

I. EDITORS' PREFACE

Mesoamerican prehistory represents a unique cultural experiment of man. Unfortunately, that great experiment was cruelly and abruptly terminated by the Cortesian conquest of Mexico in 1519, to be followed shortly afterwards by the "pacification" of Central America and western South America. The inevitable day of the meeting of representatives of the Old and New World traditions of civilization came when Columbus touched the ground of North America in October, 1492. This great event came, unfortunately, at a time when the Europeans were still imbued with the less refined aspects of medieval chivalry and militarism, and the steel-armored horsemen and guns of Pizarro in Peru, Alvarado in Guatemala, and Cortes in Mexico succeeded within a decade in destroying the functioning native cultures (though not in many cases, their entire populations). And so the greatest American experiment of all times - we speak here in the larger sense and include atomic bomb perfection, and manned moon-landings -- namely the invention of civilization, came in itself to nothing because it was overwhelmed by a superior technology in the form of better military tactics, better transport in the form of sailing ships and the horse and wheeled wagons, and better defensive and offensive devices in the form of steel armor and cannons. In earlier times outwardly similar events on a smaller scale must have occurred, as we know from the examples of the once-vigorous Olmecs of the tropical lowlands of southeastern Mexico, the Izapan culture, the Teotihuacanos, and the Maya of lowland Guatemala who had earlier passed from sight. But, whatever the cause or causes of the passing of these peoples from the scene, their decline, or even their disappearance, did not affect the general continuation of the native American style of civilization since no single and entirely alien society ever became, as did that of the Spanish conquistadores, predominant and so effectively destructive. Human history probably cannot demonstrate a more rapid and thorough-going acculturation on such enormous scale than that of the Spanish-induced example in the New World in the first half of the sixteenth century.

If the native cultures of the New World had been better recorded than they were, we would probably understand much better what their history had been. But the sudden truncation of the literate elements of the populations had the effect of creating voids in our understanding. We shall never know to what level of development the human experiment in civilization which was in process in native America might have reached. That is purely a matter of historical speculation. Such speculations are a valid subject of inquiry, if only for the reason that men of every generation find themselves in crisis and often resort (usually with little solace) to a consideration of historic precedent.

What archaeologists can do is to examine, insofar as the archaeological evidence permits, the process of the origins of civilization and to study the complicated course of the rise and spread of ideas that went into the makeup of Mesoamerican civilization. We proposed in 1968 to the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research authorization to organize a symposium to concentrate on an examination of the way or ways in which civilization took form in prehistoric Mesoamerica. To make this inquiry more stimulating in wider culture-historical terms, we originally proposed further to compare and contrast the Mesoamerican experiment in a number of ways (sociologically, chronologically, qualitatively) with the generally parallel development which took place in the Old World. This was, of course, a large order, and as the various details of the symposium were worked out, it became increasingly clear that to adequately discuss the various substantive interpretations of the Mesoamerican evidence there would not be time to consider the Old World parallels in detail. In the end we decided to limit our Old World comparisons to a single summarizing overview and this considerable task we entrusted to our colleague Robert Rodden who undertook the difficult and taxing chore of listening to Mesoamericanists thrash out their problems of sequence and chronology, cause and effect, and then to offer an overview of comparisons with the Near Eastern hearth of civilization. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to include Dr. Rodden's remarks here, but, hopefully, they will see the light of publication elsewhere.

The past several years have seen a prodigious growth of information on the chronology, content, organization of culture groups, beginnings of plant domestication, pottery, religion, architecture, and trade in ancient Mesoamerica. This is particularly true of the once very dimly perceived, often elusive, PreClassic period during which many characteristic Mesoamerican cultural patterns took form and crystallized into traditional designs. Although it seems a certainty that another decade will witness continued discoveries of such a magnitude as to thoroughly revolutionize our present picture and conceptions, the present stage of research has seemed to us opportune for an assessment of these new insights and a consideration of the variety of processes that contributed to the emergence of civilized life.

In a symposium treating so complex a subject as the emergence of Mesoamerican civilization, there were many more appropriate authorities and obvious candidates for participation than could possibly be accommodated in the format and practical size limitations imposed. In planning the conference we attempted to insure that a wide spectrum of views, background and field experience would be represented, and we feel this is evidenced in the variety of approaches and attitudes brought to bear on the subject in the following papers.

At the suggestion of Dr. T. Proskouriakoff, invitations to attend the Conference were extended to Drs. R. V. Kinzhalov and Y. V. Knorozov (American Section, Institute of Ethnography, Leningrad, USSR), but these two colleagues

did not find it possible to attend. Dr. Rainer Berger (Institute of Geophysics and Interplanetary Physics, UCLA) attended the Conference but did not prepare a paper. Mr. C. William Clewlow, doctoral candidate in Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, served as Rapporteur. The other participants were: Dr. E. Wyllys Andrews (Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans, La.), Dr. Claude F. Baudez (Musée de l'Homme, Paris), Dr. James A. Bennyhoff (University of California, Berkeley), Dr. Ignacio Bernal (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City), Dr. G. H. S. Bushnell (Corpus Christi College, Cambridge University), Dr. Anne Chapman (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris), Dr. George Kubler (Department of History of Art, Yale University), Mr. Gareth W. Lowe (New World Archaeological Foundation, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, Mexico), Dr. Lee A. Parsons (Department of Anthropology, Harvard University), Dr. Hanns J. Prem (Institut für Völkerkunde der Universität München, Germany), Miss Tatiana Proskouriakoff (Peabody Museum, Harvard University), Dr. Robert J. Rodden (University of California, Berkeley), Mr. Edwin M. Shook (Antigua, Guatemala - Field Director of the Monte Alto Project, Peabody Museum, Harvard University), Dr. Paul Tolstoy (Queens College, New York), and Dr. Gordon R. Willey (Peabody Museum, Harvard University).

While the traditional Mesoamerican patterns of civilization and the variety of their interpretation would obviously be quite familiar to the participants and thus not require special characterization, the obvious question did arise as to whether a definition or characterization of the phenomenon of civilization itself should be provided. Although it was a temptation to profer our own views on this complex issue for the symposium, we concluded that in the long run it was more advantageous to have each participant work with the concept he found most useful, and we restrained ourselves to a recommendation of perusal of A. L. Kroeber's A Roster of Civilizations and Cultures: An Essay on the Natural History of the World's Cultures, Living and Extinct (Aldine Publishing Company, 1962) and Eric Wolf's "Understanding Civilizations: A Review Article" (Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 9, pp. 446-465, 1967). These two papers were read by all conference participants and their content can be assumed to have been known to each.

There was no unanimous agreement among participants upon the primacy of certain types of processes. This clearly emerges from a reading of the position papers and the commentaries. There was a definite feeling expressed by many of the participants that materialistic/economic explanations have tended to be overemphasized, though without denying their fundamental importance, and that greater effort and attention need be to the more difficultly perceived cultural realms beyond basic technological/economic factors. The lack of consensus evident in the papers is understandable in view of the varied experience of the participants as well as reflecting the current state of archaeological knowledge. While not making for a neat and comprehensive

intellectual package, we cannot help but feel this diversity to be a healthy and encouraging condition.

It will be noted in a survey of the following papers that we made no provision for a consideration of the possible role of trans-Pacific contacts or South American influences in the emergence of Mesoamerican civilization. This does not reflect a belief on our part that the question of whether trans-Pacific contacts or inter-hemispheric communications did or did not take place during the period under consideration has been settled; it will, after all, probably never be possible to "prove" that significant trans-Pacific contacts did not occur. It is our opinion, however, that if such contacts did occur, they did not substantially affect the course of native cultural development and consequently would not be of primary significance for the symposium's concerns.

With only very minor revisions the papers and the commentaries upon them stand as originally prepared for the conference. As editors we have preferred to leave the papers as written rather than impose editorial uniformity of style. Several authors had planned major revisions after the conference, but in order to preserve the relevance of the commentaries without an overly complex series of renewed exchanges and revisions, which would also have greatly delayed publication, it was decided at the final Conference session in a spirit of very generous cooperation to allow contributions to stand as prepared. The reader of this volume should, therefore, bear in mind this situation.

A word of explanation is in order with respect to one of the papers of joint authorship in this collection. After submitting his original paper, but before the Conference took place, Dr. Lee Parsons decided to undertake revision of his paper in collaboration with Miss Barbara Price, resulting in the present paper. Although Miss Price was not a member of the conference, Dr. Parsons undertook to represent their combined views.

It is with regret, and for reasons beyond our control, that it has not been possible to include Dr. James A. Bennyhoff's inventory paper on the emergence of civilization in Central Mexico. Because it seemed unfortunate to omit Central Mexico, we invited Dr. Paul Tolstoy who was the commentator on Dr. Bennyhoff's paper at the Conference, to submit, with any changes or additions he thought desirable, a version of the important summary article published by him and Dr. Louise I. Paradis in Science (Vol. 167, pp. 344-351, 1970). We are appreciative of Dr. Tolstoy's agreeing to perform this extra task, and believe that the present volume is much improved by his contribution.

The sessions were held as follows at Burg Wartenstein:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject of Session</u>	<u>Inventory Paper</u>	<u>Discussant</u>
July 5	Olmec Region and Oaxaca	I. Bernal	R. Heizer
July 6	Highland Central Mexico	J. A. Bennyhoff	P. Tolstoy

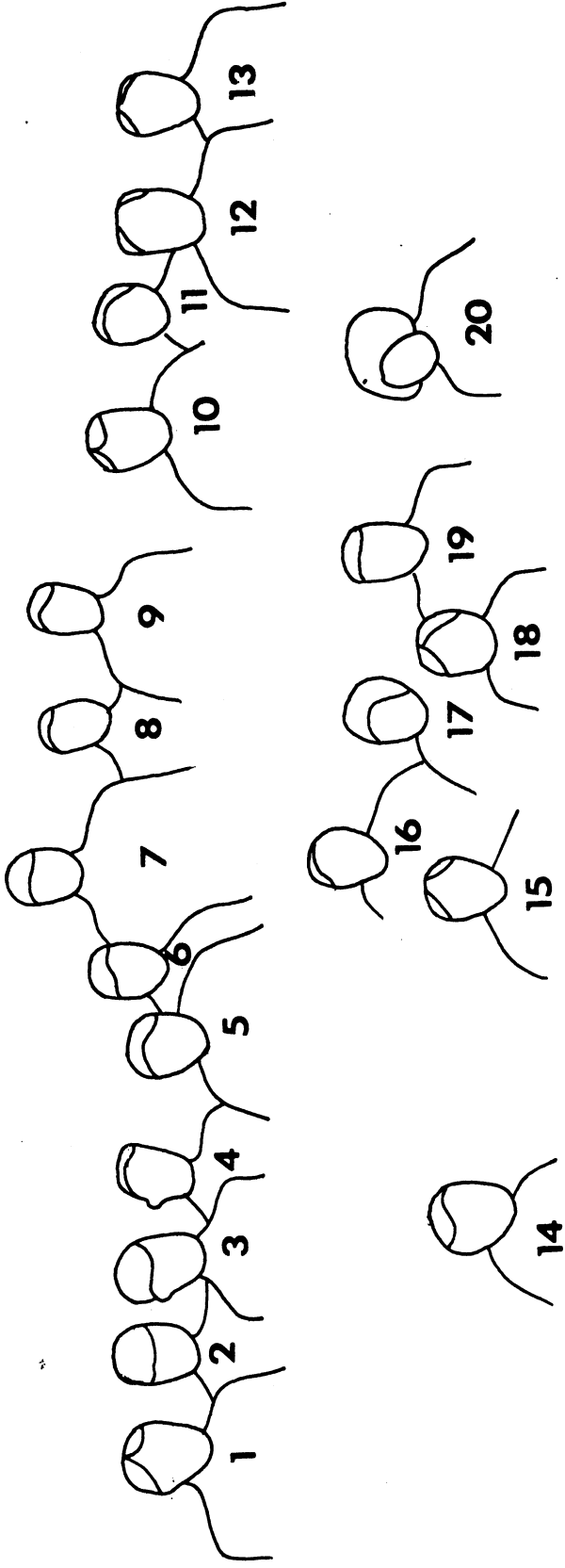
<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject of Session</u>	<u>Inventory Paper</u>	<u>Discussant</u>
July 7, a.m.	Highland and Pacific Guatemala and Adjacent Areas	E. Shook	C. Baudez
July 7, p.m.	Maya Lowlands	E. W. Andrews	G. Willey
July 8	Free Day, in Vienna		
July 9, a.m.	Calendrics and Writing	H. J. Prem	J. A. Graham
July 9, p.m.	Slides of Archaeological Excavations		
July 10 a.m.	Sculpture and Architecture	T. Proskouriakoff	G. Kubler
July 10 p.m.	Trade	L. Parsons	A. Chapman
July 11 a.m.	Ceramics and Agriculture	G. Lowe	G. Bushnell
July 11 p.m.	Slides of Archaeological Excavations		
July 12	Old World Comparisons		R. Rodden

In conclusion, we wish to express our very deep appreciation to the Wenner-Gren Foundation for making this symposium possible, and especially to Dr. Lita Osmundsen, Director of Research, whose valuable and perceptive suggestions aided enormously from initial planning to the very completion of the conference deliberations. The generous efforts of Dr. Osmundsen and the able and delightful Wenner-Gren staff at Burg Wartenstein made our stay there extremely pleasant and an experience that members of the conference will long remember. Mrs. Charlotte Frey, the Foundation's Symposium Secretary, did a superlative job of handling the organization of the Conference, and we cannot fail also to express our combined thanks to her and her husband, Carl Frey, who helped us all so much at Burg Wartenstein.

John A. Graham

Robert F. Heizer





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| 1. Gareth W. Lowe | 6. Lee Parsons | 11. James A. Bennyhoff | 16. Edwin M. Shook |
| 2. C. William Clewlow, Jr. | 7. Hanns Prem | 12. Gordon E. Willey | 17. Tatiana Proskouriakoff |
| 3. John A. Graham | 8. Paul Tolstoy | 13. Ignacio Bernal | 18. Anne Chapman |
| 4. Robert F. Heizer | 9. Claude Baudez | 14. Robert J. Rodden | 19. E. Wyllys Andrews IV |
| 5. Rainer Berger | 10. George Kubler | 15. Geoffrey H.S. Bushnell | 20. Lita Osmundsen |