FOREWORD

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THE BORDERLANDS HAS a significant place in the study of Archaic lifeways by archaeologists. First, the region was noted for its exceptional preservation of artifacts, plant remains, and painted panoramas found in rockshelters. Then the area was ignored for its seemingly long period of cultural stasis, when nothing appeared to happen. Today the region has reemerged because of its strategic position in the introduction of domesticated plant horticulture into the Southwest. Bradley J. Vierra's important "Borderlands Introduction" becomes our indispensable archaeological guide to the Borderlands and highlights the cultural significance of the region, its variation, and the cultural changes it experienced over time.

At the end of the Pleistocene most of North America witnessed millennia of biotic changes as plants migrated from southern refugia to colonize postglacial landscapes or to replace a slowly dying Pleistocene biota. North of the Red River in Texas the bulk of the edible biomass for the nomadic, post-Paleoindian hunters and foragers consisted of animal products. While increasing in density, most plants were widely scattered and seasonal in edible production. Consequently, human density was low. In the Borderlands, however, the useful energy mass was greater than in the remainder of the continent, human population density was the highest for North America, and cultural expression that was unknown elsewhere blossomed. Most of this is preserved as rock art and museum-quality perishable containers. But this short-lived "cultural florescence," based on deer, rabbits, other desert mammals, cacti fruits, and some nuts, was soon surpassed by the much higher edible biomass found to the north and east, where plant and animal diversity and productivity could support larger and denser populations of animals and humans.

In the Borderlands the human cultures continued the nomadic habits of their immediate ancestors. Through the ensuing centuries the archaeological record confirmed regional cultural variation but not the cultural excitement of the Early Archaic. By the Late Archaic technological, subsistence, and

settlement patterns became routine; numerous excavated and surveyed sites presented a database for detailed studies. Vierra's "Late Archaic Stone Tool Technology across the Borderlands" is a first in its detailed discussion of the region's lithic technology and qualitative and quantitative variability. The subsistence resources of the Borderlands in the Late Archaic served as the basis for understanding human settlement and population dispersion. Marsha D. Ogilvie places this archaeological staple into a theoretical perspective in her important chapter, "A Biological Reconstruction of Mobility Patterns in Late Archaic Populations."

Studies in ecologically and geographically distinct areas of the vast Borderlands permit "big picture" comparisons. Robert J. Mallouf's "Late Archaic Foragers of Eastern Trans-Pecos Texas and the Big Bend" establishes a standard for explaining Archaic adaptations in these areas, where few archaeologists visit today. Phil Dering's "Ecological Factors Affecting the Late Archaic Economy of the Lower Pecos River Region" describes a region with neighbors experiencing agricultural harvests while they pursue a forager's marginal meal. South Texas fared equally well by supporting viable populations of dispersed gatherers. "An Overview of the Late Archaic in Southern Texas" by Thomas R. Hester is a critical summary. Like the other chapters, it provides the grist for comparative studies of gatherers and hunters that have not been undertaken for the continent as a whole. R. G. Matson begins this daunting task in his "Many Perspectives But a Consistent Pattern: Comments on Contributions."

Today the Borderlands region garners attention with an archaeological vitality that rivals its political importance. Here archaeologists have found our earliest food-producing societies in the Greater Southwest. Here a human-controlled production economy arose that changed forever the edible biomass of the Borderlands and that permitted the rapid development of socially complex communities unlike any previously experienced in the Borderlands. These themes are developed in one form or another by the remaining chapters in this timely volume.

"The Late Archaic/Early Agricultural Period in Sonora, Mexico" by John P. Carpenter, Guadalupe Sánchez, and María Elisa Villalpando C. sets an important stage for understanding what happens to nonagricultural foragers when cultivation becomes an addition to their subsistence pattern and prepares us for further cultural transformations. "The Transition to Farming on the Río Casas Grandes and in the Southern Jornada Mogollon Region" by Robert J. Hard and John R. Roney provides that perspective as agriculture was introduced into the American Southwest. These chapters are critical for understanding the numerous cultural changes that followed.

Within the United States southeastern Arizona experienced the first significant “agricultural revolution.” The practice did not begin here, but it became the driver for numerous cultural practices—village life, permanent architectural features, pottery, status trade, and community rituals—associated with farming communities. Jonathan B. Mabry’s “Changing Knowledge and Ideas about the First Farmers in Southeastern Arizona” details the numerous sites that confirm the evolution into a new way of living.

Farming is not inevitable, however, and its acceptance did not produce instant security or cultural advancement. William H. Doleman explains this in his regional overview: “Environmental Constraints on Forager Mobility and the Use of Cultigens in Southeastern Arizona and Southern New Mexico.” Bruce D. Smith places the Borderlands’ new economics into a global perspective as he presents his unique interpretation of the phenomenon in “Documenting the Transition to Food Production along the Borderlands.”

The Borderlands remains underappreciated by American archaeologists, but this is changing with the latest excavated agricultural remains. The importance of the Borderlands to American prehistory will be further advanced by the publication of this book. The region took the cultural lead in the post-Pleistocene adaptation to a new productive environment. It is doing the same again with the spread of anthropogenic ecosystems by the first food producers in the Southwest. The prehistoric people of the Borderlands have always responded creatively to environmental and cultural changes and have left a rich legacy in the archaeological record.

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