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Nota di contenuto	Frontmatter -- Contents -- 1. Introduction -- PART I. COPAN AND QUIRIGUA -- 2. Iconography and History at Copan -- 3. Archaeological Investigations in the Site Core of Quirigua, Guatemala -- 4. Peten Cosmology in the Maya Southeast: An Analysis of Architecture and Settlement Patterns at Classic Quirigua -- 5. Construction Activity as a Measurement of Change at Copan, Honduras -- 6. History and Characteristics of Settlement in the Copan Valley, and Some Comparisons with Quirigua -- 7. Late Classic Relationship between Copan and Quirigua: Some Epigraphic Evidence -- 8. Survey in the Outlying Areas of the Copan Region, and the Copan-Quirigua "Connection" -- 9. Interaction between the Maya and Non-Maya along the Late Classic Southeast Maya Periphery: The View from the Lower Motagua Valley, Guatemala -- 10. A Reexamination of Stela Caches at Copan: New Dates for Copador -- 11. Compositional Analysis of Copador and Related Pottery in the Southeast Maya Area -- 12. Copan, Quirigua, and the Southeast Maya Zone: A Summary View -- PART II. THE GREATER SOUTHEAST -- 13. The Periphery Problem and Playa de los Muertos: A Test Case -- 14. Late Preclassic Ceramic Spheres, Culture Areas, and Cultural Evolution in the Southeastern Highlands of Mesoamerica -- 15. Natural Hazards, Natural Disasters, and Research in the Zapotitan Valley of El Salvador -- 16. A Typological Study of

Prehistoric Settlement of the Eastern Alluvial Fans, Sula Valley, Honduras: Comparison to Maya Settlement Forms -- 17. Late Classic Settlements in the Comayagua Valley -- 18. Precolumbian Settlement in the Naco Valley, Northwestern Honduras -- 19. The Role of Commercial Agriculture in Early Post classic Developments in Central El Salvador: The Rise and Fall of Cihuatán -- 20. Naco, Honduras—Some Aspects of a Late Precolumbian Community on the Eastern Maya Frontier -- 21. Southeast Mesoamerican Periphery Summary Comments -- 22. Summary of Southeastern Periphery Papers -- Bibliography -- Index

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 Copán, Honduras. For the non-Maya 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 Zapotitán Valley and the sites of Cihuatán 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. Copán 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 Copán and Quirigua and in the breadth of information on non-Maya 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 Copán 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.
