

The meat of the volume consists of several individual site histories presented as chapters 3 through 9; but both Mayanists and nonspecialists are likely to find more of interest in the interpretive study of intersite elite interactions by Linda Schele and Peter Mathews (chapter 10) and in Norman Hammond's excellent appraisal of current knowledge of the Classic Maya polity (chapter 11). Well-written lead chapters by Hammond (1) and Mathews (2) introduce the reader to the subject of Classic Maya political history and its epigraphic basis, and T. Patrick Culbert, the volume editor, provides a fine summation and synthetic discussion of the volume's overall content and significance. Without question, this School of American Research Advanced Seminar collection will prove an essential resource and reference for all with a serious interest in ancient Maya civilization.

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Cuello: An Early Maya Community in Belize. Edited by NORMAN HAMMOND. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. Photographs. Illustrations. Maps. Graphs. Notes. xxi, 260 pp. Cloth. \$89.50.

Scribes, Warriors, and Kings: The City of Copán and the Ancient Maya. By WILLIAM L. FASH. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991. Photographs. Illustrations. Maps. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. 192 pp. Cloth. \$35.00.

These books report on two of the most important projects conducted in Maya archaeology during the 1970s and 1980s. The Cuello volume, which is highly technical and directed primarily to a professional audience, reports on the excavations at one of the earliest known Maya communities. The Copán book is oriented to professionals and nonprofessionals alike, and presents a synthesis of past and present research at a site often called the Athens of Classic Maya civilization.

The site of Cuello, in northern Belize, has long been in the limelight of Maya archaeology. Archaeologists and specialists in related fields, working under the direction of Norman Hammond of Boston University from 1975 to 1987, reported an initial series of C-14 dates that suggested the community had its beginnings more than four thousand years ago. A subsequent reinterpretation of the chronological data indicates a more recent initial occupation in the final years of the Early Preclassic period, c. 1200–1100 B.C. The site continued to be inhabited throughout the subsequent Middle and Late Preclassic periods (900 B.C.–A.D. 300) and, to a lesser degree, in the following Classic and Postclassic periods (A.D. 300–1400).

Remains of Early and Middle Preclassic settlements are rare in the Maya Lowlands, as they are almost invariably buried under the remains of later communities. In many instances, traces of these early occupations have been exposed only at the bottom of deep probe excavations. The work at Cuello, however, uncovered a substantial portion of one of the earliest sedentary villages in the Maya area, and the data have revealed important new information on early village life in the Mesoamerican tropics.

The final results of the project, presented here by Hammond and his colleagues, offer a fine example of multidisciplinary research and thorough archaeological reporting. The excavations are covered in minute detail, accompanied by a lengthy analysis of their stratigraphic and chronological implications. Sections of the report present data on the ecology of the settlement, its subsistence patterns (as reflected in the detailed analysis of botanical and faunal remains), population profile (as reconstructed from the remains of 122 burials), and settlement patterns, which include data on households as well as on the growth of the community over time. The picture that emerges is one of a small jungle village whose inhabitants cultivated corn, gathered plant foods from the surrounding forest, and supplemented their diet by hunting and fishing.

Other sections of the report focus on craft technology, production and trade, and evidence for reconstructing ritual and ideology. The early inhabitants of Cuello produced ceramic vessels and lithic and shell artifacts whose high level of craftsmanship is surprisingly advanced for a simple agricultural community. Moreover, the presence of numerous trade goods, including ceramics, marine shell, chert, obsidian, and jadeite, indicate that the inhabitants were actively involved in long-distance trade networks that grew in complexity throughout the Preclassic period. The community's complexity grew in parallel fashion, as reflected in the increasing architectural diversity, ritual activity, and evident social stratification in the later stages of the Preclassic period.

While the research at Cuello represents a major contribution to our understanding of early village life in the Maya Lowlands, it also raises some important questions. As Hammond pointedly notes in his conclusion, the data from the project clearly establish that the Lowland Maya had a well-developed agricultural lifestyle and a sophisticated ceramic and lithic technology by 1000 B.C. Did they migrate into the area with these developments already in hand? Or did Cuello develop out of an earlier tradition with settlers who made the transition from a hunting and gathering existence to a village and farming way of life?

The Classic-period city of Copán lies in northwestern Honduras, on the southeastern periphery of the Maya region. Although small compared to other Classic Maya centers, Copán is famous for its rich corpus of sculpture and hieroglyphic inscriptions, unequalled in the Maya area.

First reported by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century, Copán received widespread international attention in the mid-nineteenth century after visits by Juan Galindo and also John L. Stephens and Frederick Catherwood. Between 1885 and 1946, the site became the focus of extensive archaeological investigations, first by the Englishman Alfred Percival Maudslay and later by scholars from the Peabody Museum of Harvard University and the Carnegie Institution of Washington. A new series of archaeological projects, begun in 1976 under the aegis of the Honduran government, continues to excavate and restore the site; at the same time, an extensive program of settlement pattern studies has traced the development of the population of the Copán Valley from the Preclassic through the Postclassic

periods. As the most intensively studied of Maya sites, Copán has become a virtual laboratory for Maya research, and the list of participating scholars reads like a *Who's Who* of Maya archaeology.

William Fash's book presents an excellent overview of the past work at the site and an in-depth discussion of the results of the ongoing research, in which he has participated since 1976. He is currently the coordinator of research efforts at the site.

Copán was first settled in Early Preclassic times, c. 1200 B.C., and grew into a prominent royal city during the Classic period. Epigraphers have made a series of spectacular breakthroughs in deciphering the inscriptions at the site and have identified the 16 members of the royal dynasty that ruled the city from A.D. 426 to 820. During this period, the rulers erected hundreds of monuments commemorating the history of their dynasty, as well as an impressive array of pyramids and palaces decorated with elaborate facades bearing some of the finest sculpture in the New World. The population of the valley grew to 20,000, eventually placing a severe strain on the area's natural resources. Adding a new wrinkle to existing theories of the Classic Maya collapse, Fash suggests that the breakdown of the kingdom, already under that heavy environmental stress, was abetted by competition between noble lines striving for control of the state. Royal power came to an end shortly after 822, the date of accession of a final ruler, whose subsequent fate is unknown. With the demise of the royal line, the erection of monuments and palaces ceased, and the population entered a protracted period of decline and dispersal that lasted well into the Postclassic period.

The studies at Copán have provided new perspectives on the rise, growth, and decline of Classic Maya city-states, and the ongoing research promises important new data. A side benefit has been the large-scale restoration of many of the buildings, rendering the site one of the finest archaeological parks in the Western Hemisphere. Fash's book offers an excellent introduction to Copán, its history, and its monuments, and is highly recommended to all visitors to the site.

Both of these volumes are well indexed and extensively illustrated; the Copán book has a large number of color illustrations as well. Both represent major contributions to our understanding of Maya archaeology, and they belong in every major academic library.

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Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America. By DORIS SOMMER. Latin American Literature and Culture, vol. 8. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991. Illustrations. Map. Notes. Index. 431 pp. Cloth. \$45.00.

Foundational Fictions explores the close relationship between statemaking and literary production in nineteenth-century Latin America. Working backward from the Boom novels of the 1960s and 1970s (whose revolutionary implications have