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Sommario/riassunto

Archaeologists are continually faced with a pervasive problem: How can cultures, and the interactions among cultures, be differentiated in the archaeological record? This issue is especially difficult in peripheral areas, such as El Salvador, Honduras, and southern Guatemala in the New World. Encompassing zones that are clearly Mayan in language and culture, especially during the Classic period, this area also includes zones that seem to be non-Mayan. The Southeast Maya Periphery examines both aspects of this territory. For the Maya, emphasis is on two sites: Quirigua, Guatemala, and Copan, Honduras. For the non-Mayan zone, information is presented on a variety of sites and subregions—the Lower Motagua Valley in Guatemala; the Naco, Sula, and Comayagua valleys and the site of Playa de los Muertos in Honduras; and the Zapotitan Valley and the sites of Cihuatan and Santa Leticia in El Salvador. Spanning over two thousand years of prehistory, from the Middle Preclassic through the Classic and the poorly understood Postclassic, the essays in this volume address such topics as epigraphy and iconography, architecture, site planning, settlement patterns, and ceramics and include basic information on chronology. Copan and Quirigua are treated both individually and in comparative perspective. This significant study was the first to attempt to deal with the Periphery as a coherent unit. Unique in its comparative presentation of Copan and Quirigua and in the breadth of information on non-Mayan sites in the area, The Southeast Maya Periphery consists largely of previously unpublished data. Offering a variety of approaches to both old and new problems, this volume attempts, among other things, to reassess the relationships between Copan and Quirigua and between Highland and Lowland ceramic traditions, to analyze ceramics by neutron activation, and to define the nature of the apparently non-Mayan cultures in the region. This book will be of major interest not only to Mayanists and Mesoamerican archaeologists but also to others interested in the processes of ethnic group boundary formation and maintenance.
