1) Abstract (Slightly modified from original)

The Middle Preclassic (900-600 B.C.E.) was a critical time of political and social centralization in the Guatemalan Pacific coastal plain. Of particular interest is the site of La Blanca, which had an influx of peoples from the site of Ojo de Agua in the Mazatán zone subsequently making La Blanca one of the largest communities to rise in the region and possibly develop urbanization. To reconstruct elements of everyday life we use excavated ceramic vessels to observe dynamics surrounding these households. This, in turn, elucidates components of La Blanca’s domestic economy associated with the manufacturing of ceramics. To observe the manufacturing dynamics around ceramic production, we have adapted William Dickinson’s methods of mapping regional interaction spheres using petrography. The adapted Dickinson method examines a review of local geologic terrain and the collection of 90 mostly diagnostic sherds of determinable vessel form from excavations at La Blanca. Petrographic examination of sherd thin sections has shown three distinct compositional groups: Mineralic, Vitric, and Vitric. From these groups, representative samples were selected, and point counting using the Gazi-Dickinson method. To correlate sherd samples to potential sources, we sampled three modern sands and received seven additional sands from Dr. Neff at California State University Long Beach. These samples were analyzed using the same methods as the sherds; the results suggest a local geologic provenance for raw materials and the use of open sources among each of the households. Due to the variability of composition and material characteristics among each of the households, it appears that each household was producing their own pottery.

2) Introduction

The focus of this pilot study is the Sicomuc group of the Guatemalan Pacific coastal plain during the Middle Preclassic (900-600 B.C.E.) period in which the region experienced fundamental social, political, and economic development. The development of socio-political and economic centralization during the Preclassic has been linked with the rise of La Blanca, one of the region’s largest communities at this time (Coe 1981; Faustelle 2010; Love 1989, 1993, 2002; Love and Melendrez 2001, 2013). Urbanization is thought to have occurred in tandem with political and economic centralization, associated with social stratification, and is the current focus of investigations at La Blanca (Love 2004).

3) Methods

- Petrographic analysis of ceramic samples
- Statistical analysis of ceramic samples
- GIS mapping of ceramic samples

4) Theory

Craft Production

By observing dynamics surrounding raw materials and their use in ceramics, we are contributing to the investigation of urbanization at La Blanca (Wells 2012; Nitch 1996). To communicate these dynamics we use terminology from Costin’s (1991, 2000, 2005) craft model to discuss the organization of production.

Costin’s craft production model examines four elements of production: Intensity, part vs full time production; Scale, the size and recruitment of the production unit; Concentration, the geographical distribution of craft; Context, the affiliation of producers with sociopolitical components of demand (Independent vs Attached).

These four elements are used to define the craft production types: such as household production, individual work shop, or factory.

While we are not defining a specific type this model is useful in describing craft production and its organization at La Blanca, which in turn provides a better understanding of La Blanca’s political economy and occurs of urbanisation.

5) Results: Temper Groups

A) Temper group 1

- Predominantly composed of monomineralic quartzes and feldspar
- Common lithic volcanics and glass

Photomicrograph:

A1: Example of Monomineralic temper in PPL
A2: Example of Monomineralic temper in XPL

B) Temper group 2

- Predominantly composed of basic, green, or brown in color
- Abundant monomineralic quartz, feldspar, and glass

Photomicrograph:

B1: Representative photomicrograph of Basic, green, or brown temper

C) Temper group 3

- Predominantly composed of clear colorless glass.
- Abundant to common monomineralic quartz, feldspar, and glass

Photomicrograph:

C1: Representative photomicrograph of Clear, colorless temper

6) Conclusions

Comparative compositional analysis of sherd and their provenance from the Middle Preclassic of La Blanca is possibly derived from the potentials and the sources. The analysis of the Middle Preclassic of La Blanca is possible derived from the potentials and the sources.

References

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