The Ch'orti' Maya Area

Past and Present

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Who Were Those Classic Period Immigrants into the Zapotitán Valley, El Salvador?

Payson Sheets

For this book I was asked to explore the topic of Ch'orti' Maya southern expansion during the Classic period. Length constraints eliminate many topics I would like to include. The focus here begins with the Miraflores cultural sphere of the Late Preclassic and the devastation of the Ilopango eruption. The ecological recovery from that eruption provided internally uncontested territory for agrarian expansion, and the objective of this paper is to identify who the immigrants were and whence they came, as far as possible with the archaeological record, informed by ethnohistory, ethnography, and linguistics.

Ethnicity is a challenging topic for archaeologists, particularly in areas such as the Zapotitán Valley that do not have written records. Smooha (1985: 267) argues that ethnic groups form by sharing a combination of common descent, socially relevant cultural or physical characteristics, and similar attitudes and behaviors. The cultural components can include language, religion, politics, and of course, a wide range of other factors. Ethnographers can explore the degrees to which deliberate feelings of "us" versus "them" develop, and can explore why they develop, such as suspicion of others, fear of demographic incursion, "ethnic cleansing," or threat of military action. In this chapter I explore cultural traditions in southern Mesoamerica that probably could have been identified as belonging to one ethnic group, had an ethnographer been able to study them while they existed. In this case, that of people colonizing an area ecologically recovering from a colossal natural disaster, I do think we can perceive immigrants going to considerable efforts to maintain physical (arti-

factual) and mental ties with the areas from which they came (through built environment, site planning, and patterns of construction and use of vernacular and religious buildings). The occasional imported artifact is of little use here, but when people maintain a large domestic inventory of utilitarian pottery vessels that can be traced to a probable "homeland," we have a likely situation of ethnic maintenance. And when we can see considerable surplus production of foodstuffs or household crafts being exchanged for large assemblages of elaborately decorated food and drink serving vessels, imported from a considerable distance, we can perceive the possibility of people maintaining cultural ties with their areas of origin. Clark (2001) argues that those aspects of material culture that are deeply embedded in enculturation are the most useful to archaeologists tracing immigrants to their homelands. And most importantly, where people are free to construct their household spaces and the spaces in their religious buildings as they wish, and those spaces closely replicate the built spaces in a homeland, a compelling argument of ethnic maintenance can be developed. People's earliest experiences in growing up within a particular built environment are ethnically profound factors that are often replicated as they colonize new areas. People express their common traditions or history by how they build and use their spaces, and how they obtain and use their artifacts. Thus, with care, archaeologists can study ethnogenesis and the origins of immigrants over centuries and large geographic areas.

Prior Conditions: The Miraflores Cultural Sphere

The vibrant Miraflores cultural sphere extended from highland Guatemala into El Salvador from the Late Preclassic to the Early Classic period (approx. 400 B.C. to A.D. 400; Dull, Southon, and Sheets 2001). Extending from Kaminaljuyu to Chalchuapa (Sharer 1974, 1978b) and to the Pacific coast as well as farther inland (Figure 5.1), it was characterized by a florescence of complex society, monumental construction, hieroglyphics, calendrics including the long count, and a dynamic expansionistic economy. Sharer and Traxler (2006b: 132) note that Federico Fahsen has suggested the language written in the Miraflores culture of Late Preclassic Kaminaljuyu was Ch'olan, probably an ancestral language to Ch'olti' and Ch'orti'. Ch'olti' was spoken by people living north of the Ch'orti' area, but the language is now extinct. The high degree of material cultural similarity within this cultural sphere suggests that Chalchuapa and the rest of the eastern end of the sphere may have been populated by Ch'olan speakers.

Figure 5.1. The Miraflores cultural sphere in southeastern Mesoamerica. (By Payson Sheets)

The Copan Valley was non-Maya, apparently Lenca,[1] in the Late Preclassic (Andrews and Fash 2005; Marcello Canuto, personal communication, 2005). Maya immigration into the valley began in the Protoclassic period, about A.D. 100. Thus, the Maya predominantly occupied the area to the west and north of the Zapotitán Valley, in the early centuries A.D.

Apocalypse Then: The Ilopango Eruption

The Ilopango explosive eruption, dated to the early fifth century, was one of the greatest of the Holocene in the Americas (Dull, Southon, and Sheets 2001). The devastation to flora, fauna, people, soils, and the eastern end of the Miraflores cultural tradition has been documented in de-

tail (Sharer 1974, 1978b; Sharer and Traxler 2006b; Sheets 1979, 1983, 2002; Dull, Southon, and Sheets 2001). The tephra blanket (Figure 5.2) was pushed by prevailing winds toward the west-northwest, thus affecting western Salvador more than western Honduras. The population growth and stress on agrarian resources in the Copan Valley during the middle Classic (Webster, Freter, and Gonlin 2000) indicate to me that it might have been a source of immigrants who headed south into the recovering territory seeking uncontested farmlands (see Chapter 4).

Ecologic and Cultural Recovery

Volcanic ash deposits were far greater in western El Salvador than in Honduras. The two to six meters of ash blanketing the Zapotitán Valley resulted in its thorough depopulation for about a century, and the one-meter depth in Chalchuapa resulted in an abandonment of almost as long (Sheets 1979, 2002, 2006). Who reoccupied Chalchuapa? Demarest (1988) argues for continuity based largely on the ceramics. However, five major ceramic groups disappear from the Caynac into the Vec complexes, and five others evidently originate at this time, with four showing continuity (Sharer 1978b 3: 126–28). Perhaps the continuity indicates that many of the immigrants into Chalchuapa were descendents of the pre-eruption people. The discontinuities may be evidence of the depopulation, dislocation, and general culture changes during the generations following the eruption. In addition, some immigrants likely were descendents of peoples living beyond the zone of devastation who did not have to emigrate but who culturally shared much with the emigrants. Because Chalchuapa recovered environmentally and demographically before the Zapotitán Valley did, it too should be considered as a possible source of migrants into the valley. Non-Maya populations to the northeast, east, and southeast also need to be considered, and will be in the following sections.

The Zapotitán Valley: Immigrant Material Culture

Various elite-organized "top-down" migrations are known in Mesoamerica, such as K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo"s group from Tikal, or a nearby southern Maya lowland settlement, to Copan (Sharer and Traxler 2006b). Here I propose the migration into the recovering Zapotitán Valley was "bottom-up" ("bottom-sideways" is more accurate but has unfortunate associations). Commoners in need of arable land that was not already occupied may have been the first to move in. If this is correct, then the elite that developed to support long-distance trade and occupational specializa-

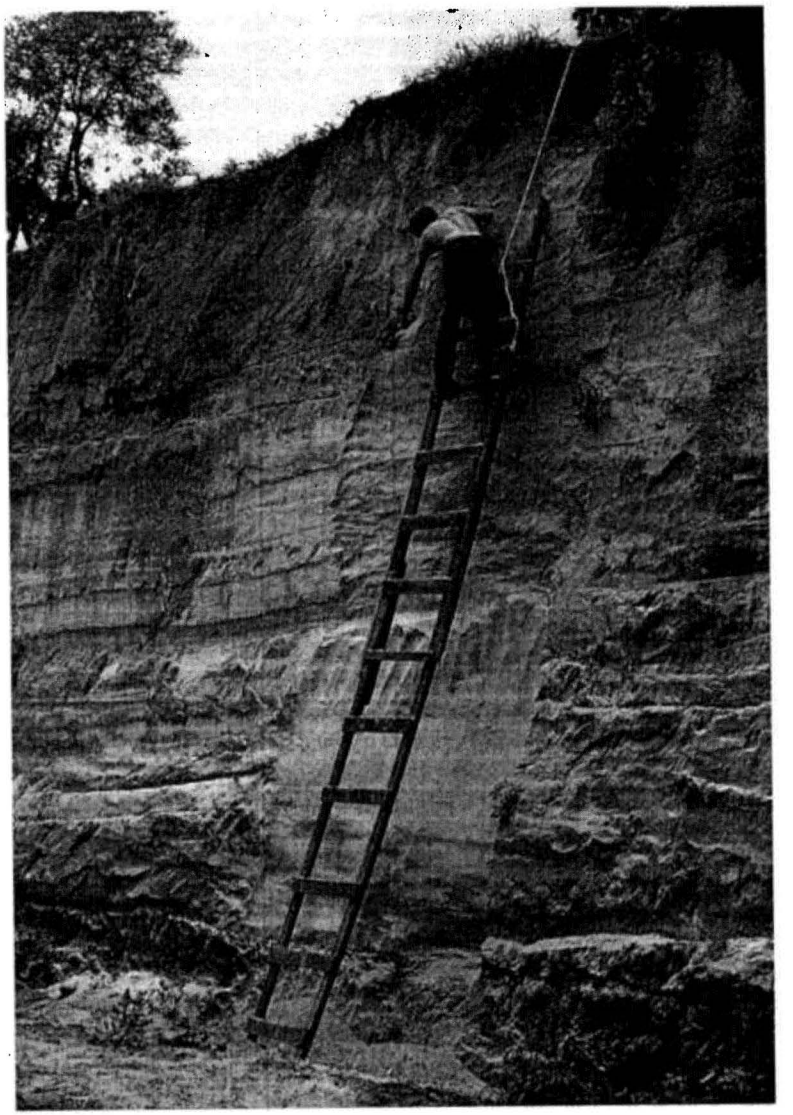

Figure 5.2. Volcanic ash from the cataclysmic Ilopango eruption, at the Ciudad Credisa site. The soil that was the ground surface prior to the eruption is the dark layer at the bottom of the bulldozer cut. There was a small village here. No people, flora, or fauna survived the eruption in a broad area around the volcano. This site is fifteen kilometers from the source, and the ash gets much deeper closer to the volcano. A total of seven meters of volcanic ash fell here. (Photo by Payson Sheets)

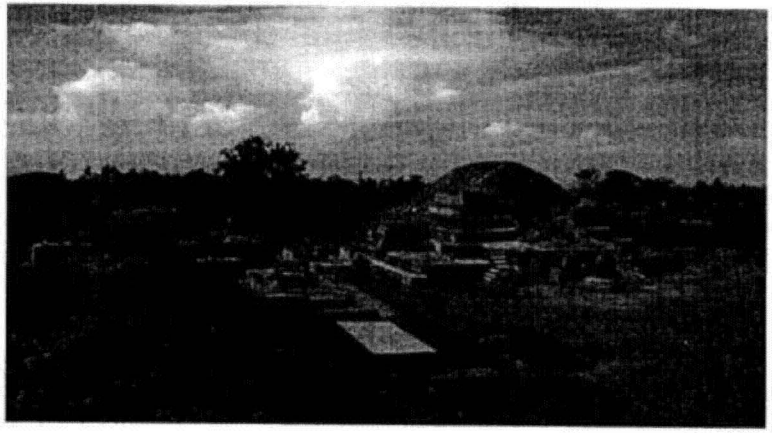

Figure 5.3. Campana San Andrés, the largest elite center in the Zapotitán Valley. A pyramid, with palace and storerooms on the left, bounds an elevated sacred plaza. Its architectural design resembles Chalchuapa and Copan more than non-Maya centers in Honduras and eastern El Salvador. (Photo by Payson Sheets)

tions were from local roots, not transplanted directly from another center. Transplanted elite centers, the result of top-down deliberate elite colonizations, resemble the original center as closely as possible. In contrast, the elite centers that emerge after commoner population movements tend to be more idiosyncratic, and resemble earlier elite centers only in some aspects.

San Andrés

The site of San Andrés, in the center of the Zapotitán Valley, was the primary regional center (Cobos and Sheets 1997) for the area of some one thousand square kilometers around it (Figure 5.3). Architecturally it generally resembles mid-Classic Copan, as both emphasize pyramids and temples defining sacred spaces around elevated plazas, but San Andrés is smaller in scale. Some artifacts are spectacularly Maya—such as the chipped eccentric of Belizean chert (the light honey-brown colored and exceptionally fine-grained, isotopic material from northern Belize), along with some ceramics—but portable artifacts are unreliable indicators of ethnic origins. San Andrés exhibits stronger similarities with Chalchuapa (Sharer 1978b) in architecture, in part because they both had better access to earthen construction material than to cut stone material. San Andrés and Chalchuapa were quite similar in artifactual inventories

during the middle Classic period, from about A.D. 500 to 700. Baudez (1986) contrasted the Maya penchant for massive construction with the smaller-scale elite centers of the non-Maya groups farther to the east in Honduras. San Andrés resembles his Maya characterization more than his non-Maya one. If the colonization of the territory recovering from the Ilopango catastrophe were under the impetus of commoner agriculturalists, then we would wish to examine their settlements more closely than the elite centers that may have developed afterward. The serendipitous Ceren discovery provides that opportunity.

Commoner Immigrant Materiality: A Close Look at Ceren

Ceren is the earliest commoner settlement yet known of the immigrants who moved into the recovering zone. When the settlers arrived, there were no local cultural antecedents, so their site planning, reflected in their built environment, and their basic technologies were brought with them. And I see no constraints on their constructing living and ritual spaces using materials that were locally available, other than the lack of easily quarried stone for massive construction. Thus, a close examination of what they brought should shed light on their origins. Ashmore (1986) has demonstrated the importance of site planning relative to ethnicity as well as cosmology.

Ceren Religious Architecture

Although I believe the construction and use of most if not all structures at Ceren involved religion, we can identify two overtly religious buildings at the site, both of which are located at the highest elevation within the community. They are at the easternmost edge of the village, overlooking the river. Both have the most unusual architecture in the village, in that they were painted white with red decoration, deviated from the dominant orientation of other buildings in town, and had deliberately fragile characteristics. Both had successively higher floors as one progressed toward the innermost rooms, a characteristic that Marcus (1978) and Becker (1971) identify as Maya, in contrast to the architecture of non-Maya groups farther east in Central America.

Structure 10 (L. Brown and Gerstle 2002) was built for community feasting and ritual focusing on deer (Figure 5.4). The moment in time preserved by the eruption coincided with the first maize harvest, as maize plants with mature ears were doubled over in the fields for drying. And the ceremonies at Structure 10 were underway when the eruption struck.

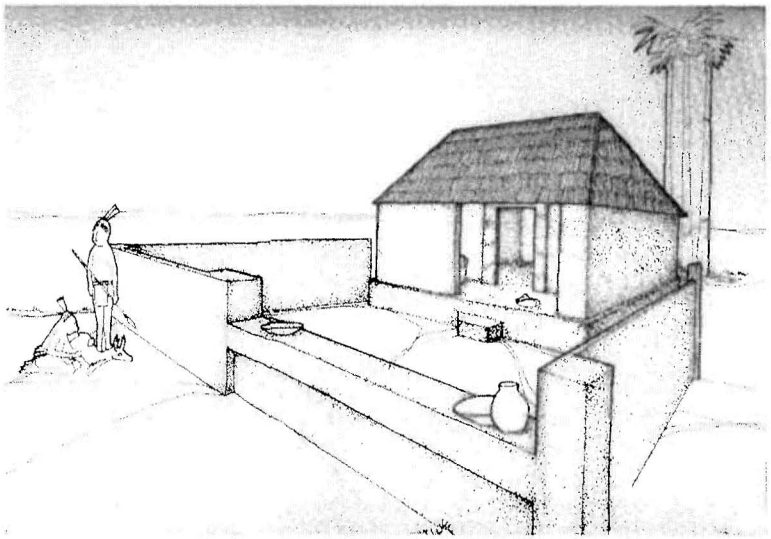

Figure 5.4. Structure 10 at Ceren, a building for community ritual and feasting. The rituals performed there focused on deer, probably symbolic of the fertility and productivity of nature. The feasting and rituals were underway when the nearby Loma Caldera volcanic vent erupted and buried the village under five meters of volcanic ash. The first maize harvest in the nearby fields was happening at the time, probably the reason for the ritual. (Drawing by Payson Sheets)

The ritual resembles the Maya "kuch" ceremony, which focuses on deer as symbolic of fertility of the earth and on giving thanks for the maize harvest (L. Brown 2001; L. Brown and Sheets 2001). The anteroom on the east side was used for food preparation and dispensing. The inner, upper rooms were used for storage of ritual paraphernalia, including a deer-skull headdress that was painted and still has the string used to attach it to a person's head. A caiman-effigy pottery vessel was full of achiote (*Bixa orellana* L) seeds. And an obsidian blade, presumably used for bloodletting, still retains human hemoglobin. Many deer long bones, scapulae, and antlers were kept in the building, along with elements of what may have been a ritual costume (L. Brown 2001). The architecture, artifacts, and beliefs and behaviors that enlivened them certainly relate more closely to the Maya than to the Lenca or other groups to the east of El Salvador.

Structure 12 (Simmons and Sheets 2002) is the easternmost building of the religious complex (Figure 5.5). It apparently was built for a diviner (shaman) to practice, not to live in. A collection of minerals and

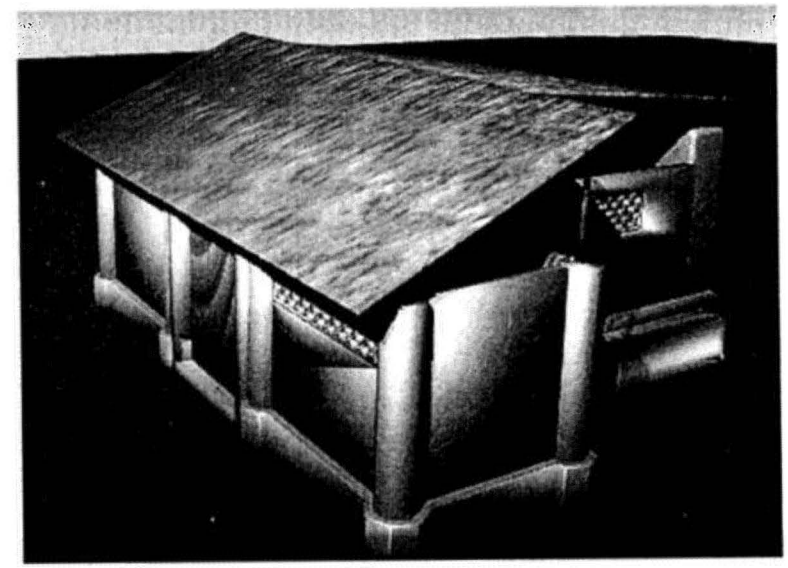

Figure 5.5. Structure 12 at Ceren, the other ritual structure at the eastern edge of the village, overlooking the river. It apparently was built for divination, and people would approach the lattice window in the front, communicate with the diviner, and if an accord was reached, leave payment in kind. The diviner moved through rooms with successively higher floors to the back room, cast her minerals or beans, read the pattern, and communicated the results through the lattice window on the right. (Electronic reconstruction by Payson Sheets)

two of beans could have been cast onto the floor, probably of the largest room, which also is the innermost and highest. A lattice window in the front (north side) could be used for communication between the diviner and the client, and the lattice window in the back room to communicate the result of the divination. Various artifacts that were left as payment for services remained in the structure, especially in the anteroom. All of the gender-specific artifacts found in the structure are female in utilization, suggesting that the diviner was a woman. For different reasons, there are few analogues with Structure 12 in the archaeological or the ethnographic literature. This building would be difficult to identify at most archaeological sites, with gradual abandonment and all the natural transformation processes that affect buildings in such conditions. Divination has been forced "underground" by centuries of pressure from Catholics; so traditional Mesoamerican diviners in contemporary communities do not build structures that are overtly for divination. Thus, it is difficult to interpret this structure in terms of ethnic origins.

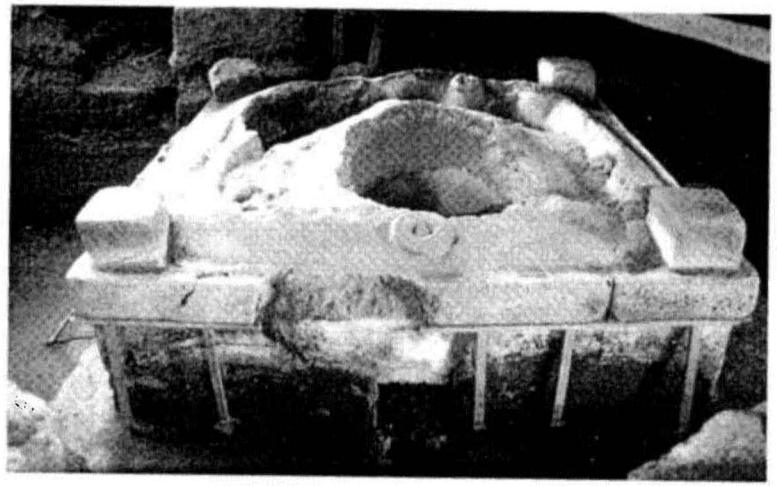

Figure 5.6. Structure 9, by Household 2, at Ceren This large sweat bath could seat almost a dozen people on a bench inside, around the firebox. It had a dome of wattle-and-daub that was protected from the elements by a thatched roof. Such large formal sweat baths are found in the Southern Maya Lowlands. (Photo by Payson Sheets)

Ceren Public Architecture and Plaza

The center of the village features a prepared clay-surfaced plaza, rectangular in plan, and cleared of vegetation. Facing it on the south is Structure 13, a solid earthen-walled building with a lot of artifacts, but about which we know little because it has only been touched by a couple of test pits. Facing it on the west side is the massive Structure 3 (Gerstle 2002), with its solid terre-pise walls, two interior rooms with big benches in the front room, and large porch. The building is interpreted as serving a political function, the adjudication of disputes. Two geophysical anomalies have been detected on the east side of the plaza, which may also be buildings. They have not been confirmed. Similar formality of relatively massive public buildings surrounding a prepared rectangular plaza within Classic villages has not been found in southeastern Mesoamerica. That is due, at least in part, to generally poor preservation of earthen architecture that was not suddenly interred.

The large sweat bath (Structure 9, Figure 5.6) maintained by Household 2 is included here under public architecture because it seated about a dozen people, well beyond the number of people in a single household (Sheets 2006). It could of course have been included under religious architecture, as current and ancient uses of sweat baths in southern Meso-

Figure 5.7. Model of Ceren homestead. Each Ceren household constructed at least three buildings, each with specialized functions. The principal building is the domicile, in the center of this electronic reconstruction, and built on a higher platform than the other buildings. The storehouse is on the left. The kitchen is beyond the left edge of this view. A small outbuilding is on the far right.

america involve much ritual and belief in cleansing. Large sweat baths are common in many Classic Maya sites in the southern lowlands, but absent in Lenca and lower Central American societies.

Ceren Domestic Architecture

The most striking aspect of Ceren residential construction is that each household built at least three functionally distinct structures (Figure 5.7; Sheets 2006). A domicile was the principal structure, for sleeping as well as a wide range of daytime activities. They built a bodega (storehouse) for storage of pottery vessels, tools, food, firewood, wood ash, pigments, and items that were in the process of manufacture. And they built a kitchen for food storage, processing, cooking, and storage of some miscellaneous other items. And each of these buildings had a ceramic incense burner, for copal, to convey messages into the supernatural domain. Ceren *incensarios* are stylistically most similar to those at Chalchuapa (Beaudry-Corbett, personal communication, 2005).

Each building was built on top of a low mound of earth, the edges of which coincided with the drip lines of the thatched roofs, to encourage moisture to flow away from the building. Then a formal earthen platform was created, square to rectangular for bodegas and domiciles, and

round for kitchens. The domicile platforms were the most substantial, and kitchens the least. After the moist earthen construction material dried, it was fired, presumably to make a harder floor and perhaps to impede the upward capillary movement of groundwater. Domicile and bodega walls were wattle-and-daub, locally called *bajareque*, and the vertical poles of all walls continued up to support the roof beams. The walls of the kitchen were thatched rather than mud-daubed. Roofs were thatched with grass. Both domicile and bodega roofs extended significantly beyond the walls and platform edge, creating a sheltered space used for informal storage and a wide range of activities. Both of these buildings had more roofed space outside the walls than inside.

The arrangement of buildings was informal, but apparently favored a north-south placement of domicile to bodega. The off-line placement of the kitchen, and the placement of a clay-laden hardened surface between the buildings, created an informal but much-used patio.

The most similar architectural structures contemporary with Ceren are the households excavated by the Penn State project in the Copan Valley (Webster, Freter, and Gonlin 1997). For instance, the Copan Valley household at site 7D-6-2 constructed three buildings for different functions. One was a domicile and another apparently was a kitchen. The sizes of the buildings at Copan and Ceren were roughly similar, with Copan domiciles larger than those at Ceren, perhaps because the former had been occupied for a much longer time. The floor plans of the domiciles at both sites are strikingly similar, with a step up to the front room and an interior partition wall with a doorway leading to a larger room. The Ceren kitchen was circular, however, while the Copan kitchen was a T-shaped rectangular building. Kitchens at both sites were on smaller, simpler platforms. An important comparison here would be to middle-Classic domiciles and kitchens in Chalchuapa vernacular architecture. Unfortunately, they simply are not known.

Portable Artifacts: Locally Made

The most common kind of household artifact at Ceren is pottery, and each household kept more than seventy pottery vessels. Of those, 75–80 percent were utilitarian vessels for storage and cooking. The most common utilitarian pottery belongs to the cream-slip Guazapa group (Beaudry-Corbett 2002: 119). Cream-slipped pottery was made at about this time some 350 kilometers to the north in the Petén, as well as in Greater Nicoya, some 400 kilometers to the southeast, and in a spotty distribution in between (Beaudry-Corbett 2002). Sharer (1978b) notes cream-slipped pottery at Chalchuapa when it was recovering from Ilopango, and

that seems to me a much more likely source than Greater Nicoya. The absence of *comales* (tortilla griddles) at Ceren is puzzling, given their presence at sixth-century Copan and Chalchuapa, and that in and of itself might point toward origins to the east rather than north (Beaudry-Corbett 2002).

Other artifact categories need to be examined to see if they "point" in any direction. Many painted gourds were found at Ceren, but their paucity at other Classic period sites in southern Mesoamerica makes comparisons difficult. A common decorative scheme, of a painted rim band decorated with alternating "U" and dot shapes, is not similar to any ceramic decoration that we have found at the site or in the country. The most similar I have seen is the decoration on the gourds depicted in the Late Preclassic murals at San Bartolo in northern Guatemala (Saturno, Taube, and Stuart 2005). Because of the years and kilometers separating San Bartolo from Ceren—both in the hundreds, with no intermediate links—I am reluctant to posit a relationship.

The chipped-stone industry at Ceren is eminently Mesoamerican, and bears no relationship with Greater Nicoya and virtually none with Honduras except for the Copan area. Thus, the chipped stone indicates that the colonists came from the north or west rather than the northeast or southeast. Cerenians did not manufacture any of their chipped-stone tools, but obtained them readymade from one or more of the many elite centers in the Zapotitán Valley (Sheets 2002). The obsidian came from Ixtepeque, 80 kilometers north-northwest of Ceren.

The Ceren ground-stone industry (Sheets 2002) similarly indicates a northern or western origin. The most expensive item that a household owned, and every household had one, was a jade axe. Household axes were used for woodworking, largely for shaping and trimming wood for building construction and digging sticks, and occasionally for making wooden vessels. Surprisingly, they all were unhafted. The source was Sierra de las Minas, 130 kilometers straight north of Ceren. The manufacture of these axes was difficult, and was presumably done by specialists attached to elites near the source. The same traders that carried obsidian macrocores southward into elite centers in El Salvador may have transported axes. The seven jade beads from Household 2 presumably followed the same route as the axes. The other ground-stone artifacts were made within the community, with Household 1 manufacturing manos, metates, and donut stones. Donut stones have a widespread distribution in Mesoamerica and Central America into the Andes, but are more common in Mesoamerica. At Ceren most were used as perforated mortars with wooden pestles, but some were digging-stick weights, and the larger decorated ones were used in yet unknown ways. The wide diversity of shapes, decorations, and

functions at Ceren do relate more to Mesoamerica than the Intermediate Area, and thus point toward the north and west as source areas. Manos and metates are very widespread and thus do not help much in exploring Cerenian origins. However, the cultural practice of having a well-used metate on the floor of a kitchen and others elevated by *horquetas* (thick forked stick supports) may be ethnically related. And the floor metate in the kitchen was used far more than the elevated metates, which may have been used only when village ceremonies were being held in the nearby Structure 10. At most sites however, neither *horquetas* nor their holes preserve or, if they do, they have been misidentified as postholes for roof supports. A hard greenstone disk found in Structure 12 looks to me more like a Maya sculptural insert or portion of a mosaic sculpture than anything else.

Ceren Portable Artifacts: Imported

Some spectacularly Maya artifacts have been found in San Andrés (elaborate chipped-stone eccentric) and Ceren (God N, a *pahuatun,* on a cinnabar paint pot), but individual artifacts say little about their owner's ethnicity. More significant are assemblages of artifacts. Beaudry-Corbett (2002) notes that about three-quarters of the pottery in domestic and nondomestic contexts at Ceren was made locally, by multiple producers, within the village or nearby. However, a strikingly high proportion of each Ceren household's ceramic vessels were cream-paste polychrome vessels, such as Copador. Based on extensive compositional analyses on these vessels and others in southeastern Mesoamerica, Beaudry-Corbett (2002: 124) states that multiple producers in the Copan Valley probably made them (Bishop and Beaudry 1994). However, Neff and colleagues (1999: 295) have challenged this, and believe the major source was around Chalchuapa and into Guatemala. In either case, it appears that Maya producers were satisfying Maya consumers, and there may have been subtle cultural or ethnic differences between producers and consumers. Within Ceren, it seems to me extraordinary that commoner households would expend so much surplus production to obtain fancy food and drink serving vessels, which make up about a fourth of their ceramic inventory, from such a distance. Might the objective have been to maintain connections with their ancestral homeland, and thereby to maintain a semblance of their own ethnic identity? If so, then the locus of cream-slip polychrome manufacture is of considerable significance. It seems to me that Beaudry-Corbett's data and argument are somewhat more convincing. However, she notes some other aspects that do not point from Ceren toward either Copan or Chalchuapa, such as the lack of *comales,* the prevalence of legged

plates, and the elongated horizontal "swimming figures" on cylindrical vessels. She describes these characteristics as what one might expect in a frontier zone.

Other Possible Source Areas for Immigrants

Quelepa, the largest site in eastern El Salvador, evidently was affected neither by the eruption directly, nor by refugees fleeing the devastated areas (Andrews 1976). Quelepa was continuously occupied from about 500 B.C. through the Classic period, and it had monumental architecture as well as a generalized Mesoamerican artifact inventory. Thus, Quelepa could possibly have been a source for the demographic reoccupation of the disaster zone. A close look at Quelepa architecture, with its huge terraces and ramps, however, indicates its lack of relationships with monumental architecture in the reoccupied zones. Vernacular architecture is unknown at Quelepa. The ceramics of Quelepa remain in the Usulutan tradition during the Late Preclassic through Classic periods, showing no relationships with the ceramics of the recovery populations. Andrews (1976: 160) found only 501 prismatic blade fragments at Quelepa and no cores, indicating that the site was at the very attenuated end of the Mesoamerican obsidian prismatic blade distribution system and, most importantly, beyond the manufacturing domain. In contrast, at Chalchuapa 11,135 prismatic blades and 115 polyhedral cores were recovered from roughly comparable excavation volumes and techniques (Sheets 1978: 11–14), providing a good example of a Mesoamerican locus of manufacture and distribution. I can find no artifacts, architecture, or other elements of culture in Early to Middle Classic Quelepa suggesting it was a source of people who moved into the recovery areas. Andrews argues convincingly that Quelepa was a Lenca settlement throughout prehistory, and the site maintained its closest relationships with peoples living to its north, in central Honduras.

Similarly, the central Honduran Classic period sites lack the massiveness of San Andrés–style monumental architecture, the elaborate core-blade technology, the cream-slip polychrome pottery, and the multiple buildings per household characteristics of the immigrants into the recovering territory. This is not to say that none of them participated in that expansion. But it is clear from the evidence at hand that the predominant culture of the immigrants was Maya.

Summary and Conclusions

Many scholars have noted the precocious Late Preclassic development of the Miraflores cultural sphere, extending from western El Salvador to

Kaminaljuyu in the Guatemalan highlands. Fahsen suggested the language in the western portion was Ch'olan Maya, and that it could have extended into El Salvador. The cataclysmic eruption of Ilopango volcano at the end of the Preclassic period, or more likely early in the Classic period, devastated the eastern portion of the cultural sphere. Ecologic, demographic, and cultural recovery from the eruption required many decades to a century or more in most devastated areas of central and western El Salvador. The issue here is who the people were who moved into the internally uncontested terrain. Descendants of the Miraflores refugees from moderately devastated zones or residents of the central areas of the sphere may well have participated in the reoccupation. A possible source for people would have been Chalchuapa. Copan is also a possible source for humans moving into the recovering territory. The Copan area probably was Lenca through the Preclassic, but during the Protoclassic a significant inmigration of Maya occurred, as documented in the lower Acropolis layers. The Early to Middle Classic population growth of the Copan Valley has been amply documented, providing another logical possibility for a source of people moving into the recovering lands. And, of course, it need not be one or the other, and in fact, it seems to have been a fascinating mixture of both.

Ceren was a village established early in the demographic-cultural recovery process, and thus is a key settlement to examine closely for affinities with groups surrounding El Salvador. Very few indications of Lenca or Greater Nicoya cultural characteristics have been found at Ceren or in the valley. On the other hand, the "deepest" elements of culture at Ceren apparently had their origins among people to the north and to the west. The planning, construction, and use of religious buildings and domestic structures show the strongest relationship with the Copan Valley during the Classic period, and with the ethnographically recorded Ch'orti'. The large sweat bath may indicate connections with the southern Maya lowlands. The majority of the utilitarian pottery at Ceren was most closely related to that at Chalchuapa. So, perhaps not too surprisingly in a frontier-colonizing situation, we do not have a single point source, but a combination of peoples and cultures moving into the recovering lands. The predominant immigrants were culturally Maya, perhaps with occasional people and cultural characteristics from neighboring non-Maya groups.

Acknowledgments

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Note

1. In this chapter the terms *Lenca* and *Maya* are used in their general senses, and should not be taken as internally monolithic, emically generated entities. Rather, they are terms of convenience that denote general cultural and linguistic traditions, within which there were considerable localized variation. I see no evidence that any extensive level of self-identification existed during any pre-Columbian time period.