



“a critical baseline study for this area, transitional between the Andean and Amazonian areas. . . . The manuscript is one of the most graphically detailed, which makes it possible for a reader to gain an almost unprecedented degree of understanding of site settings and regional distributions”
—Michael J. Heckenberger, University of Florida

“the most complete and detailed regional survey conducted in Venezuela so far”
—Erika Wagner, Instituto Venezolano de Investigaciones Científicas

THIS IS THE FIRST of a series of monographs about an archaeological project that Redmond and Spencer carried out in the high llanos and Andean piedmont of the Distrito Pedraza, Barinas, Venezuela. The project was designed to investigate the evolution of prehistoric chiefdoms in the western Venezuelan llanos and assess the possibility that intersocietal interaction such as exchange and warfare played a role in chiefdom development.

This volume presents the Barinas project's research design, introduces the chronological sequences that were established for the Andean piedmont and high llanos, and reports the findings of the first phase of field investigations: the regional survey conducted in the 450 km² study region centered on the Canaguá River valley from 1983 to 1985. The volume features detailed descriptions of 103 archaeological sites.

Sites of the CURBATÍ COMPLEX (A.D. 300–1000) are restricted to the piedmont, where they are typically located on remnant river terraces overlooking stretches of farmable alluvium. The regional survey found evidence of a two-level settlement-size hierarchy for Curbatí-complex sites in the Curbatí and upper Canaguá River valleys. While Curbatí-complex sites lacked earthworks, some sites in the Curbatí River valley were associated with petroglyphs. A similar two-level settlement-size hierarchy obtained for sites in the piedmont of the later CAÑO SECO COMPLEX (A.D. 1000–1550), although there is evidence of population growth in the number and areal extent of Caño Seco settlements, especially in the upper Canaguá River valley.

Sites of the GAVÁN COMPLEX (A.D. 300–1000) are largely found on the high llanos, where the regional survey revealed a clear three-level settlement hierarchy according to site size and associated mounded architecture. At the top of the hierarchy stood the

33-ha site of El Gaván (B12) with its linear plaza flanked by tall earthen mounds, house mounds, and associated earthworks and causeways. Linked by causeway to the regional center were 5 second-order settlements with similar mound configurations, but on a smaller scale. The lowest level of the Gaván regional settlement hierarchy consisted of 28 habitation sites smaller than 5 hectares in area and without visible mounded architecture. A drained-fields facility (B27) lay southeast of the regional center of El Gaván on the Canaguá River alluvium. The discovery of 4 third-order habitation sites with Gaván-complex ceramics in the upper Canaguá River valley, associated with large tracts of fertile alluvium, raises questions as to the relationship and intersocietal interaction between the inhabitants of the high llanos and the adjacent forested piedmont in Late Gaván times. The oval causeway that encloses the regional center of El Gaván may have served, in part, as a defensive earthwork. The degree of centralized regional organization manifested by the Gaván-complex settlement hierarchy, with the array of mounded architecture, the network of intersite causeways, and the implementation of drained-field agriculture, are consistent with the archaeological manifestations expected for chiefdoms.

ELSA M. REDMOND is a Research Associate in the Division of Anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History. She received her Ph.D. from Yale University in 1981, and has conducted archaeological fieldwork in Mexico and Venezuela.

CHARLES S. SPENCER is Curator of Mexican and Central American Archaeology in the Division of Anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1981, and has conducted archaeological fieldwork in Mexico and Venezuela.



Redmond
Spencer

Archaeological Survey in the High Llanos and Andean Piedmont of Barinas, Venezuela



Archaeological Survey in the High Llanos and
Andean Piedmont of Barinas, Venezuela

Elsa M. Redmond Charles S. Spencer

Anthropological Papers
No. 86—2007—AMNH

American Museum of Natural History Anthropological Papers, Number 86

Scientific Publications of the American Museum of Natural History

American Museum Novitates

Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History

Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History

Publications Committee

ROBERT S. VOSS, Chair

Board of Editors:

JIN MENG, Paleontology

LEE H. HERMAN, Invertebrate Zoology

ROBERT S. VOSS, Vertebrate Zoology

CHARLES S. SPENCER, Anthropology

BRENDA E. JONES, Managing Editor

Submission Procedures can be found at <http://research.amnh.org/scipubs>

Complete lists of all issues of the Novitates, Bulletin, and Anthropological Papers are available at World Wide Web site <http://library.amnh.org/pubs>. Inquire about ordering printed copies via e-mail from scipubs@amnh.org or via standard mail from: American Museum of Natural History, Library—Scientific Publications, Central Park West at 79th St., New York, NY 10024. TEL: (212) 769-5545. FAX: (212) 769-5009.