

NOGUERA, EDUARDO. *La Cerámica Arqueológica de Mesoamérica*. Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Publicaciones, Primera Serie, número 86 (Serie Antropológica, 8). Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. México, 1965. 412 pp., bibliografía, 159 figuras, 4 tablas.

As a result of a steadily increasing amount of excavation and reconnaissance, the past few decades have seen the accumulation of a tremendous amount of information concerning the ceramics of various areas of pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica. These data are scattered throughout a large number of publications. A few regional syntheses have been published, but no truly pan-Mesoamerican survey has hitherto been available. The book which is the subject of this review constitutes the first such contribution to appear. Its author, Eduardo Noguera, has been a leading figure in Mexican archaeology for over 40 years, and throughout his long career he has particularly concentrated on the ceramics. He has excavated in a number of different areas of Mesoamerica and has been a prolific contributor to the Mexican archaeological literature since 1921.

As Noguera explains in his introduction, his intention is to provide "un tratado o manual", "un libro de texto acerca de la cerámica arqueológica de Mesoamérica", "dirigida principalmente a los estudiantes" —although— "para los especialistas pueda servir como memorándum". He also points out that the bulk of the literature on this subject is in English, which underlines the importance of making these data more widely available in Spanish.

After a brief introduction, a fairly lengthy preliminary section is devoted to a discussion of the principles of stratigraphy, the technology of ceramic manufacture and decoration, and methods of ceramic description. However, there is no discussion of ceramic typology on a more abstract conceptual level.

The remainder of the book is devoted to summaries of the best-known pre-Hispanic ceramic assemblages and phases of the major Mesoamerican regions (usually, but not invariably, discussed in

chronological order): 1) the Central Basins (Mexico, Morelos, Puebla, Toluca); 2) Oaxaca (Mixteca, Monte Albán sequence, Isthmus of Tehuantepec); 3) Gulf Coast (North, Central, and Southeast Veracruz); 4) the Huasteca (including the Sierra de Tamaulipas); 5) West Mexico (Sinaloa, Nayarit, Jalisco, Colima, Michoacan, Guerrero); 6) Northern Mexico (Zacatecas, Durango, Chihuahua, Sonora); 7) Maya area (including Western Honduras and El Salvador). A brief historical summary of the major archaeological work so far accomplished in each area is also usually included. A number of chronological sequence charts for these various areas are figured (sometimes taken from the publications of other investigators), plus a general overall Mesoamerican chart (Tabla iv). One hundred fifty-nine figures (both black-and-white photographs and line drawings) illustrating many of the ceramic types described in the text—nearly all taken from published sources—are included in a special section at the end of the book.

Any work which attempts to cover so much ground within relatively so few pages will invariably be subjected to some criticism concerning specifics of selection and emphasis, particularly from area specialists, and this book should prove to be no exception. Certain areas appear to be more adequately covered than others, which would, of course, inevitably reflect to some extent the special area interests of the author. Generally speaking, however, there has obviously been a conscientious attempt to present as balanced a pan-Mesoamerican picture as possible. A few brief comments on the coverage of the different areas follow.

The treatment of the ceramics of the Maya Region seems particularly incomplete at times, especially for the Southern Area. A number of standard contributions to the archaeology of this latter sub-region do not appear to have been used, although some are included in the bibliography: e.g., Thompson's classic "*Trial Survey*" (1943); Lothrop's *Atitlan* (1933) and *Zacualpa* (1936); Wauchope's *Zacualpa* (1948); Woodbury and Trik's *Zaculeu* (1953); Dutton and Hobb's *Tajumulco* (1943); Coe's *La Victoria* (1961; only his 1959 article is actually cited); Shook and Kidder's *Mound E-III-3, Kaminaljuyu* (1952); Thompson's *Cotzumalhuapa* (1948); Smith and Kidder's *Nebaj* (1951); and various 1960-1963 Papers of the New World Archaeological Foundation (wherein the verbal phase names for the Chiapa I-IX sequence, not mentioned in the book, are developed). Boggs and Haberland's contributions to El Salvador archaeology might also have been profitably utilized (only the sequence chart of the latter is included). The coverage of the Central and Northern Areas seems somewhat more comprehensive, but some utilization of Sanders' Quintana Roo survey (1960; listed but not cited) might

have been expected, as well as some mention of the important, newly defined ceramic sequences from Tikal (reported preliminarily by Culbert in *Cerámica de Cultura Maya*, 1962), Altar de Sacrificios (sumarized by Adams, 1962, at the 35th International Congress of Americanists, Mexico City; published, 1964), and Seibal (preliminarily reported by Adams, 1963, in *Estudios de Cultura Maya*).

For the Gulf Coast, the coverage of Central Veracruz also seems incomplete. Medellín Zenil's standard account of this area, *Cerámicas del Totonacapan* (1960) is not cited, while some of García Payón's papers on various ceramic assemblages in this same area were also apparently not utilized. The Oaxaca section summarizes the best known assemblages, but some mention of the Yagul data might have been in order. For the Basin of Mexico and surrounding areas the coverage is extensive, although some omissions are noteworthy—particularly Xochicalco, where Noguera himself has made the basic contributions. The important southern Pueblan area is also somewhat slighted (another region where Noguera has made important original contributions to our knowledge). No mention is made of the new data on very early ceramic assemblages in this area contributed by the Tehuacan Project. The Basin of Mexico sequence, specifically, is undergoing significant modifications at present, principally as a result of the work of various recent projects in the Valley of Teotihuacan (INAH, Millon-Bennyhoff, Sanders). A somewhat revised sequence for the Teotihuacan zone was tentatively agreed upon after a series of conferences in the summer-fall of 1963 and has recently been published by Acosta (*El Palacio de Quetzalpapalotl*, 1964)—but perhaps this revised sequence was not available when this section of the book was written. This may also be the explanation for the lack of mention of the increasing evidence for Classic-Postclassic transitional ceramic links (e.g., Cerro Portezuelo preliminary data, presented by Hicks and Nicholson at the 35th Americanist Congress, Mexico City, 1962; published, 1964; Sanders' Teotihuacan Oxtotipac phase, briefly summarized in a progress report published in *Katunob* in 1963).

Considerable space is devoted to West Mexico. The Sinaloa section would have been enhanced by some consideration of the Kelley-Winters revised phase sequence (1960; only their sequence chart is presented on p. 300), while the Nayarit section might have used the Grosscup Amapa figurine sequence (1961) to good advantage. The discussion of coastal Michoacan could have profited from some utilization of the Corona Nuñez reconnaissance published in Brand's 1960 monograph on this coast and the more recent UCLA survey of the southern and Río Balsas delta sector preliminarily

reported in *Katunob*, 1963. The same report contributed new data on the Colima coast. The first radiocarbon dates for ceramic assemblages from far West Mexico, resulting from UCLA's 1959-1962 reconnaissances and excavations along the Nayarit-Jalisco-Colima-Michoacan coasts (which apparently run the ceramic sequence in parts of this area back to B. C. times, partially published in *American Antiquity's Notes and News* (1962) and in *Katunob* (1963), might also have been mentioned (and the West Mexico sequence chart modified accordingly). Finally, the coverage of North Mexico is quite extensive (and includes regions well outside of Mesoamerica), although more of the published Southern Illinois work in Durango and adjoining territory, led by Kelley, might have been incorporated into the discussion.

In general, the author relies on published works which present a substantial amount of information on the ceramic assemblages of the areas in question, including sufficient illustrative material. In an introductory synthesis of this kind this seems to be a justifiable procedure, but occasionally even preliminary reports can be quite important when they present important new information, however briefly, and more of these could have been used. Partly for this reason, therefore, some sections are less up-to-date than might have been expected from the citation of various titles published as late as 1964.

It is probably unfair to criticize a book for what it does not contain, but, if a second edition of this work is ever issued, it would undoubtedly be much enhanced by the inclusion of new sections on: 1) conceptual problems of ceramic typology (including some discussion of an important growing typological movement—particularly in the Lowland Maya region—the “type-variety system;” 2) the problem of New World and especially Mesoamerican ceramic origins; 3) a final, more genuinely synthesizing section which would attempt to summarize the outstanding trends in ceramic development in preHispanic Mesoamerica as a whole; 4) a map of Mesoamerica (and/or a series of regional maps) showing the locations of the many archaeological sites mentioned in the text; 5) a detailed index; and 6) some new illustrations specifically designed to be closely integrated with the text.

After completing this book, some crying needs in Mesoamerican ceramic archaeology become particularly obvious, above all, a genuine handbook or catalogue of all known Mesoamerican ceramic types, following a standardized descriptive format—plus the establishment of at least one comprehensive pan-Mesoamerican ceramoteca (ideally, also various regional ones) where samples of all major types would be available to all qualified archaeolo-

gists for consultation and comparative analysis. Such a handbook should be of the looseleaf notebook type, for convenient insertion of new type description forms when they become available, on the order of some archaeological handbooks already issued in the United States (Fay made a beginning along this line, for the ceramics of Nayarit, but it has remained a truncated effort). Gradually, through the years, if most practicing Mesoamerican archaeologists would cooperate and contribute to such an enterprise, a fundamental descriptive catalogue of leading Mesoamerican ceramic types and varieties would build up, eventually providing an indispensable tool for all serious workers in the field. Computerized techniques could undoubtedly be devised to expedite the preparation of this type of ceramic handbook. Its uniform descriptive nomenclature, in itself, would aid substantially in facilitating communication in this area where so much individual variability has so frequently caused considerable difficulties in effecting type equations and comparisons. Whether such an enterprise could ever be successfully mounted is a moot point. But one of the considerable merits of a book of this kind is that, by summarizing a great amount of scattered data, it points the way to—and would positively facilitate the preparation of—such a standardized handbook of Mesoamerican ceramic types.

In a very real sense this book is a pioneer effort at pan-Mesoamerican synthesis. An impressive amount of useful information on pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican ceramics is packed into its 395 pages, more undoubtedly than in any other single work yet published. For the beginning student, especially, it should provide a very helpful introduction to the ceramic aspect of Mesoamerican culture history. In addition, it will serve the specialist as a very convenient reference tool. *La Cerámica Arqueológica de Mesoamérica* belongs on the shelf of every Mesoamerican archaeologist.

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