1

Introduction

1.1. Aims and Scope of the Book

This book presents a reconstruction and interpretation of the history of the Regional Development sanctuary at Salango, on the central coast of Ecuador (Figure 1.1). Through an account of the archaeological evidence for funerary and other architecture, burial practices, ritual installations, and offerings, we gain insights into how, over the span of around 900 years, and in the face of occasionally dramatic circumstance, society defined, enacted, and maintained its relations with the ancestors on whom it depended for its existence (DeLeonardis & Lau 2004; Helms 1988:34–54).

By 350 BC, Salango had seen a small and simple Middle Engoroy ritual space grow into a 3-ha Late Engoroy shamanic sanctuary celebrated as an origin site of importance to communities well beyond its immediate environs. There then occurred two events: one was a catastrophic ash fall resulting from the explosion of the Pululahua volcano, and the other was the transition from the Formative Period traditions that ended with the ash fall to those of the Regional Development that followed. The cultural transition is manifest first in a brief Very Early Guangala (VEG) phase chiefly characterised by a remarkable funerary program conducted in response to the impact of the ash fall (Table 1.1).[1] Perhaps 100 years later the sanctuary was reconfigured once again, now as an elaborate elite burial complex with novel purpose-built funerary enclosures. This was one of the small number of Regional Development cemeteries that have been documented along the coast from Isla Puná, 150 km to the south in the Gulf of Guayaquil, to La Tolita, 375 km to the north. More locally, on account of its geographical location, it was a point of convergence and ritual encounter between the two local neighbouring but markedly different Early Guangala and Bahía II traditions. Finally, the Middle Guangala phase of sanctuary use saw an end to human burial there, the capping of the earlier enclosures, and the creation of a perimeter wall underlain by massive offerings.

The Regional Development sanctuary at Salango grew directly over, out of, and in recognition of the preceding Late Formative sanctuary and so can be seen, and must be seen, as an expression of continuing relations with the spirit world of Salango that were first formalised architecturally centuries earlier. Indeed, the entire sequence from the construction of the first Middle Engoroy ritual floor to that of the final Middle Guangala platform over 1000 years later can be understood as a precise, extended, and richly detailed exposition of understandings of cosmos and human existence. As such, the overall history of the sanctuary is a valuable example of the workings of ancient Andean ritual practice and consciousness through time.

Prior to the Engoroy structures, however, there was a still earlier cemetery of the Middle Formative Machalilla phase (1500–900 BC; Lunniss & Ubelaker 2025), with some minimal evidence for burials of the brief span in between. Yet even there we should not stop, as shell rituals were performed at Salango in Late Valdivia times (Lunniss 2022a:505, 506), 500 years or more before the Machalilla cemetery was founded.[2] There is a big leap, in scale as well as time, to be made from those beginnings to the highly structured design of the Regional Development sanctuary; but it is necessary to look that far back to gauge the importance of the place itself to those who lived there as a force in their lives, and to see how the nature of the relationship with the place, so many centuries later, was founded on something that in its essence may not have changed.

The Middle and Late Engoroy phases of the Salango sanctuary have been relatively well published (Lunniss 2001, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2011, 2019a, 2021, 2022a, 2023a, 2024a, 2024b). The first purpose of this book is now to present as complete an account as possible of the intricate sequence of events that unfolded during the VEG (300–200 BC), Bahía II/Early Guangala (200 BC–AD 300), and Middle Guangala (AD 300–600) phases that followed the ash fall and ended with the abandonment of the sanctuary.[3] Certain aspects of this latter sequence have

[1] Although the general period scheme for coastal Ecuador which is the basis for the first column of Table 1.1 is out-dated, there has so far been no serious move made to provide any alternative since its original tentative presentations (Estrada 1962: Cuadro 4; Meggers 1966:Fig. 3). Thus, rather than as an analytical tool, for the moment it serves as a heuristic device, however unsatisfactory, for making rough approximations of broad time-space dynamics whose often complex and varied local components are better defined by well-dated phases and phase sequences for specific sites. Meanwhile, the identification and dating of large-scale natural events such as the Pululahua explosion and ash fall that is central to this study are increasingly important in providing regional and supra-regional structure (e.g. Isaacson & Zeidler 1998; Zeidler 2016, 2023; Zeidler & Isaacson 2003), and this will eventually lead to a reconceptualisation of the overall cultural chronology and its motors. With respect to the phases identified at Salango, the use of the name Very Early Guangala, while perhaps further complicating the terminology with yet another sub-division, seems to be the best way to integrate this specific chrono-functional section of the sanctuary sequence with the broader cultural sequence of the central coast. Whether or not it has wider application remains to be seen.

[2] It is also possible that Valdivia burials lie undiscovered in areas untouched by archaeology or other intrusion.

[3] Middle Engoroy has till now generally been set at 600–300 BC, with Late Engoroy at 300–100 BC. Identifying the Pululahua explosion as marking the end of Late Engoroy and thereby removing the 200-year

Figure 1.1. Map of the Ecuadorian coast with Archaic, Formative, and Regional Development sites mentioned. Drawing by Luke Dalla Bona.

also already been published (Juengst *et al.* 2019, 2023; Lacorne *et al.* 2024; Lunniss 2001, 2016, 2017, 2019a, 2022a, 2022b, 2023b; Norton *et al.* 1983; Stahl & Norton 1984; Ubelaker & Lunniss 2023; Ubelaker *et al.* 2022), but this and much more unpublished material requires integration within an overarching synthetic narrative.

One new data set to be discussed at the outset concerns the chronology of the Regional Development at Salango. Previously, I have followed the model, largely based on indirect evidence, that the transition from the Late Formative Late Engoroy cultural phase to Regional Development Early Guangala occurred at Salango around 100 BC (Lunniss 2001:288–292). Two of three radiocarbon dates recently obtained for human burials excavated in 2015 now suggest that the end of the Late Engoroy phase, brought on by the ash fall, be pushed back two centuries

span previously allotted to that phase, now requires reconsideration of the start dates for both Middle and Late Engoroy.

Table 1.1. Cultural Chronology at Salango, 4000 BC–AD 600.

Period	Cultural Phase	Estimated Dates at Salango
Middle Regional Development	Middle Guangala	AD 300–600
Early Regional Development	Bahía II & Early Guangala	200 BC–AD 300
Early Regional Development	Very Early Guangala	300–200 BC
Late Formative	Late Engoroy	500–300 BC
Late Formative	Middle Engoroy	700–500 BC
Late Formative	Early Engoroy	900–700 BC
Middle Formative	Machalilla	1500–900 BC
Early Formative	Valdivia	3800–1500 BC
Late Archaic	Unnamed	4000–3800 BC

(Table 1.2). Samples of human bone, UGSMA-73579 and UGSMA-73580, were taken from two burials found in one of two funerary mounds constructed during the VEG phase following the fall (Figures 1.2, 1.3). The first sample, from burial Context 460, the earliest burial of the East Mound sequence, gives a calibrated date at 2 sigma of 408–200 BC, while the second, from burial Context 359, gives 384–177 BC, with median dates of 304 BC and 280 BC respectively. These results show that the most likely source for the ash was indeed the great Pululahua explosion dating to 2305 +/- 65 RYBP (Hall 1977, cited by Zeidler & Isaacson 2003:75) which, when calibrated, gives a 2-sigma range of 512–144 BC, with a median date of 328 BC (Figure 1.4).[4] The third new result for Salango, for sample UGSMA-73582, comes from a burial of the Early Guangala phase and gives a calibrated date at 2 sigma of AD 84–221, with a median date of AD 152 (Figure 1.5). Provisionally, then, we can suggest that the VEG burial phase dates to around 300–200 BC. The Early Guangala and Bahía II phase would then run from 200 BC to AD 300, roughly as previously estimated (Lunniss 2023a:7), though starting 100 years earlier. While there can be no certainty as to these estimates, they will serve as guides until more dates are available.

The rest of this chapter follows with a brief discussion of the intricacies of the Bahía II and Guangala occupations at Salango. There are then overviews of funerary practice and patterns on the coast of Ecuador, first for the Archaic and through to the end of the Late Formative, and then for the Early Regional Development (ERD). Compared to coastal and highland Peru, relatively little systematic investigation has been made into the Archaic, Formative, and Regional Development funerary traditions of coastal Ecuador, such that in recent major volumes on Andean

[4] Previous correction and calibration of the radiocarbon date for the Pululahua explosion resulted in a 95.4% probability range of 752–182 Cal BC (Zeidler & Isaacson 2003:76, Fig. 3). Application of the SHCal20 calibration curve gives a range that is tighter and more recent.

Table 1.2. Radiocarbon Dates from Calle 22 Salango in relation to Radiocarbon Date for the Pululahua Explosion.

Sample #	Site	RYBP	+/-	Calibrated Date 95.4% (median)	Source	Phase
SI-2128	Pululahua	2305	65	512–144 BC (328 BC)	Carbonised wood under base surge deposits	
UGSMA-73579	Salango	2340	30	408–200 BC (304 BC)	Tooth of Burial 460	Very Early Guangala
UGSMA-73580	Salango	2250	30	384–177 BC (280.5 BC)	Tooth of Burial 359	Very Early Guangala
UGSMA-73582	Salango	1900	20	AD 84–221 (AD 152.5)	Tooth of Burial 141	Early Guangala

Note: Correction and calibration were performed using the online OxCal v4.4.4 program (Bronk Ramsey 2021) in combination with the SHCal20 calibration curve (Hogg *et al.* 2020).

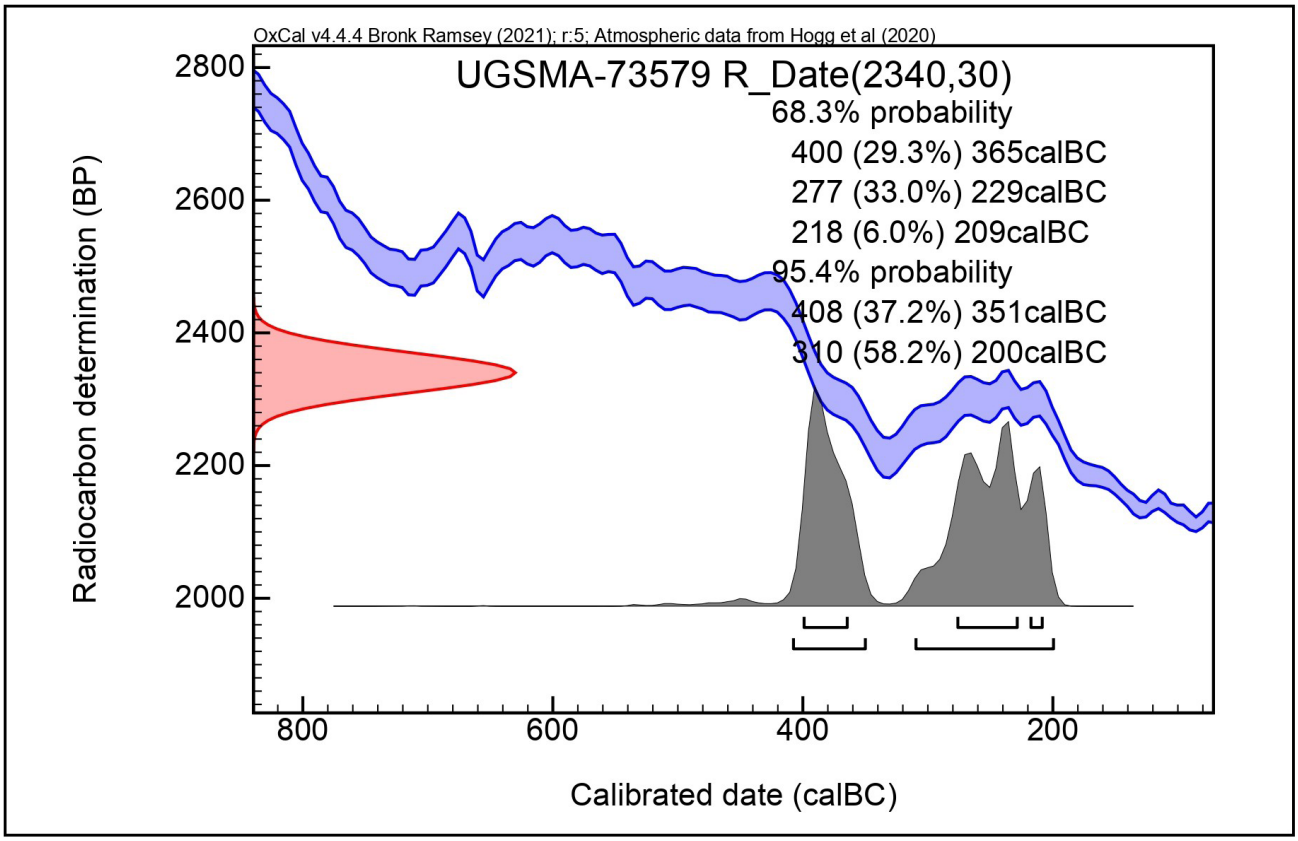

Figure 1.2. Plot of calibrated radiocarbon determination for Very Early Guangala burial Context 460.

practices (Dillehay 1995a; Eeckhout & Owens 2015; Shimada & Fitzsimmons 2015) it is only the Archaic cemetery at Las Vegas (Stahl & Stothert 2020; Stothert 1985, 1988) that has gained attention (Dillehay 1995b:6; Rivera 1995:61–62). Background knowledge of the earlier traditions and of practice contemporary with the Regional Development sanctuary greatly enhances evaluation of the Salango data.

In Chapter 2, I first outline the location and nature of the Salango sanctuary as an archaeological site, and the history of its excavation. I seek specifically to contextualise the description of the sanctuary with an account of the conditions under which it was excavated and recorded. By this I refer not only to material conditions, but also to our perception of and relation to the site as we excavated it. I then describe the materials and methods used in constructing the narrative of the sanctuary at Salango, with similar reference to the development of my understanding and changes in my ideas about what I was doing.

Chapters 3 to 8 are the heart of the book, and present detailed accounts as well as analysis and interpretations of the evidence for site design, architectural components, human burials, ritual installations, and offerings during the VEG, Bahía II/Early Guangala, and Middle Guangala phases. While these are three parts of what is ultimately a single historical sequence, each phase is necessarily treated according to the nature of the material involved since, as already indicated, this differs significantly from phase to

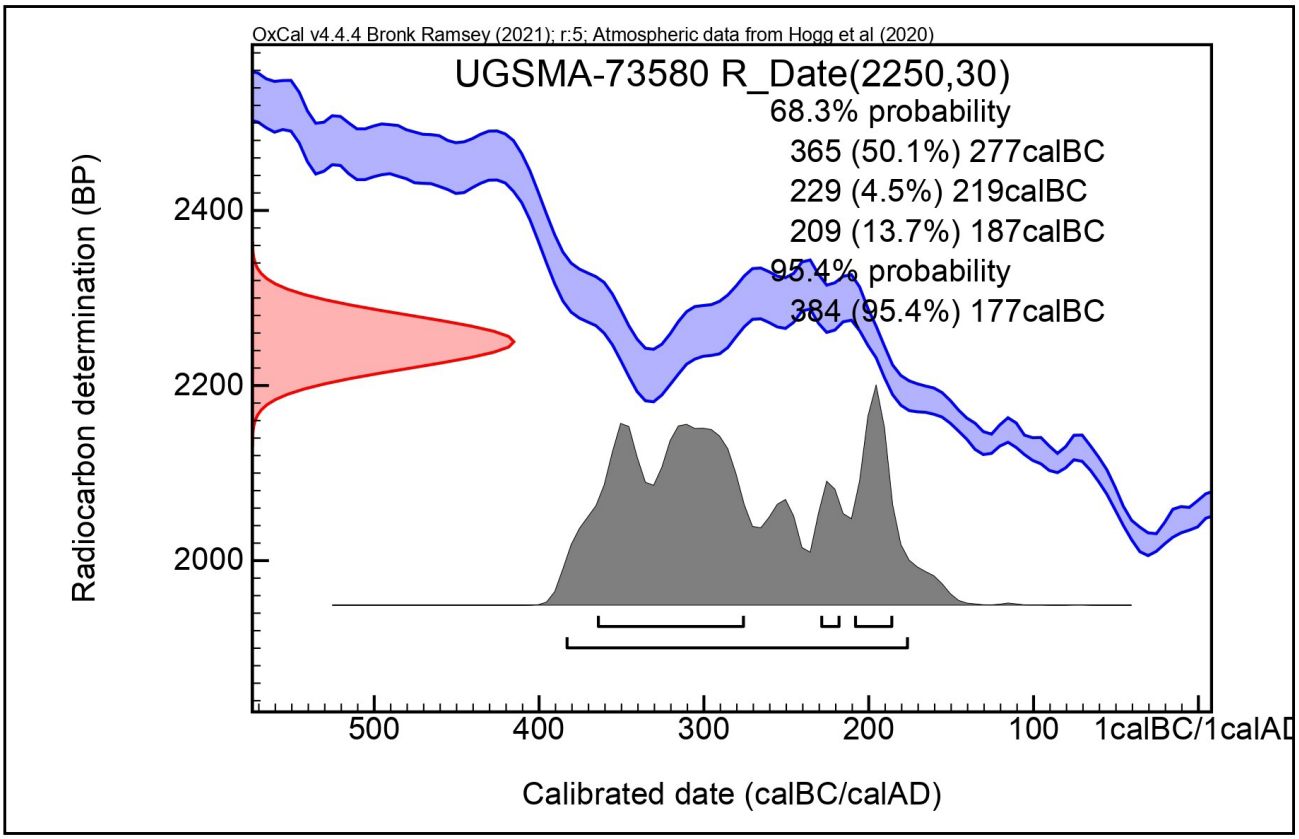

Figure 1.3. Plot of calibrated radiocarbon determination for Very Early Guangala burial Context 359.

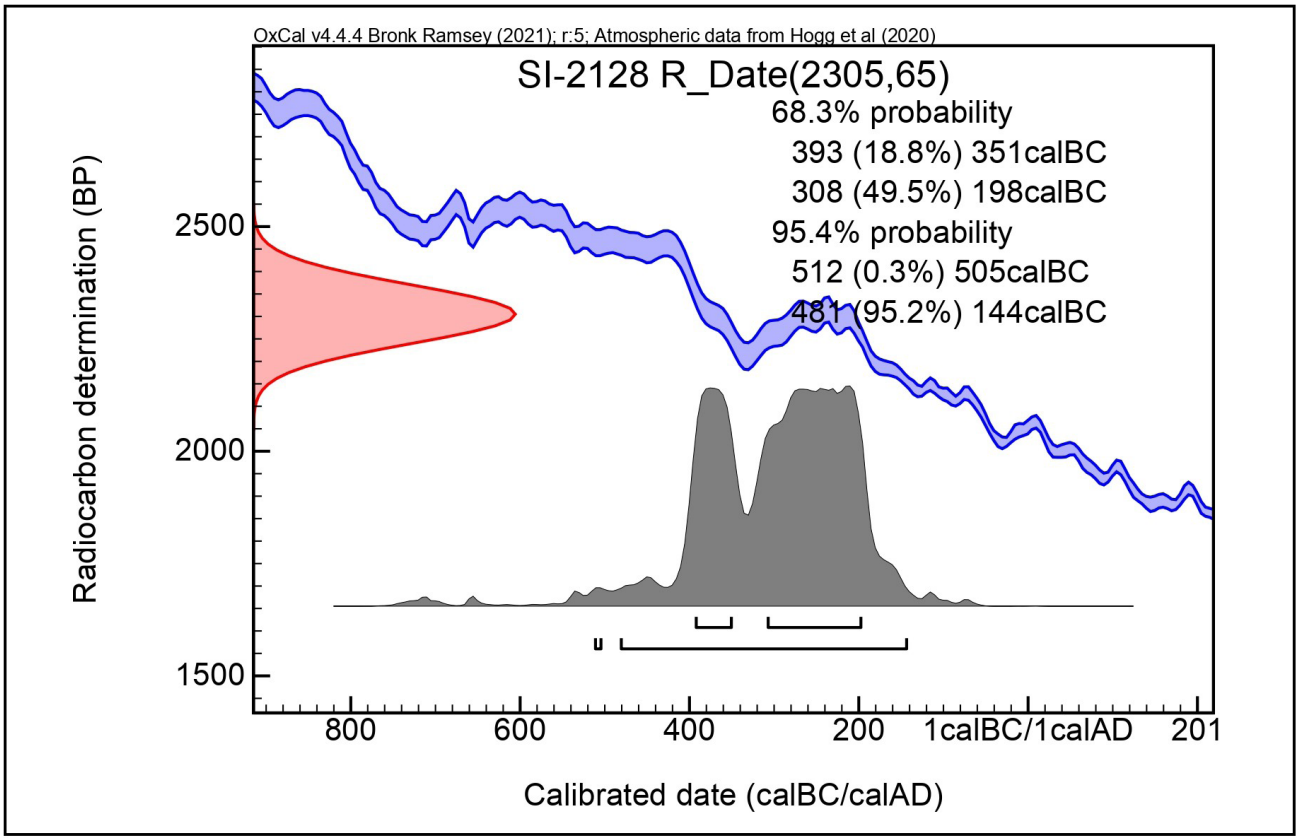

Figure 1.4. Plot of calibrated radiocarbon determination for the Pululahua explosion.

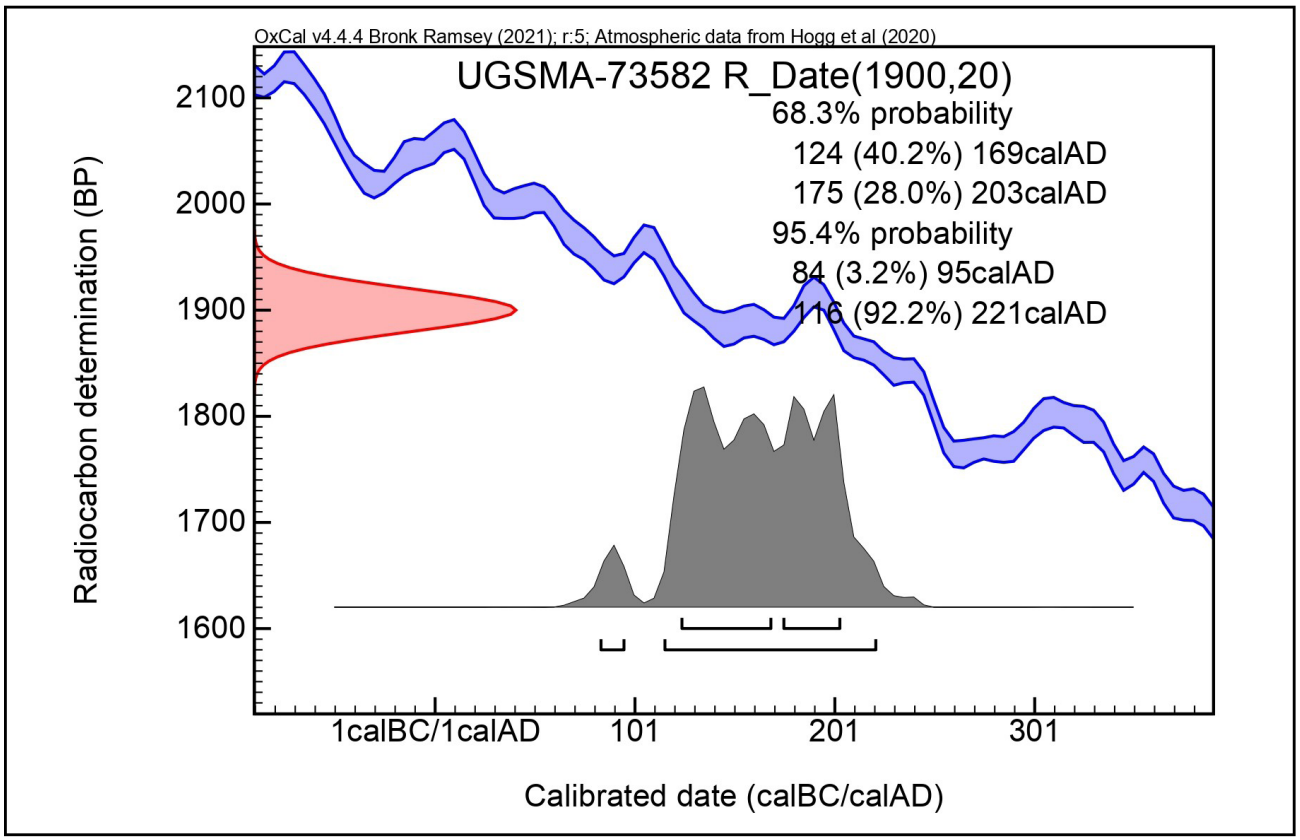

Figure 1.5. Plot of calibrated radiocarbon determination for Early Guangala burial Context 141.

phase. In view of the large quantity of data involved, the Bahía II/Early Guangala phase occupies four chapters, separating the description of architecture and then of burials from their analysis and interpretation. Treatment throughout also varies according to the differences in the respective written and photographic excavation records available. The stratigraphic sequence, however, forms the backbone of the site narrative, and as full an account as possible is made of its details in supporting the descriptions given of the sanctuary through each phase and through the transitions between the phases. Interpretation seeks to situate the sanctuary at each stage in the wider context of Ecuadorian coastal traditions.

Chapter 9 summarises the history of the Regional Development sanctuary during each of its three phases. While addressing the unique nature of the site itself, its relation to the earlier sanctuary of Middle and Late Engoroy times, and its correspondences and possible connections with north coastal Peruvian traditions, I emphasise the changing and inventive expressions of relationships with the ancestors, both proximate and ultimate, and the centrality of these relationships to the design and functioning of the site. Chapter 10 concludes with reflections on the significance of the Salango sanctuary for interpretation of the archaeology of ancient coastal Ecuador in terms of history, place, and individuals. I also suggest that in the ERD sanctuary phase we can find the origins of certain traditions that were to stand at the centre of the ritual and identity of the Late Manteño societies that flourished at the time of the Spanish conquest.

1.2. Guangala, Bahía II, and the Salango Sanctuary in the Regional Development

The massive explosion of the highland Pululahua volcano, over 300 km to the northeast, created an ash cloud whose fall left a 1–3-cm-thick layer of fine, soft grey powder over the top of Salango's final Late Engoroy central platform, its ramp, and the floor just outside the platform (Lunniss 2001:86, 292; 2023a:31; 2023b). This fall was followed by the extraordinary funerary program described in Chapter 3. The artefacts associated with this program are, save for some exceptions discussed later, of recognisable Early Guangala style.

ERD Salango lay just inside the northern limit of the zone of influence of the Guangala culture which followed out of Engoroy and whose heartland was the Santa Elena Peninsula (Bushnell 1951; Estrada 1957, 1962; Masucci 1992, 2000; Reitz & Masucci 2004; Stothert 1993). It was thus just outside the southern limit of the Bahía culture zone centred at Manta (Estrada 1957, 1962; Graber 2010; Lunniss 2022b:3–7, 129–142). So it was that when, perhaps around 200 BC, the sanctuary entered a new phase and began its reconfiguration as an elite burial ground, not only did its design become more elaborate, but its composition also became more complex. For although

burials with Early Guangala offerings were deployed in various other areas of the sanctuary, control of the main, central funerary enclosure was now taken over by forces aligned with Bahía II, the later manifestation of Bahía.

To discriminate the separate and anterior nature of the post-ash fall funerary program, it is identified as part of a VEG phase. This therefore constitutes the first part of the ERD at Salango, while the following joint Bahía II and Early Guangala stage constitutes the second part. With the end of the ERD, around AD 300, all Bahía influence disappeared from Salango, and the pottery of the Middle Regional Development (MRD) phase sanctuary is purely Middle Guangala.

This history and its terminology are made more complex by the fact that, at Salango, a significant component of the pottery so far called Bahía II is often not so much the Bahía II of Manta, but a variant tradition that came out of Salaite, 25 km north from Salango (Lunniss 2022b:141–142). Salaite, which seems to have marked the southernmost extension of territory under continuous Bahía II or Bahía II-type influence, was a necropolis of much larger size than the sanctuary at Salango, and it has produced a wealth of ceramic, gold, and other artefacts that indicate its status as one of the great funerary sites of the central coast during the Regional Development. Unfortunately, although its name may appear as provenience in collection catalogues, no publications have been made other than a photographic description of a single pottery vessel collected there (Piana 1970). In this study, therefore, I draw attention to those usually elaborate forms, and the decorative techniques and elements with which they were embellished, that are especially identifiable as deriving from Salaite, and then to the spiritual vision that Salaite, based on those vessels, can be said to have inspired.

But these difficulties can also be seen as offering valuable evidence concerning complexities of cultural identity, ritual practice, and social interaction that have so far passed unnoticed in studies of this period. Rather than limiting ourselves to attempts to define essential characteristics, we can observe, almost in real time, something of the processes and devices through which different groups of humans engaged with each other and their spirit world. And even if these are for the moment just what we can see at or out of Salango, they point to forces working from the wider regions to either side and beyond, and they are an indication of how we might more fruitfully consider the period as a whole.

1.3. Funerary Practice and Architecture on the Coast of Ecuador in the Archaic and Formative Periods

To appreciate the nature of the Regional Development sanctuary and burials at Salango, it is necessary to have knowledge of the coastal Ecuadorian funerary traditions in the preceding Archaic and Formative periods (Stothert 2003:348–360; Ubelaker 2003) out of and in answer to which they emerged (Table 1.3). Cemeteries and more isolated burials found all along the coast, though not always well documented, provide evidence concerning the different approaches taken with respect to preparation of the dead for burial, burial configuration, burial context, valuation of the dead, and the ritual use of human remains outside more strictly funerary contexts. While I bring focus onto the principal tendencies, I also detail variation in treatment of bodies and body parts since the full range of such treatment, unsurprisingly given the complexity of the record, tends to be overlooked and underappreciated.[5]

1.3.1. The Archaic: Las Vegas

Archaic funerary practice on the coast of Ecuador is represented by the Las Vegas cemetery at site OGSE-80 on the Santa Elena Peninsula (Stahl & Stothert 2020; Stothert 1988; Ubelaker 1988, 2020) and another at site OGSE-66 (Stothert & Sánchez 2011; Popov & Tabarev 2023). Dated to the Late Las Vegas phase (7000–5300 BC), the OGSECh-80 burials occupied the summit of a low but commanding hill set between the headwaters of two river tributaries. Prior to its purposing as a cemetery, this had been a central place of residence associated with a semi-sedentary Las Vegas phase (9000–7000 BC) population "focused on terrestrial, marine, and estuarine resources while also participating in plant manipulation and the progressive intensification of horticulture and fishing" (Stothert & Stahl 2020b:171). How and where the dead were buried in the earlier phase is not known. But with Late Las Vegas the site came to house what is today one of the largest early burial populations documented for the Americas (Ubelaker 2020:61).

The remains of 192 individuals were recovered at Las Vegas through excavation of 65 better defined and other burial contexts, though much of the site had been lost to erosion. There were three main burial types: primary (n=39), small secondary (n=21), and massive secondary (n=5) (Stothert 1988:133–170).[6] These included individuals of all ages and both sexes and displayed marked variation as well as general consistency. After primary burial, individuals could be disinterred and then reburied in their own secondary burials, or along with other primary burials, or in massive ossuaries. Bones were occasionally found stained with red pigment.

Primary burials were usually wrapped or tied up sharply flexed, with the arms doubled over the chest and the hands near the face. Adults were on the left or, more commonly, the right side, and youths and children were usually on the left side. Males seem to have been oriented to the west or southwest and sub-adults to the east or southeast, while for women there was no preferred orientation. There were also three extended supine burials, and one prone burial with the

[5] The difficulty at times of separating out the elements of any given assemblage, along with the ambiguity of definition of what is a burial and what the interment of human remains for other purposes, means that burial counts given, though based on published figures, are at times more approximate than exact.

[6] The counts for the different burial types are shown by Stothert 1988:Table 6.2, which also lists 1) additional bone collections that could not be confidently ascribed to any type, and 2) eleven burials not excavated and not included in the counts.

Table 1.3. Archaic and Formative Period Burial Assemblages of the Ecuadorian Coast.

Period	Cultural Phase	Site	Date	No. Inds.	Publications
Archaic	Las Vegas	Las Vegas	7000–5300 BC	192	Stahl & Stothert 2020; Stothert 1988; Ubelaker 1988, 2020
Archaic	Las Vegas	Loma Atahualpa	7000–5300 BC	18	Stothert & Sánchez 2011; Popov & Tabarev 2023
Early Formative	Valdivia	Real Alto	3800–1450 BC	100	Marcos 1988; Ubelaker 2003; Zeidler *et al.* 1988
Early Formative	Valdivia	Real Alto	3800–1450 BC	4	Tabarev *et al.* 2021
Early Formative	Valdivia	Loma Alta	3800–1450 BC	1	Stahl 1984
Early Formative	Valdivia	Río Perdido	3800–1450 BC	1	Lippi 1980
Early Formative	Valdivia	Buena Vista	3800–1450 BC	15	Meggers *et al.* 1965; Munizaga 1965
Early Formative	Valdivia	San Pablo	3800–1450 BC	9	Zevallos & Holm 1960
Early Formative	Valdivia	Buen Suceso	3800–1450 BC	15	Bowers & Juengst 2023; Rowe 2018
Early Formative	Late Valdivia	La Emerenciana	1850–1650 BC	4	Staller 2001
Early Formative	Terminal Valdivia	Capa Perro	1600–1450 BC	1	Zeidler *et al.* 1988
Middle Formative	Machalilla	Salango	1450–900 BC	31	Lunniss & Ubelaker 2025
Middle Formative	Machalilla	La Cabuya	1450–900 BC	2	Meggers *et al.* 1965; Munizaga 1965
Middle Formative	Machalilla	San Pablo	1450–900 BC	1	Meggers *et al.* 1965; Munizaga 1965
Late Formative	Engoroy	La Libertad	900–300/100 BC	41	Bushnell 1951
Late Formative	Engoroy	La Libertad	900–300/100 BC	21	Stothert 1984; Ubelaker 1988
Late Formative	Engoroy	Los Cerritos	900–300/100 BC	174+	Zevallos 1965, 1995b
Late Formative	Engoroy	Palmar	900–300/100 BC	1	Bischof 1982
Late Formative	Engoroy	Los Cerritos	900–300/100 BC	13	Beckwith 1996
Late Formative	Middle Engoroy	Salango	700–500 BC	5	Lunniss 2001
Late Formative	Late Engoroy	Salango	500–300 BC	25	Lunniss 2001, 2023a
Late Formative	Engoroy	Puerto López	900–300 BC	1	Currie 1995
Late Formative	Bahía I	La Isla, Jaramijó	500–300 BC	14	Domínguez & Ordoñez 2024
Late Formative	Tabuchila	Dos Caminos	1000–300 BC	1	Hermann 2016
Late Formative	Tolita Temprano	La Tolita	600–200 BC	6	Ubelaker 1997

legs doubled to either side. Other than the normally single burials, there was one double burial, known as Los Amantes de Sumpa, involving an adult male-female pair, 20–25 years old, oriented to the east, each flexed and facing the other, with his right hand on her waist and right leg over her pelvis, and with six large stones set over their main joints. Also notable was the discovery of an adult female (over 45 years old) in the entrance to a small northeast-facing circular shelter. And one infant was buried on a bed of *Anadara tuberculosa* shells and then had two large stones set on top.

Small secondary burials could be independent or associated with primary burials. The few massive burials, each including the remains of up to 18 adults as well as additional sub-adults and infants, saw piles of bones up to 50 cm deep, in three cases with the bones, especially the heads, carefully arranged. Bones could be articulated or semi-articulated as well as loose. Overall circular arrangements suggest that these ossuaries were set inside shelters like that which housed the adult female. Within such arrangements, however, there were visibly distinct groups of heads and other bones that would each have been placed in a separate woven container.

Grave goods were occasionally found with primary and massive secondary burials but were mostly absent from small secondary burials. These included shell spoons of *Malea ringens* and *Lyropecten* sp., conches, shell ornaments, a stone axe, round limestone balls, pebbles and hammerstones, grinding stones, small water-polished white stones, water-polished pebbles stained with red pigment, different sets of a set of coloured pebbles, fox teeth, and a peccary tusk.

At OGSE-67 km, 30 km to the southeast of Las Vegas, Stothert recovered fifteen secondary burials similar to those at Las Vegas itself (Popov & Tabarev 2023:59). Redesignated as OGSEAt-66/67 and named Loma Atahualpa, the site was re-excavated by a joint Russian-Ecuadorian team that found the primary burials of two adult females and one adult male which were also attributed to Las Vegas (Popov & Tabarev 2023:59, 60, Figs. 9, 10).[7]

[7] A Late Archaic burial has been provisionally identified at Julcuy, 25 km upriver from Puerto López in south Manabí Province but has yet to be published (Florencio Delgado, *pers. comm.*, 7th July 2024).

1.3.2. The Early Formative: Valdivia

For the multi-phase Valdivia period (3800–1450 BC; Raymond 2003), eight sites have yielded 146 or more documented burials.[8] The main set (n=100) comes from original excavations at the agricultural settlement and later ceremonial centre at Real Alto, not far from Las Vegas on the Santa Elena Peninsula (Lathrap *et al.* 1977; Marcos 1988, 2003; Zeidler & McEwan 2021), where individuals of all ages and both sexes were represented (Marcos 1988:161–173; Ubelaker 2003). Patterns of differential burial present especially for the dominant (n=72) Middle Valdivia Phase III (2800–2400 BC) group, where adults and sub-adults were typically buried flexed in shallow graves next to house wall trenches or occasionally in the wall trenches prior to construction, infants were buried in wall trenches or middens, and prenatal infants in upturned cooking pots in wall trenches (Zeidler *et al.* 1988:111). Other practice included fully extended burial in deep graves, and secondary burial in communal graves. Associated grave goods, few and mostly limited to adult burials, included stone axes, shell ornaments, food items, and ceramic figurines. One unusual burial in a wall trench comprised the skull of a twelve-year-old and the post-cranial skeleton of a five-year-old, in whose thoracic cavity reposed a quartz blade perhaps involved in the death or post-mortem treatment of the child (Marcos 1988:171). Another presented a flexed burial with the body decapitated and the head separated from the body by a large pottery sherd (Marcos 1988:40).

A significant proportion of the total excavated burial population of the site was associated with Structure 7, a single northeast-facing Phase III funerary house on top of a low mound projecting into the village plaza, and these presented other forms of treatment (Marcos 1988:68–72, 163–171; Zeidler *et al.* 1988:111; Zeidler & McEwan 2021:357–360). The principal burial was that of an adult female, evidently of high status, placed at the entrance in a grave lined with broken manos and metates, her head resting on a pottery sherd bearing an excised face design, and with two other large sherds in the fill. Adjacent was a pit containing an intentionally dismembered adult male and, around these remains, five flint knives and two stone scrapers. In the same pit were packets of skulls and other bones of a further six adult males and one sub-adult, interpreted as the result of a series of reburial events following successive sacrifices in honour of the female.

Eleven other burials were distributed around the house. In the wall trench were a neonate without goods and, less normally, an older infant lacking hands and lower legs but accompanied by a burnt flint blade, a semi-flexed child lacking the left hand but with a polished stone adze, a large pot sherd, and half a metate, and the secondary burial of a 15–16-year-old with pot sherds, deer bones, and large fish vertebrae. In pits cut into the house floor, one burial had the skull plus other bones of an adult male and some pot sherds, and another the long bone fragments of a young child. One neonate was buried supine and complete save for the feet but with a pottery figurine underneath and 14 small Spondylus beads around the waist. A secondary burial included the skulls and other bones of six individuals of mixed ages from neonate to adult along with a pottery figurine, a deer mandible, and three large pot sherds. In one pit were the packeted bones of a child, and in another the packeted disarticulated post-cranial skeleton of an adult male, the head absent save for part of the mandible lying close by. Intrusive into this Phase III assemblage was a Phase IV (2400–2250 BC) pit containing a set of burnt human bones along with four pottery figurines and a pottery miniature shaman's stool (Marcos 1988:70, 96–100), and other deposits associated with the ramped entrance suggest that the mound continued in use into at least Phase V (Marcos 1988:41). Prior to construction of Structure 7, however, and into the mound on which it was built, was buried a human skull accompanied by a deer scapula and fourteen sherds from different pots (Marcos 1988:70–71).

More recent research at Real Alto has resulted in four more undated primary adult burials (Tabarev *et al.* 2021). While three conformed to the standard flexed position on the side, the fourth, 50 or more years old, lay on his back with the legs flexed. Grave goods with the burials included seashells and a broken bowl of soft white stone.

Assemblages from other Early to Late Valdivia sites on the Santa Elena Peninsula generally conform to the more standard patterns suggested by Real Alto. These include: one burial at the inland agricultural village of Loma Alta (Stahl 1984:226–229), and one burial found at the adjacent Río Perdido Machalilla village (Lippi 1980:118–120), where the individual, with a stone axe, lay flexed on the back as the fourth burial described by Tabarev and colleagues (2021) for Real Alto; fifteen burials at Buena Vista, 1 km inland from the eponymous Valdivia site (Meggers *et al.* 1965:18–21; Munizaga 1965:24, Table 1); and nine burials at the large estuarine site of San Pablo (Meggers *et al.* 1965:22; Zevallos 1995a; Zevallos & Holm 1960). At Buen Suceso, however, a small inland settlement with Valdivia occupation through the entire sequence of Phases I–VIII (Rowe & Duke 2020), a different approach to the integration of the human dead in village architecture is suggested (Bowers & Juengst 2023; Rowe 2018). Here 15 burials, mainly of infants and children, were found in a variety of contexts, including a Late Valdivia cobbled floor, perhaps that of a ceremonial house, at the centre of the ring-shaped village.

Two sites of later date, and from outside the Valdivia heartlands of the Santa Elena Peninsula and South Manabí, present unprecedented burial configurations and more elaborate grave offerings. At La Emerenciana, a Valdivia VII–VIII (1950–1600 BC) ceremonial centre of the south coastal lowlands of El Oro Province, four female burials,

[8] No burials have yet been associated with the San Pedro pottery complex that ran parallel to or even preceded the earliest Valdivia phases (Bischof & Viteri 2006; Kanomata *et al.* 2019; Lunniss *et al.* 2021).

placed in separate pit graves cut into a small platform itself built on top of a larger mound, suggest insertion of the dead in reconstructions of the vertical *axis mundi* of shamanic cosmology (Staller 2001). Flexed and seated upright, these individuals were encased in oysters, and three were stained with red pigment. The bodies and shells once in place were covered with pottery sherds, bird and animal bones, and floral elements. The burials were then terminated by the burning of offerings in the mouth of the grave. Finally, at the Capa Perro settlement, in North Manabí, a Terminal Piquigua (1600–1450 BC) young adult female was found buried fully extended with a unique set of artefacts suggesting shamanic function or ritual: a miniature pottery lime container, a polished greenstone pendant, a concentration of unmodified claystone, and a Late Valdivia ceramic figurine inside a feline snout (likely the remains of the facial portion of an ocelot skin vestment) overlain by part of a grinding stone, as well as bones of a large bat, a deer, and two rats (Zeidler *et al.* 1988).

1.3.3. The Middle Formative: Machalilla

The principal evidence for Machalilla funerary practice is an assemblage of 31 infants and adult males and females from the sea-fishing village at Salango dating to 1500–900 BC (Béarez *et al.* 2012; Lunniss & Ubelaker 2025). Graves were concentrated in and over an area of earlier Machalilla residence, but none were associated with any sort of structure. Differential distribution suggests two main groups, neither of which were completely excavated, along with outliers or other potential groups. Twenty-eight graves, three of them containing double burials, were excavated. All but one were of primary articulated burials. Adults were flexed and seated, flexed on the left or right side, or flexed on the back. Infants lay on their backs or flexed on one or other side, save for one who lay across the back of a seated adult female, and one in front of a seated adult male. The third double burial was that of two infants flexed on their left sides next to each other, and other burials may also have been carefully sited in close juxtaposition to each other. Notably there was no intrusion of any grave on any earlier burial. Surviving grave goods, if present, were usually small and few, and included *Pinctada mazatlanica* shells, a *Spondylus crassisquama* valve, and pottery sherds. Shell fishhooks and stones may also have been given as offerings. One infant was overlain by a pot sherd, and another by a broken pottery vessel. Extraneous bones were included in four graves, and in at least two of these the inclusion seems intentional.

One exceptional burial was that of a 35–40-year-old female interpreted as a sea turtle shaman. Prior to burial, the body was decapitated and dismembered. The limbs and torso were then arranged together and packaged and placed with the head on top or adjacent. Along with a mano encased in two *P. mazatlanica* valves, and another such valve and stone, the burial was covered by a large pottery vessel in the form of a sea turtle shell. Notably also, large pottery chicha jars were buried in separate events adjacent to human interments, though the chronological relation is not clear.

Elsewhere, two skeletons at La Cabuya and a skull at San Pablo (Meggers *et al.* 1965:110, 111, 146; Munizaga 1965:228–229) are of Machalilla date, those at La Cabuya having been buried flexed on their sides. The skulls in all cases, as that of the redeposited skull at Salango, presented occipital flattening.

1.3.4. The Late Formative: Engoroy

The Late Formative of coastal Ecuador saw the emergence of a series of related but distinct ceramic and other traditions, of which the most famous is Chorrera, named after the type site in the lower Guayas Basin (Evans & Meggers 1957, 1982). Not one Chorrera burial, however, has ever been documented, and our best direct evidence for the period comes from excavation of Engoroy (900–300/100 BC) cemeteries and isolated burials at La Libertad, Los Cerritos, Loma Alta, and Palmar on the Santa Elena Peninsula, and Salango and Puerto López in South Manabí. Bahía I burials have been found uniquely at La Isla, near Manta. A single possible Tabuchila phase burial, coeval with Chorrera and Engoroy, is registered for North Manabí, along with seven for the Tolita Temprano phase at La Tolita in Esmeraldas Province.

At a cemetery 200 m from the sea cliffs at La Libertad, Bushnell (1951:85–94) recovered 41 Engoroy individuals in different groups. The burials, poorly preserved, were presumed to be secondary. All ages were recorded, from infant up to 60 years. Twenty-five lacked any offerings, seven had a single pottery vessel, three a tool of shell or polished stone, two a pot and a tool, three two pots, and one four pots. Close by at site OGSE-46D, part of the same cemetery, Stothert (1984) later carried out her own rescue excavations. Twelve burial features were recorded as Engoroy, three with individuals seated with flexed legs, while nine were secondary burials with the remains of 21 individuals or more (Ubelaker 1988).[9] The secondary burials included a range of small artefacts like those found by Bushnell, with the addition of greenstone beads, and it can be concluded that at Libertad the normal Engoroy practice was indeed secondary burial of the remains, complete or partial, either of individuals or groups of individuals, accompanied by such artefacts. And based on the similarity of the artefact types to Late Engoroy grave goods at Salango, it seems likely that the Engoroy material recovered by both Bushnell and Stothert from the secondary graves was itself of the Late Engoroy phase.

The largest Engoroy burial assemblage comes from Los Cerritos, a massive cemetery on a north-facing hill slope 18 km northeast along the coast from La Libertad and just upriver from the San Pablo site (Zevallos 1965, 1995b). Zevallos (1995b:181) recovered 174 graves, at times densely packed such that out of the first excavated area of 12 m^2 he found around 20 burials. These he separated into two phases. In his Phase 1, they were mostly primary, seated, and flexed. In his Phase 2, there were five primary

[9] There was also a likely historic period extended burial.

burials but with a different set of grave goods, and the rest were collective secondary burials with up to five individuals in each burial, usually disordered and lacking grave goods. The uncalibrated radiocarbon date obtained for a Phase 1 burial was 840 BC +/- 90, which would coincide with Early Engoroy as identified at Salango (Beckwith 1996:64). Some artefacts are evidently of Late Engoroy date, again as suggested by comparison with Salango and elsewhere. Thus one bottle with a secondary burial is of Paracas-like type (Lathrap *et al.* 1975:Fig. 79; Zevallos 1995b:Fig. 51d) while another is of more Chorrera type characteristics (Zevallos 1995b:Fig. 51a), and other vessels (Zevallos 1995b:Figs. 42b, 50, 51f) could all easily have come from Late Engoroy graves at Salango, as could the batons made from shell columellae (Zevallos 1995b:Fig. 56). Other curved pendants of bone (Zevallos 1965:Fig. 5) may have been lime dippers, such as also found at Salango. Amongst the beads and other artefacts of coloured stone were greenstone pendants identical to others found at Cerro Narrío in the southern highlands near Cuenca (Zevallos 1995b:169, Fig. 49). And it was in this cemetery that the first piece of metal was recovered from a coastal Formative site (Zevallos 1995b:181), this being a small piece of copper sheet associated with one of the Phase 1 burials. Notably also, three individuals were found with Lyropecten valves protecting their head or knee, recalling the placement of upright *L. subnudosus* and *S. limbatus* valves over the left knee of an extended adult male at Salango Lunniss 2022a:Fig. 14.9).

At Palmar, 15 km up the coast from Los Cerritos, Zeller excavated an unpublished extended Engoroy burial (Bischof 1982:162). Further north still at Loma Alta, thirteen adult and sub-adult primary Engoroy burials were registered, all flexed and five with grave goods (Beckwith 1996:47, 48). The most elaborate set of offerings accompanied a centrally sited adult male of evident high ritual status flexed on the back, perhaps attended by three other burials. The artefacts included a bowl set upside down over the feet, a labret, fish vertebra earspools, a Spondylus pendant, shell beads, a possible bone spatula, a possible bone snuffing tube, and two lime residues from gourd containers (Beckwith 1996:83, 84; Damp *et al.* 2010:123).

For Manabí, the largest Late Formative burial assemblage is that of the Engoroy burials at Salango. It is possible that there are a few primary burials in association with house floors of the Early Engoroy fishing village at Sector 141C (Kurc 1984), but this is not certain, and the best evidence is for assemblages associated with the sanctuary of the following Middle and Late Engoroy phases at Sector 141B.

The five Middle Engoroy burials at Sector 141B Salango were all set to the rear of a northeast-facing ritual house in a second stage of use after the dismantling of the original exterior wall (Lunniss 2001:107–109; 2021:150–153; 2023a:43). The principal burial was that of an adult (likely male), interpreted as the ritual specialist or shaman who had practiced his work in the house. The body, with head to the southeast, was flexed on the left side and accompanied by a well-used Middle Engoroy tripod bowl and a string of polished white shell beads, as well as two loose white and red shell beads and a polished sea lion incisor. On or next to the old wall trench, so echoing Middle Valdivia associations between infants and house foundations, were three neonates on their backs, two headed to the southeast, one to the north, one of them also accompanied by a string of polished white shell beads and a red Spondylus bead. Outside the house, a 6-month-old, also with a red shell bead in the grave fill, lay supine with the head directly on the line of the house's northeast-southwest central axis and the body extended perpendicular to the axis to the northwest. Notably, the underground space in which lay the four burials inside the house had been previously and carefully delimited, at the time of house foundation, by the ritual installation of seashells, stone discs, and flakes of sheet copper in the bases of the postholes that enclosed it.

For Late Engoroy, 25 individuals from 24 burials (Lunniss 2001:109–123; 2021:162–172) were once more associated with a carefully constructed sacred space, but of a different order and in association with a range of other features related both to the immediate funerary ritual and the overall ritual context of the burial placements. The place of burial was to the rear of a rectangular northeast-facing platform of yellow clay bordered by a wall of red clay, beyond which lay a red clay floor.[10] In its final version, the rear wall was underlain by a row of large stone ancestor figurines (Lunniss 2001:129–132), and under the ramped entrance there was a pair of tusk-shaped stone figurines, one each side of the central axis (Lunniss 2023a:36, 37). Mostly single adults of either sex, mostly supine and extended or, rarely, with the knees raised, the buried dead lay northwest-southeast and vice versa in equal numbers, cross-cutting the direction of the central axis. There were also three infants, one across the stomach of an adult female, and one sub-adult. Grave goods associated with different parts of the bodies were principally single pottery vessels of different forms, greenstone beads, and obsidian flakes, but also included unworked shell and stone. Shell beads and other artefacts of shell and stone were found in grave fills. To the front of the group, just to the left of the central axis, one adult male was buried flexed on his left side, head to the northwest and facing northeast. Accompanied by a whistling bottle in the shape of a mythic being (under the back), a long bone baton (under the legs), a greenstone bead (under the jaw), a *Volutella caestus* conch (above the head) and a container made from a modified deer cranium (by the left shoulder), this exceptional individual, as the adult of the Middle Engoroy house, is identified as a shaman or professional ritualist. A short distance to the northeast, on the summit of the platform just inside the clay steps at the top of the ramped entrance, was another pit of grave-like form and dimensions (Lunniss 2023a:43). This contained a second and slightly different version of the first mythic being whistling bottle, and a greenstone

[10] Other burials likely lay in the unexcavated rear right section of the platform.

bead but was empty of human remains and, exceptionally, was aligned northeast-southwest, parallel to the central axis.

Funerary ritual was not limited to burial of the dead in the graves but included the making of fires in pits and the disposal in other pits of pottery, shells, and other artefacts which can be interpreted as the remains of feasting (Lunniss 2001:159–166). These pits were all set to the rear of or immediately behind the platform. And while there were other ritual installations, the fourth and most numerous set of features associated with this burial setting were dozens of stone figurine placements set in small holes cut into the floor surrounding the platform up to 50 m or more away (Lunniss 2001:129–135; 2011; 2023:37). The overall interpretation of this complex scenario is that it represents the cycle of life and death, in which the recent dead, identifiable as proximate ancestors-in-the-making, were entrusted to the Underworld out of which emerged the figurines, identifiable as ultimate ancestors making their first appearance on the surface of the earth.

Moving north again, at Puerto López just one primary burial accompanied by a stone bead has been identified as of likely Engoroy date (Currie 1995:10, Table 1). At the shoreline site of La Isla, a small promontory east of Manta at Jaramijó, a Bahía I cemetery is represented by six tombs containing 14 individuals (Domínguez & Ordoñez 2024). Burials were primary, extended, and single or multiple (up to five individuals), with one single secondary burial. Grave goods were a figurine head in one multiple burial and a complete pottery bowl in the other.[11] In North Manabí, at Dos Caminos, near San Isidro and the Capa Perro site, Engwall excavated an adult female, buried flexed on her back with legs drawn up to her right side, which he identified on stratigraphic grounds as of being of the Late Formative Tabuchila phase (Herrmann 2016:206), and there are seven burials attributed to the Tolita Temprano phase (600–200 BC) at La Tolita, in northern Esmeraldas (Ubelaker 1997:3).

1.3.5. Summary

The best burial registers for the Archaic and Formative periods of coastal Ecuador come from Las Vegas, Real Alto, and Salango, with La Emerenciana as an outlier. For the other sites it is not always possible to estimate the precise settings of the interments, and we rarely gain an idea of any total burial population. But while Zevallos does not say whether he exhausted Los Cerritos, it does give us some idea of how large Late Formative cemeteries could be. We must wonder what percentage of the cemetery at La Libertad, apparently a major Engoroy settlement, was recovered by Bushnell and Stothert. It is also almost shocking to note that other than the single burials at Puerto López and Dos Caminos and the six tombs at La Isla, there has been no documentation of the often-extensive Late Formative cemeteries which, based on thousands of looted museum pieces, at one time marked the landscapes of Manabí beyond Salango. Nevertheless, while it is not easy to decide to what extent the different sites are representative of either chrono-cultural phase or geographical region, some observations can be made that will help better understand the significance of the data from Salango in the Regional Development.

Treatment of the bodies through time presents no well-defined sequence of change, but rather some broader tendencies obscured by variation. Primary burials were normally flexed on the side in Las Vegas and then in Valdivia up to the late phases when the bodies might be seated, and these two formats continued into Machalilla, when the body might also be lain on the back. Extended supine burials are found throughout, though they tend to be mainly infants, and are only common in Late Engoroy at Salango. Early and Middle Engoroy practice is unclear, though Los Cerritos points to seated flexed and to a lesser extent secondary burials. Flexed burials on the side or back in Engoroy are limited to the shamans or ritualists at Loma Alta and Salango in the Middle and Late phases and thus appear to have special significance at that stage. Simple secondary burials are found throughout, while larger secondary burials are limited to Las Vegas and Middle Valdivia. Dismemberment and decapitation and subsequent repackaging is a rare practice followed in highly specialised ritual contexts, both for Valdivia at Real Alto and Machalilla at Salango, though for different purposes. At Real Alto there are also cases of partial dismemberment of primary burials. Indeed, Real Alto presents an unmatched range of post-mortem treatment of the body and use of body parts that has yet to be properly understood. The staining of bodies with red pigment, practised at Las Vegas and La Emerenciana, has not yet been found for any post-Valdivia cemetery.

Grave goods reflect changes in technologies as well as in symbolic systems and ritual values. This is especially true with respect to the rare elaborate burials. But while occasionally there were small precious items, including some that had been traded over long distances, the artefacts generally tended to be modest, at times being limited to pot sherds or objects taken from nature such as shells or stones, though this of course may also reflect the non-survival of perishable goods, including the cloth, clothing, nets, or baskets in which the dead were buried, or the cords used to tie them up. Thus the Las Vegas repertoire emphasised shell and stone artefacts, including collected pebbles of different kinds, grinding stones, which persist into Valdivia, and axes, which become more prevalent with Valdivia. With Valdivia small solid ceramic figurines and pot sherds could be added, but it seems to be only with Middle and more especially Late Engoroy that complete large pottery vessels begin to be included, though by then small figurines had disappeared. No necklaces are found until Middle Engoroy, but occasional shell beads are present from Valdivia onwards, perhaps included,

[11] The pottery and a radiocarbon date of 455 BC suggest that these were of Bahía I rather than Bahía II affiliation, though the presence of Los Esteros type figurines might place them later.

Table 1.4. Regional Development Burial Assemblages of the Ecuadorian Coast.

Cultural Phase	Site	Date	No. Inds.	Publications
Jambelí	San Lorenzo del Mate	500 BC–AD 500	106	Ledergerber 1992, 1997; Ubelaker 1983a
Jambelí	Punta Brava	500 BC–AD 500	7?	Piana & Marotzke 1995
Early Guangala	La Libertad	300/100 BC–AD 300	43+	Bushnell 1951
Early Guangala	La Libertad	300/100 BC–AD 300	8	Disselhof 1949
Early Guangala	La Libertad	300/100 BC–AD 300	3	Stothert 1984
Early Guangala	La Libertad – Samarina	300/100 BC–AD 300	14	López *et al.* 2022; Santana *et al.* 2014
Early Guangala	La Libertad – Torre Marina	300/100 BC–AD 300	79	Ubelaker & DeGaglia 2020
Early Guangala	Palmar	300/100 BC–AD 300	7	Van Bork-Feltkamp 1965
Early Guangala	Valdivia	300/100 BC–AD 300	3	Estrada 1961; Meggers *et al.* 1965
Early Guangala	Valdivia	300/100 BC–AD 300	22	Stothert 1993; Ubelaker 1983b
Early Guangala	Olón	300/100 BC–AD 300	4+	Disselhof 1949
Bahía II	Salaite	300 BC–AD 300	?	None
Bahía II	Joá	300 BC–AD 300	?	Holm 2001a, 2001b
Bahía II/Early Guangala/Chirije	Cerro Jaboncillo	300 BC–AD 600	?	Saville 1910
Bahía II	Bahía de Caráquez	300 BC–AD 300	?	Estrada 1962; Huerta 1940
Jama-Coaque I (Muchique I)	Dos Caminos	300 BC–AD 400	1	Herrmann 2016
Classic Tolita + Late Tolita	La Tolita	200 BC–AD 300	81	Ubelaker 1997; Valdez 1987
Tejar	Salitre	300/100 BC–AD 300?	4+	Piana & Marotzke 1995
Guayaquil	San Pedro de Guayaquil	300/100 BC–?	16	Aleto 1988; Parducci & Parducci 1970, 1972, 1975

along with greenstone beads, increasingly present in Late Engoroy, as spiritual activators or protectors.[12]

Throughout the sequence, while at any one stage there was standard treatment of most individuals, certain others merited or required special treatment. Thus at Las Vegas the burial of "Los Amantes de Sumpa", at Real Alto the female at the entrance of ritual house, at Salango the Machalilla female shaman and then the Middle Engoroy shaman in his house and the Late Engoroy shaman at the centre of the ritual platform, and at Loma Alta the adult male with his ritual paraphernalia, all, for their unusual burial configurations, elaborate grave goods, or specific burial locations, stand out from the general population. They also show that from early on, burials were used to make statements both about the individuals interred and the places in which they were buried. Indeed, from the start we can suggest that Las Vegas itself was chosen as a burial site for two important locational reasons. First, it had value as a site of ancestral residence for two millennia or more prior to the apparent initiation of burial ritual there around 7000 BC. Second, for its elevation, it commanded views across the surrounding landscape and was visible from points around that landscape. And within the closed landscape of Real Alto, this pattern is matched by the central location of Structure 7.

From these few examples alone, we are led to see that we can understand the burials only if we also understand their setting, including the tomb itself, the cemetery or other immediate surround, and the place in which these are situated with all the history and meanings attached to it. This is best indicated at Salango, where the ritual house of Middle Engoroy became the ancestor house of the dead shaman and the founding structure over which ultimately was enacted in more explicitly cosmic terms the Late Engoroy myth of Salango as an origin site. We can also see that with the Late Formative, while many dead were likely still buried at or close to their villages, there began a custom of burying select dead at certain specially designated and at times architecturally defined locales, outside or removed from settlements occupied by the living (Stothert 2003:355), and that these burial places may have included individuals from different and even distant communities.

1.4. Funerary Practice and Architecture on the Ecuadorian Coast in the Early Regional Development Period

Early Regional Development cemeteries have been documented along the coast of Ecuador from Isla Puná and the Gulf of Guayaquil up to La Tolita in the estuary of the Río Santiago near the Columbian frontier (Table 1.4). But there are enormous gaps and, with vanishingly small exception, the burial grounds of central and north Manabí

[12] Valdivia Spondylus masks, though iconic, have only been documented in the context of a Manteño burial dating to more than 2000 years after Valdivia (Juengst *et al.* 2025).

and Esmeraldas that are the sources of thousands of often spectacular looted Bahía, Jama-Coaque, and Tolita grave goods have never been investigated scientifically.

1.4.1. Jambelí

Sited on top of a 50-m hill close to the mangrove systems of the Gulf of Guayaquil, San Lorenzo del Mate was a Jambelí (Estrada *et al.* 1964) cemetery that produced one of the largest Regional Development burial assemblages so far documented for the coast of Ecuador (Ubelaker 1983a). From approximately 60% of the cemetery's 1500 m^2 area, Ubelaker recovered 106 individuals of all ages, most of them as primary burials that could be seated, supine with legs in a variety of positions, prone, or on either side.[13] Nine other burials were secondary and seven disturbed. Burials of given configurations tended to be sited together, and subadults tended to be grouped apart from the adults. No radiocarbon dates were obtained, and no patterns were observed to suggest temporal change or phasing within the 500 BC–AD 500 range estimated for the Jambelí culture. Thirty-nine individuals, more often adult males than adult females, and least of all children and infants (n=3), were accompanied by one or two, rarely more, complete artefacts (Ledergerber 1992, 1997; Ubelaker 1983a). These included complete pottery vessels, spindle whorls, occasional shell beads but also one set of 295 beads and another of 396, shell plaques, shell lime dippers and lime masses, stone beads and tools, artefacts of deer antler, and copper earrings and rings.[14] Four outstanding graves included multiple vessels as well as other artefacts. These, the elaborate design of some of the pottery (Ledergerber 1997:Pls. 3b, 3c), the greater number of unaccompanied than accompanied burials, and the patterns of spatial distribution suggest that the cemetery might represent social or ritual divisions between a smaller elite and larger commoner population. Sexual division is also indicated by exclusive association of spindle whorls and metates with women, and of lime paraphernalia and lime masses used in coca ritual with men.

Across the waters of the gulf on Isla Puná, there was another Jambelí cemetery situated on an eroding hill next to the shore at Punta Brava, the extreme west point of the island (Piana & Marotzke 1995:31–71). No indication of the total area is given, and just seven burials were excavated, the bones mostly destroyed, the configuration unclear, but with grave goods including five pottery vessels and various copper tools. Nearby was a dense ashy deposit falling down the side of the hill, with a reported abundance of fish, bird, and deer and other mammal bones, thousands of sherds of Jambelí, Garbanzal, Guangala, and Bahía fine ware and kitchen vessels, and various small artefacts of shell, stone, bone, and copper.

[13] One supine burial, extended with the knees bent outwards and feet together (Ubelaker 1983a:Fig. 6) looks suspiciously like a Late Guangala format as found at Loma de Cangrejitos (Marcos 2012:64–66).

[14] Ten other graves had just a few pot sherds, and pot sherds were also found in graves with complete artefacts.

1.4.2. Early Guangala

Back on the Santa Elena Peninsula, a series of Early Guangala cemeteries have been found along the coast proper and inland. Most excavation has been centred on La Libertad, near where Bushnell and Stothert had excavated their Engoroy burials. Amongst these Engoroy interments, one primary supine child burial included a figurine and other material that show it to have been an intrusive Guangala feature (Bushnell 1951:87), and a secondary urn burial, not explicitly identified as such, with infant bones in a red-painted kitchen bowl was also possibly Early Guangala (Bushnell 1951:89, Fig. 39h).[15] Likewise, Stothert had found three burials of seated format, one of them with a pedestal bowl with negative paint inside and out, that were more likely Early Guangala (Stothert 1984; 2003:Figs. 9, 10).

Separate from the main Engoroy burial area, Bushnell (1951:22–31) identified Early Guangala mounds up to 40 m across and excavated two of them. Mound G1a was composed of over 2.5 m of mostly unstratified ashy material mixed with sherds and shell. In the northwest sector were ten certain and two possible primary extended burials on intercardinal axes, eight of them with grave goods sited around and over the body that included pottery vessels (one over the head, two over the chest), stone tools, grooved stone balls, a copper needle, and a J-shaped shell fishhook. Secondary adult burials were varied in composition but mostly of single individuals. They included two with just the skulls present, one accompanied by a shell lime pot and the other by a bowl, one with the skull covered by a bowl and accompanied by two other vessels, one with a copper needle and two artefacts of shell and stone, and one with just a square-cut pot sherd. Four were skulls and some other bones but lacking goods, one burial held the remains of three individuals, and there were also remains of children. At Mound G1, there were two primary extended burials, one of which had a bowl by the head. Perhaps ten secondary burials were represented by various registered collections of bones in different states of preservation or completeness, some of single individuals, others of two, three, or four individuals, as well as further sets of bones dismissed as being of no interest. One collective burial had two pots and three typical small artefacts of shell, stone, and bone, and two single burials had pots. In addition to these more normal burials, there was one with just the torso and the head set at the base of the back, along with a painted sherd and anthropomorphic plate leg. All the material associated with the burials is Guangala. But there was in the mound itself an exotic greenstone amulet (Bushnell 1951:Fig. 26) similar to the one found by Zevallos in his Engoroy cemetery at Los Cerritos (Zevallos 1995b:169, Pl. 49).[16]

[15] These misidentifications, and likely others, are explained by the fact that 1) Bushnell (1951:85) considered Engoroy, which he was here identifying for the first time, to post-date rather than pre-date Guangala, which he was also identifying for the first time, and 2) certain Late Engoroy vessel types persisted into Early Guangala.

[16] It is also notable that Mound G1a was underlain by the deposition of three Late Engoroy tusk-shaped stone figurines (Bushnell 1951:24, Figs. 5, 25i).

Following Bushnell, Disselhof (1949) excavated cuts into five mounds, one of them next to a cut made by Bushnell. He seems to have found eight Early Guangala primary extended burials in just one mound, Mound IV, seven of them with offerings. These included pottery vessels, twice with one, twice with two, twice with three, and in one case with seven similar vessels in two rows. Two burials also had small artefacts of shell, stone, bone, and copper like those found by Bushnell.

More recently, there have been two projects to rescue burials from the same general area. First, ten were found in association with two successive house floors at the Hotel Samarina site (López *et al.* 2022; Santana *et al.* 2014). One was the secondary burial of three adult females, a young adult, and an infant. The others were all primary and extended, with two infants with an adult male in one, the rest but one all adults. Five of the adult crania had occipital flattening. Grave goods included two small lime pots and other vessels, a shell nose-ring, and other personal ornaments. At Torre Marina, more extensive excavations revealed 57 graves containing the poorly preserved skeletal remains of 79 individuals of all ages and both sexes, the largest Guangala assemblage yet excavated (Ubelaker & DeGaglia 2020). One adult female buried supine and extended east-west had three spindle whorls to the right, and shark teeth and red shell beads to the left, but data on the burial configurations are otherwise unpublished.

Moving up the coast, seven burials excavated at Palmar by Zeller are reported by Van Bork-Feltkamp (1965), but it is at Valdivia that we find the next large Early Guangala cemetery. While three primary burials had been earlier recovered by Estrada (1961:10, cited by Stothert [1993:10]; Meggers *et al.* 1965:16), Stothert's systematic excavation led to the most complete description of any Early Guangala burial set yet published (Stothert 1993; Ubelaker 1983b). The cemetery lies at the base of an ancient sea cliff 100 m from the sea, on the south edge of the estuary of the Río Valdivia, and the graves were cut through Early Guangala house floors and domestic refuse that had built up over a dried-up lagoon or branch of the estuary. The full extent of the cemetery is unknown, but 22 graves were recovered from the different cuts that could be opened. Burials were all primary, supine and extended, and oriented, without preference, to one or other of the four cardinal directions. They included three adult males, one adult female, and one adult of unknown sex, six neonates, and 11 other infants up to 3.5 years. Two double burials are suggested, one for a female accompanied by bones of a neonate and one for an adult male with a neonate next to the left elbow. A possible third double burial was suggested by an adult-sized tomb with only a one-year-old left in it. The remains of at least seven individuals other than the principal occupants of the tombs were recovered from these and other contexts (Ubelaker 1983b). Two of the males each had a pottery vessel, and the unidentified adult had two, one of them a large plate covering the head which, notably, had been cut off and placed face down. Save for the female, adult burials also variously contained two shell lime containers, one with a lime spatula, a shell nose-ring, shark teeth, shell beads, perforated shells, chert flakes, obsidian, pottery sherds, fishhooks, beach pebbles, and pieces of cream ochre. The three-year-old had a griddle plate over the head, and a one-year-old had a pottery vessel by the right shoulder. Otherwise, the children, save four who lacked any type of offering, had as goods a shell lime container, shells, fragments of yellow ochre and clay floor, a set of sherds and fish bones, shell fragments, a double strand of shell beads, obsidian flakes, and a rock crystal bead. All this material is easily identified as Early Guangala.

The most northerly excavated Early Guangala burials of the Province of Santa Elena were found 16 km up from Valdivia at Olón where they were mixed with intrusive Manteño burials, resulting in some confusion in distinguishing the two sets (Disselhof 1949). Four more definite primary Guangala burials included one with six iridescent painted bowls, and two with a single Guangala two-colour vessel in one case and two such in the other.

1.4.3. Bahía II

Passing Salango, we enter Bahía II territory. The first major cemetery was at Salaite. There is no register to account for the context of any of the hundreds of often spectacular gold and pottery grave goods looted from the site. Nevertheless, from the museum proveniences of some of this material, we can identify not only the wealth of the cemetery, but also an important ritual as well as ceramic tradition. To this we shall return in discussing the grave goods from Salango, where they can be put in proper context.

Beyond Salaite is the estuary of the Río Jipijapa and following the valley 15 km upstream we reach Jóa. Lying at the intersection of the Jipijapa valley and another that leads to Julcuy, Joá was a gateway to traffic moving from the interior to the coast and vice versa. There are also sulphur springs. Evidence for the cemetery comes from two articles by Holm (2001a, 2001b) and the artefacts he collected which are now held by the Museo Antropológico y de Arte Contemporáneo (MAAC), Guayaquil, which also houses some of the Salaite material. Grave goods included: fossil and modern shark teeth (Holm 2001a:188–190, Figs. 5.3.1, 5.3.2); cut plaques of serpentine 35–40 cm across and weighing up to 7 kg (Holm 2001b:177, Figs. 5.2.2, 5.2.3); 116 polished stone axes and a pottery vessel in the form of an axe with the stone head inserted into a wooden handle (Holm 2001a:188, Fig. 5.33a); string-cut Spondylus lime dippers with representations of spirit beings (Holm 2001b:117–181, Fig. 5.2.6); and sharpening stones with the grooves left from use as such (e.g. GA-2036-3122-95 in the reserves of the MAAC). The shark teeth, fossil and modern, are matched by offerings in Early Guangala tombs at Valdivia (Stothert 1993:15, Fig. 17f) and Torre Marina (Ubelaker & DeGaglia 2020), and also at the Fase Guayaquil cemetery in Guayaquil (Parducci & Parducci 1972:148, Fig. 30a, Pl. 30e), while the serpentine blocks are like others found on Isla de la Plata by Dorsey

(1901:266, Pls. LXII–LXVI). Also, and along with pottery vessels, most commonly decorated with iridescent paint, there were Bahía pottery figurines of different styles and other artefacts that suggest a possible Bahía I (500–300 BC) presence as well as Bahía II.

The first Regional Development material ever excavated within the Bahía II mainland came from a pair of funerary mounds at right angles to each other on a plateau near the 648 m summit of Cerro Jaboncillo, later to become the principal sacred mountain and ceremonial centre of the Manteños (McEwan 2004:Fig. 5.5; Saville 1910:35–56). Measuring 21 m by 15 m and 20 m by 14 m, up to around 2 m tall at their highest points, and made of earth but fronted by stone steps across the entire width, these match in general the design of a Bahía II platform recorded for Manta by Jijón y Caamaño (Estrada 1962:17; Jijón y Caamaño 1997:52, 53, Fig. 20). Though there were burials and offerings from later Manteño times, ascription of the mounds to the Regional Development period, as suggested first by Bushnell (1951:11) and Estrada (1962:23), is confirmed by the nature of pottery figurines and other artefacts found as grave offerings, as well as by figures apparently not associated with any burial. Notably, ovens and associated small platforms were constructed in the mounds and these seem likely to have been used for burning offerings (Saville 1910:40, 47, 52–54).

Amongst pottery figures there were four of Early Guangala style (Saville 1910:Pls. LXXXV, LXXXVIII bottom, LXXXIX.4,5) and at least four others of Bahía II style (Saville 1910:Pl. LXXXVI) or something more like Bahía than Guangala (Saville 1910:Pls. LXXXVII, LXXXVIII top), and five of these represented individuals engaged in ritual coca consumption. In these five cases, the individuals were all seated on wooden stools, with coca bags hanging from their left wrists, lime pot in their left hands, and lime dippers in the right hand. It is notable then that the grave goods included shell lime pots (Saville 1910:Pl. LXVII.1-5), and that these match others found at Punta Brava, San Lorenzo del Mate, La Libertad, Valdivia and Salango (Lunniss 2017). Copper and copper-gold alloy ornaments (Saville 1910:Pl. LXXVI.8–10) also match offerings from San Lorenzo del Mate and Salango.

Finally, a diverse set of pottery vessels (Saville 1910:Pls. LXX.3–8, LXXI, LXXII.1, 3–5, LXXIII, LXXIV) different to both Bahía II and Early Guangala standard types has been ascribed by Estrada to a Regional Development period Chirije ceramic complex (Estrada 1962:76–79). Named after the Chirije site, just south of Bahía de Caráquez, Estrada identified this tradition as emerging out of a Guangala incursion after the collapse of Bahía II. There has been no further work done to evaluate Estrada's idea, necessarily provisional since it was based on scanty evidence other than the material from Cerro Jaboncillo. Nevertheless, when added to the Bahía II and Early Guangala vessels, these indicate that the two funerary platforms continued to be venerated and visited after their period of initial construction and use.

Most northerly of the Bahía cemeteries is one at Bahía de Caráquez itself. The first report (Huerta 1940), based on informal observation of digging of the cemetery area prior to construction work, suggests a burial platform rising 60 cm above ground level, just 60 m from the south bank of the estuary of the Río Chone. An unknown number of burials, extended and prone, were found at an average depth of 1.5 m. Around 400 artefacts were collected, mainly of pottery, though there were also objects of stone, including two stone axes, bone, and shell, including a small superbly worked red Spondylus fish (GA-2708-3122-95 B; Huerta 1940: Pl. 3, Figs. 2, 3). Many pottery figurines, complete or incomplete, were found, some of which match types first recorded on La Plata (Huerta 1940:Pl. 1) while others, their heads at times extravagantly adorned with serpents (Huerta 1940:Pls. 2, 3, Fig.1; see also GA-95-918-78) are, with respect to documented pieces, so far unequalled anywhere else for size or character. Also unique to the site and found in the tombs were rock hard balls of fired clay, each moulded around a stone at its centre, 20 cm in diameter and weighing 20 lb. The cemetery was revisited in 1960 by Julio Viteri, who excavated immediately next to the first area reported, recovering two more prone extended burials, as well as a skull, one of these with a La Plata type figurine and a triple bowl (Estrada 1962:19, 20). Nearby was a massive stone axe (Estrada 1962:Fig. 99). Bahía figurines from this second area and nearby included 38 complete or near complete examples, and the remains of 90 others. Perhaps most notably, Viteri identified a combined stratigraphic sequence which saw first the construction of two stone floors, then the placement of burials, and, in one cut and over the burials, a 10 cm layer of ash (Estrada 1962:20, Fig. 19). Estrada suggested this might be evidence for a funeral pyre or for the accidental conflagration of houses and their inhabitants, but there is no mention either of the skeletons or the offerings having been burnt. Obsidian from beneath the ash layer was dated to AD 40–200.

1.4.4. Jama-Coaque and La Tolita

For Jama-Coaque, there is one documented burial excavated by Engwall at the much-looted Dos Caminos site, though two more adjacent burials were left unexcavated (Herrmann 2016:192, 193). The grave occupant was a 40–45-year-old female who lay extended and supine with a complete annular based decorated bowl (Herrmann 2016:Fig. A12) upside down over her face.

For the great necropolis at La Tolita, the more complete skeletons and partial human remains of 81 individuals of the Classic Tolita (200 BC–AD 75/90) and Late Tolita (AD 75/90–300) periods were recovered from excavation of eight sectors, and graves from two areas in particular provide some evidence of the different burial practices carried out during those periods (Ubelaker 1997; Valdez 1987). At the Tola de Pajarito, of Classic Tolita, there was a double burial with a 5-year-old accompanying a flexed and seated adult male, a secondary packet burial of five females, and a simple secondary burial with the head on

top of the packet of the rest of the bones, likely later than the other two (Valdez 1987:27, Figs. 18–21). At El Mango Montaña, over 20 burials were excavated from an area of 8m^2 (Valdez 1987:32, 33, Figs. 24–27). These were mostly extended on their stomachs with the head to the north and the face looking down. There were grave offerings of pottery and figurines. A Late Tolita date is indicated by the grave offerings of pottery vessels and radiocarbon dates of AD 90–195. At both locales the burials were sometimes associated with "chimneys" composed either of stacked urns with their bottoms knocked out or of ceramic tubes without top or bottom, or a mixture of both, but no explanation for these has yet been found, and some such structures have been found without burials nearby. Tola de Pajarito is notable for complex and varied construction techniques employed when it was amplified in the Late Tolita phase from an earlier height of 2 m to a new height of 5.6 m (Valdez 1987:39, 40, Figs. 28–31). Specifically, soils of different origins, textures, and colours were used to produce a deliberate mosaic effect.

1.4.5. Lower Guayas Basin

For the lower Guayas Basin, there are two small Tejar phase burial mounds near Salitre (Piana & Marotzke 1997:71–110). At one, there was the double burial of two adults, one judged to be an older person and the other a female. Both were seated with legs crossed, the older person in front and the other facing the same direction behind. The first had a double pedestalled plate and a jar with two pearl shell ornaments and one of deer antler, the other a simple pedestalled plate and a carinated bowl. At the other mound, there were numerous packets of human bone, rarely with a cup, plate, or pedestalled plate, and there were four sets of offerings unaccompanied by human remains and the burial of a large mammal. Two single burials were as those of the first mound, seated cross-legged, one in front of the other. They had offerings at the knee but also pedestalled cups in front of the chest, and each also had the head and chest protected by half a large olla.

The last assemblage is a set of 16 Fase Guayaquil burials from a midden site at San Pedro de Guayaquil, amongst which an undefined number were set, flexed, on beds of pottery sherds (Aleto 1988:64–68; Parducci & Parducci 1970, 1972, 1975). As well as pottery vessels, artefacts associated with the burials included objects of stone and shell and pottery figurines, flutes, and ocarinas. Dates for the site as well as the pottery suggest that there may have been, as at Salango, some continuity from a Late Formative stage in the final centuries BC into a subsequent and more recognisably Regional Development tradition.

1.4.6. Summary

The evidence for Regional Development burial practices, not always as systematic or perhaps representative as it could be, presents along different axes an image of increased complexity, intensity, and variation in comparison with the Formative. Indeed, it is the artefacts from the cemeteries, mostly looted though occasionally documented, that is the main basis for identification of the Regional Development as a distinct stage characterised both by a newly emerged aristocratic elite and by regional variations in the expression of their power (Masucci 2008; Stothert & Cruz 2007; Valdez 1992; Zeidler 2001).

First, while in cases such as La Libertad and Valdivia the cemeteries were sited in areas previously used for residence, others, such as Punta Brava and Cerro Jaboncillo are now found not simply outside the areas of settlement but in places removed from them. At San Lorenzo del Mate, it is not known if the cemetery was surrounded by residential areas or areas dedicated to performance of funerary or funerary-related ritual, but it occupied the summit of a hill commanding strategic views and thus, in inverse fashion, was visible from far around. Part of the investment at La Tolita, as at Cerro Jaboncillo, was directed to the construction of dedicated funerary platforms. This idea was not new, having antecedents at Late Engoroy Salango and Middle Valdivia Real Alto, but the magnitude of the Regional Development funerary architecture is of another order. What in general this suggests is a concept of landscapes populated, denoted, and even dominated by elite burial places that ran parallel to the rise of the new elite, aristocratic class whose dead occupied such places.

Burials could now be endowed with greatly increased quantities of grave offerings, including personal ornaments and pottery vessels, which were themselves of greater elaboration. The sharing of certain ritual artefacts, in particular paraphernalia related to coca consumption, and the presence at elite cemeteries of pottery vessels from other, even multiple other regions, as suggested by Punta Brava and Cerro Jaboncillo, then further suggests the creation of shared elite identities that derived authority or power from occasional collective association with the places in which the cemeteries were situated.

This had to some extent also earlier been suggested by Late Engoroy Salango, but the Regional Development cemeteries present the idea on a greater scale. Cerro Jaboncillo in this respect is a fascinating case. Figurine imagery affirms in explicit manner the importance not only of the site itself as point of intermediation between society and the world of ancestors and spirits but also of coca ritual as a shared aspect of Bahía and Guangala aristocratic identity.

At the same time, there are differences from region to region. Guangala cemeteries have yet to display any of the elaborate funerary architecture found at Bahía II and Tolita cemeteries. Likewise, while the absence of precise and specific data, quantitative as well as qualitative, with regard in particular to Bahía II, Jama-Coaque, and La

Tolita grave contents hinders comparison, investment in offerings and other aspects of funerary ritual also seems to have been greater in the more northerly regions than to the south. It is also striking that at Bahía de Caráquez and La Tolita individuals were buried extended and prone rather than supine. With regard to Bahía cemeteries, it is notable that, even more so than at Cerro Jaboncillo, ceramic figurines at Joá and Bahía de Caráquez played a large part that has no equal further south. More specific comparisons will be better made as the Salango material is described.

Finally, we should note continuing practice, at least for Guangala and albeit occasional, of radical reorganisation of the articulated body at burial as well as individual or collective skull burials and the inclusion to different degrees in primary burials of body parts derived from other individuals.