

WAS THERE A GREATER NICOYA SUBAREA DURING THE POSTCLASSIC?

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RESUMEN

Se discute hasta que punto el concepto de la subárea geográfica cultural de Gran Nicoya, formulado por Albert Norweb hace más de cuarenta años, es un concepto útil para explicar los diversos procesos sociales ocurridos durante casi 2000 años, a partir del 500 a.C. hasta el momento del Contacto.

Para ello se revisan los datos arqueológicos producto de la investigación desarrollada en esa subárea en las últimas décadas. Se concluye que las diferencias observadas entre los denominados sector sur y norte de la subárea son mayores que las similitudes, exceptuando quizás los últimos 700 años de la secuencia precolombina, por lo cual el concepto de Gran Nicoya debe ser revisado críticamente desde el punto de vista teórico y sustantivo.

ABSTRACT

In this article it is discussed the usefulness of the Greater Nicoya subarea concept- first formulated by Albert Norweb over forty years ago-, in explaining the diverse social processes unfolded over a period of 2000 years, from 500 A.D. to the Contact.

Archaeological data obtained by researchers over several decades are reviewed to address this issue. It is concluded that there are more differences than similarities over time among the so-called northern and southern sector of the Greater Nicoya, with the exception of the last seven centuries when more similarities are observed. Therefore, it seems necessary to critically evaluate the significance of Greater Nicoya both empirically and theoretically in future research.

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In 1959 and 1961, in a few sites along Pacific Nicaragua in the departments of Granada, Masaya and Rivas, Gordon R. Willey and his then graduate student, Albert W. Norweb, conducted limited research. Their research goals were (1) to establish cultural phases and place them into cultural sequences; (2) to define archaeological regions; and (3) to identify influences from both Central and South America. Norweb's findings, published in the Proceedings of the XXXV International Congress of Americanists (1964), defined the Greater Nicoya subarea (Fig. 1), a definition still used today, which identifies a region that supposedly had a shared cultural history for at least 2000 years (Vázquez *et al.* 1994).

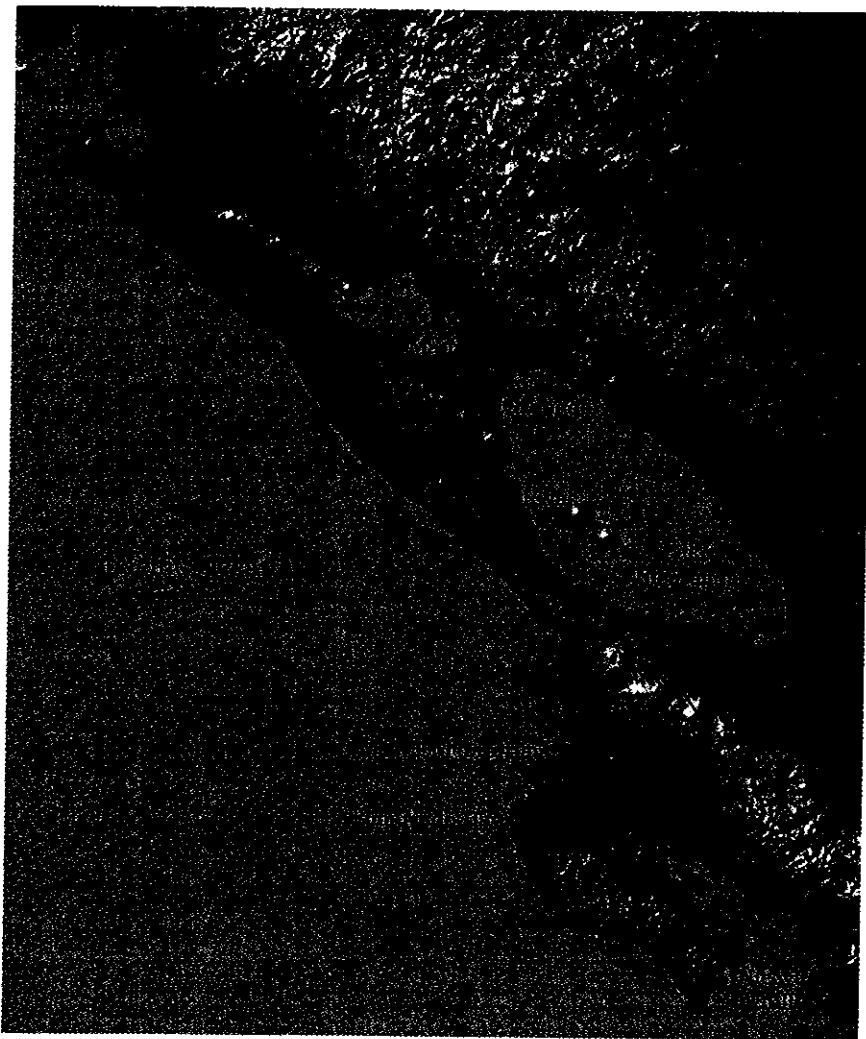


Fig. 1 Map showing Greater Nicoya's boundaries

WHAT IS THE GREATER NICOYA SUBAREA?

Greater Nicoya, according to Norweb (1964: 551), is a geographical-cultural province, "...a corridor for north-south cultural movement, and, for a span of several hundred years, apparently marked the southern limit of intensive Mesoamerican influence". He used the chronology of four periods established by Michael D. Coe in northwestern Costa Rica (Coe 1960; Coe and Baudez 1961) as a framework to establish his own cultural sequence for southwestern Nicaragua. Nevertheless, Norweb noted slight differences between the two zones of Greater Nicoya, specifically in the distribution of ceramic types associated with the phases of the last two centuries before the Spanish arrival:

"The application of this scheme to both Pacific Nicaragua and northwestern Costa Rica is justified by the general similarity in ceramic sequences. However, evidence is mounting that this correlation is far from exact, particularly in regards to the Late Polychrome period in some regions of Pacific Nicaragua where, unlike northwestern Costa Rica, only minor typological variations mark the transition from Middle Polychrome" (Norweb 1964:552).

Norweb considered that, before A.D. 800, Greater Nicoya had mainly local development with only marginal contacts with Mesoamerica. But after that date, in his own words, "Mesoamerican dominance is absolute", with Classic Maya designs common on Pagayayo Polychrome—particularly in what is now defined as the Mandador variety—along with Cholula-Veracruz traits such as tripod vessels with zoomorphic supports. In the last four pre-Columbian centuries, Norweb sees an intensification of Mixteca-Puebla motifs displayed on Vallejo Polychrome, such as the "earth monster" and Quetzalcóatl. His view of Greater Nicoya development differs from that of Michael Coe (1962), who argued it was always an integral part of the Mesoamerican periphery.

Four decades have passed since Norweb's formulation about Greater Nicoya, and mounting evidence suggests that relations with Mesoamerican regions were not similar in Pacific Nicaragua and northwestern Costa Rica, nor were the endogenous dynamics of these zones. But certainly, during the last seven centuries of pre-Columbian human occupation, the intensity of interaction with Mesoamerica was stronger in both zones. From existing data, we believe that the existence of Greater Nicoya, as a cultural subarea of Mesoamerica, became a reality only when those processes of intense interaction took place.

Frederick W. Lange (1984) divided Greater Nicoya into a northern sector that included Pacific Nicaragua and a southern sector represented by northwestern Costa Rica. His division was based on the recognition that, besides few ceramic types found in both sectors, there was little else in the lithic complexes, or settlement and funerary patterns that could unify the subarea. In a different vein, Fonseca (1992) subdivided Greater Nicoya into three subregions: (1) a northern that encompasses lowlands extending from the Bay of Culebra in Guanacaste to Pacific Nicaragua; (2) the highlands, defined by the Guanacaste Cordillera form another, and (3) a southern portion including the remaining part of the Guanacaste Province in Costa Rica. The northern subregion had, in Fonseca's characterization, the closest ties with Mesoamerican regions whereas the rest of Greater Nicoya was a periphery of the area only in the last seven pre-Columbian centuries.

In 1993, Lange organized a workshop to evaluate the validity of the concept of Greater Nicoya. The participants concluded that the subarea should not be considered a constant periphery of Mesoamerica, but more a frontier area that interacted in diverse degrees through time with societies to the north and south, emphases shifting

dependent upon interaction with the Chibchan Area or with Mesoamerica (Vázquez et al. 1994). Both Lange (1986), Salgado (1996) and Salgado and Zambrana (1994) had recently argued that the relation of Pacific Nicaragua with Mesoamerica was more intense and constant through time than the one maintained by northwestern Costa Rican societies and Mesoamerica.

HISTORY OF PRE-COLUMBIAN OCCUPATION IN PACIFIC NICARAGUA AND NORTHWESTERN COSTA RICA

Little evidence of human occupation of the Greater Nicoya area has been found prior to 2000 B.C. (e.g. Swauger and Mayer-Oakes 1952; Bradley 1994; Sheets 1994; Espinoza 1995) due mainly to a lack of specific projects studying the Paleoindian and Archaic periods.

Linguistic studies suggest that by the Formative period (2000 B.C.-A.D. 300) the territory of Pacific Nicaragua and northwestern Costa Rica was inhabited by speakers of Corobicí -a language mentioned but not recorded in the historical documents- which most likely had a close affinity with or was Rama itself (Constenla 1994). Rama, along with Guatuso, has been classified within a family related to Chibchan language stock (Constenla 1991). The separation from proto-Chibcha of what later will become Rama, Guatuso and Huetar is estimated to have occurred in the third millennium before Christ or even earlier, therefore constituting very ancient populations in the area (Constenla 1985, 1991). The process of separation of these languages was likely associated with the territorial movement of societies, whose productive systems were to a large extent based on agriculture.

Indeed, the first evidence of agriculture and sedentism is believed to have emerged around 2000 B.C., when both paleobotanic and lithic evidence indicate a system of cultivation that included maize (Hoopes 1984, 1994; Matthews 1984), even though much earlier dates for maize pollen and phytoliths have been reported in Lower Central America (e.g. Piperno et al. 1985; Piperno, Bush and Colinvaux 1990; Northrop and Horn 1996). Alongside the development of agriculture, pottery production emerges sharing stylistic and formal characteristics with coeval pottery from Nuclear America, particularly with ceramics of the Ocos phase in coastal Chiapas (Hoopes 1994).

FIRST MANIFESTATIONS OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND INTERACTION SPHERES: THE TEMPISQUE PERIOD (500 B.C. - A.D. 300)

Archaeologists working in the area agree that if Greater Nicoya reflects an empirical reality, its starting point is around 500 B.C. Nevertheless, aside from the pan-regional distribution of the Rosales Engraved ceramic type, there is little that can be said to suggest cultural homogeneity. According to the compositional analyses performed by Ronald L. Bishop (Lange, Bishop and Lange 1990), Rosales was manufactured in Pacific Nicaragua, even though it is relatively common in southern sector coastal sites as far south as Tamarindo Bay on the Nicoya Peninsula.

Usulután-related pottery has a widespread distribution in Pacific and Central Nicaragua, with local production in the Managua area (Lange et al. 2003) as well as farther north (Wyckoff 1976). This distribution is indicative of a general interaction in which ideas and technologies were shared with societies of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras during the Middle and Late Preclassic. Direct imports of Usulután from the highlands of El Salvador and Guatemala are relatively common in the principal site of Granada during this period (Lange et al. 2003). Another common import in Pacific and Central Nicaragua was obsidian from the Guinope source in Honduras, manufactured

into artifacts in a local chipped stone industry. However, both Usulután pottery and obsidian are rare in Costa Rica.

There is no clear indication of political ranking or centralization in known villages in Pacific Nicaragua. These are extensive but dispersed, with domestic and funerary spaces present within the confines of the village, where both urn and extended primary burials are common. In northwestern Costa Rica, few settlements of the period have been located, most of them being inferred by scattered surface deposits and cultural layers in stratigraphic excavations. Cemeteries have been found in panoramic heights, spatially separated from probable settlement areas. In some, burials include elaborate paraphernalia of high craftsmanship. Carved metates, mace heads and jade artifacts are found in shaft-and-chamber tombs and pit graves covered with small stone tumuli (Hartman 1907; Stone 1977; Guerrero 1993). The association of jade-mace head-metate as a pattern of grave goods in certain interments extends throughout the northwestern, central Atlantic, and even central highland regions of Costa Rica. The presence of this pattern has been interpreted by some as indicative of social ranking and emergent chiefdoms (Lange 1984; Snarskis 1984), and/or emblematic of already well-defined elites (Guerrero 1993; Lange 1993).

The geographic characteristics, as well as the distance between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, cannot account for the almost complete absence of jade artifacts in southern Nicaragua. Sociopolitical factors more likely explain this differential distribution. Assuming that Costa Rican groups were organized in ranked systems, it could be hypothesized that if jade had a high symbolic and economic value, then elites controlled the movement of jade as a sociopolitical marker both internally and externally (Salgado 1993, Salgado and Guerrero 2005). Jade was not transferred to southern Nicaragua perhaps because its people were not considered allies and, therefore, were not worthy of sharing this precious material.

Greater Nicoya societies during the Tempisque period relied on agriculture and probably had developed ranked social systems in some regions of the southern sector. Nevertheless, it seems that southern sector societies and those of the northern sector were integrated into different interaction spheres.

REGIONALIZATION AND SOCIOPOLITICAL DIFFERENTIATION: THE BAGACES PERIOD (A.D. 300 - 800)

Perhaps the salient aspects of this period are the process of regionalization that took place, and that is linked to the consolidation of sociopolitical complexity (Healy 1980; Salgado 1996; Vázquez et al. 1994). Also worthy of note is the creation of a polychrome tradition with ties to the Ulúa polychromes of Honduras; the best example is Galo Polychrome. Once again, these shared features are overshadowed by differentiation in aspects such as settlement and funerary patterns and -to a lesser degree- pottery and lithic industries that very likely reflect different spheres of interaction.

Ranked societies did developed in Pacific Nicaragua as seen in a two-tiered settlement system in archaeological projects from Managua to Rivas. Nucleated villages, the seats of ranked societies, have occupation areas of 50 hectares (0.5 km²) or more. These areas often contain earthen mounds and the relatively common presence of imports from Quelepa, including vessels of Delirio Red on White and obsidian prismatic blades, as well as vessels of the Ulúa polychromes from the Ulúa and Comayagua valleys. More rare are stucco vessels from the Maya highlands.

In the southern sector, villages with areas of around 10 hectares (0.1 km²) or less (Abel-Vidor 1980; Vázquez 1986) are found on the coast, with larger settlements near

the Tempisque River. The area closer to the piedmont of the Guanacaste Cordillera yielded, in a regional survey, a large number of cemeteries and very little data on habitation contexts (Guerrero and Solís 1997). The funerary sites include huge stone mounds and/or groups of small tumuli under which simple pit and cist and shaft tombs of stone masonry are placed, often with flexed interments. Thus, because few habitation contexts have been excavated, evidence for ranked societies could be putatively derived from the highly elaborate funerary features and offerings found in areas of certain cemeteries, including jade and, by the end of the period, gold offerings (Herrera 1998).

Indeed, the strongest general contrast between communities of northwestern Costa Rica and Pacific Nicaragua is in the funerary pattern. In the former, the most salient type of cemetery is a large stone mound, in numbers varying from one to twelve (Guerrero, Solís and Vázquez 1994). Diverse funerary practices are shown in the presence/absence of funerary mounds, varied tomb edifice construction, and variation among cemeteries as regards type and number of artifacts found in them. The stone mound funerary pattern is notably absent in Nicaragua, where urn burials and extended primary burials are commonly found in domestic sites (Zambrana and García 1995; Salgado 1996).

Ceramic complexes differ at the regional level, with polychrome and bichrome types showing localized manufacturing and distribution. As an example, the Jaguar variety of Galo Polychrome is common in some regions of Guanacaste, but very rare in Pacific Nicaragua, where the Lagarto variety is more abundant. In the Granada area, decorated ceramics have formal and stylistic similarities with central and northwestern Honduras. The abundant jade industry in Guanacaste clearly contrasts to its almost total absence from the northern sector, while the contrary is true for a chipped stone obsidian industry.

The differences observed during the Bagaces period most likely indicate regionalization related to the emergence and/or consolidation of several political units (Salgado and Zambrana 1994; Salgado and Fletcher 1994). These units were probably competing to expand their alliances, including control over long-distance trade networks. Precious elite goods controlled by northern sector societies were not frequently exchanged with those of the southern sector, and the most highly valued prestige material in the southern sector, jade, is found in Nicaraguan sites only in a handful of cases.

INTENSIFICATION OF INTERACTION WITHIN GREATER NICOYA: THE SAPOA PERIOD (A.D. 800/900-1350)

Settlement of Pacific Nicaragua and northwestern Costa Rica by Mesoamerican groups is well documented in historic and linguistic studies (e.g. Stone 1966; Carmack 1993; Constenla 1994; Ibarra 1994, 2001). Nevertheless, some scholars have questioned the impact that such migrations had on native societies, suggesting that Mesoamericans were assimilated into local cultures, losing their homeland identity in the process (e.g. Lange et al. 1992).

Regional archaeological research conducted in the last fifteen years in Pacific Nicaragua has shown dramatic changes in almost every aspect of material culture beginning about A.D. 800 (Salgado 1996, 2000; Niemel 2003), a point postulated by Healy (1980) and Norweb (1964). The number and extension of sites increase, with new settlements near lake shores. The location and layout of regional centers change, and—for the first time—some cemetery areas are segregated from habitation sites.

Regional centers can be up to 350 hectares (3.5 km²) in size and stone-faced or earthen mounds are commonly arranged around a plaza. On the islands of Lake Nicaragua, monumental statuary emerges, placed in mounds. It can be said that even when the exact function of these sites is not clear, when they are placed in the general context of Pacific Nicaragua, they seem to have a political and/or ceremonial role.

The economy apparently became more complex than in preceding periods, with specialization both in the production of ceramics and lithics documented at least in Tepetate, a regional center on the coast of Lake Nicaragua.

Something similar, but on a smaller scale, can be seen in northwestern Costa Rica, where the largest size of an archaeological site, in any period, is estimated at 40 hectares (0.4 km²). Along the shores of the Bay of Culebra, Sapoa deposits increase in size and density at preexisting Bagaces settlements, as well as in nearby sites previously used only as burial places, workshops or small dwellings (Lange, Accola and Ryder 1980; Solís 1998). Subsistence practices changed from an agriculturally based system that also included fishing and hunting, to the addition of intense consumption of mollusks together with an increase in fishing (Gutiérrez 1998).

Burial customs of the Sapoa period in Guanacaste show noticeable differences when compared to those of the previous period. Flexed interments are no longer practiced. The inhumation of extended bodies accompanied by partial bone remains from other individuals appears, signifying an ancestor cult or a representation of social rank (cf. Wallace and Accola 1980; Guerrero, Blanco and Salgado 1988). In some cases, burials are deposited in domestic spaces or in cemeteries without stone markers. Interestingly, Bagaces cemeteries—many of them conspicuously marked with stone features—were respected and not desecrated at all by people living in the same sites during the Sapoa period.

The most common funerary pattern in Pacific Nicaragua is urn-burials, where primary and secondary burials have been documented, but also primary extended and secondary burials have also been reported (Haberland 1992; Espinoza, García and Sugañuma 1999; García 2004). Burials were placed in segregated cemetery areas, but also around and under house floors and other features associated with domestic spaces. Cranial and dental deformation practices are new features reported in both sectors (e.g. Stone 1977; Hoopes 1980; Wallace and Accola 1980; García and Espinoza 2004) and have been identified as a Mesoamerican trait.

Ceramic complexes in general display formal, technical and iconographic differences with preceding periods both in monochrome and polychrome types, although this change is sharper in Pacific Nicaragua, where white-slipped pottery with Mesoamerican-related motifs becomes dominant in painted pottery (Healy 1980; Day 1984). In the southern sector, most white pottery was imported from Nicaragua, with the probable exception of the Culebra variety of Papagayo Polychrome that most likely was produced around the Bay of Culebra, and which, like Galo Polychrome, shares formal and stylistic attributes with late types of the Ulúa Polychromes and the white-slipped pottery from Mayan sites in Belize (Joyce 1994, 1996). The most popular polychromes are those known as Mora, which—even when showing continuity with previous polychrome technology and motifs—incorporate new iconographical elements that have been related to the Maya, particularly with the Copador pottery of Copán (Abel-Vidor *et al.* 1990).

Lithic complexes also show significant changes in artifacts made of both local and imported raw materials. The clearly Mesoamerican-derived core-blade technology is manufactured locally for the first time starting sometime between A.D. 800-900; in the

region of Granada, the obsidian prismatic blades produced at Tepetate are distributed among at least a third of the sites of the period. Bifacial artifacts such as arrowheads and axes are an addition to the preceding period's unifacial technology typical of the Chibchan tradition of Lower Central America (Valerio and Salgado 2002). Payson D. Sheets noted a wide distribution of stemmed round-base bifaces, an artifact that is also present in the Late Classic and Postclassic periods in the southern Maya area (Lange et al. 1992).

Lithic complexes are less well known in northwestern Costa Rica, but obsidian artifacts are noticeably scarce. However, bifaces are known from several Sapoa contexts in Guanacaste. An example is a workshop of that period located by the Cañas-Liberia project, where débitage and bifacial tools produced from a black basalt were found; most tools correspond to what looks to be a single type of lanceolate knife (J. V. Guerrero and W. Valerio personal communication 2004).

The societies of Sapoa were probably multiethnic, formed by both native and Mesoamerican groups. The pattern of material culture shows the clear introduction of new elements related to Mesoamerica, as well as a more complex social system. Even when there are differences between Pacific Nicaragua and northwestern Costa Rica, it is clear that intense interaction, along with population size immigrations, took place. A series of traits in material culture is shared by both sectors more than in preceding periods. We believe the processes observed during the period can be attributed, in part, to the arrival of the Chorotega and perhaps other Mesoamerican groups.

NEWCOMERS AND CHANGES: OMETEPE (A.D. 1350-1522)

There are few changes during this period; one of the most significant is a decline in the number of sites in most regions, with the exception of the Isthmus of Rivas (Niemel 2003). This decline seems more marked in northwestern Costa Rica (Lange 1984).

In some regions, ceramic complexes show pottery with new iconographic and formal characteristics, even when these new elements are not a simple overlay on local traditions, but show a complex interaction between those and foreign cultural traditions (Canouts and Guerrero 1988). The polychrome types Vallejo and Madeira in Nicaragua and Jicote Polychrome in northwestern Costa Rica show those changes. Vallejo shares with the Sapoa period polychromes the white-slip, but has an iconography new to the area that is reminiscent of iconography in the Postclassic cultures of the Mexican highlands. Geoffrey McCafferty suggests a similarity to Cholula pottery (McCafferty, Steinbrenner and Fernández this volume). Jicote is a tan-slipped pottery whose distribution is limited to northwestern Costa Rica and whose Cara and Lazo varieties closely resemble the same varieties in Vallejo Polychrome, even when both types also have other, numerous varieties that are quite distinct in each type. The similarities of the Lazo and Cara varieties in both types are interpreted by Canouts and Guerrero as fitting the concept of a horizon style (Willey and Phillips 1970), which indicates shared, specific cultural values between the southern manufacturers of Jicote and the northern manufacturers of Vallejo in the south, despite obvious differences in other varieties of these types.

Finally, Madeira Polychrome and related types such as Luna Polychrome show a distribution with a high concentration on Ometepe Island and the Isthmus of Rivas (Niemel, Román and Salgado 1997). Perhaps this distribution reflects manufacturing by the new Nahua groups that settled those regions in the last two or three centuries of pre-Columbian occupation.

In Nicaragua, jade artifacts in the form of beads and small pendants are found as burial offerings, but only in a few cases (Bransford 1881; Espinoza, García and Suganuma 1999). Gold pendants are found in even fewer cases. It is interesting since Jane S. Day (1988) has pointed the presence of -in some ceramic types of the period, particularly in the Jicote and Vallejo bowls- symbols of the gold eagles and gold frogs common in Costa Rican metallurgy. Day thinks the depiction of these symbols in pottery vessels could indicate that "...the painted vessels which were being interred with the dead took the place of actual items of gold, which was perhaps being reserved for some other purpose" (Day 1988:209). In the first entrada to Pacific Nicaragua, Gil González Dávila reportedly collected a fairly large amount of gold, more so than in Nicoya, which indicates that gold ornaments were available and perhaps, as Day argues, were maintained for purposes other than funerary offerings. Ibarra (2001) suggests the Matagalpa goldsmiths could have been manufactured gold objects for the Chorotega and the Nicarao.

The changes seen within Ometepe, once again, could be in part explained by the arrival of the Nicarao to the area of Rivas, but other internal factors contributed in creating those changes. The cultural practices and shared iconography between regions of the southern and northern sectors of Greater Nicoya attest to an intensification of interaction that produced closer cultural and political ties between different populations.

The arrival of Mesoamericans during the last two periods did not produce a substitution or hybridization of local cultures, but rather an exchange of ideas and practices that resulted in the constitution of a new cultural and political landscape known as Greater Nicoya.

CONCLUSIONS

The theoretical limitations of the concept of culture area have been long addressed by archaeologists and ethnologists (e.g. Harris 1968; Demarest and Sharer 1986; Wolf 1992). Following some of these critiques, Bishop (1994) states that even when the distribution of artifacts, or other cultural elements, has helped to define the cultural boundaries and their changes in Greater Nicoya, the definition of these patterns does not explain the processes that created them.

In the same manner, we think the definition by Fonseca of the Area de Tradición Chibchoide (Fonseca 1992, 1994) or the Area Istmo Colombiana (Hoopes and Fonseca 2003) suffers from conceptual and empirical problems. This area is considered a self-contained historical region where endogenous factors account for its cultural characteristics. Hoopes and Fonseca (2003) extend a proven biological and linguistic genetic relation among Chichchan groups of the southern sector to the northern sector, where the archaeological data do not provide at this point any definitive indication of such a connection.

The complex social and political history of the societies of Lower Central America it is hard to explain without taken into account both endogenous and exogenous factors and processes. Societies at northern end of that area, from the first-known occupations, show a stronger link with other located among the confines of what is known as Mesoamerica than they do with those located in most of Costa Rica and Panama. The process of interaction and diversification of Lower Central American societies was influenced by processes that took place in geographic spaces that transcend the boundaries of the Area de Tradición Chibchoide.

From the point of view of a world-systems analysis, concepts such as Greater Nicoya are of limited use. The emphasis on "cultural" aspects and lack of attention to economic and political dynamics is problematic. In a recent article, Kowalewski (1996) examines the trajectory of the northwestern, southwestern and southeastern areas of the United States and explains them as world-systems rather than as culture areas (see also McGuire 1989). He looks at underlying political and economic processes to explain similarities and differences in the cultural traits in each of these areas.

In a similar manner, we believe that a world-systems analysis could explain the processes of political and cultural integration and fragmentation observed in the archeological record of Greater Nicoya (Bonilla et al. 1990). The similarities found in the ceramic complexes of the southern and northern sector of Greater Nicoya contrast with the growing evidence for significant differences in other aspects of material culture. Macro and micro settlement patterns, mortuary practices and lithic complexes can be clearly differentiated between known regions of the southern and northern sectors. In other words, if a list of cultural traits is defined, then it is likely that more differences than similarities will be found. In addition, the external relations of many regions often had distinct orientations (Guerrero, Solís and Vázquez 1994; Salgado 1993; Salgado and Zambrana 1994). This pattern of differentiation could be perhaps explained by the emergence, consolidation and decline of polities in several regions of Greater Nicoya at different points in time. Neighboring groups, in times of competition over resources, would tend to reinforce their ethnicity or distinctiveness from other groups through material culture (Hodder 1979). The homogenization of certain cultural aspects would serve to define sharper boundaries with neighboring groups. At the same time, even when this differentiation takes place, the inevitable interaction between neighbors also produces at least a few similarities.

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