The foundations for the Maya and other civilizations of ancient Mesoamerica were laid down over 2,400 years ago during the early and middle phases of the Formative period. The most elaborate of these formative Mesoamerican societies are represented by the archaeological culture called Olmec, which merged some 3,500 years ago in the tropical lowlands of southern Veracruz and Tabasco, Mexico. Flourishing over the next 1,000 years, the Olmec created the most complex social and political hierarchies of their time on the North American continent. Olmec rulers expressed their material and religious power in the first monumental stone art of Mesoamerica, remarkable for its sophistication and naturalism, as well as through massive buried offerings of wealth obtained from great distances. *Olmec Archaeology and Early Mesoamerica* offers the most thorough and up-to-date book-length treatment of Olmec society and culture available.

Christopher A. Pool is associate professor of anthropology at the University of Kentucky. He has conducted archaeological fieldwork in southern Veracruz state, Mexico, and in the eastern United States.
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OLMEC ARCHAEOLOGY AND EARLY MESOAMERICA

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University of Kentucky
For Margaret B. Pool and Jack E. Pool
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