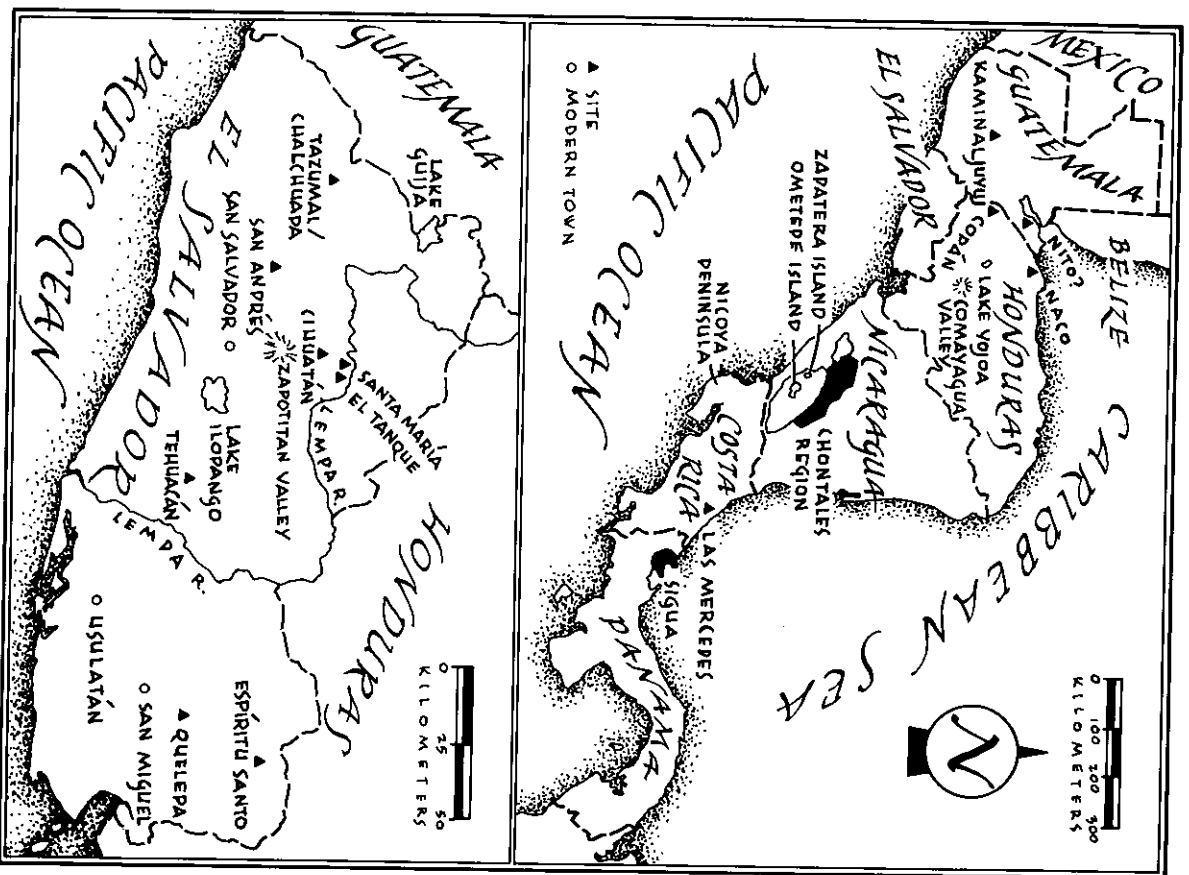


Figure 14.1 Sites and geographical features mentioned in chapter.

hypothesized that the major urban-ceremonial centers of Mesoamerica must have had marginally affiliated support groups who were engaged in hunting and gathering of needed wild products, such as meat. The petroglyphs of the rockshelter cannot be directly dated, and some engraved designs look suspiciously late (Haberland 1976b:figs. 5-14).

Considering the earliest ceramics in El Salvador, it seems more likely that either outright diffusion or stimulus diffusion from the northwest brought ceramics into the region and probably to the southeast as well. Some of the earlier ceramic complexes of Costa Rica look suspiciously Mesoamerican, and those of Panamá always had their closest ties with northern South America. On the other hand, it may well be, again as Haberland has suggested, that the polychrome traditions of the Intermediate Area were highly influential upon the earlier Maya ceramic traditions, bringing to them the technology as well as the idea of creating colored depictions on vessels. Polychromy was earlier developed in the Intermediate Area and seems to have always had a firmer hold on local ideas than it did among the Maya.²

The Middle Preclassic exhibits the first good evidence that El Salvador was known to the Mesoamericans and had something (or some things) that they wanted. The relief carved boulder formerly located on the finca Las Victorias (now moved to the Chalchuapa Museum compound) is the most southerly monumental sculpture of the much-traveled Olmec (Boggs 1950, 1971).³ A large conical earthen mound at El Trapiche is thought to have resemblances to the unique conical pyramid of La Venta (Sharer 1989:250-254). The closely related site of Casa Blanca may have a ball court, one of the earliest known in southern Mesoamerica, and, in general, the Mesoamerican pattern of ceremonial structures on high platforms laid out around con-tiguous plazas was introduced into this southern realm at this time.

Close ceramic ties between the Pacific piedmont of Guatemala, Chiapas, and El Salvador are evident in the Middle Preclassic. The famous Playa de los Muertos complex of north-central Honduras is also apparently closely related to these Mesoamerican traditions (Popenoe 1934, N. C. Kennedy 1986), and the Salvadoran varieties of "pretty ladies" and baby figurines are nearly identical to those from the general piedmont region and western Honduras (Haberland 1977b; McClesky 1976). However, although there are general resemblances among the various local ceramic complexes, as Demarest has noted (1989:312) there are no pieces with specific Olmec designs known from El Salvador. Even the general ceramic resemblances fade out away from the Chalchuapa-Abnuchapán-Güija region.

It seems evident that western El Salvador was always more closely related to mainstream Mesoamerica than the rest of the modern country. The Preclassic in the rest of El Salvador does not really look very Mesoamerican; however, based on wet-screen recovery of cacao hulls (Richard Crane, personal communication 1975), chocolate cultivation has been noted at El Perical in the upper Lempa drainage and pretty lady

figurines of vaguely Olmeclike-Mexican type are widely found throughout the country. Because numbers of the Lempa sites seem to have been affected by the Ilopango eruption and then abandoned (although there was still some occupation in the area), perhaps this eruption was the immediate force that cut off any tendency toward the Mesoamericanization of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, and local traditions by the Middle Polychrome period (beginning ca. A.D. 600) show little Mesoamerican influence.

There is, however, another viewpoint on Mesoamericanization in the Intermediate Area. Notwithstanding the lack of specific correspondences between eastern El Salvador and Mesoamerican ceramic traditions, Michael Snarskis sees at this time the penetration into Costa Rica of a Mesoamerican "mythic complex or politico-religious 'world view'" that included intensive maize agriculture and an interest in carved jade artifacts (1984b:31). Some imported ceramics, especially Usulután wares from El Salvador, also found their way into Costa Rica, along with other northwestern imports (Snarskis 1984b:32). If there was a penetration of symbolism along with the various artifacts (and certainly there seems to have been at least sporadic trade in jade items and, perhaps, pottery well into the Mesoamerican Classic), does this represent an extension of the frontier zone? It may be more likely, in this instance, that the appearance of Mesoamerican jade items, ceramics, and perhaps other items and their influence upon such purely local forms as axe gods are part of a generally growing cultural complexity in Costa Rica. One result of this growing complexity could have been that the new elites were willing to try anything exotic that would add to their nouveau luster. A strong and distinctively Central American cultural pattern was developing in lower Central America, and try as diffusionists might to find similarities in local ceramic and stone-working traditions, there is nothing definite that one can point to and say, "That is Mesoamerican." Trade appears to have continued between the two culture areas, and there seems to have been a recycling of Maya prestige items, especially belt celts, into Costa Rica. The information that necessarily accompanies any trade, even down-the-line-trade, may be responsible for the appearance of a number of Mesoamerican-looking elements in the Nicoya polychrome traditions. After all, we do not know what the jade came wrapped or packed in.

The Southeastern Classic

The Classic in the frontier zone presents us with a significantly more complex situation. With the lack of precise cultural chronologies for lower Central America, especially Nicaragua, it is difficult to pinpoint what was evidently a fairly rapidly fluctuating frontier. In the Chalchupana zone there was strong Maya influence in architecture and in ceramics, with Copador wares and imported vessels from both the highland and southern lowland

Maya regions occurring in some quantity. Teotihuacán Thin Orange pottery has been found as far to the east as San Salvador, although not in large quantities (Navarrete 1969), and Haberland (1976a) has seen some possible early Teotihuacán influence in figurines from the site of San Marcos Lempa and other sites in the eastern Department of Usulután. These ceramic imports occur along with other ideas drawn from the northwest, such as the ball game. Ball courts are common in Salvadoran sites of the Classic, including Tazumal, Cara Sucia, San Andrés, El Tanque, Tehuacán, and Quelepa, inter alia. The forms of the courts vary between the Mexican I form and that of the smaller, open-ended Maya courts; moreover, a fair number of stone models of ball game paraphernalia (yokes, hachas, and palmas) have been found in El Salvador as well (Haberland 1991b). However, even in these Mesoamericanized sites (to judge from their layout, architectural forms, and even a stela from Tazumal), there is a certain indication of a Central American presence (Lardé y Larín 1951). The stone sculptures of Cara Sucia—a site that has yielded (at least to judge from the illicit antiquities market in California) vast quantities of Maya and Mayoid polychromes, Salva polychromes, Copador, and similar Mesoamerican wares—are much more Central American in their inspiration. The famous jaguar face has close analogs to the unfortunately ill-dated (Early Classic?) "bathtub altar" of Quelepa. Other sculptures with their serpent or death forms are as Central American as Mesoamerican in their thematic inspiration (Boggs 1968–1975; Bruhns 1982).

The Mayas apparently were not the only people with an interest in El Salvador. By the Late Classic one can make a good case for the frontier zone having moved east beyond the Lempa as far as near San Miguel, where during the Lepa phase of Quelepa (A.D. 650–1000), there appear I-shaped ball courts, hachas, yokes, wheeled figurines, elaborate modeled flutes, and other evidences of a nonlocal presence. The excavator E. Wyllys Andrews sees these exotic artifacts and ideas as reflecting a gulf coast presence and has hypothesized that there may have been peoples from the Veracruz vicinity resident at Quelepa, perhaps as traders (1976:185). Veracruz influence is visible in other areas of El Salvador as well. Wheeled figurines, widely considered a gulf coast invention, are very common in El Salvador, as are, later, numbers of other artifacts, including large clay effigies and some strange, Plumbate-related ceramics (Boggs 1973; Casasola 1976–1977; Bruhns 1982). It is possible, of course, that sites in western El Salvador acquired some of these Veracruz-inspired items from their eastern neighbors; context is so poor for many of the known artifacts that any further interpretation is not indicated.

Between Quelepa and Chalchupana there apparently existed a far less homogeneous situation. San Andrés exhibits Mesoamerican features of a generalized sort in its architecture; the ceramic complex contains both Uta-Yojoa (Bablonia) and Copador polychromes. A Late Classic cache from a small platform adjacent to the main plaza contained an eccentric

flint of Peten manufacture, indicating that not all influence or contact was from the same region or the same Maya. In the Zapotitán Valley there is evidence of a re-entering and growing population following the Early Classic Ilopango disaster, but cultural patterns do not show any great exterior influence (Black 1983). This is not the case in the Lempa region of north-central El Salvador: here Copador-related wares are common at nucleated ritual centers such as Santa Bárbara and El Tanque, as are some stuccoed vessels with Maya motifs and other artifacts clearly related to those of the Copán-Quirigua realm (Crane 1975; Earnest 1976; Fowler 1976). Maya-style ball courts are also present in this region (Haberland 1991b).

By the Terminal Classic it appears that El Salvador was a mosaic of Mesoamerican presences and influences, with both gulf coast peoples and Mayas vying for a toehold of whatever sort in the rich, well-watered lands of El Salvador. Maya influences are strongest from Chalchupapa around to the Honduran border area, whereas the Mexican "sphere of influence" was to the east, past the Río Lempa, in the San Miguel region. Beyond this, there is a problem. The question of the relationship between the Ulúa polychromes and the Nicoya polychromes is open. Even given the (earlier) posulated Chorotegan intrusion into Costa Rica, much of lower Central America was very definitely not Mesoamerica-oriented and evidences of trade are limited to small luxury items that were reworked into local value systems. Although it has been claimed that the entrance of Mesoamerican peoples into Nicaragua began at this time, there is no real evidence, and it is perhaps best to keep an open mind. It is clear, however, that the Mesoamerican traits in Nicaraguan Lake sculpture, a somewhat later phenomenon, are Mexican, not Mayan (Zelaya Hidalgo, Bruhns, and Dotla 1974; Bruhns 1986, 1992). On the other hand, everything else about the lake cultures is much more strongly related to the Intermediate Area (Haberland 1986). The Classic period cultures around the Gulf of Fonseca are likewise not Mesoamerican in any particular. All of this suggests that, except for a gulf coast enclave at Quelepa (and perhaps another at Tehuacán), the Río Jiboa-Río Lempa boundary was still by and large the place where Mesoamerica ended.

Postclassic Changes: Migrations and Trade

With the Early Postclassic there appears some disruption of this picture. The single most salient event of the Terminal Classic was, of course, the much debated Maya "collapse," and this seems to have had some serious repercussions within the frontier zone. Although Chalchupapa continued as an important population center and although Robert Sharer and his colleagues (1978:vol. 3, p. 128) report evidence of trade with the northwest in the form of Tohil Plumbate pottery, the limited evidence available suggests that there had been changes in both local structures and in exterior interactions. Tohil Plumbate is sometimes used as an indication of the Pipil presence, that is, a movement of Nahuatl-speaking peoples into El Salvador, presumably

bypassing the still Maya-speaking, although Mexicanized, peoples of highland Guatemala.

However, the relationship of a given linguistic group with this widespread trade pottery cannot be substantiated. Tohil Plumbate is commonly thought to have been manufactured in Guatemala (although there is a minority view on this topic that sees definite gulf coast participation in the invention of the technique, if not in the full development of Tohil Plumbate [cf. Shepard 1948; Bruhns 1980b]). The Postclassic Maya were definitely participating in the expanded trade networks that brought a certain surface internationalization to Postclassic cultures (McKillop 1989; Henderson 1976, 1977). These late Maya were not Mexicans either linguistically or culturally. Haberland (1977a) identifies the Pipil with a local Salvadoran ceramic type, Marihua Red-on-Buff, which is Late Postclassic, although it may well have its roots in earlier styles. Marihua Red-on-Buff is not, for example, found at Cihuatán, a site that has been identified with the Pipil ethnic group (Fowler 1989:43-45)—erroneously in my opinion, for the site was abandoned early in the Postclassic. It is poor practice to identify prehistoric sites with historic cultures, especially when the material remains of the historic culture itself still must be satisfactorily identified. Elsewhere in El Salvador, in the southeast Quelepa was abandoned, and in the central area sites in the Zapotitán Valley are reported to be fewer but larger and more nucleated. San Andrés was used only as a pilgrimage center, and the Lempa sites were abandoned. From Cihuatán, on the route from the coast and the western valleys to the Lempa and the main route to Honduras, we have evidence of where the population went. Cihuatán is a huge, sprawling site with one main and a number of peripheral ritual centers, including one in the Lempa Valley proper (Sta. María) (Bruhns 1980a; Fowler and Solís 1977). It is possible that these sites formed some sort of hierarchy, although under a different aegis than in the Late Classic. The major ceremonial center at Cihuatán has I-shaped ball courts, talud-tablero construction, large clay statues of Mexican deities (Xipe, Mictlantecuhli), spiked hourglass incensarios, and a host of other traits closely linking it with México, especially with Veracruz. Are these the retrenched Veracruzanos of Quelepa, or do we see here yet another gulf coast attempt to take over the cacao- and cotton-growing lands of the region (Bruhns 1980a), this time without substantial Maya interference? The existence of similar ceramics (Xipe statues) as offerings in Lake Güija suggests several routes of entry into El Salvador as well as the continuation of the use of this lake as an important offering site, which it had been since the Middle Preclassic (Boggs 1976, 1977). Cihuatán itself was burned after a short occupation and abandoned. What the evidence suggests is at least a momentary retrenchment of the Mesoamericans, among whom the Mayans were not able to re-exert any influence they might have had over the lands to the east.

The equivalent time period in South America and Central America is of some relevance to this fluctuating border zone. Elsewhere I have presented

the hypothesis that the custom of erecting stone statues associated with mortuary-religious structures is part of a long-standing Intermediate Area tradition, largely uninfluenced by Mesoamerican ideas of two- and three-dimensional representations and their proper use (Richardson 1940; Bruhns 1982, 1992). Although evidence from Nicaragua is as yet largely lacking, Costa Rica during this time frame shows increasing populations, large settlements, increasing architectural ambitions, and increasing warfare, which some scholars have related to competition over resources, coupled with ranked societies in which chiefs were continually seeking to increase their prestige through military victories and the wealth these might bring. Exotica are referred to by many scholars as being insignia of prestige, and it is, perhaps, in this light that we should look at the occasional finds of Tohil Plumbate and other goods from the northwest—results of a down-the-line trade such as has been suggested for Intermediate Area jade artifacts.

One important event of the Early Postclassic was the appearance of metalurgy in Mesoamerica. This may have been accomplished through an actual movement of metalworkers from the Intermediate Area to the Maya one; finds at Zalcuapa, at Mojo Cay in Belize, and at a number of other sites support this scenario (Lothrop 1936; Bruhns and Hammond 1982, 1983). It is likely that it was the collapse of Maya elite culture that made this transfer finally possible because traditional value systems would appear to have been modified by the events and changes of the epi-Classic–Early Postclassic (Bruhns 1989).

Although there has been much reference to the supposed movement of Mexican peoples into El Salvador and lower Central America, these movements are difficult to identify archaeologically. It bears repeating that neither statues nor potsherds carry linguistic information. By the Late Postclassic, Mexican-speakers had replaced Maya-speakers throughout much of western El Salvador. Their eastern extension is hazy, however. Sometime after A.D. 1000 (Yavó Escoto 1972; Fowler 1989) strong Mexican influence is evident in the iconography of the Nicaraguan Lake styles of sculpture, specifically on Zapatera Island. The neighboring and perhaps coeval Chontales style shows few such northern borrowings (Zelaya Hidalgo, Bruhns, and Dotla 1974). The pottery associated with sculpture-bearing sites is not Mesoamerican, nor are the location of the staturary, site layout, mortuary practices, etc. It is known that the Nicaraos were speaking a Mexican language, although they had such un-Mexican habits as hammocks and coca chewing. In any event, it would appear that the real frontier, the region of an active cultural mix, moved down into Nicaragua in the Middle Postclassic, resulting in islands of Nahuatl, Lenca, and other linguistic groups through El Salvador and northern Nicaragua at the time of the Conquest. Exactly who was involved is a moot point, although

the ubiquitous gulf coasters could well have been a part of this movement. Slightly later this Mexican presence (whatever it may have been) appears in Costa Rica. The site of Las Mercedes exhibits a somewhat nonlocal layout; the staturary at this site is definitely part of the local tradition in theme and utilization, but its style is hauntingly reminiscent of the Toltec-Aztec tradition of full, round representation in a hyperrealistic vein (Hartman 1901). There is also some evidence of copying the idea of chacmools (Richardson 1940; Bruhns 1992), if not their northwestern function, in Costa Rica during the last few centuries before the European invasions.

So where do we draw the line? Was Mesoamerica really expanding the way it has been suggested? And what is expansion? Is it the copying of exotic details on local staturary, which suggests that the local elite may have been buying high-style headdresses from their local Veracruzano boutique? Is it the exchange of personnel, such as might be seen in the transfer of metallurgical techniques to the Mayas and Mexicans and the presence of such colonies as the elusive Sigua of northern Panamá (Lothrop 1942b)? There is a peculiar, restricted quality to much of our information from before the Spanish *entradas*: most of this material is from elite contexts. So the question is: Does having a foreign-influenced elite or even an imported elite make for a frontier? These are all questions that we cannot, as yet, answer archaeologically. It seems clear that the southwest frontier fluctuated continually and that the evidence of its size and location at any given time, especially in a period of rapid cultural and ethnic change such as the Early Postclassic, is going to be equivocal. After all, artifactually, linguistically, and ideologically, is Tijuana Mexican or North American?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I presented an earlier version of this chapter at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in 1987. I would like to thank Julie Benyo and John Weeks for the invitation to participate in the symposium “Late Prehistoric and Early Historic Indigenous Societies in Northern Central America: Recent Archaeological and Historical Research” and Patricia Urban and Edward Schortman for thinking of me in connection with their work on the southeastern frontier. I would also like to thank Patricia Netherly, Karen Stohert, and Ernesto Salazar for many fruitful discussions about yet another frontier far to the south. Wolfgang Haberland has, as ever, contributed substantially in terms of concrete data and ideas through conversations and correspondence. I am, of course, responsible for what I have done with these ideas.

Notes

1. The Lempa River boundary is the current favorite. Kirchhoff, however, favored a boundary that was farther to the southeast and which included the Nicaragua Lake region and Greater Nicoya; he was utilizing traits present in the contact period, a time later discovered to have been one of great expansion of Mesoamerican influence. Others, such as Reyes Mazzoni, have expanded Kirchhoff's trait list to try to refine belonging or nonbelonging to Mesamerica in specific regions. Claude Baudéz introduced the concept of concentric rings of Mesoamericanization within Central America and also tried to apply the concept of a fluctuating frontier zone to this model.
2. The idea that Central American polychromes may have been influential in the development of Maya pictorial ceramics is one that Haberland has suggested from time to time. Regarding the ultimate origins of Central American ceramics, independent invention, something that can be demonstrated to have occurred in both North and South America, is widely regarded as a heretical idea by Mesoamericanists. If independent invention of ceramics is not to be considered, then the most likely source for the early Salvadoran ceramic traditions is coastal Guatemala.
3. I prefer to avoid the question of the affiliation of the pot-bellied or boulder sculptures of the Pacific piedmont. Although they are widely claimed to be of Olmec inspiration, perhaps yet another "pallid reflection," it is just as likely that they represent a purely local sculptural expression, along with the "bath-tub altars" and jaguar sculptures that appear somewhat later along the southeastern piedmont.

15.

Lower Central American Archaeology: Some Comments as of 1991

GORDON R. WILLEY

The chapters in this volume have been as diverse and as encompassing as Wolfgang Haberland's interests and researches in lower Central American archaeology. Wolfgang has always been a very "catholic" archaeologist. Like others of us in the 1950s and 1960s, he was very aware of the importance of adequate "time-space structures," and he had a leading role in building these in lower Central America (Haberland 1955, 1960a, 1962, 1966, 1969). He was also interested in all of those things an archaeologist should be interested in—in subsistence, technology, trade and exchange, and the evidences for past ritual behaviors—and in examining the ethnographical record to see what light it might throw on the archaeological one (Haberland 1961a, 1964, 1968a, 1973, 1984a). All of these topics are treated in one way or another in chapters in this volume, and they compose a fitting tribute to an old and valued colleague in this field.

Although it has been a long time since I have been directly active in lower Central American research, I was pleased to be asked to contribute to this volume. At the same time, let me make it clear that I am not attempting any kind of a conscientious summary or synthesis of the preceding writings. I leave that exacting task in the capable hands of Frederick W. Lange. Instead, I will indulge in more random and general comments, prompted by the works of our colleagues.

I will begin with the obvious. I think most of us have always looked upon lower Central America as being more "backward" or "retarded" in the development of archaeological time-space systematics than, say, Mesoamerica or Perú. And yet, we must remember that the eminent European prehistorian C. V. Hartman (1901, 1907) carried out both stratigraphy and grave lot seriations in Costa Rica in the early twentieth century (see also Rowe 1959). This was a few years before Manuel Gamio's (1913) Valley of México stratigraphy and as early as another great European archaeological scholar, Max Uhle (1903, 1910), began putting the Peruvian chronological house in order. But though Mesoamerica and Perú went on almost immediately from these early twentieth-century beginnings, there was a distinct absence of a follow-up in chronological research in lower Central America. The two major