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Jeffrey P. Blomster

Changing Cloud Formations

THE SOCIOPOLITICS OF OAXACA IN
LATE CLASSIC/POSTCLASSIC MESOAMERICA

The origin and collapse of sociopolitical organizations remain topics of fundamental importance to anthropological archaeology. Sometime after 700 CE, both processes unfolded in various parts of modern Oaxaca State, a region in the southern highlands of Mexico (Figure 1.1) encompassing a mosaic of cultures and landscapes (Figure 1.2). One of the first states in the New World emerged after 200 BCE in the Valley of Oaxaca, centered at the Zapotec city of Monte Albán, founded ca. 500 BCE on a hill in the center of the valley. While Monte Albán and other states in disparate regions of Oaxaca began downward spirals of political control and hegemony after 700 CE, territorially small city-states emerged and became the political organization in place when the Spanish first arrived in 1519 in what we now call Mexico. The disjunction in politics contrasts with the persistence of many aspects of daily life and non-elite culture.

Except for studies of Postclassic style and imagery, external relationships and how Oaxacan cultures were situated in a post–Monte Albán world has received less attention than the rise and study of the Monte Albán state. The impact of events outside of Oaxaca that bookend the period of time on which this chapter and volume focuses—the collapse of Teotihuacan in Central Mexico after 600 CE and the
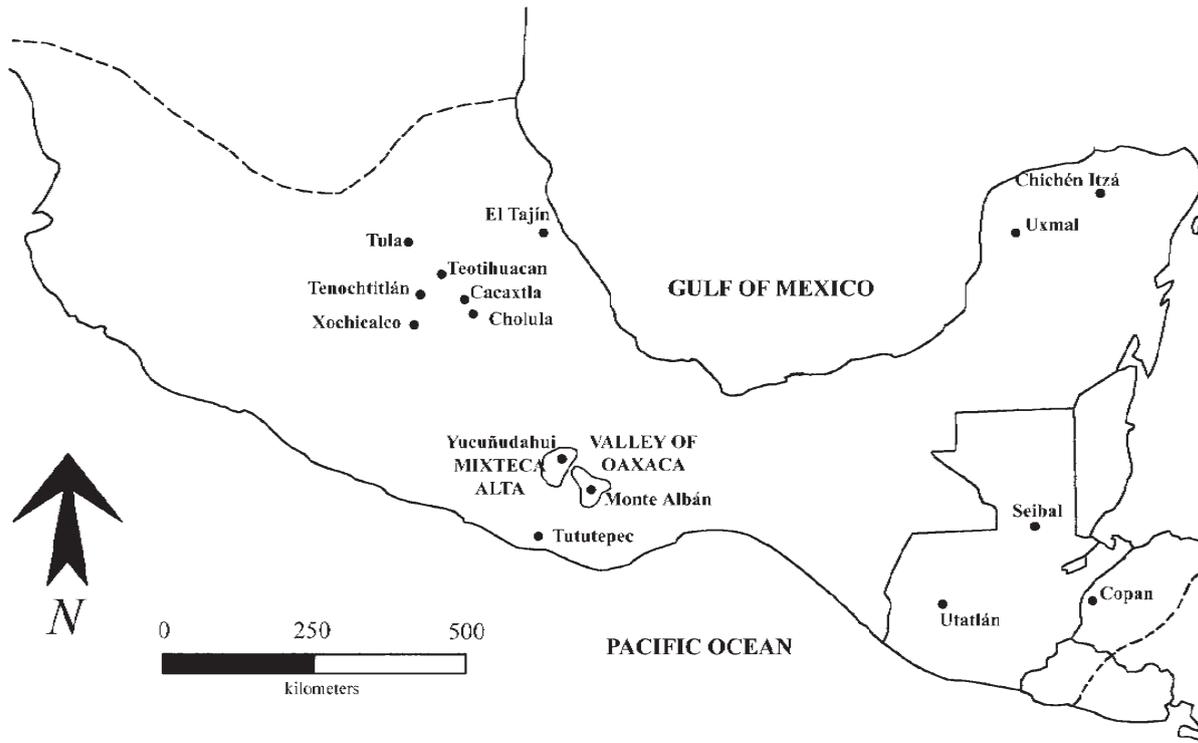
1.1 Map of Late Classic and Postclassic Mesoamerica, showing major sites mentioned in the text. Dashed lines delimit the boundaries of Mesoamerica, and solid lines mark both cultural regions and modern national boundaries. Geographic/cultural regions are indicated in uppercase letters, and sites are in lowercase letters.
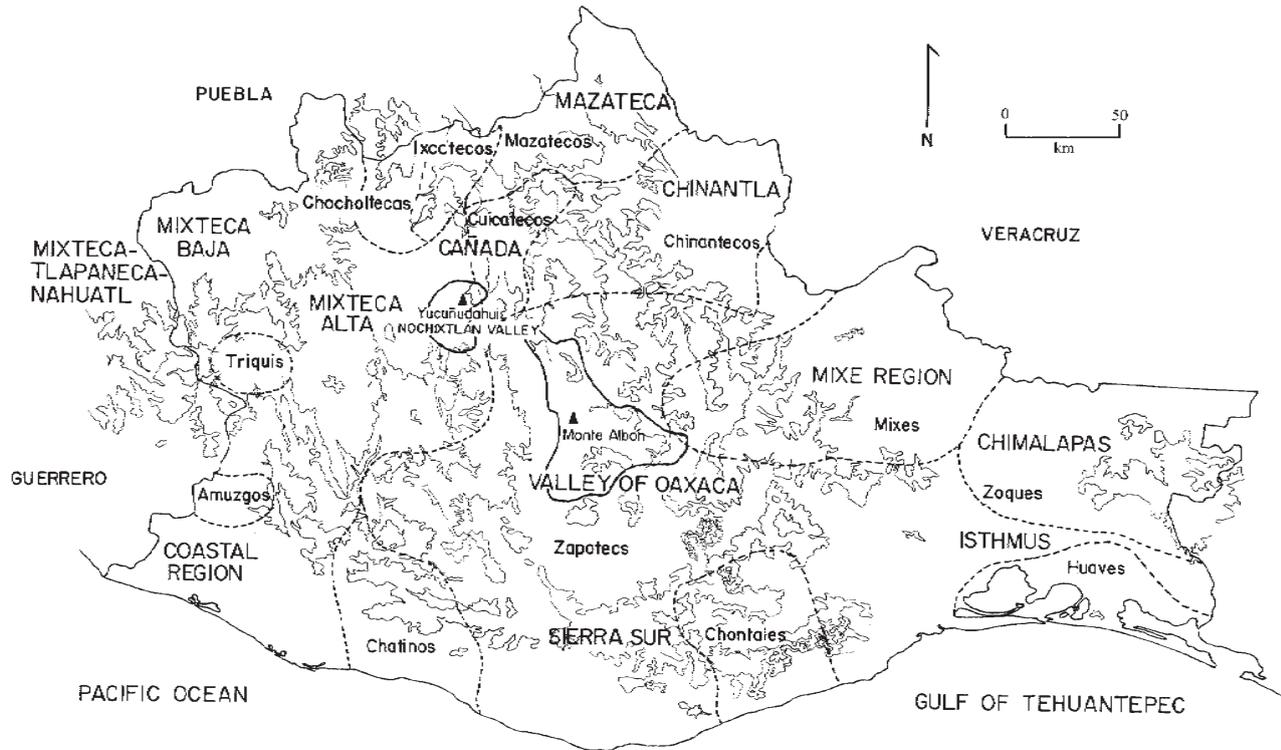
1.2 Map of Oaxaca State and adjacent regions, showing cultural regions (in capital letters) and language groups (in lowercase letters). The important Late Classic urban centers of Yucuñudahui and Monte Albán are represented by triangles. Map by Juan Cruz Pascual, based on Barabas et al. 2003:map 1.

dual incursions of the so-called Aztec Empire into various parts of Oaxaca in the fifteenth century and the Spanish Invasion of the sixteenth century—remain poorly understood and conceptualized. The nature of interregional interaction of Oaxacan societies within the context of larger Mesoamerica, and between the many cultural regions of Oaxaca, remains poorly defined. To many Mesoamerican scholars, Oaxaca remains "off the map" during this time—too focused on balkanized internal politics to have been particularly impacted by or relevant to the transformations occurring throughout ancient Mexico.

After establishing the larger Mesoamerican context in which Oaxaca is situated, this chapter explores what is known about the Late Classic and Postclassic throughout Oaxaca, especially from the three best studied regions: the Valley of Oaxaca, the Mixteca Alta, and the coast/lower Verde Valley (Figure 1.2). Instead of categorizing Late Classic and Postclassic Oaxaca as static and decadent compared to the glories of Classic Monte Albán, this chapter synthesizes the sociopolitical continuities and transformations after the collapse of Classic Oaxacan states. The focus is on themes and analysis of data from recent excavations, surveys, documents, art, and iconography that show Oaxaca's contribution to Postclassic Mesoamerica and larger issues in anthropology.

AFTER TEOTIHUACAN: LATE CLASSIC
AND EARLY POSTCLASSIC MESOAMERICA

The demise of the massive urban center at Teotihuacan, situated in the Basin of Mexico (Figure 1.1), impacted other Classic states throughout Mesoamerica, leading to new patterns of interaction, political institutions, and ruling ideologies. Some authors refer to the Late or Terminal Classic in Central Mexico from the fall of Teotihuacan to the rise of Tula (600/700–900 CE) as the Epiclassic (Jiménez Moreno 1966). Teotihuacan's demise may be part of a larger phenomenon of Classic states disintegrating throughout Mesoamerica, from Maya centers (such as Palenque, Tikal, and Copan) to Monte Albán. Although the nature of the demise of Classic states remains uncertain, the usual suspects include warfare, environmental degradation, climate change, internal revolt, and/or commoner agency in rejecting waning Late Classic elite domination (Culbert 1973; Diehl and Berlo 1989; Joyce et al. 2001).

Following Teotihuacan's demise, new cities, or formerly subordinate ones, flourished throughout Mesoamerica, such as El Tajín, Xochicalco, Uxmal, and Cacaxtla (Figure 1.1). The new powers that arose in Central Mexico had roots extending prior to the fall of Teotihuacan. Arising in areas that had been politically marginal zones, none of these new centers approached Teotihuacan's size and influence (Diehl and Berlo 1989:4). Whereas the Classic settlement pattern of the Basin

of Mexico had been dominated by only one center, after the demise of Teotihuacan six population clusters emerged, each centered on a major urban center (Sanders et al. 1979).

New connections developed between regions, with trade becoming more decentralized as it flourished in both central and formerly "peripheral" zones. Groups moved throughout Mesoamerica, as often depicted in public art. In the Maya region, the Classic city of Seibal erected stelae in the Late/Terminal Classic featuring individuals with foreign physiognomies—probably the intrusive Putún Maya. Alternatively, these figures on Seibal stelae have been interpreted as representing a greater range of statuses or stylistic temporal variation rather than different cultural identities (Tourtellot and González 2004:64). The highland Mexico sites of Cacaxtla and Xochicalco epitomize the eclectic network of influences and people of the Late/Terminal Classic. The murals of Cacaxtla, primarily painted in Maya style and using the distinctive "Maya-blue" paint, exhibit Central Mexican and Mayan warriors locked in mortal combat. The Temple of Quetzalcoatl at Xochicalco displays lords with Mayan characteristics enveloped by undulating feathered serpents. At both Cacaxtla and Xochicalco, there is a cosmopolitan mixing of influences from throughout Mesoamerica, including Oaxaca as evinced by hieroglyphic elements. Both sites also document the development of state-sponsored militarism, prior to the emergence of the Toltecs at Tula, with the presence of warrior orders (Hirth 1989).

Toltecs: Tula, Chichén Itzá, and Cholula

The impact of the Toltecs, centered at Tula, Hidalgo, on early Postclassic Mesoamerica (900–1200 CE) remains contested. Indeed, although the word "Toltec" is used throughout this volume and usually refers to the people of Tula, it is not assumed that all Toltec elements originated or were even fully expressed at Tula. The Nahuatl term for Tula, "Tollan," actually is much more generic, less geographically specific (see below); many "Toltec" lords noted throughout Postclassic Mesoamerica had little or no connection to Tula. The use of "Tula" refers specifically to the large center in Hidalgo, whereas "Tollan" may refer to several different places. At its height, Tula covered sixteen square kilometers, with an organized city plan and militaristic public art and architecture (Mastache et al. 2002). Ethnohistoric and archaeological data are equivocal on the relationship between Tula and Chichén Itzá, an important late Maya site on the Yucatan peninsula. Beginning with Désiré Charney (1887), some scholars postulate an invasive Toltec presence at Chichén Itzá based on ethnohistoric data, architectural features (such as the "Temple of the Warriors" at each site), sculpture (the recumbent chacmools, receptacles for sacrifices), and iconographic imagery (such as the similar depictions of jaguars and eagles devouring hearts). The work of George Kubler (1961) represents a more recent break from this interpretation,

which has long had detractors, focusing instead on local Maya development at Chichén Itzá (see Cobos 2006 for a recent summary). The iconography at Chichén Itzá clearly shows some kind of ethnic opposition or differentiation, as does the art of Late Classic Cacaxtla and Seibal. Some scholars stress, however, that the theme at Chichén Itzá is really elite interaction rather than the conquest or domination of one region by another; what appears to be different ethnic groups may be allies or clients, and they may be relatively local. William Ringle (2004) suggests that elites at centers across Mesoamerica (such as Tula, Chichén Itzá, and El Tajín) were all linked through a shared cult and investiture rituals focused on Quetzalcoatl, a deity whose origins can be traced to the time prior to the Classic period in several regions of Mesoamerica. The importance of shared investiture rituals and symbols reappears elsewhere in this volume (Chapters 3, 9, and 10).

In addition to monuments, Toltec contact is often associated with certain types of pottery, such as Silho Fine Orange and Tohil Plumbate, a distinctive ware with a lustrous gray surface actually produced in the area around Takalik Abaj in the western coastal plain of Guatemala (Neff 2002; Shepard 1948). The production of plumbate extends back to the later portion of the ninth century—almost a half century prior to the Tollan phase (the time of the Toltecs) at Tula (Cobos 2006:181). Thus, its association with Toltec "influence" remains problematic, although the Toltecs may have controlled later distribution of this prized ware. Similarly, the distribution of Silho Fine Orange also lay outside of Tula; Cobos (ibid.) notes that its distribution in the Maya Lowlands was controlled by Chichén Itzá, and that this ware (which also existed prior to the Toltecs) did not actually reach Tula. The movement of ceramics, such as Tohil Plumbate and Fine Orange from the Gulf Coast, epitomize the flourishing trade during the Early Postclassic. Rather than focusing on their Toltec associations, these ceramics served as a canvas for a set of common symbols that spread along trade routes and may be linked with the diffusion of the new international religion and series of rituals (discussed previously) focused on Quetzalcoatl. This symbol set may be a precursor to the Mixteca-Puebla style that characterizes interaction in the Late Postclassic.

A final complicating factor in the supposed Toltec domination of Chichén Itzá is the recent reconsideration of the site's chronology. Rather than being an Early Postclassic center, Chichén Itzá increasingly is referred to by some scholars as a Terminal Classic center in terms of monument construction and elite activity (Andrews et al. 2003). This multi-ethnic center became an important capital as early as the ninth century; its influence was greatly diminished by the first half of the eleventh century. In this view, Chichén Itzá does not represent a break with the Classic Maya past but would have overlapped with important Terminal Classic Maya cities such as Uxmal (ibid.). Both the chronology, however, of Chichén Itzá and the timing of "Toltec" sculptural and architectural elements at this cen-

ter remain debated, as recent research at Chichén Itzá supports substantial overlap between such features at both sites and the continuation of Chichén Itzá as an important political and economic center through the eleventh century (Schmidt 2007:194). Additionally, there is a growing awareness that although much of the scholarly focus has centered on Tula and Chichén Itzá, they operated in a larger context of competing centers (including Alta Vista and La Quemada to the northwest of Tula in Zacatecas) that also contributed elements shared by both centers (Kristan-Graham and Kowalski 2007:26). Similarities at Tula and Chichén Itzá may represent participation in a larger pan-Mesoamerican cult, some elements of which have antecedents. Indeed, some of the Toltec or Central Mexican imagery at Chichén Itzá may derive from Late Classic Mayan utilization of Teotihuacan imagery (Kowalski 2007:295).

Ethnohistoric documents from the Quiché region of highland Guatemala have also been interpreted as showing the importance of Toltec connections, with clear "Mexican" influence (such as I-shaped ballcourts) first apparent archaeologically in the Epiclassic period and increasing during the Early Postclassic (Fox 1980) and Late Postclassic (Carmack 1981). John Fox (1980:51), among others, interprets ethnohistoric accounts (such as the Sacapulas document) as evidence that actual Toltec lineages came into the Río Negro Valley, conquered the inhabitants, and built much of the public sectors at Chutinamit. The later Quiché Maya adopted Toltec symbols of authority as part of the justification and legitimation of the Quiché state (Carmack 1981:369). Some scholars, however, dispute the notion of Quiché migrations and importance of Toltec connections, preferring a local development, or "ethnogenesis," model, based on contact with Aztec neighbors in Soconusco, to account for the Late Postclassic transformation of elite culture (Braswell 2003).

"Tollan" (Place of the Reeds) may have been a concept linked with several important centers in the Early Postclassic. Throughout the Postclassic, "Tollan" referred to both sacred space and actual places; in addition to towns named with variants of "reed place" throughout the Mexican states of Hidalgo, Veracruz, and Oaxaca, the Aztec capital was sometimes referred to as Tollan Tenochtitlán (Kristan-Graham and Kowalski 2007:22). Although the Toltecs were celebrated, and appropriated by the Aztecs as great warriors and artisans, Tula was simply one Tollan, as were Chichén Itzá and El Tajín, or in highland Guatemala, Nacxit has been suggested as a local Tollan (Fox 1980). Ringle (2004) suggests this pattern extends back to Teotihuacan and sees these cities as legitimating centers for large hinterlands. The recent discovery (Stuart 2000:501–506) of a Classic Mayan glyph of a cattail reed at Tikal and Copan, in texts that refer to the arrival of foreigners with Teotihuacan-style features, supports the idea that Teotihuacan may have been a Tollan, or reed place.

Early Postclassic Cholula, Puebla, may also have been a Tollan (Byland and Pohl 1994). As part of the movement of peoples during the Early Postclassic, the Olmeca-Xicallanca, a mercantile group from the Gulf Coast, occupied Cholula (McCafferty 1996). Much of the massive pyramid at Cholula was constructed at this time. Cholula evinces significant changes during the end of the Late Classic/ Early Postclassic (including a shift to seated flexed burials), and Cholula's identity as a sacred place—the site of a Late Postclassic cult center—may have been established at this time. The ritual authority of Cholula would have far exceeded in distance its limited direct political control (Ringle 2004). Cholula's proximity to Oaxaca may have made it the most referenced Tollan among Oaxacans vying for political power (see below). Despite the various local understanding of "Tollan," Toltecs remain frequently cited in the origins of dynastic lineages, from the Quiché Maya (Carmack 1981) to the Late Postclassic Aztecs, or Mexica. For Postclassic elites, Tollan served as a place for investiture of titles and insignia, with nose-piercing at various Tollans explicitly depicted in Mixtec codices.

LATE POSTCLASSIC MESOAMERICA: MIXTECA-PUEBLA STYLE AND THE AZTECS

The small size, limited political power, and shared ideology of competitive city-states throughout Mesoamerica was conducive to the expansion of commercial exchange and stylistic communication, the hallmark of the Late Postclassic (Smith and Berdan 2003a). In Central Mexico, city-states varied greatly in size and power, with some developing specialties, from markets to centers of law (Texcoco). Michael Smith (2003a:37) suggests that it was the Postclassic development of strong and autonomous commercial institutions that precluded the development of powerful centralized states prior to the Aztecs. Two significant Late Postclassic phenomena impact Oaxaca: the Mixteca-Puebla style and the Aztec Empire.

During the Late Postclassic, a style and iconography emerged that are often referred to as the Postclassic International Style (Robertson 1970), which includes the Mixteca-Puebla style, Aztec painting, coastal Maya mural style, and southwest Maya style. Oaxaca remains inextricably linked to the Mixteca-Puebla style (Brown and Andrews 1982; Nicholson and Quiñones Keber 1994). Starting in the late 1930s, George Vaillant (1938) introduced the concept as part of his effort to describe post-Teotihuacan Central Mexico; he named it Mixteca-Puebla in reference to its supposed place of origin. The concept was more fully elaborated by H. B. Nicholson (1960, 1982), who argued for it as primarily stylistic and iconographic. Noting that it appears in various media, including codices, polychrome murals, ceramics, and turquoise mosaics, Nicholson characterized the Mixteca-Puebla style by its "almost geometric precision in the delineation of its images, both figural and

symbolic. The former often represented deities important in the pantheon, usually identifiable by their relatively standardized insignia" (Nicholson and Quiñones Keber 1994:vii).

Detailed stylistic and compositional analysis of polychrome ceramics in the Mixteca-Puebla style have determined the existence of multiple production loci (Lind 1987; Neff et al. 1994). The application of Mixteca-Puebla is confined to Middle and Late Postclassic codices, ceramics, and murals from the Mixteca-Puebla region (Nicholson and Quiñones Keber 1994; Smith 2003b:182); however, material in related local variants are found throughout Mesoamerica, where it is often cited as evidence of "Mexican" contact or participation in pan-Mesoamerican phenomenon. In the Quiché region, materials visually related to the Mixteca-Puebla style (most notably the mural paintings at Iximché and Utatlán) are seen as the most substantial Mexican influence in the highlands, although Robert Carmack (1969) notes that its expression is a local variant, from general presentation to specific features.

Sharing of the Mixteca-Puebla style and iconography followed alliance corridors. Rather than the outcome of a purely economic exchange, the use of certain iconographic symbols and stylistic features of the Mixteca-Puebla style represented a comprehendible form of communication for leaders speaking a plethora of different languages and formed parts of their strategies for social and political interaction (Byland and Pohl 1994; Smith 2003b:181). Its dissemination may also reflect the emergence of an important pilgrimage center at Cholula (see previous discussion). During the Late Postclassic, Cholula became the site of an important oracular shrine for Quetzalcoatl that attracted pilgrims from as far away as Guatemala (McCafferty 2001; Ringle et al. 1998). Reflecting the more commercialized nature of the Late Postclassic, Cholula was also a major mercantile center. The sacred and the profane were closely intertwined at Cholula. The link between the spread of religious ideology and trade networks is symbolized at Cholula by the depiction of Quetzalcoatl as Yacatecuhtli, the Nahua merchant deity (Pohl 2003a:174).

In addition to movement of styles, objects, and iconography, one group—the Aztecs—also intruded into many regions of Late Postclassic Mesoamerica. The Aztecs, based at their capital of Tenochtitlán, formed one of the most expansive empires in the New World. With their allies, the Aztec Triple Alliance incorporated vast regions of Mesoamerica into their empire, whereas other regions—such as the Tarascan Empire—remained largely free from Aztec tribute demands. The impact of the Aztecs varied across Mesoamerica; they often did little to disturb the underlying foundations of the city-states that they incorporated into their empire, with ruling elites allowed to maintain their position as long as tribute flowed to the Triple Alliance. Some towns became well integrated into the Aztec Empire, but others paid tribute only under threat of an Aztec attack.

1.3 The public core of Monte Albán; view of the Main Plaza, looking south.

OAXACA AS A REGION

The Spanish arrived in what is now Oaxaca State to find one to three million people with rich, diverse regional cultures (Figure 1.2). At least sixteen distinct ethnic and linguistic groups are generally acknowledged in Oaxaca State (Flannery and Marcus 1983; Winter 1989), the vast majority of which remain poorly known and studied (Chapter 12). Some Oaxaca-related cultures, of course, are not limited by modern state boundaries, making recent investigations in eastern Guerrero—adjacent to Oaxaca—of great interest (Chapter 11). The best-studied cultures, the Mixtec and the Zapotec, occupy the largest valleys in Oaxaca; in addition to their own knowledge traditions, aspects of their cultures are documented by early colonial Spanish records and subsequent anthropological projects. Information available on the Zapotec and Mixtec should caution scholars in how carefully to treat intra-group diversity. Neither group ever dominated all of Oaxaca State or formed a unified ethnic group—there was never a unified "Zapotec" nation; rather, there were always factional divisions that cut across and within cultural and linguistic boundaries (Byland and Pohl 1994). Indeed, the Nahuatl names assigned by the Aztecs to these groups remain useful because they are generic names. Variations of indigenous names used by Oaxacan groups (such as the Bènizàa for some Zapotec groups or the Ñuu Dzavui/Ñudzahui for some Mixtec groups)—often glossed as meaning

"people of the rain or clouds"—epitomize the regional, linguistic, and cultural diversity among what are often stereotyped as well-defined "ethnic" groups (Jansen and Pérez Jiménez 2000).

The Valley of Oaxaca

Systematic archaeological investigations in the Valley of Oaxaca date back to 1931 and the pioneering efforts of Alfonso Caso and his associates. Covering 2500 square kilometers and at approximately 1,500 meters in elevation, the Valley of Oaxaca is well studied archaeologically through surface surveys and extensive excavations (see Kowalewski et al. 1989, Winter 1989). Much research in Oaxaca focuses on the emergence of the first urban center at Monte Albán (Figure 1.3), on a series of hills in the center of where the three sub-valleys of the Oaxaca Valley converge. After 200 BCE, Monte Albán became the head of a Zapotec state, with a complex four-tier settlement hierarchy in the Valley of Oaxaca and incursions—the nature of which remains debated—into surrounding regions (Joyce 1991; Marcus and Flannery 1996; Winter 1989). At its Classic period height the city probably covered 6.5 square kilometers (Blanton 1978). Although substantially modified (see Figure 2.1), the ceramic chronology for much of Oaxaca is based on the initial efforts of Caso, Ignacio Bernal, and Jorge Acosta (1967) at Monte Albán.

Mixteca Alta and Baja

The various Mixtec regions cover approximately 50,000 square kilometers of rugged terrain. The largest of these regions, the Mixteca Alta, features mountains that surround small, irregular valleys, which account for only 20 percent of the land mass (Smith 1976:24). Much of the archaeological research in the Mixteca Alta centers on the largest valley, the Nochixtlán, which was systematically surveyed by Ronald Spores in the 1960s (Spores 1972) and was the setting for the large Classic/ Late Classic urban center of Yucuñudahui. Other areas of the Mixteca Alta, such as the valleys at Teposcolula (Stiver 2001), Huamelulpan (Gaxiola González 1984), and Tamazulapan (Byland 1980), have been increasingly explored. A recent litera-ture review by Spores (2001) summarizes both historic and recent work throughout the Mixteca Alta. The Mixteca Baja, the lower, "hot" Mixtec region of the Ñuiñe culture (the term also refers to a style, people, and phase name; see Winter 1989, 1994) centered at Cerro de las Minas, exhibits shared and contrasting cultural traits with the Alta (Paddock 1966; Rivera Guzmán 2002). The relationships between Classic Mixtec centers in adjacent valleys remain unclear. The impact of Monte Albán's demise on Mixtec states varied, as ongoing archaeological research demon-strates their multiplicity of external relations that went beyond the Zapotec state.

The Lower Río Verde Valley

Beginning with research in the late 1980s (Joyce 1991), a long-term project in the lower Río Verde Valley, a low, hot, coastal plain along the western Pacific Oaxaca Coast, has provided data critical for challenging many Valley of Oaxaca–centric interpretations. A combined program of survey and excavation have shown that trends in political centralization culminated during the Terminal Formative (150 BCE–250 CE) in the emergence of a state centered at Río Viejo. Rather than interpretations that focus on Zapotec conquest (Marcus and Flannery 1996), the ongoing research suggests a complex indigenous development, marked by periods of political collapse and centralization, with political and economic ties that distin-guish it from the Valley of Oaxaca.

Other Regions of Oaxaca

Other parts of Oaxaca State remain underexplored. The best documented is the Cuicatlán Cañada, a deep canyon between the Mixtec, Zapotec, and Mazatec regions that served as an important trade corridor and was heavily impacted by the Monte Albán state (Spencer 1982). One contribution of the present volume is providing data on other poorly known Oaxacan regions during the Late Classic through Postclassic (Chapter 12). In addition to the culturally related eastern part of Guerrero (Chapter 11), other parts of Oaxaca included in this volume are the Mixe region (the mountains east/northeast of the Valley of Oaxaca), the Chinantla

(the mountainous area on the northern extreme of the Zapotec Sierra and the river valleys/piedmont that slope down to the Gulf Coast), the Mazateca (an area of highland and river valleys northwest of the Chinantla), and the southern Isthmus (the coastal plain of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and adjacent low hills) (Figure 1.2).

CHALLENGES: CHRONOLOGY, METHOD, AND THEORY

At the foundation of many of the unresolved issues facing the Oaxacan Late Classic/Postclassic is a highly problematic chronology; failure to devise more temporally sensitive ceramic phases has led to basic problems in estimating population and settlement during this period. Methods and prevailing theories have also influenced interpretations.

Chronology, Methods, and Hiatus

Archaeologists construct ceramic chronologies, supported by absolute dates, for the regions in which they work. The problems in Oaxaca chronology are especially pronounced at the end of the Late Classic and Postclassic. As traditionally outlined, the Postclassic alone encompasses six centuries—an untenable situation. The ceramic chronology defined by Caso and his collaborators (Caso, Bernal, and Acosta 1967) featured periods I through V, beginning with the founding of Monte Albán around 500 BCE and ending with the arrival of the Spanish. They correlated Period IIIB with the Late Classic, whereas Period IV represented Oaxaca after the collapse of Monte Albán—the Early Postclassic (Chapter 2; Figure 2.1). As the surveyors were unable to distinguish between diagnostic ceramics from these periods, they combined them into Phase IIIB-IV. Some sites once considered the type sites of the Early Postclassic, such as Lambityeco (Chapter 5), have been radiocarbon dated to the 650–750 interval before the Monte Albán collapse and are similar to dates from Cacaxtla and Xochicalco. The confusion with this part of the chronology masks important stylistic changes and political disjunction.

The problem has recently been tackled by Robert Markens (Chapter 2). Using Valley of Oaxaca burial lots, he distinguishes early and late sub-phases in the Xoo (600–800), Liobaa (800–1200), and Chila (1200–1521) phases (see Figure 2.1). The proposed ceramic sequence has received confirmation through radiocarbon dates from recent excavations at sites in the Tlacolula branch of the Valley of Oaxaca, such as Macuilxóchitl (Chapter 6) and Xaagá. Additionally, Michel Oudijk analyzes ethnohistoric documents to provide an alternative chronology starting at 963 CE, with three well-defined phases starting at 1100 (Chapter 3). Oudijk's chronology was developed independently of ceramics and archaeological sources and is based on the foundation of lineages, suggesting there are three critical moments

in which it may be possible to divide the Postclassic period. Both chronologies may be useful and inform each other; they represent emic (Oudijk) and etic (Markens) approaches. Finally, recent work in the lower Río Verde opens new possibilities for understanding differences between Early Postclassic ceramics and those from the Late Classic and Late Postclassic (Chapters 7 and 8).

The long-standing confusion with the chronology render problematic basic data on Postclassic population, as much of the data come from surface survey. As William Sanders (1989:216) asked, "How can we accept settlement and population histories from an area when the basic chronology is so confused?" Many regions of Oaxaca have been surveyed, and the surface surveys are extremely valuable tools for identifying sites. The Valley of Oaxaca was the location of a full-coverage survey, directed by Richard Blanton and Stephen Kowalewski and completed in 1980; 2,700 archaeological sites were recorded (Kowalewski et al. 1989). In addition to site formation processes, which lead to the underrepresentation of earlier deposits that lie buried in multi-component sites (Brown 1975), the poor ceramic chronology led to what appears to be drastic population decreases and movements in some areas. For example, recent research at Macuilxóchitl (Chapter 6) underscores problems with reliance on surface survey. Excavations at Mound 1, categorized as Late Formative and Early Classic by the Prehistoric Settlement Patterns of the Valley of Oaxaca Project (Kowalewski et al. 1989), revealed only Late Classic and Postclassic materials (Markens, personal communication, 2004).

Due partially to a problematic chronology, archaeologists disagree on the issue of regional abandonment. Marcus Winter (Chapter 12) proposes an abandonment of parts of the Valley of Oaxaca at the end of the Late Classic. In addition to drastic population decline at the end of the Xoo phase (800 CE) at Monte Albán, excavations at Lambityeco, a major salt-producing center in the Valley of Oaxaca, document the abandonment of houses between 700 and 800, although some salt making continued at the site into the Postclassic (Chapter 5). Indeed, it appears that the depopulation of Lambityeco represents repression and political domination of a competing center by the Monte Albán state prior to its collapse (see below). In addition to hiatuses in the Mazatec, Chinantla, and Mixe regions, Winter (1994:217) has proposed a "dark age" in the Mixtec urban centers as well, including Cerro de las Minas. In the lower Río Verde Valley, where the ceramic chronology is more refined for the Late Classic/Early Postclassic, the data do not support a hiatus. Although Río Viejo declined in size, at 140 hectares it remained a significant center in the Early Postclassic (Chapter 7).

New Theoretical Approaches

In terms of theoretical approaches, much of the research and syntheses that have been published for Oaxaca are based on an explicitly cultural evolutionary

perspective (Flannery and Marcus 1983; Marcus and Flannery 1996). Although an effort has been made to lose the ethnocentric baggage and more extreme biological analogies of cultural evolution by referring to it as "social evolution," the promise of an "evolution without stages" has not been fulfilled (see Flannery 2002:240). New theoretical approaches further illuminate our understanding of the Late Classic and Postclassic.

The majority of chapters in this volume approach political and social phenomena through a practice/praxis or agency perspective (Ortner 1984). A practice perspective explores the relationships of human agents within larger systems (structures). Neither random nor unrestrained, actions occur within a structural context, constrained by both the biophysical and sociocultural environment. Individuals pursue self-interested goals and strategies; they make decisions in relation to multiple factors and other agents (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984). The archaeologists' emphasis is on social identities and behavioral strategies rather than on details of individual lives, although the details provided by the codices of individual lives (albeit invariably those of the elite) flesh out the roles and structure of Postclassic society. Rather than perspectives that solely focus on the negotiations of elites, efforts have been made to explore commoner agency as well (Chapters 5 and 8; Joyce et al. 2001). Such approaches are also more sympathetic to emic perspectives, such as how people living in Early and Late Postclassic Oaxaca viewed the Late Classic/Postclassic transition (Chapters 3 and 4).

MONTE ALBÁN'S COLLAPSE AND ITS IMPACT IN OAXACA: DISJUNCTION?

Although a series of internal factors were probably most responsible for the post–700 CE collapse of the Zapotec state at Monte Albán, ripples from events occurring elsewhere in Mesoamerica—such as the demise of Teotihuacan—may have disrupted exchange networks that the ruling elite depended on for exotic goods, prestige, trade, and power. In the case of Monte Albán, the demise of a potential threat like Teotihuacan may have undermined the necessity for such a large, nucleated population to resist it. The collapse of Monte Albán and other Classic period states in Oaxaca initiated political changes but represents a transformation rather than a sudden event. With a 600 CE population of at least 30,000 people living at and on the sides of this hilltop center (Blanton 1978), the process of overexploitation of the region had been well under way for generations. Competing centers, such as Lambityeco, Mitla, Jalieza, and Zaachila, had already appeared in the Valley of Oaxaca. During this transition, leaders of nascent city-states would have negotiated a challenging political climate in order to assert independence from Monte Albán while still referencing that ancient city as a source of legitimacy, especially those that

served its secondary administrative centers. The demise of effective power at Monte Albán allowed the ideological adjustments and political realignments to flourish.

Monte Albán was not the only large Classic center in the various cultural regions of Oaxaca; other large states were centered, for example, at Yucuñudahui in the Nochixtlán Valley and Río Viejo in the lower Río Verde Valley. Such states engaged in diplomatic, economic, and martial relationships with other large states beyond Monte Albán. Although elements of elite culture at Yucuñudahui, for example, show Zapotec influence, artisans drew from an array of inspirations, such as the local distinctive square main chamber and Ñuiñe-style carvings from Tomb 1 (Caso 1938; Winter 1989). Relationships beyond those with the Zapotec state in the Mixteca and lower Verde encouraged different dynamics in the wake of the collapse of Monte Albán. In the Mixteca Alta, the Classic hilltop centers may have survived the collapse of Monte Albán (Spores 1984); however, due to the problematic nature of the Late Classic Mixtec ceramic chronology, this observation is tentative.

In the lower Río Verde Valley, collapse began around 800 CE after a marked Classic period of population nucleation and political centralization focused at Río Viejo. Although the dominant ruling regime ended, the site remained occupied but without construction of additional public architecture—a pattern seen during this time at other sites in Oaxaca. The end of what Arthur Joyce (Chapter 7) refers to as a period of unstable rulership represents the failure to establish long-term legitimacy.

Although archaeological evidence of a true hiatus (depending on how "hiatus" is defined) in any region of Oaxaca remains problematic, some important sites throughout Oaxaca were largely abandoned. The ideological impact may have been substantial; the Late Classic to Postclassic transition may have been perceived as a significant disjunction from the Classic. Byron Hamann (Chapter 4; 2002) interprets Postclassic pictorial histories as emphasizing a rupture with the Classic, which is treated as a different age, or "Sun," from which the Postclassic present emerged. Interpretation of this rupture presented both challenges and opportunities to individuals from the full spectrum of economic and political status. In the Mixteca Alta, much of the rupture may correspond with an event from the tenth century first identified by Alfonso Caso (1960) and now referred to as the "War of Heaven." Sites that appeared in pictorial histories prior to this event vanish as living communities; Bruce Byland and John Pohl (1994) have been able to link several of them with Classic period ruins around Tilantongo. The dramatic political changes in the lower Verde Valley lend some support to this perspective, with images of elites from the previous order treated with a decided lack of respect in the Early Postclassic (Chapter 8). Similarly, the abandoned Late Classic palaces at the Valley of Oaxaca administrative center of Lambityeco were reused by commoners in the Early Postclassic for salt production (Chapter 5).

LATE CLASSIC/POSTCLASSIC
BALKANIZATION IN OAXACA: TRANSFORMATIONS

After 700 CE, a wave of major sociopolitical transformations surged across much of Oaxaca. The diversity of responses to the collapse of major states throughout Oaxaca evinces the great variety of contact and integration between regions.

Political Transformation

With the demise of large centers, small, competing cacicazgos flourished in Oaxaca. As with other parts of Mesoamerica (Diehl and Berlo 1989), the emergence of city-states was tied with new alliance formations, many of which predated the final decline of Monte Albán. Many of the ruling lineages of newly ascendant city-states in the Valley of Oaxaca may have administered secondary centers for the Zapotec capital or may have been factions within the ruling elite at Monte Albán and desired more independence or pragmatically viewed the irreversible demise of Monte Albán as an opportunity to establish themselves elsewhere. The post–Monte Albán elites would have emphasized their genealogy and marriage alliances—a trend begun in Xoo phase Monte Albán, with the importance of "genealogical registers" (Marcus 1989) manifested in stone sculpture. That fact that other Xoo centers in the Valley of Oaxaca illustrate comparable scenes shows that Monte Albán was no longer able to suppress such statements at competing centers.

The failure of some emerging centers to flourish after the Xoo phase testifies to the potential repressive force exercised by Monte Albán. Some lineages of competing centers may have simply been premature in pursuing economic or political independence, or expressed it in a way that the Monte Albán leaders could not ignore. Lambityeco, a secondary administrative center or district capital for the Tlacolula arm of the Valley of Oaxaca, became a major salt-producing center in the early Xoo phase, with numerous households in charge of production. Michael Lind (Chapter 5) documents the increasing wealth and power of the Lambityeco rulers, appointed by the Monte Albán king; elite houses at Lambityeco, such as Structure 4, were larger than corresponding ones at Monte Albán. The increasing wealth and independence of Lambityeco may have been viewed as a challenge to Monte Albán, which after 700 CE reacted by deposing the local ruling lineage and drastically reorganizing salt production in a government workshop. Rather than becoming an important Early Postclassic center, Lambityeco was largely abandoned as a living community, serving primarily as a locus for salt production throughout the Postclassic (Chapter 5). Similar dynamics played out in the Mixteca Alta as well, although in the absence of a central state as hegemonic as Monte Albán, the processes began earlier and may not have been met with successful repression as in the case of Lambityeco and Monte Albán.

Demographics and Settlement Patterns

Upheavals in the Late Classic/Postclassic transition are reflected in demographics. Throughout regions of Oaxaca, settlement patterns changed. For example, the major Classic center of Río Viejo lost half of its Late Classic population by the Early Postclassic (Chapter 7). Although some formerly large states experienced depopulation as part of political decentralization, population was redistributed in emerging first-order sites. Beginning in the Early Postclassic, a trend develops whereby people moved into the piedmont from the west to the east side of the Río Verde; by the Late Postclassic, piedmont occupation accounts for 93.2 percent of settlement in this region, as opposed to comprising only 34.2 percent in the Late Classic (Joyce et al. 2004).

In the Valley of Oaxaca, some Late Classic sites were abandoned or reduced substantially in population (such as Monte Albán); many Xoo phase houses fell into ruin. As noted above with the Lambityeco example, the failure of some Xoo centers to thrive in the Early Postclassic was not necessarily a demographic collapse but rather a response by the remaining occupants to the successful political repression by Monte Albán.

In contrast to the conflicting evidence from the Early Postclassic, the Late Postclassic appears to be a time of incredible growth throughout all regions of Oaxaca. While earlier sites remain occupied, people tended to select higher elevations for new sites in the Late Postclassic (Kowalewski et al. 1989:307). The foundation of a new noble house and a population expansion reenergized Macuilxóchitl, and it became one of many important players in Late Postclassic politics in the Valley of Oaxaca (Chapter 6).

The Late Postclassic represents the time of maximum population in the Mixteca. In the Tamazulapan Valley, the number of occupied sites doubles (Byland 1980). Spores (1972) notes a substantial change in the location of major centers in the Nochixtlán Valley—on the valley floors rather than hills, where the old hilltop localities continued to serve as ritual centers and places of legitimacy and power.

Mixtec Invasions and Ethnicity

A long-standing problem in Oaxaca archaeology is the presence of Mixtecs in the Valley of Oaxaca documented by the sixteenth-century Spanish; to some, this signals a Mixtec invasion of the Zapotec Oaxaca Valley (Paddock 1983:274). Although ethnohistoric documents clearly mention Mixtec incursions (Chapter 3), archaeological evidence of a forced Mixtec entry in the Valley of Oaxaca has proven elusive. Mixtecs occupied the western Valley of Oaxaca in the sixteenth century (Burgoa 1989), but how they entered remains problematic. Many of the claims of a Mixtec conquest of the Valley of Oaxaca come from the Mixtecs themselves and were motivated by both pride and a desire to negotiate a specific identity and

place for themselves in colonial society. Rather than envisioning hoards of Mixtecs (who were never a unified "ethnic" group) swarming into the Valley of Oaxaca, we should view Mixtec entry into the Valley of Oaxaca as following the same patterns of negotiations as between Mixtec cacicazgos. The sixteenth-century Relaciones Geográficas indicate Zapotec cities interacted with specific Mixtec cacicazgos and elite lines, facilitating Mixtec entry into the Valley of Oaxaca, at least initially as partners, affinal kin, and allies.

The specter of a Mixtec invasion reflects the problematic associations between different geographic areas, material culture, and ethnicity. Archaeologists often essentialize the concept of ethnicity, when in fact there may be many underlying features to unpack. As a situational phenomenon, ethnicity can be both claimed by the agent and also assigned by others and includes tangible and intangible features (Barth 1969; Cohen 1978). This is not to deny that ethnic distinctions may have been extremely important to ancient Mesoamericans. The use of ethnic markers to distinguish groups from each other can be seen at Late and Terminal Classic sites such as Cacaxtla, Seibal, and Chichén Itzá, where artists juxtaposed different physiognomies, styles of clothing, ornamentation, and weaponry. At Classic Monte Albán, supposed Teotihuacan visitors were differentiated from Zapotecs appearing on the same stone monuments, such as the Lápida de Bazán (see Figure 4.12) and various stelae from the South Platform. Esther Pasztory (1989:18) notes that ethnic styles often serve as badges of group identity—differentiating members of one group from "the other." Although she notes that style juxtapositions in Mesoamerican art are rare, they generally occur in public areas—a politically sanctioned attitude that speaks to the official perception of these cultures.

Archaeologists can only approach ethnicity through multiple lines of evidence (Stein 2002), recognizing the different agendas and points of view in each type of source. Archaeologists attempting to characterize Mixtec and Zapotec ethnic groups in Late Classic to Postclassic Oaxaca face numerous challenges. For example, ethnographies demonstrate that individual identity remains contingent and variable. Modern Zapotec villagers associate themselves with their specific village or community, which they differentiate from others, rather than a vague concept of "Zapotec" (Dennis 1987). In other circumstances, a larger group identity may have been advantageous—even a form of resistance. The frequent use of the term for Mixtec, Ñudzahui, in indigenous sixteenth- to eighteenth-century documents may reflect an attempt at maintaining group boundaries and identity in the face of colonialism (Terraciano 2001:318). Furthermore, the material culture that archaeologists excavate provides only tenuous links with ethnicity. Pottery is especially difficult to link with ethnic groups in the Postclassic; some pottery types may have been produced at specialized pottery-making centers and were widely available across ethnic lines (Marcus and Flannery 1983:225).

A Shifting Mosaic: Cacicazgos in Postclassic Oaxaca

Although the basic city-state (cacicazgo or señorío) format existed prior to the demise of large states like Monte Albán, its Postclassic florescence introduced new features and transformed others. Throughout the world, city-states often, but not inevitably, emerge after the collapse of larger central states, such as in Greece after the collapse of centralized Mycenaean palace societies (Snodgrass 1977). As autonomous polities, city-states exert less economic control over populations—especially those living in towns and villages outside of the center.

The extent and identity of a Mesoamerican city-state is defined by affiliation with a ruler rather than a territory (Smith 2003a:36). A royal family rules a cacicazgo, with close kinsmen as noble administrators; each has a capital center (*cabecera*) and surrounding subject communities that provide labor and support (Spores 1967). Social stratification is well developed, often with beliefs in separate origins for nobles and commoners. The well-documented city-states (*altepetl*) of Central Mexico had additional classes, including slaves and different divisions of commoners based on access to land.

Reflecting local practice, Oaxaca exhibits much variety in the constitution of its city-states. In the Mixteca Alta, the word for a populous settlement is *yuhuitayu* and combines the Mixtec words for "reed mat" and "pair/couple," referring literally to the city-state as the seat of rulership for a married couple (Terraciano 2001:103). In the Nochixtlán Valley, an average cacicazgo, or kingdom, contained a population of 2 to 10,000 people (Winter 1994:217), with larger ones, such as Yanhuitlán, having populations of 25,000 or more. The basic patterns documented by Spores (1972) for the Nochixtlán Valley are typical. The center of the cacicazgo lay near the valley bottomland, often with a fortified palace on a nearby ridge—a place that could be defended in times of conflict (Pohl 2003b).

Postclassic cabeceras also differ from Classic centers in their internal organization. There is a dramatic reduction in the amount of monumental and civic-ceremonial architecture; what ceremonial structures exist are less imposing than in the Classic (Spores 1972). In the lower Río Verde, Early Postclassic centers lack public architecture (Chapter 7). This represents the reduced territorial and ideological integration of the Postclassic, as smaller, adjacent kingdoms competed against each other. Larger structures are generally palaces, celebrating elite lineages, rather than large public monuments that glorify the state and its ideology. Palaces feature rooms organized around one or more open patios and vary greatly in size, depending on the power of the lineage and the position of the city. Throughout Mesoamerica, private residences of the elite overshadowed public architecture; the Quiché palaces at Utatlán became so massive and elaborate that the Spanish approvingly referred to them as castles (Carmack 1981:193). Large Postclassic structures, of course, exist—the massive Temple of Heaven at Tilantongo rivals

the size of Classic Mixtec mounds, although it does not appear to be part of a formal layout of public architecture as at the nearby Monte Negro. And in the Late Postclassic, the double-temple of the Aztec Templo Mayor was a massive and imposing structure that represented the heart of their cosmological and political empire.

Zapotec kingdoms (*gueche*) in the Valley of Oaxaca were similar to those in the Mixteca, with connections based on trade and marriage. Oudijk (2002:80) suggests that the Valley of Oaxaca can be provisionally divided into eleven to thirteen major cacicazgos, whose size, population, and territory constantly changed over time. None of the large cabeceras approached the size of Monte Albán, and populations were less nucleated. Although many of the best-known Postclassic centers and dynasties in the Valley of Oaxaca had Classic antecedents, others, such as Macuilxóchitl, appear to have had a new noble house established in the Postclassic. Fortifications at some Zapotec sites (such as Mitla, Yagul, Huitzo, and Zaachila) are usually placed on a hill and indicate some degree of warfare or raiding during the Postclassic. The boundaries of a cacicazgo were circumscribed, but influence—and even control—extended irregularly beyond them.

Cacicazgos differed greatly in size and importance. Along the western coast of Oaxaca, Tututepec became a massive center in the Late Postclassic, sitting atop a five-tier site hierarchy and perhaps covering as much as 2,185 hectares (Joyce et al. 2004). The ca. 1100 foundation of Tututepec, as depicted in the codices, involves the famed Lord 8 Deer Jaguar Claw and a possible strategic alliance with the Toltec-Chichimeca after a period of political instability in the Early Postclassic. The polity centered at Tututepec may have controlled an empire of 25,000 square kilometers. To the west, the Tlapa-Tlachinollan formed a major Postclassic state—controlling some 150,000 people—along modern Oaxaca's border with eastern Guerrero and extending south to the Costa Chica (Chapter 11). In the Mixteca Alta, Achiutla was famed both for sacred tree birth and the seat of a solar oracular shrine controlled by a powerful priest; due to the supernatural power centered in this place, the Achiutla oracle was often consulted by Mixtec rulers (Chapter 10). Another important Mixtec oracular shrine—for Lady 9 Grass—was located in Chalcatongo. To the north, the multi-ethnic city of Coixtlahuaca became a major mercantile center; its market attracted merchants from Tenochtitlán and other large cities (Durán 1994). In the Valley of Oaxaca, places such as Cuilapan and Mitla had important religious and market functions. The elegant palaces at Mitla served to celebrate the administrative powers of the royal line as well as entomb great Zapotec rulers. Mitla also served as the residence of one of the most important Zapotec priests, who served to mediate political disputes—leading to Spanish comparisons with the Vatican (Canseco 1905; Pohl 1999); the Achiutla oracle also arbitrated conflicts between competing royal families (Chapter 10).

City-states also varied greatly in their level of political independence. Some city-states successfully dominated others. Zaachila served as a political center for at least part of the Valley of Oaxaca, with places as far as Macuilxóchitl apparently subject to it. The control exercised by important city-states such as Zaachila or Tilantongo waxed and waned. This pattern is common in Postclassic Mesoamerica, where competing kingdoms were sometimes centralized or controlled for a period of time under multiple regional centers, such as Utatlán and Iximché in the Quiché region of highland Guatemala or the series of city-states around Lake Texcoco that tried to exercise control over the Valley of Mexico prior to the successful domination of that region by the Aztecs.

Other institutions played important political functions. Relatives of the ruling elite often filled administrative roles, whereas members of the priesthood filled positions of secular authority in both the Postclassic and early Colonial eras; a council of four priests has been suggested as particularly significant in the Mixteca (Pohl 1994). Judith Zeitlin (1994) has explored the role of the barrio, or residential ward, in the functioning and integration of city-state organization. She sees the plaza-centered public architecture at Panteón Antiguo, Tehuantepec, as identifying it as a corporate community, the focus of religious and administrative features (such as overseeing public works projects) and physically separate from other communities (1994:291).

Power and Legitimization: Alliances, Marriages, Factions, and Conquest

From Late Classic to Postclassic, the legitimization strategies employed by the ruling elite changed. With the collapse of Monte Albán and other large states, alliances between city-states became increasingly important in reinforcing both the power and legitimacy of lineages and the position of the cacicazgo in regional politics. New forms of legitimization focused on the complex ways in which dynasties were founded—reflective of the complex, factional politics of the Postclassic. Yuhuitayu, the Mixtec term used for large settlements (see previous discussion), specifically associates place with a ruling couple's union.

Marriages linked dynasties and connected them to larger political networks. Places that had venerated supernatural connections, such as Achiutla, and/or ancient and well-established genealogies, such as Tilantongo, Jaltepec, Tlaxiaco, and Coixtlahuaca (Chapter 10; Pohl 2003b), produced royals who made especially desirable marriage partners, and ambitious elites (often from less important lineages) vied for these marriage partners to enhance their own legitimacy and reputation of their dynasty. Beyond the initial marital merger, the stability of the union also remained a paramount concern. Based on early colonial documents, Kevin Terraciano (2001:103–104) notes that rulership as inscribed in yuhuitayu refers to a married pair representing different ruling lineages; this union joined the resources

and authority of two places without compromising their separateness. The continued viability of these relationships could be reaffirmed through multiple marriages between important figures from both places, such as between Achiutla and Hill of the Wasp (Chapter 10).

Alliances could prove crucial in the origin of a ruling dynasty. Throughout Oaxaca, challenges—both internal and external—to a ruling dynasty were often met by enhanced alliances and, in times of crisis, linked with the foundation of a new dynasty. Zaachila rulers routinely made alliances, generally through marriage, with Mixtec ruling dynasties, and as Oudijk shows (Chapter 3), in one case (Cosijoeza), the alliance was actually used to initiate a campaign of colonization. Sometimes alliance involved external parties. The founding and promotion of the Coixtlahuaca dynasty, for example, extended back to eleventh-century alliances made with a "Toltec" lord, 4 Jaguar, who materialized alliances and promoted his supporters through a nose-piercing ceremony (Doesburg and van Buren 1997). The same Lord 4 Jaguar proved crucial to the ambitions of Lord 8 Deer Jaguar Claw; the Toltec connection is further discussed below. Such alliances transmitted powerful messages to competing dynasties within and outside of a particular city-state.

In the face of factional opposition, the position of ruler was continually reconstituted, along with the associated practices, as part of a recursive ordering of social conditions (Giddens 1984). Within cacicazgos, rulers created heroic histories for their lineage that blended historical actions with a larger ideology that celebrated the "nationality" or origin of that cacicazgo, attempting to rise above factional disputes (Pohl 2003c). Military conflict and conquest was an additional tool of rulership and incorporation. Lord 8 Deer Jaguar Claw, of Tilantongo, deployed the whole gamut of strategies as he incorporated a series of city-states under his rule.

New Ideology, Paraphernalia, Media, and Modes of Visual Expression

After the Late Classic, some cultural elements associated with elites, such as ceramic effigy vessels depicting elites impersonating deities, vanish from the archaeological record. New badges of office and power—such as turquoise nose ornaments presented at nose-piercing ceremonies at a Tollan, symbolic of promotion to the rank of Toltec lord—represent the mosaic of relationships and alliances in which rulers engaged, both with neighbors and distant city-states and their kings.

Zapotec hieroglyphic writing ceases at the end of the Late Classic, as does one format on which it appeared—the stone genealogical registers portraying elites in rites of passage at sites such as Monte Albán. Throughout Oaxaca, there is a clear shift away from Classic monuments that show individual aggrandizement and dominance. Although still showing important personages, three Early Postclassic carved stones recovered at Río Viejo do not show them adorned in elaborate headdresses and other regal paraphernalia, as had Late Classic carved stones. Also, the Early

Postclassic stones were positioned on a natural hill (Chapter 7), not in the Late Classic acropolis. The appearance of women on these stones has been suggested as evidence of a change in gender ideology, with more equality in the Early Postclassic than in the Late Classic (Joyce et al. 2001:373). Oval monumental stones, with pecked depressions, were found associated with Río Viejo house patios, suggestive of an Early Postclassic change in venue for at least some ceremonies to more private space as commoners appropriated the sacrificial rituals of elite specialists (Chapter 7; Joyce et al. 2001).

The themes previously expressed in Late Classic carved stone monuments are expressed in a distinct new form—the codex or painted book—that records elite, ritual, and astronomical activities. Codices, screenfold documents generally painted on animal hides, provide both secular and sacred stories, foundation narratives, and royal genealogies that illustrate how the ruling class obtained their position (see Chapter 10). Although images on Maya pottery document the presence of codices among the Classic Maya, no such evidence exists for pre-Postclassic codex use in Oaxaca. Codices served to legitimate and celebrate the accomplishments of the ruling dynasty and the sacred history of their cacicazgo. Specialists interpreted codices for a variety of audiences (Byland and Pohl 1994; Smith 1983). In lieu of carved stones, some codices may have hung from palace walls, and fragments of codex-like scenes painted directly on doorway lintels still remain at Mitla. Applying concepts developed by Marshall Sahlins (1985), codices can be considered "heroic histories" in which the central heroic agent's actions influence and reflect the larger society, which the agent embodies (Joyce et al. 2004; Zeitlin 1994). The codices document a significant representational break with the Xoo phase in that Zapotec hieroglyphic writing is absent; only symbols for dates, places, and names are present.

Political themes in some codices relating to the legitimization of ruling dynasties may have been expressed in other media and venues. Procession scenes and images of past ancestors may have been expressed in stone benches or "banquettes," similar to those from Tula, and later copied in an archaizing fashion by the Aztecs at Tenochtitlán (Chapter 9). In addition, John Pohl (1999) has suggested that the codices themselves were meant be performed, providing public spectacle and constant renegotiation and legitimization of the painted images.

Other paraphernalia associated with legitimacy and power, such as sacred bundles, emerged in the Postclassic. Made of paper, cloth, or vegetable materials that enveloped sacred objects (such as the greenstone *penates* found at Postclassic sites), these bundles represented deified founding ancestors (Oudijk 2002). The sacred bundles may also have contained the bones of royal ancestors and served as the focus of offerings and shrines. In the Mixtec codices, four priests carry the bundles (Pohl 1994), which represent the sacred charter of rulership. The sharing of bundles among four priests also reflects the less hegemonic rule of Postclassic kings.

In the Late Classic and Postclassic, dead rulers were transformed into religious objects and badges of authority in the form of mummies or through curation of specific body parts. Displays of ancestral bones appear throughout Late Classic and Postclassic Mesoamerica, with femora held by warriors on the Cacaxtla murals. Elites were depicted holding femora—probably from their ancestors—on tomb friezes at Lambityeco, where the removal of long bones from corpses has been documented (Lind and Urcid 1983). In the Postclassic, Mixtec mummy bundles served as physical proof of the royal line of succession upon which social order was defined—with the physical remains of the royal ancestors providing the current leader's "bona fides." The legitimating power of ancestors remained important during this time of change; as Byland (Chapter 10) notes, the dramatic political changes involving Tilantongo, and the establishment of a new dynasty, would not have been considered legitimate without the approval of the Achiutla oracle.

Economic Transformations, Exchange, and World Systems

The period from the Late Classic/Early Postclassic transition through the Late Postclassic represents a time of fundamental economic transformation in much of Mesoamerica, marked by a high level of commercialization. Although rulers continued to control land, labor, and tribute, commercial exchange systems developed that were only loosely connected with state institutions (Smith and Berdan 2003a:12). Compared to the Classic period, the Postclassic is marked by an enhanced role for merchants, markets, and money throughout Mesoamerica. Markets provided additional integration within cacicazgos.

Without the strictures of a large centralized state, elites in emerging city-states engaged in fierce economic competition both with internal factions and with other city-states. One manifestation of changing political economy in Oaxaca is the proliferation of important markets, some of which occurred between major city-states (Pohl et al. 1997). In the Classic period, household-level specialization is evidenced for a variety of craft industries, such as ornamental shell production at Ejutla (Feinman 1999) and the fiber industries proposed for El Palmillo, in the eastern edge of the Valley of Oaxaca (Feinman et al. 2002). In some cases, such as in late Xoo phase salt production at Lambityeco, the state attempted to impose workshop labor organization after generations of household production; as noted previously, this change was met with resistance (Chapter 5). In the Postclassic, some villages may have turned to more specialized production, such as the thicker cotton produced at Río Viejo, which may have had its own market niche (Chapter 8). There is also evidence that Postclassic organization of production went beyond the household level generally proposed for Classic Oaxaca (Feinman 1999). The small Late Postclassic Valley of Oaxaca village of Llily Gueeubin may have specialized in coarseware ceramic production at the community-based workshop level (Fargher

2003). These contrasting patterns of production evince the transformations that occurred in the increasingly commercialized economy of the Postclassic.

Throughout Postclassic Mesoamerica, trade goods diversified and new forms of wealth increased in circulation (Smith and Berdan 2003a:7). Items that formerly were restricted prestige goods became available for sale in markets as commercial luxury goods. The new inventory of rich material culture that appeared by the Early Postclassic includes bichrome pottery, flutes, earspools, and spindle whorls. After 1200 CE, metalworkers in Oaxaca—as well as Guerrero—produced relatively standardized types of copper objects: the famous "axe-monies," often cited as a form of currency or medium of exchange. Turquoise from the American Southwest became more widely available, and in Oaxaca the coastal region became particularly important as a source of raw materials, such as feathers, marine shells, *pupura* dye, and cacao (Chapter 8). Sites such as Río Viejo engaged in multiple exchange networks, with connections to the Mixteca Alta, Cholula, and Tula. Early Postclassic pottery from the lower Verde Valley documents the increase in stylistic cross-ties between that region and highland Mexico (Joyce et al. 2001:377). The new products, different regional partners, and the mechanisms of exchange and distribution represented significant disjunctions with the past.

As trade and interaction reached new heights of intensity throughout Mesoamerica in the centuries before the arrival of the Spanish, the agents of this exchange varied between regions. Rather than a specialized long-distance trader class, such as the Aztec *pochteca*, it appears that among the Mixtecs it was the junior nobility who organized expeditions for rulers (Pohl 2003a). Commoners also appear to have been heavily involved in exchange and markets. Due to the antagonistic relationships between Mixtec city-states, exchange often took place at annual religious events in the boundary areas between major cacicazgos. Thus, political conflicts did not disrupt economic relationships (Pohl et al. 1997).

To some, the interconnected economies and interdependencies that developed during the Postclassic in Mesoamerica formed a world system (Smith and Berdan 2003a). One recent effort at defining a Postclassic world system conceives it as a "large-scale zone of economic and social interactions that tied together independent polities, and these interactions had significant impacts on the participating societies" (Smith and Berdan 2003a:4). Rather than using terms such as "core," "periphery," and "underlying hierarchy," Smith and Berdan (2003b:24) usefully conceive of a series of zones: core zones, affluent production zones, resource extraction zones, unspecialized peripheral zones, and contact peripheries. Areas included in each zone change through time, with generally four to five core zones at any given time in the Postclassic. In the Late Postclassic, the "Mixteca/Valley of Oaxaca" region is considered a core zone (Berdan et al. 2003:314), although elsewhere Smith and Berdan (2003b:26) note that the small size of Oaxacan urban centers precludes

core status. It is premature to apply world systems concepts to Oaxaca as a region until more data are available from throughout Oaxaca, especially from areas that are considered "peripheral" primarily due to a lack of research (Chapter 12).

POST-TRANSITION CONTINUITIES IN OAXACA

Although the settlement and demographic changes outlined above certainly impacted the population, it was elite culture and political structure that experienced the most disjuncture. Continuities characterize several realms of life for most Oaxacans from the Late Classic throughout the Postclassic, especially in the realm of subsistence, houses, burials, beliefs, and rituals. Similarly, despite the massive impact that the decline of Teotihuacan had on Mesoamerican prehistory in general, continuities have been noted in ceremonies, subsistence, social organization, urban patterns, and religion in Central Mexico (Diehl and Berlo 1989). Much of what marks Mesoamerica as a unified cultural region is the consistency of core beliefs; common people are the major stakeholders and reproducers of what continues—often referred to as central social propositions (Sahlins 1985). It is daily practice that represents the constitution of society (Bourdieu 1977).

Quotidian Life

Although the material culture of the elite experienced drastic changes, objects used in commoners' daily lives demonstrate great continuity, as with the ceramics in the lower Verde Valley from Late Classic to Early Postclassic. In some parts of Oaxaca, such as the Mixteca Alta, subsistence practices may have become more intensive to accommodate an increased Postclassic population, but there are no drastic changes in technology and food produced. The daily life of a farming family would have been virtually indistinguishable before and after the Late Classic/ Postclassic transition.

One of the most striking continuities is expressed in houses. During the Xoo phase, the typical house layout becomes a patio surrounded by rooms at Monte Albán and Lambityeco (Chapter 5); this template serves at the floor plan for Postclassic palaces at Mitla, Yagul, and Zaachila (Winter 1989). The recent excavations at Macuilxóchitl exposed primarily a Xoo occupation with a very limited Early Postclassic (Liobaa) component. When the community underwent extensive reoccupation during the Late Postclassic (Chila), a Chila phase residence at Mound 1 was constructed over the remains of an earlier Xoo phase structure and exhibits surprising continuity with the earlier residence in terms of architectural layout and household activities (Chapter 6). In the Mixteca Alta and Baja, there is also continuity in house layout and construction, with block-and-slab construction continuing in use from Late Classic Ñuiñe (Winter 1994:218).

Although many aspects of commoner life demonstrate great continuity between the Late Classic and Early Postclassic, recent research in the lower Río Verde Valley suggests commoners thrived during this transition; they engaged in a more diverse domestic economy and had more access to imported prestige goods (see previous discussion). They also may have played a more expansive role in this period of sociopolitical transformations. At Río Viejo, commoners may have seen the waning power of elites as an opportunity for them to change the nature of what had become an increasingly exploitative relationship (Joyce et al. 2001). Freed of the coercive power of Late Classic elites, commoners played an active role in the denigration of what had come before, reusing both space and objects associated with elites; a similar important role by commoners may have been crucial in the post-Xoo depopulation of Lambityeco (see previous discussion). Commoners constructed their own meanings for the ruins of Late Classic monumental architecture among which they lived in the Early Postclassic; as Hamann (Chapter 4) suggests, they may have viewed these ruins as evidence of the failed, decadent, and hierarchical society that had come before. Arthur Joyce and colleagues (2001) see the Early Postclassic as making visible a previously hidden transcript of more subtle resistance and negotiation between commoners and elites.

Imagery, Rituals, and Ideology

Although the new suite of paraphernalia has been emphasized as showing drastic transformations in elite culture and imagery, elements of it have Xoo phase, and earlier, roots. Motifs associated with Postclassic imagery, such as grecas, have clear Late Classic antecedents (Winter 1989). In some places, such as the lower Verde Valley, carved stones continue into the Early Postclassic, albeit with very different imagery and messages (see above). The carving of animal bones, which reached an extraordinary height in the Postclassic at Monte Albán's Tomb 7, also has Classic manifestations across Oaxaca, although with the hieroglyphic writing that is lacking in the Postclassic. Mural painting, exemplified in Classic and Late Classic Monte Albán tombs, also continues into the Postclassic. Indeed, codices may represent a transformation of this venerable tradition onto a more portable medium. Perhaps the appearance of codices reflects the Late Classic trend of smaller sites throughout the Valley of Oaxaca erecting genealogical registers that celebrate activities of their ruling elite.

Many of the prehispanic beliefs that continue to manifest themselves in modern Oaxaca villages have roots that extend prior to the Late Classic/Postclassic transition. For example, the manner of internment has remained stable. In the Mixteca Alta, internment took the form of seated burials and continued unchanged during this period of transition. In the Valley of Oaxaca, the continuity in burials involved household heads buried in family tombs with junior family members placed in

simple graves beneath house floors (Chapter 6). Also, tombs, especially at Monte Albán, were reused from generation to generation, cutting across the transition from the Late Classic to Early Postclassic (Winter 1989). By the Late Postclassic, possible Xoo phase tomb reuse occurred at Zaachila, but elsewhere, such as at Mitla, the form and placement of new tombs differed from those of the Xoo phase. Throughout these burial rituals, the importance of the ancestors, and their legitimating force, remained constant.

Deeper beliefs evocative of cosmology also continue from the Late Classic throughout the Postclassic and beyond. Continuities in the calendar system exemplify the resilience of such deep-seated beliefs (see Chapter 11). The importance of sacred mountains to cultures throughout Mesoamerica probably extends back to the Olmec; among the Classic Maya, pyramidal platforms represented these mountains and glyphs refer to them, as well as to the temple atop, as a particular sacred mountain. The Mixtec codices document the names of sacred mountains and places across an animate landscape. In the Valley of Oaxaca, modern residents of Macuilxóchitl continue a Classic—or earlier—tradition of seeing the adjacent Cerro Danush as a sacred mountain. Earlier beliefs, style, and iconography were also reimagined through archaizing, a common trend throughout Postclassic Mesoamerica (Umberger 1987).

OAXACA IN LATE CLASSIC AND
EARLY POSTCLASSIC MESOAMERICA: "TOLTECS"

Oaxaca is often not considered a participant in the new patterns of interaction that emerged during and after the Late Classic/Postclassic transition, as the region is too often characterized as a series of insular city-states. Given its strategic geographic setting, Oaxaca clearly lay at the crossroads of many of these reconstituted interactions, exchange routes, and movements of people—and contributed to them. For example, the art programs at sites such as Cacaxtla and Xochicalco depict non-Mexican individuals and exhibit glyphs that show Zapotec and Ñuiñe influences from Oaxaca mixed with possible Teotihuacan precursors (Berlo 1989; Moser 1977; Nagao 1989).

Material evidence of outsiders impacting Oaxaca is limited. In terms of sculpture, John Pohl (1999:184) suggests that Tututepec Monument 6 resembles the colossal atlantid warriors from Tula, but the sculpture itself is probably Late Postclassic and is related to Toltec imagery in only the general, non-Tula-specific sense (see Chapter 9). The stone bench fragment from Etlatongo may appropriate a form of Toltec imagery but is also probably significantly later than the era of Tula. Winter (Chapter 12) documents the presence of Maya Jaina-style figurines in the Isthmus and suggests a Late Classic/Early Postclassic complex, multi-ethnic panorama for

that area, perhaps reflecting on a smaller scale the larger Mesoamerican population movements seen at Cacaxtla and Xochicalco. Tohil Plumbate, problematically associated with the movement of "Toltecs," is rare in the Valley of Oaxaca and Mixteca Alta but appears on the Isthmus (at Paso Aguascalientes), which was part of an important trading network including the source of plumbate pottery. The recent excavation of several intact plumbate vessels at Paso Aguascalientes (Chapter 12) substantially expands the surprisingly small sample of such pots from throughout Oaxaca. Although acknowledging the occupants may have been Zapotec, Winter also suggests the site may have been occupied by an outside group—perhaps a merchant colony or enclave from the Soconusco. Along the western coast of Oaxaca, no plumbate has been found at Río Viejo (Chapter 7). In the Mixteca Alta, a Toltec-related bowl, in terms of style, has been found at Yucuita in the Nochixtlán Valley (Winter, personal communication, 2003). Another purported ware that evinces interregional interaction, Silho Fine Orange, has been found in the Valley of Oaxaca, at Lambityeco (Chapter 5). Numerous problems abound in associating scattered plumbate and Silho ceramic sherds with "Toltecs," especially if by "Toltec," a presence from Tula is suggested; as noted above, neither plumbate nor Silho Fine Orange were made at Tula.

Although material evidence of Toltec contact is limited, evidence occurs in codical documents, as well as the painted murals at Mitla (Pohl 1999), and ethnohistoric manuscripts. These sources emphasize the ideological importance of the Toltecs, or "Tollan," in Oaxaca rather than any large-scale presence of a foreign group. As noted above, it is crucial to make the distinction between the site of Tula in Hidalgo state and what these sources refer to as "Tollan," a generic term for a sacred or important place or center of culture—a place of legitimization. The "Toltec" Lord 4 Jaguar, mentioned in several documents (such as the *Lienzo de Tlapiltepec*) as involved in the founding of the Coixtlahuaca dynasty, as well as abetting the ambitions of Lord 8 Deer Jaguar Claw of Tilantongo, probably came from the relatively nearby Tollan of Cholula (also known as Tollan-Cholula; see Chapter 3). Coixtlahuaca itself may ultimately have been viewed as a Tollan (Chapter 10). Given the similarity in nose-piercing as investiture ceremonies from Oaxaca to the Maya Highlands, a chain of Tollans, linked spatially and temporally, became associated with political investiture of Postclassic lords (Kristan-Graham and Kowalski 2007:22).

Beginning in the Early Postclassic, association with Toltec elites—wherever they were from—apparently formed an important legitimizing narrative in Oaxaca. Toltec connections also assisted in accessing exchange routes and the common elite leadership imagery and rituals discussed above, which some scholars link with a pan-Mesoamerican cult of Quetzalcoatl (Ringle 2004). As with other groups in Mesoamerica, such as the Quiché (Carmack 1981:374), competitive lineages in Oaxaca acquired Toltec imagery, icons, and ancestors as one of many strategies

in negotiating power. In Oaxaca, association with "Toltec" appears to be more invoked after the demise of Tula (Chapter 9), and similar to the appropriation and creation of Toltec by the Aztec, the "civilizing" aspect of the Toltec was desired. If Oudijk (Chapter 3) is correct in his linking of the concept he interprets as "Lagoon of Blood" with Tollan, many ruling houses throughout Oaxaca invoked "Toltecs" in their founding narratives.

OAXACA IN LATE POSTCLASSIC MESOAMERICA: MIXTECA-PUEBLA AND AZTECS

Oaxaca, particularly the Mixteca, has been proposed as a possible origin for the Mixteca-Puebla style, especially due to the presence of codices in the Mixteca Alta. For some scholars (Jiménez Moreno 1966; McCafferty 1994; Nicholson 1982), the early importance of polychromes at Cholula (by at least 900 CE) and architectural antecedents for images on the later codex-style vessels implicate Cholula in the origins of the Mixteca-Puebla style. Some imagery encompassed under Mixteca-Puebla style appears in Toltec and earlier Central Mexican art. Although its origins remain unclear, the sharing of this style and associated iconography reflected Late Postclassic interaction and materialized the alliance corridors and elite leadership rituals that connected groups within Oaxaca and beyond; such sustained contact among elites developed from the Tollan phenomenon discussed above, which probably predates the city of Tula.

In Oaxaca, the Mixteca-Puebla style usually appears on small objects, especially ceramics and codices, reflecting the reduced nature of public spectacle from the Classic. Examples in larger media, such as the stucco figures from the Zaachila tombs or on stone benches (Chapter 9), are consistently at a smaller than life-size scale. The distribution of Mixteca-Puebla-style (especially "codex"-style) pottery remains uneven throughout Oaxaca. Generally rare at houses in both the Teposcolula Valley (Pérez Rodríguez 2004) and Nochixtlán Valley (Blomster 1998, 2004; Lind 1987; Spores 1972), 10,000 Mixtec polychrome sherds were recovered by Alfonso Caso (1938) in his excavations of a Chachoapan midden; it is not clear how many of these truly represent the Mixteca-Puebla codex style rather than simple geometric polychromes. Concentrations of Mixteca-Puebla pottery are scattered in the Valley of Oaxaca, often appearing in spectacular tombs (Caso 1969); only at the Casa Mixteca, on the lower terraces of Monte Albán, have extremely high quantities of this material been documented (Salinas Contreras 2004). Although not frequent throughout the lower Verde Valley, polychromes with Mixteca-Puebla-style designs are found in relatively high quantities at the massive kingdom of Tututepec (Joyce et al. 2004; Levine 2006). Spectacular Mixteca-Puebla objects, both in textile fragments and turquoise mosaics, have come from caves in the Cuicatlán Cañada

and Mazatec regions (Chapter 12; González Licón and Márquez Morfín 1994). Only in the Mixe (see Figure 1.2) region have no Mixtec polychrome or codex-style designs been reported, which may represent the resilience of indigenous representational conventions and iconography or even actual resistance to the dominant Postclassic ideology. Until substantial archaeological data are reported from the Mixe region, such interpretations remain speculative at best.

Aztec impact throughout Mesoamerica varied, and regions of Oaxaca reflect the differing strategies, successes, and failures of the Aztec imperial machine (see also Chapter 11). Although there is little archaeological evidence of Aztec domination of Oaxaca, ethnohistoric documents reveal that the Aztec incursions into Oaxaca began as early as during the reign of Aztec ruler Moctecuhzoma I, who ventured into northern Oaxaca, supposedly conquering Coixtlahuaca around 1458 (Marcus 1983:314; Pohl 2003c:61). Conflict with the Aztecs in Oaxaca intensified during the reign of Ahuitzotl, who attacked at least sixteen localities throughout Oaxaca, while his successor, Moctecuhzoma II (the Aztec emperor in power upon the arrival of the Spanish in 1519), subdued forty-four places. Some episodes involved substantial violence, such as the conquest of Coixtlahuaca, whose leader, Atonal, unsuccessfully attempted to forge an alliance capable of resisting the armies of the Aztec Triple Alliance. The *Codex Mendoza* (66) documents the Aztec garroting of the defeated Atonal (Berdan and Anawalt 1997; Townsend 2000:98), and, according to some accounts, the Aztec supposedly established a garrison at Coixtlahuaca. Thus, Coixtlahuaca can serve as an example of the impact of direct Aztec hostile contact. Although the documents record their assassination of the ruler, their impact on the majority of the population is not directly detailed in the indigenous and colonial documents. At both Coixtlahuaca (particularly from Ignacio Bernal's excavations at Ingüiteria, on a small hill near the current center of Coixtlahuaca) and Zaachila, Aztec burnished red occurs primarily with elite burials and tombs (Bernal 1949; Gallegos Ruiz 1978). In 1998, Ronald Spores directed a brief surface survey of the residential areas on the hills surrounding the modern town of Coixtlahuaca, where much of the Postclassic population lived; few Aztec-related ceramics were observed on these eroded residential slopes. Utilization of Aztec material goods may have been confined to only a small sector of society, with minimal impact on daily lives for the majority.

The Aztecs resonated in Oaxacan alliance structures. Although alliances were between individual cacicazgos rather than ethnic groups, larger scale, strategic alliances were attempted in order to resist the Aztecs. One such alliance between Zapotecs and Mixtecs culminated in the late-fifteenth-century battle at the Zapotec fortress site of Guiengola, on the southern Isthmus of Tehuantepec (Peterson and MacDougall 1974). Alliance strategies used within Oaxaca also could be applied to the Nahua intruders, with marriages between Zapotecs and Aztecs documented in

the final years before the arrival of the Spanish, such as the famous marriage between the last prehispanic king of Zaachila, Cocijoeza, and Coyolicatzin ("Cotton Puff"), daughter of the Aztec king Ahuitzotl (Burgoa 1989). This alliance ended the Aztec siege at Guiengola and produced offspring who continued to form alliances with other kingdoms into the Colonial era.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE CLASSIC:
A REAPPRAISAL OF THE POSTCLASSIC IN OAXACA

Reappraising the Postclassic, and Oaxaca's role in prehispanic Mesoamerica, is linked with changing views of the Classic period in Mesoamerica. Previous models viewed Classic Teotihuacan as a peaceful theocracy, where high priests dispatched artists to other parts of Mesoamerica to spread the Tlaloc cult; the Postclassic was portrayed in a negative light, formed by barbarians who lacked the culture of Teotihuacan (Jiménez Moreno 1966:50). The Postclassic too often has been defined by what it lacks compared to the Classic, with the Late Classic/Postclassic transition considered a time of decadence. Recent research reveals the Postclassic as a vital, dynamic time during which Oaxacan cultures flourished.

Because domination systems are negotiated and unstable, civilizations are not static; they experience continual change as their fortunes wax and wane (Bourdieu 1977; Diehl and Berlo 1989; Giddens 1984). In many regions of Oaxaca, the unstable nature of Classic states such as Monte Albán, Yucuñudahui, and Río Viejo, as well as the disruption of important networks of interregional relations with the demise of Teotihuacan, resulted in the radical political and social transformations of the Postclassic. The collapse of interregional communication networks may have signaled to both competing centers and commoners within each center the weakness of rulership and its associated ideology and institutions, leading to further erosion of legitimacy and power at these places (Joyce et al. 2001:375). Although the formation of city-states often follows the collapse of a major polity throughout the world (Marcus 1989), in some regions of Oaxaca city-states existed prior to the collapse of centralized states, both within and outside of the territory of places such as Monte Albán. Elite culture fundamentally changed following the major political realignment, but great continuity characterizes commoner household organization throughout Oaxaca.

Although regions of Oaxaca interacted with other parts of Mesoamerica prior to the Late Classic, relations shifted during this time of sociopolitical upheaval. Populations adjusted to new political challenges and opportunities; new alliances developed, within and outside of Oaxaca. Both elites and commoners displayed new items of material wealth, some of which originated in areas largely ignored in previous eras, such as metal from West Mexico. The internal and external relations

of city-states appear driven by factional competition, with new strategies employed to show the legitimacy and stability of ruling lineages.

As opposed to large centralized Classic states, Postclassic city-states allowed many Oaxacan communities to withstand two subsequent invasions—both the Aztec and the Spanish—with at least initially only limited disruptions in socio-political institutions and quotidian life; the elites simply channeled tribute to the intruders, whether Aztec or Spanish. Postclassic institutions and agents, such as the residential ward with hereditary barrio leaders, facilitated community survival during the ultimate demise of native elite rule under Spanish colonialism (Zeitlin 1994:276). Despite Spanish efforts to eradicate indigenous religion and its practitioners, deeply held religious beliefs persisted, drawing from the Postclassic, Classic, and earlier. Rather than a mere shadow of the Classic "golden age" of Oaxaca, the Postclassic actually provides continuities and links with earlier eras and elements of political, economic, and religious organization, even as the Spanish imposed new institutions. The Postclassic was a time of innovation, as original solutions emerged for problems stemming from the collapse of Classic states and institutions. In at least some parts of Oaxaca, the Postclassic represents an unprecedented rise in the power and autonomy of commoners. The continued resilience of indigenous people throughout Oaxaca in the face of a vast array of hegemonic forces remains as testimony to the enduring institutions and traditions that continued and/or were developed during the Postclassic.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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