

Commoner Power: A Case Study From the Classic Period Collapse on the Oaxaca Coast

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This article argues that the agency of commoners has not been adequately theorized in archaeological studies of the political dynamics of complex societies. Recent developments in social theory emphasize that political relations are produced through social negotiations involving commoners as well as elites. This paper considers the role of commoners in the Classic period collapse in the lower Río Verde Valley, Oaxaca, Mexico. Regional survey and excavation data demonstrate that the Classic-to-Postclassic transition was marked by dramatic changes in settlement patterns and sociopolitical organization, including the decline of the Late Classic regional center of Río Viejo. The research indicates that rather than passively reacting to the sociopolitical developments of the Classic-to-Postclassic transition, commoners actively rejected many of the ruling institutions and symbols that were central to the dominant ideology of the Late Classic state. Early Postclassic people reused and reinterpreted the sacred spaces and objects of the Río Viejo state such as carved stone monuments and public buildings. The evidence from the lower Verde is examined in the context of an emerging theoretical perspective in archaeology that considers commoner power. We argue that commoners contribute to the social negotiation of dominant discourses through three overlapping forms of social interaction: engagement, avoidance, and resistance.

KEY WORDS: social theory; commoners; resistance; collapse.

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INTRODUCTION

The nature of sociopolitical change during the Classic-to-Postclassic transition in Mesoamerica has been a source of great research interest and debate (Cowgill, 1979, 1992, pp. 110–114; Culbert, 1973a; Diehl and Berlo, 1989; Sabloff and Andrews, 1986). In general, the evidence indicates that this period, lasting from about A.D. 600 to 1000, was characterized by the fragmentation or collapse of the centralized polities that dominated the Classic period (ca. A.D. 250–800) political landscape. Powerful urban centers like Teotihuacan, Monte Albán, and Tikal declined in size or were abandoned (Fig. 1). Archaeological, iconographic, and epigraphic research suggests that this period was characterized by increasingly disruptive interpolity warfare and changes in political institutions and ruling ideologies as well as depopulation in some regions (Culbert, 1973a; Demarest *et al.*, 1997; Diehl and Berlo, 1989; Inomata, 1997; Sabloff and Andrews, 1986; Sabloff and Henderson, 1993; Sharer, 1994). Despite the dramatic sociopolitical changes documented for this period, many questions remain as to their timing, nature, and causes.

Recent debates on the causes of the collapse have been dominated by scholars stressing either interpolity warfare (Demarest *et al.*, 1997; Freidel, 1986; Schele and Freidel, 1990; Sharer, 1994, pp. 338–357) or anthropogenic landscape degradation (e.g., Abrams and Rue, 1988; Fash, 1991, pp. 179–181; Paine and Freter, 1996; Webster, 1993; Webster *et al.*, 2000). Briefly, warfare models tend to argue that endemic conflict at the end of the Classic period led to political destabilization and the collapse of political centers. Warfare at the end of the Classic period seems

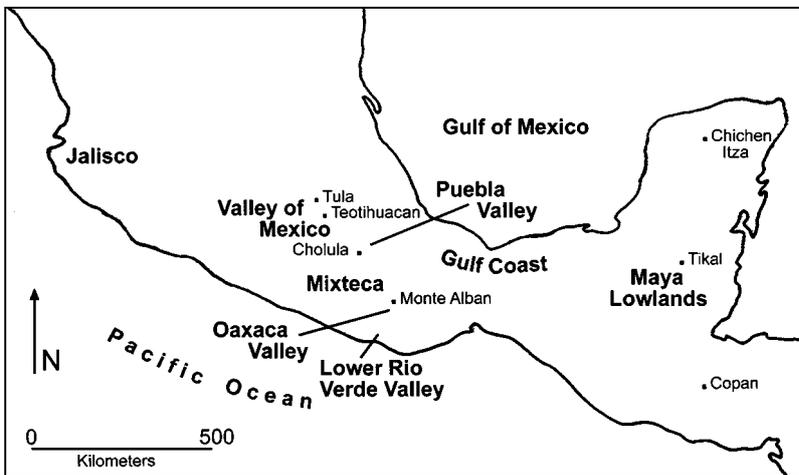


Fig. 1. Mesoamerica, showing sites and regions referred to in the text.

to have involved an increase in territorial conquest and the destruction of civic-ceremonial centers relative to earlier periods. Models of anthropogenic landscape change argue that population growth and agricultural intensification at the end of the Classic period triggered landscape degradation and the collapse of subsistence systems, soon followed by demographic and political collapse. What these recent theories of the collapse share, however, is a particular view of Mesoamerican society that treats commoners as largely powerless observers in social change (Gillespie, 2001, p. 74; A. Joyce, 2000; Robin, 1999, pp. 26–34; Yaeger, 2000, p. 124). In the case of the collapse, commoners are usually seen as helpless victims of either elite political competition or the ecological consequences of their own demographic success.

The view that commoners did not have an active role in the Classic period collapse is symptomatic of a more general bias in archaeological research on complex societies, which has been focused almost exclusively on the role of elites in power systems that create and maintain inequality. In most recent archaeological theorizing of power, elites dominate people through some combination of economic control, military force, and ideology (e.g., Blanton *et al.*, 1996; Demarest and Conrad, 1992; Earle, 1997; Joyce and Winter, 1996). Structures of domination, especially dominant ideologies, are created and imposed on commoners by elites with little involvement from the former other than compliance. The role of commoners in the social negotiation of power is therefore typically denied (Pauketat, 2000).

This article argues that the agency of commoners must be included in archaeological studies of power in complex societies. We examine the role of commoners in the social negotiation of power during the Late Classic (A.D. 500–800) to Early Postclassic (A.D. 800–1100) transition in the lower Río Verde Valley on the Pacific Coast of Oaxaca, Mexico (Fig. 2). Recent research in the lower Verde region has clarified the nature of demographic and sociopolitical change at this time, and drawn attention to commoners as agents of social change.

The data from the lower Río Verde Valley indicate that the Classic-to-Postclassic transition witnessed the collapse of the ruling institutions of the Río Viejo state and there is evidence for the active denigration of symbols of state power by Early Postclassic peoples. Full-coverage survey data show that there was a major shift in settlement patterns with people moving into the piedmont, perhaps due to increasing conflict. Ethnohistoric data (Joyce *et al.*, 2001) suggest an intrusion of highland Mixtec peoples into the region sometime during the Postclassic period (A.D. 800–1521). We consider the possibility that this intrusion of highland peoples occurred during the Early Postclassic and involved military conquest of Río Viejo and the denigration of the symbols of state power. Based on the archaeological evidence, it is found instead that an intrusion of highland peoples was not a major factor in the Classic period collapse. These data indicate that during the Early Postclassic, local commoners, rather than foreign invaders, were transforming the

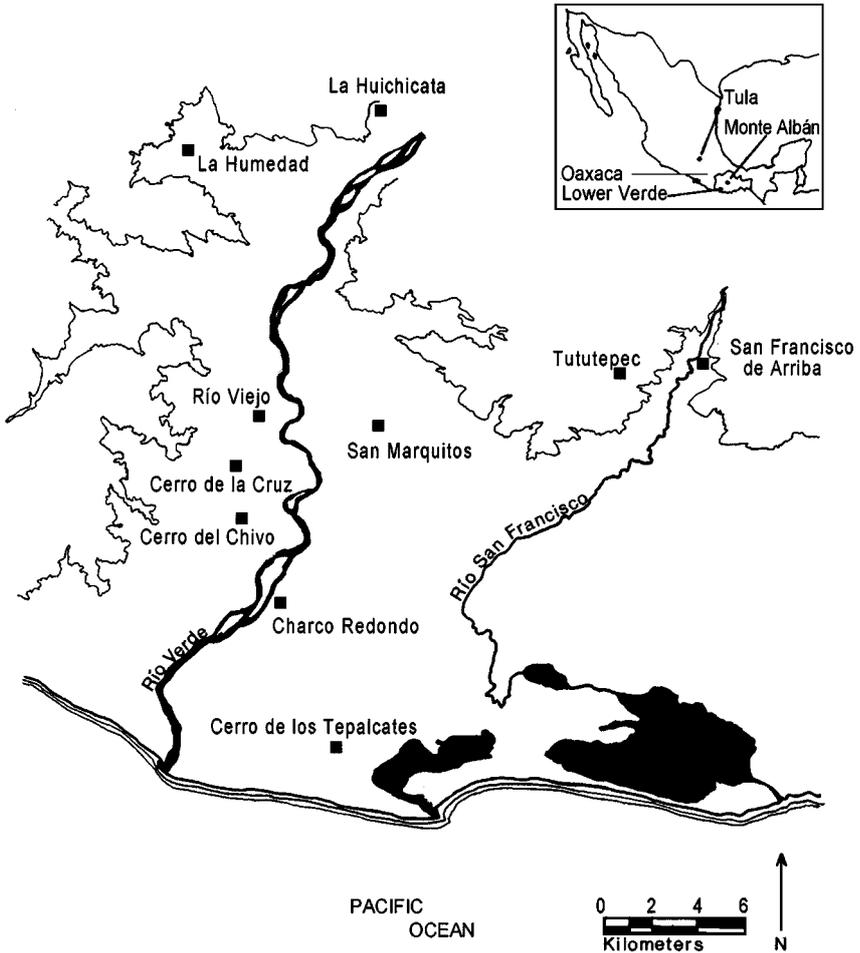


Fig. 2. The lower Río Verde Valley, Oaxaca.

meanings of the sacred spaces and objects of the Late Classic state such as carved stone monuments and public buildings. Based on the present evidence it is difficult to determine the extent to which the collapse might have involved commoner rebellion. While the Classic-to-Postclassic transition was characterized by the collapse of the ruling institutions and the ideologies that supported the power of nobles, commoners appear to have prospered.

The article develops a theoretical approach to examine the role of commoners in the social negotiation of political power in complex societies. We argue that commoners contribute to the social negotiation of power through three overlapping

forms of interaction: engagement, avoidance, and resistance. In the lower Río Verde Valley, rather than passively acquiescing to history, commoners actively expressed resistance to dominant ideologies and were important agents of social change both before and after the collapse. We begin the article by reviewing approaches to commoner power in contemporary social theory.

THEORIES OF COMMONER POWER

A focus on elite domination with little consideration of the contribution of commoners to the social negotiation of power has a long history in social theory (Robin, 1999). Marx and Engels (1970) developed the most influential view of power and domination arguing that ideology creates a false consciousness such that the interests of elites are hidden and subordinates are duped into compliance. Variations on the theme of dominant ideologies and false consciousness continued with Gramsci's concept of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971), Habermas' ideas on the relationship between ideology and domination (Habermas, 1971), Althusser's ideological state apparatus (Althusser, 1990), and Mills's power elite (Mills, 1956).

Recently, feminist and poststructuralist theorists have critiqued this top-down view of power as domination (Butler, 1993; Abercrombie *et al.*, 1980; Foucault, 1986; Giddens, 1979; Kertzer, 1988; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Scott, 1985, 1990). Power is now recognized as encompassing relationships that are broader than domination and social control. This view is reflected in the distinction between *power to* and *power over* (Miller and Tilly, 1984). *Power over* refers to domination, while *power to* refers to the transformative capacity of an agent to achieve an outcome in the world, which can either reproduce or change the social and structural setting (Giddens, 1979, pp. 88–94). *Power to* encompasses power as domination, but it also includes the positive, productive, and creative aspects of cultural knowledge and social relationships that create social identities and which people draw on in practice (see Foucault, 1977, 1981, 1986). The transformative capacity of agents is determined by the compromise struck between their creativity, skill, and awareness of the world along with structural principles and the properties of resources that create asymmetries in access to social, material, and symbolic resources. All people, therefore, have some power in the world in the sense that their practices serve to reproduce social relations. When referring to power, we adopt the more general view of *power to*.

Social theorists now emphasize that systems of political power that support inequality in complex societies result from social negotiation among all members of society (Butler, 1993; Comaroff, 1985; Scott, 1990). People and groups in different social circumstances have variable readings of cultural traditions that embody dominant ideologies and act on those readings such that domination is to some extent contested. Recognizing that power is socially negotiated means that dominant ideologies are historically developed through the ongoing interaction

of people of different social positions such as elites and commoners, women and men, urban and rural dwellers, and people of the core and periphery. Dominant ideologies are rarely simple reflections of elite interests imposed on subordinates. The outcome of the negotiation of power may bolster the social position of elites, but it can do so in ways that reflect some degree of compromise resulting from the interactions of varied social actors. Transformations in power relations can result from strategic action, but are often largely unintended because of incomplete knowledge, unacknowledged conditions, and the unpredictable outcomes of social action.

Commoners always have some degree of penetration of dominant discourses, which can be actualized as resistance (Giddens, 1979, pp. 145–150). Based on several historical case studies, Abercrombie and his colleagues (1980) have argued that subordinates often penetrate dominant ideologies to a great degree. In these instances, the dominant ideology seems to serve more as a means to create social cohesion among the elite class rather than to justifying inequality to subordinates. Subordinates may develop alternative ideologies that contest the dominant one. Scott (1985, 1990) shows how commoners express resistance to domination in a wide variety of forms both discursively and nondiscursively. While resistance may occur in the form of active rebellion, more frequently it is expressed in subtle forms that do not directly confront authority. These subtle, although important, forms of resistance are what Scott (1990) terms the “hidden transcript,” and are usually disguised or conducted outside the view of elites or their functionaries. Examples of the “hidden transcript” include distancing behavior such as humor and irony directed at dominant individuals, institutions or ideas, which is oppositional in form if not in content. Other examples of hidden transcripts include private rituals that challenge or bypass authority and foot dragging or withholding payments to the state in the form of labor or resources (Dirks, 1994; Giddens, 1979, pp. 145–150; Scott, 1990). Commoners are often limited to expressing resistance in subtle hidden forms because of the possibility of reprisals by elites. It may also be difficult to invest in and organize more overt and challenging forms of protest because subordinates are caught up in the daily struggle to make a living. Resistance can be undermined if people are divided by geography or cultural background. Even under highly repressive and coercive forms of domination, commoners can at least express resistance passively. Peasant rebellions in recent history, however, indicate that commoners will at times express resistance overtly and at great risk in the face of coercion by dominant groups.

Dominant ideologies can provide a framework in which subordinates are able to resist, for example by claiming that the ideologically constructed social contract has not been met. Resistance via a dominant ideology can be more public since it does not appear to challenge ideas that legitimate authority, providing subordinates more leeway to express resistance. For example, in Czarist Russia peasants occasionally protested oppression at the hands of local authorities by claiming that

those officials were acting against the will of the Czar (Kertzer, 1988, pp. 144–150; Scott, 1990, pp. 172–182). Resistance can also be expressed via elite-sanctioned rituals of reversal like the Carnival in fifteenth to nineteenth century Europe where some degree of disrespect and feigned rebellion was tolerated. Of course, outright rebellion did occasionally break out during Carnival, which highlights the fact that power is contested and that any interaction can result in unanticipated outcomes.

The expression of resistance in subtle, often disguised forms often creates the historical impression that commoners have been duped by a dominant discourse, which may explain the prevalence of theories of false consciousness (Scott, 1990). The appearance of an uncontested domination is also a product of what Scott (1990) calls the “public transcript,” where the dominant discourse is overwhelmingly represented in overt expressions of power in writing, architecture, art, and ritual performance. During periods of rebellion and political upheaval, however, the hidden transcript becomes public and resistance is enthusiastically and openly expressed. Rebellions and periods marked by the collapse of established political orders allow commoners to express the anger that is stifled by coercive and oppressive systems. As Scott (1990, p. 213) argues,

The frustrations engendered by domination have a double aspect. The first aspect is, of course, the humiliations and coercion entailed by the exercise of power. The second is the frustration of having continually to rein in one’s anger and aggression in order to prevent even worse consequences.

It is periods of political upheaval and collapse, therefore, that are most promising for observing the public expressions of commoner power in the form of resistance and outright rebellion.

Pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica’s most dramatic period of political upheaval was the collapse of the centralized, urban states of the Classic period. In the lower Río Verde Valley this period was marked by the collapse of the Río Viejo state, one of the most powerful Late Classic polities on the Pacific Coast of Mesoamerica. The next section describes the Río Viejo polity in the Late Classic as a prelude to considering its collapse at ca. A.D. 800.

THE LATE CLASSIC RIO VIEJO STATE

The lower Río Verde Valley on Oaxaca’s western Pacific Coast has been the focus of interdisciplinary research over the past 15 years (Grove, 1988; A. Joyce, 1991a,b, 1993, 1999; Joyce *et al.*, 1998a; Urcid and Joyce, 1999; Workinger, 2002; Workinger and Colby, 1997). This research has included large-scale archaeological excavations at the sites of Río Viejo (RV20), Cerro de la Cruz (RV18), and San Francisco de Arriba (RV62) as well as test excavations at 14 other sites. The entire region has been the focus of a nonsystematic surface reconnaissance, while

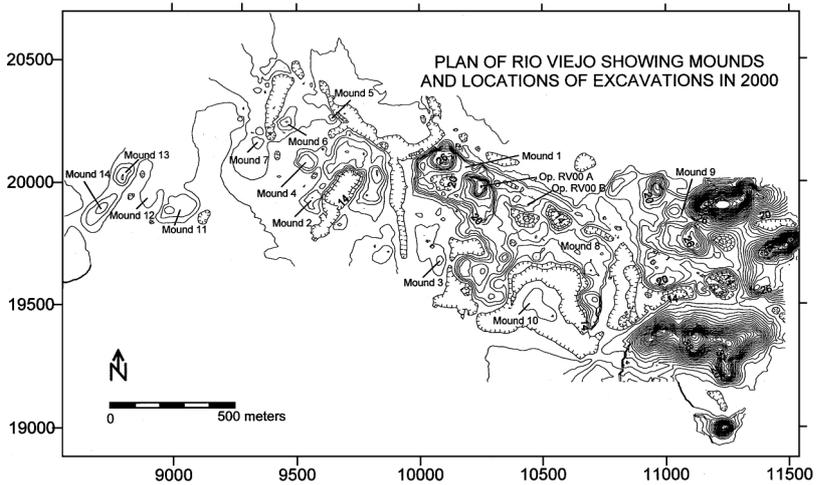


Fig. 3. Plan of Río Viejo showing mounds and locations of excavations in 2000.

full-coverage surveys⁴ have systematically studied an area of 152 km² (A. Joyce, 1999; Workinger, 2002). The research has focused on understanding the origins, development, and collapse of the Río Viejo polity.

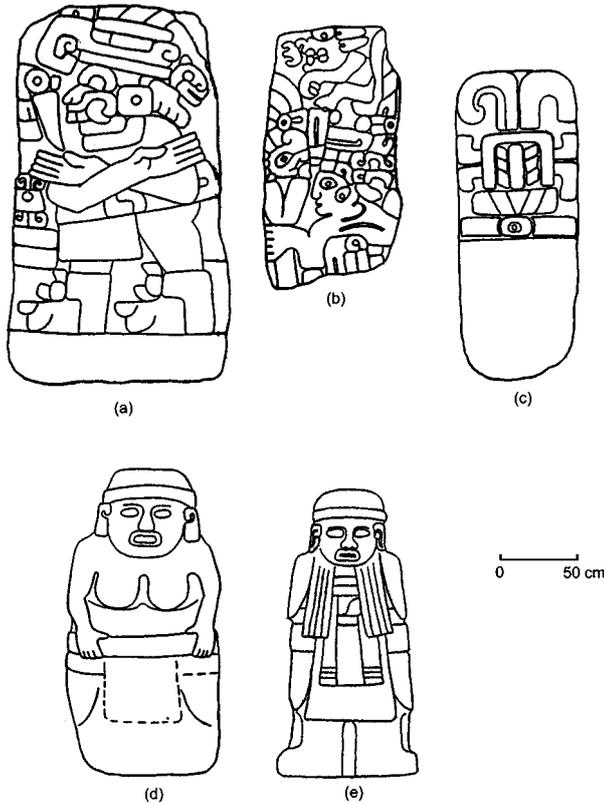
Archaeological research shows that by the Terminal Formative Period (100 B.C.–A.D. 250) the lower Río Verde Valley was the locus of a state polity with its capital at the urban center of Río Viejo (A. Joyce, 1993, 1999, 2000). While Río Viejo declined in size during the Early Classic (A.D. 250–500), by the Late Classic period the site had grown to its maximum area of 250 ha and was the capital of a state that dominated the lower Verde. During the Late Classic Yuta Tiyoo phase (A.D. 500–800), much of the site was artificially raised above the floodplain by a series of large residential platforms (Fig. 3). All of the platform mounds mapped at Río Viejo have Late Classic occupations, although most of them included redeposited pottery from earlier periods. Mounds 2–4 and 6–14 appear to have been residential platforms based on the presence of building foundations visible on the surface along with numerous *manos*, *metates*, and utilitarian pottery. The largest of these platforms was Mound 8, which covered approximately 16 ha. Evidence for the specialized production of gray ware pottery has been recovered from surface collections and a test excavation in Mound 4 (Workinger and Joyce, 1999, pp. 86–91). Mounds 2, 8, 9, and 11 also supported large structures, probably public buildings.

⁴Since 1994 a full-coverage survey directed by Joyce (1999; Joyce *et al.*, 2001) has systematically studied an area of 127 km² in the region. Workinger (in press) also carried out a systematic survey of 31 km² of the Río San Francisco drainage in the lower Verde region. To assure continuous coverage the two surveys were intentionally overlapped by 6 km² so that the total area examined by full-coverage techniques was 152 km².

Río Viejo's Late Classic civic–ceremonial center was the huge acropolis at Mound 1. Mound 1 consists of a platform measuring approximately 350 m × 200 m along its base and rising about 5 m above the floodplain (Fig. 3). The platform supports two large substructures, reaching heights of 15 m above the floodplain. With an estimated volume of 400,000 m³, the Mound 1 acropolis is one of the largest structures in pre-Hispanic Oaxaca. Evidence that Mound 1 was a locus of important public ceremonies, and probably the ruler's palace, includes the presence of three Late Classic carved stone monuments depicting rulers (Urcid and Joyce, 1999), a plaza spatially situated for public gatherings, and a sunken patio probably for elite-restricted activities. A test excavation 50 m south of Mound 1 recovered thick deposits of Late Classic sherds from fancy serving vessels, suggesting elite domestic activities (A. Joyce, 1991a, p. 480). A charcoal sample from these deposits yielded an uncorrected radiocarbon date of 1230 ± 70 B.P., or A.D. 720 (Beta-62906). Excavations during the 2000 field season in the eastern substructure (Mound 1 – Structure 2) demonstrates that this part of the acropolis was built during the late Terminal Formative (A.D. 100–250) and was abandoned during the Early Classic (A.D. 250–500). Mound 1-Structure 2 was reoccupied during the Late Classic, although the architecture from this period was very poorly preserved, because of the reuse of foundation stones during the Early Postclassic (ca. A.D. 800–1100). Excavation and surface collections suggest that the entire acropolis was occupied during the Late Classic.

A total of 13 carved stone monuments have been dated stylistically to the Late Classic at Río Viejo (Urcid and Joyce, 1999, in press). They are carved in low relief and are made of the local granite (Fig. 4). Many of the carved stones depict nobles, probably rulers of Río Viejo, dressed in elaborate costumes and sometimes accompanied by a glyph that represents their name in the 260-day ritual calendar.⁵ For example, Río Viejo Monument 8 located on the acropolis depicts a noble wearing an elaborate headdress and the profile head of a jaguar. The personage also wears a jaguar buccal mask with prominent fangs and earspools. To the left of the figure is the individual's hieroglyphic name, 10 L (10 “Eye”). Río Viejo Monument 11 depicts a noble holding a zoomorphic staff. The person is wearing a composite pendant and an elaborate headdress that has a jaguar head protruding from its back. Above the figure are the glyph 2 Jaguar and the “blood” glyph, probably a reference to the autosacrificial letting of blood. Human sacrifice may be referred to on Monument 15 where a noble is shown with several glyphs including those for heart and blood. In addition to actual depictions of rulers, two carved stones (Monuments 1 and 14) each include only a single glyph, which we hypothesize to be the calendrical name of a ruler. The overall theme of the corpus of Late Classic carved stones appears to be the ruling dynasty of Río Viejo, suggesting a concern with the aggrandizement of individual rulers, their ancestors,

⁵In Pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica an individual's data of birth in the 260-day ritual calendar was often incorporated in the persons name.



CARVED STONE MONUMENTS FROM RIO VIEJO
 (a=Mon. 8; b=Mon. 11; c=Mon. 14; d=Mon. 3; e=Jamiltepec Mon. 1
 drawn by Javier Urcid)

Fig. 4. Carved stone monuments from Río Viejo.

and their place in the line of dynastic succession. Similar themes are found in Late Classic carved stone monuments in the highlands of Oaxaca (Urcid *et al.*, 1994) and the Maya lowlands (Schele and Freidel, 1990; Schele and Miller, 1986).

Late Classic settlement in the full-coverage survey zone consisted of 50 components, covering 605 ha (Fig. 5).⁶ The floodplain was the focus of Late Classic settlement with 56.0% of the occupational area recorded there; piedmont sites accounted for 34.2%, secondary valley sites made up 7.3%, and coastal plain sites accounted for 2.4%. A seven-tiered settlement hierarchy based on site size, volume of mounded architecture, and the presence/absence of carved stone monuments is

⁶The occupational area of RV146 was excluded from the settlement pattern analysis since it appears to have been a nonresidential, ceremonial site.

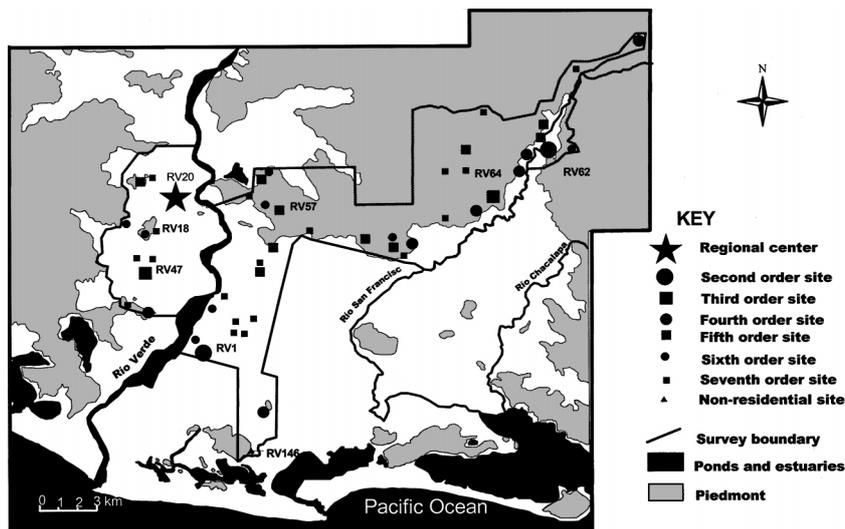


Fig. 5. Late Classic settlement hierarchy, lower Río Verde Valley, Oaxaca.

indicated by the full-coverage survey and regional reconnaissance data for the lower Río Verde region. Río Viejo was the first-order capital of a state polity given its large size, monumental architecture, and numerous carved stone monuments. In the preliminary settlement model, second-order sites range from 52.0 to 57.6 ha and have impressive monumental buildings and carved stones. Second-order sites sampled in the full-coverage survey zone include Charco Redondo (RV1) and San Francisco de Arriba (RV62). Third-order sites range in size from 26.2 to 33.4 ha and include Tututepec (RV64) and Cerro del Chivo (RV47). Other probable third-order centers, outside of the full-coverage zone, are La Humedad (RV74) and La Huichicata (RV49). With the exception of Tututepec, all of the third-order centers have monumental architecture and carved stones. Lower order sites never have carved stones and rarely include mounded architecture. Fourth-order sites range from 10.2 to 15.0 ha, fifth-order sites range from 4.6 to 8.6 ha, sixth-order sites from 2.2 to 3.8 ha, and seventh-tier sites are 1.5 ha or less.

Carved stone monuments at second-order and third-order sites are similar in style to those from Río Viejo and include either depictions of nobles or stones with only the hieroglyphic names of rulers (Jorin, 1974; Urcid and Joyce, 1999; Winter, 1987; Workinger and Colby, 1997). The nobles referred to on these carved stones may be local rulers or members of Río Viejo's ruling dynasty. So far, none of the glyphs at second-order sites correspond to those carved at Río Viejo. Hieroglyphic inscriptions carved into boulders have also been found at Cerro de los Tepalcates (RV146), a hilltop ceremonial site overlooking the ocean and estuaries about 2.5 km north of the coast. The inscriptions appear to be calendrical names of nobles. The

names often occur in pairs, suggesting that they may represent marital pairs. The site also included a probable looted tomb. Since no tombs have been discovered elsewhere in the region, these data suggest that lower Río Verde nobles may not have been interred in their communities, but rather in sacred nonresidential sites like RV146.

Evidence from surface survey and test excavations indicates that commoners were primarily farmers who lived in modest wattle-and-daub houses (A. Joyce, 1999; Joyce *et al.*, 1998a). Data from Mound 4 at Río Viejo show that some commoners were involved in the specialized production of pottery. Household rituals are suggested by the presence of ceramic figurines. Burials of nonelites have been found in residential settings usually without offerings or accompanied by a small number of ceramic vessels. A more elaborate burial (RV-B22), although probably still from a commoner, was recovered in Mound 7 at Río Viejo. This burial was an adult, probably male, accompanied by three ceramic vessels, two ground stone axes, a shell necklace, two bone pendants, two pieces of worked bone, one greenstone bead, and a piece of worked granite.

The evidence from the lower Río Verde Valley shows that the Río Viejo polity shared many features with other Late Classic Mesoamerican states, including urbanism, monumental art and architecture, writing, the institution of kingship, craft specialization, and a settlement hierarchy with at least four levels (Coe, 1962; Sharer, 1994). The rulers of Río Viejo may have dominated areas to the east and west along the Pacific Coast (A. Joyce, 1993) and had exchange relations with regions as distant as the central Mexican highlands and the Gulf Coast (A. Joyce, 1993; Joyce *et al.*, 1995). The numerous carved stone monuments depicting individual rulers suggest an ideology that was focused on the institution of kingship. Iconography from the carved stones suggests that as in much of Mesoamerica (A. Joyce, 2000; Schele and Freidel, 1990) sacrificial rituals, noble ancestors, and genealogical ties were important elements of the dominant ideology that legitimated rulership (Urcid and Joyce, 1999, *in press*). Overall, the survey and excavation data from the lower Río Verde Valley show that Río Viejo was one of the largest and most powerful polities in Late Classic Oaxaca.

THE EARLY POSTCLASSIC AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE RIO VIEJO STATE

The data from the lower Río Verde demonstrate that a major change in settlement patterns and sociopolitical organization occurred during the Early Postclassic Yugué phase (A.D. 800–1100).⁷ Río Viejo continued as a first-order center, although

⁷The Early Postclassic Yugué phase has only been recently defined (Hutson, 1996; Joyce and Hutson, 1998). In earlier publications, only a single phase, the Yucudzaa phase, was used for the entire Postclassic period (A.D. 800–1522). The Yucudzaa phase will continue to be used for the Late Postclassic, only (A.D. 1100–1522).

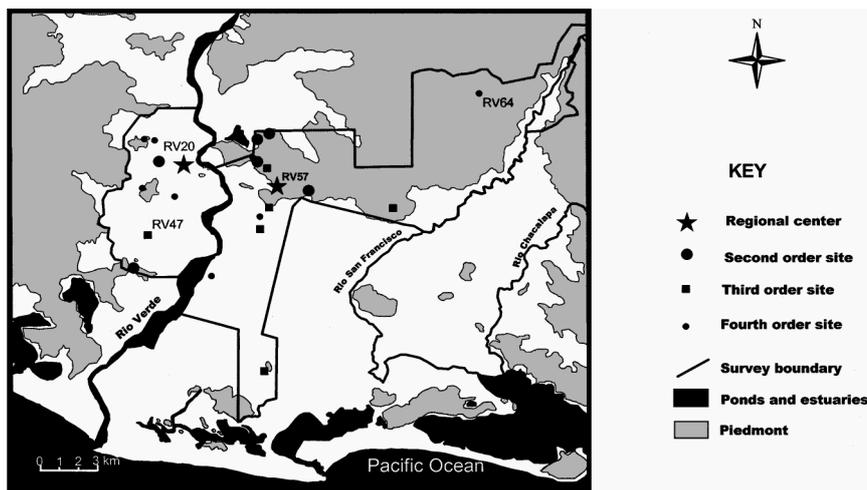


Fig. 6. Early Postclassic settlement hierarchy, lower Río Verde Valley, Oaxaca.

settlement at the site declined from 250 to 140 ha (Fig. 6).⁸ At the same time, another first-order center emerged at San Marquitos (RV57), which grew from 6.8 ha in the Late Classic⁹ to 190.9 ha in the Early Postclassic. Second-order sites range from 10.2 to 21.1 ha, third-order sites from 2.0 to 5.1 ha and fourth-order sites are 1.4 ha or less. The occupational area in the full-coverage survey zone declined to 451.7 ha and the number of components decreased from 50 to 22, showing that Early Postclassic sites were on average larger than those of the Late Classic. A more dramatic aspect of settlement change was a shift into the piedmont as exemplified by the decline of Río Viejo and the growth of San Marquitos located in the low piedmont. In the Late Classic only 34.2% of the occupational area recorded in the survey was in the piedmont. By the Early Postclassic, 61.7% of the occupational area was in the piedmont, with 37.1% in the floodplain and 1.1% in the coastal plain.

Excavation and survey projects have found no evidence for the construction of monumental architecture at Río Viejo and other sites during the Early Postclassic. Río Viejo Mound 2, a residential platform, was extended and resurfaced during the Early Postclassic (Workinger and Joyce, 1999, pp.79–85). Mound 2, however, supported low status residences and the Early Postclassic mound building was modest in scale. Beyond the possibility of a building at San Marquitos adorned

⁸Early Postclassic Río Viejo includes two components, the main settlement, which covers 140 ha, and a 20 ha component along the western end of the site.

⁹The San Marquitos site as a whole includes multiple components during both the Late Classic and Early Postclassic. The settlement figures cited here are only for the major Early Postclassic component and its Late Classic precursor.

with architectural sculpture,¹⁰ the data indicate a cessation of the construction of monumental buildings to house rulers and the politico-religious institutions of the state. The lack of monumental building activities is mirrored by a reduction in monumental art with only three carved stone monuments recorded at Río Viejo (Fig. 4) that are tentatively dated stylistically to the Early Postclassic; all of these are sculptures (Urcid and Joyce, 1999).¹¹ The probable Early Postclassic sculptures were located on a natural hill on the southeastern end of the site, rather than on monumental buildings as they had been in the Late Classic.

Excavations at Río Viejo during the 2000 field season show that the Early Postclassic witnessed a major transformation in sociopolitical organization. Large-scale horizontal excavations exposed two areas of Río Viejo with the remains of Early Postclassic residences (Joyce and King, 2001). Operation RV00 A cleared 242 m² on Mound 1 – Structure 2, the eastern portion of the acropolis, which was first constructed in the Terminal Formative (Fig. 3). Two structures were completely exposed, as were portions of three others. Operation RV00 B cleared 284 m² on Mound 8, approximately 180 m southeast of the acropolis, exposing one structure completely, along with portions of four others.¹² All of the Postclassic structures were low platforms, approximately 0.5 m high, that supported perishable buildings. The excavations yielded burials along with artifacts, features, and refuse that demonstrate the domestic function of these buildings. The following discussion focuses on the Op. RV00 A excavations, which show that by the Early Postclassic, the Mound 1 acropolis at Río Viejo was no longer the civic–ceremonial center of the site, but instead was a locus of commoner residences.

Excavations on the acropolis show that by the Early Postclassic Mound 1 – Structure 2 was occupied by people living in relatively modest houses. Mound 1 – Structure 2 is an L-shaped monumental substructure that rises approximately 8 m above the surface of the acropolis plaza and 15 m above the surrounding floodplain (Fig. 3). The structure was first built during the late Terminal Formative (A.D. 100–250) and was reoccupied in the Late Classic (A.D. 500–800) after its apparent abandonment in the Early Classic. The top of the substructure had an area of approximately 1400 m², which supported probable public buildings during the late Terminal Formative and Late Classic periods. Excavations on Mound 1 – Structure 2 during the 2000 field season exposed the remains of five low (ca. 0.5 m) platforms dating to the Early Postclassic. These platforms provided a base on which perishable residential structures were built.

The five platforms excavated on Mound 1 – Structure 2 were densely packed, often with less than 2 m separating structures (Fig. 7). All of the structures were

¹⁰At the modern town of San José del Progreso, which is part of the San Marquitos site, an informant was in possession of a portable sculpture, probably an architectural element, reportedly excavated in the vicinity of his house.

¹¹One of these sculptures, Jamiltepec Monument 1, was moved from Río Viejo to Jamiltepec in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century (Urcid and Joyce, in press).

¹²The Op. RV00 B excavations will be reported in a doctoral dissertation by Stacie King.

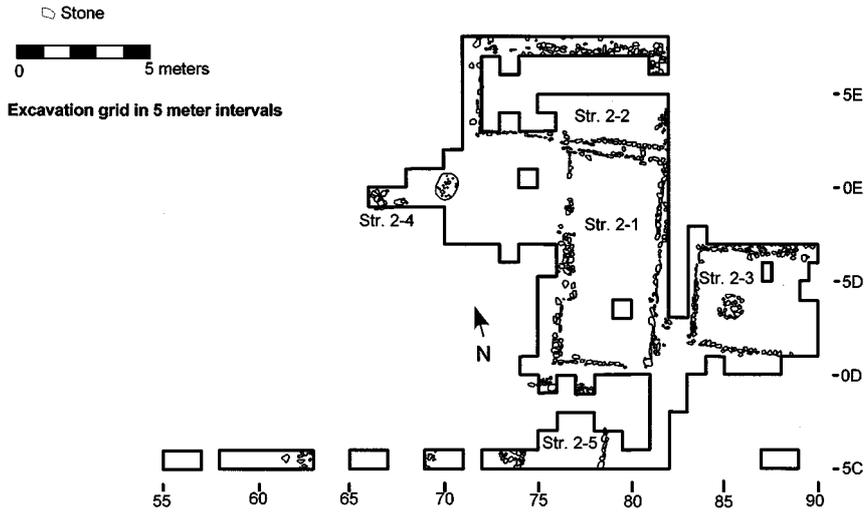


Fig. 7. Plan of Op. RV00 A excavations Río Viejo, Oaxaca.

built in similar fashion with platform fill retained by oval or rectangular slabs set upright on their long axis. Smaller horizontally set slabs capped the edge of the fill, thereby stabilizing the platform (Fig. 8). Other than one post hole, no other features were found intruding into the occupational surfaces of the platforms. The deposits that overlay occupational surfaces included concentrations of unfired daub apparently from the decay of wattle-and-daub superstructures. Sherds from utilitarian pottery vessels were found on the platform surfaces.

Three of the platforms excavated in Op. RV00 A surrounded a patio (Mound 1 – Structures 2-1, 2-2, and 2-4). Structure 2-1 defined the eastern edge of the patio and measured 11 m × 5 m, with its long axis oriented 20°/200°. Two

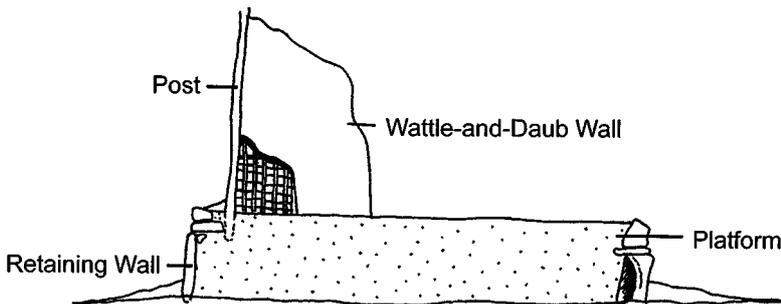


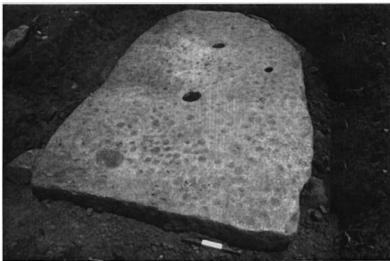
Fig. 8. Reconstruction of Early Postclassic residences at Río Viejo.

burials, each containing a single child without offerings, were excavated outside of the southwest corner of Structure 2-1. The northern end of the patio was bounded by Structure 2-2, which measured 10 m × 5 m, with its long axis oriented 110°/290°. The patio was bounded on the west by Structure 2-4, although only a 1.25 m long section of the north wall of this building was exposed. A deposit of charcoal on what was the terminal patio surface yielded an uncorrected radiocarbon date of 899 ± 44 B.P., or A.D. 1051 (AA40034). Given its stratigraphic context, this sample should approximately date the abandonment of this area of the site and confirms the Early Postclassic date of the associated ceramics.

A monumental stone was found lying on the surface of the patio. The stone was worked into an oval shape, measuring approximately 1.42 m × 1.09 m × 0.48 m, and resembled in form a plain stela or altar. On the upper surface of the stone were two ground depressions measuring 15 to 23 cm in diameter and about 8 to 10 cm deep (Fig. 9). There were also 13 shallow (1–3 mm) pecked depressions measuring between 1 and 3 cm in diameter. Two similar stones have been found on the surface of Mound 8 approximately 50 m east of Mound 1 (Urcid and Joyce, 1999, pp. 24–25) and several boulders at the site exhibited the small shallow pecked depressions. The function of these stones is unclear. They were not *metates* since numerous *manos* and *metates* have been found in Early Postclassic deposits, although they may have been milling stones for the processing of some unknown material. The pecked depressions resemble those on stones recorded by Mountjoy



a) Stone from Mound 1



b) Stone from Mound 8

Fig. 9. Early Postclassic monumental stones from Río Viejo, Oaxaca.

(1987) at Tomatlán, Jalisco. The stones from Tomatlán are usually accompanied by more elaborate petroglyphs, however. Mountjoy (1987, pp. 41–47) suggests that these stones represent the eye or face of the sun god and may have been used in rituals petitioning the deities for rain (also see Urcid and Joyce, in press). Broda (1997, p. 151) interprets circular depressions carved on rocks in various places in the Basin of Mexico as containers for water and blood from autosacrifice used in rituals to propitiate the gods.

A ceremonial use for the monumental stone in the patio on Mound 1 – Structure 2 may be suggested by the presence of a multiple burial interred 1.25 m east of the stone. The burial included two individuals placed in a pit partially lined with stones; neither was accompanied by offerings. The first individual to be interred was a secondary burial of an adult male. Several bones of this individual exhibited cut marks, possibly due to a violent death—perhaps human sacrifice—or to preparation of the body following death and prior to the first inhumation (Urcid, 2000). Prior to burial beneath the patio, which would have been the second inhumation of this individual, red pigment was added to some bones and some were burned at low temperatures. The fill in the burial pit also included ash and charcoal indicative of burning. The second individual was a primary interment of an adult female. She was seated and tightly flexed, possibly indicative of a bundle burial, and placed directly on top of the first individual. After the burial was covered with sediment, a fire was set over the grave, leaving a layer of burned earth. The evidence suggests a relatively elaborate mortuary ceremony, which may have involved the burial of an adult female accompanied by a male ancestor or sacrificial victim. In Pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica, human sacrifice was one way to petition the deities for fertility, including rain (Boone, 1984). This would support Mountjoy's interpretation that these pecked monumental stones were associated with ritual activities (Mountjoy, 1987, pp. 41–47). Since the rituals would have been carried out in a small, enclosed patio space, it is likely that they were household ceremonies rather than large-scale public performances. Conversely, since there was not a direct association between the burial and the stone in the patio on Mound 1 – Structure 2, a utilitarian function for the stone is equally plausible.

While the evidence from the patio suggests ritual activities, data from the other two platforms (Structures 2-3 and 2-5) confirm the domestic use of this area (Fig. 7). Structure 2-3 was located 2 m east of Structure 2-1 and was oriented with its long axis at $110^\circ/290^\circ$, exactly perpendicular to Structure 2-1. It is impossible to estimate precisely the surface area of Structure 2-3 since its eastern wall was not present, either because of minor erosion along the eastern edge of Mound 1 – Structure 2 or from mining of building materials by later people. Since the eastern edge of Mound 1 appears to be generally intact, it is possible to estimate the length of the structure as ranging from a minimum of 6 m to a maximum of 8. Since Structure 2-3 is 5.5 m wide, this yields an estimated surface area of 33 to 44 m², making this platform somewhat smaller than Structures 2-1 and 2-2. The burial

of an adult male was excavated beneath the occupational surface immediately outside of the southwestern corner of Structure 2-3. The individual was flexed on his left side and unaccompanied by offerings. In the western end of Structure 2-3 a feature of uncertain function was uncovered, consisting of a circular concentration of stones (1.3 m in diameter) overlaying the building's floor. Excavation beneath the stone feature did not reveal evidence of a hearth or pit. The smaller size of Structure 2-3, and the presence of a type of feature not found in any of the other excavated Early Postclassic buildings, opens the possibility that this structure may have differed in function from the others. Ongoing artifact, flotation, and soil chemical analyses will hopefully clarify the function of Structure 2-3.

Structure 2-5 was located only 1 m south of Structure 2-1. Only short sections of three of the retaining walls of Structure 2-5 were exposed. The platform appears to have been 4.5 m wide with its long axis oriented 20°/200°; length could not be estimated. Overlaying the occupational surface of the 1 m wide passage between Structure 2-5 and Structure 2-1 was a 0.4–0.5 m thick midden deposit. An uncorrected radiocarbon date of 997 ± 47 B.P., or A.D. 953 (AA37669), was obtained from charcoal in the midden. The platform fill of Structure 2-5 also included dense deposits of Yugüe phase refuse, probably redeposited. The midden material in the fill of Structure 2-5 suggests that the Early Postclassic occupation in this area began prior to the construction of that structure.

Artifacts associated with the Early Postclassic occupation on Mound 1 – Structure 2, especially those from middens, provide evidence for the domestic economy of this period. Typical Mesoamerican domestic items included obsidian blades, cores, and debitage; ground stone axes; hammerstones; *mano* and *metate* fragments; chert projectile points and debitage; heat-altered rock; animal bone; shell; charred plant remains; ceramic sherds, figurines, whistles, earflares, stamps, and spindle whorls; bone needles; and carved bone. These data suggest activities such as food processing and consumption, working of lithics, textile manufacture, and performance of household rituals. The diverse set of imported goods associated with the residences included greenstone beads, a turquoise pendant, obsidian, rock crystal, pumice, nonlocal ceramics, and fragments of at least two alabaster bowls. An almost identical set of domestic artifacts and imported goods was recovered from the residences excavated in Op. RV00 B (Joyce and King, 2001). Overall, the data suggest relatively little variation in social statuses and roles between the two areas where Early Postclassic residences were excavated. While the inhabitants of these residences had access to a variety of local and imported prestige goods, the relatively modest architecture and burial offerings (Joyce and King, 2001) indicate commoner status.

The presence of commoner residences on the acropolis at Río Viejo show that Early Postclassic people did not treat the earlier sacred spaces, objects, and buildings with the same reverence they had been afforded in the Late Classic and before. A dramatic example of this disjunction between Late Classic and Early

Postclassic political organization is marked by the discovery of a fragment of a Late Classic carved stone monument (Río Viejo Monument 17) reutilized in an Early Postclassic structure wall in Op. RV00 B (Joyce and King, 2001). The carved stone depicted an elite individual with an elaborate feathered headdress. Prior to its placement in the wall of a commoner residence, this monument had first been reutilized as a *metate*. At least four other Classic period carved stones (Río Viejo Monuments 5, 7, 8, and 12) were also reset in walls during terminal, presumably Early Postclassic, occupations (Urcid and Joyce, in press). It is unlikely that these carved stones were simply reused opportunistically for the construction of walls and a *metate* and that Early Postclassic people exhibited ignorance of or indifference to the earlier meanings of sacred objects and spaces. Both Ops. RV00 A and RV00 B exhibit stratigraphic continuity between Late Classic and Early Postclassic deposits and there are no indications of a hiatus in the occupation of these areas (Joyce and King, 2001). Evidence from Mesoamerica and throughout the world shows that earlier meanings of monumental art and architecture continue to inform their reuse and reinterpretation for hundreds and sometimes thousands of years after their creation and initial use (Barrett, 1999; Bender, 1998; Bradley, 1993, 1998; Byland and Pohl, 1994, pp. 11–13; Masson and Orr, 1998; Schele and Freidel, 1990, pp. 195–196). It is unlikely that only a few generations after the collapse of the Río Viejo state the earlier meaning of these portraits of rulers would have been lost and that they would simply have been considered as convenient building materials.

The evidence from the lower Verde indicates a major transformation in politico-religious institutions, ideology, and rulership in the Early Postclassic. Río Viejo, the Late Classic capital of the lower Verde state, was in decline, with a decreasing population, a reduction in the erection of carved stone monuments, and a cessation in the construction of monumental architecture. The data from the lower Verde not only indicate the collapse of political institutions, but also the denigration of sacred objects, symbols, spaces, and buildings by commoners.

THE CLASSIC-TO-POSTCLASSIC TRANSITION AND THE MIXTEC INTRUSION

Ethnohistoric and linguistic data suggest a potential explanation for the denigration of ruling ideas and institutions during the Early Postclassic in the lower Río Verde Valley that involves immigration or invasion of highland Mixtec peoples. The period from A.D. 700 to 900, often termed the Epiclassic, was a time of population migrations and conflict in many areas of Mesoamerica (Diehl and Berlo, 1989; Ringle *et al.*, 1998). Mixtecs entered the lower Verde sometime in the Postclassic, but the key debate in the ethnohistoric literature is if this happened in the Early Postclassic or later. If highland Mixtecs came to dominate the lower

Verde as early as the Early Postclassic, it could be inferred that the denigration of Late Classic ruling institutions and symbols was the result of the destruction of local ruling institutions by invading highland peoples. This situation would be similar to the Putun Maya takeover of Seibal and other sites in the Río Pasión region of the Maya lowlands (Sabloff, 1973; Sharer, 1994, pp. 349–353). If highland Mixtecs did not subjugate the region until the Late Postclassic, then the data suggest a very different scenario involving the subversion of ruling institutions and ideas by indigenous commoners.

At the time of the Spanish Conquest most people of the lower Río Verde were members of the Mixtec ethnolinguistic group as are most indigenous people in the region today. Linguistic studies by Josserand and her colleagues (1984, p. 154) suggest that the coastal Mixtec dialect probably originated in the highland region of San Juan Mixtepec. Glottochronological estimates suggest the coastal and highland dialects diverged around A.D. 900–1000 (Josserand *et al.*, 1984, p. 154). Prior to the Postclassic (A.D. 800–1521) relatively few cultural similarities are apparent between the lower Río Verde region and the Mixteca Alta and Baja regions (A. Joyce, 1993; Winter, 1989). This has led Joyce and Winter (1989) to suggest that before the Postclassic the lower Verde was not inhabited by Mixtecs, but may instead have been ethnically Chatino (also see Urcid, 1993, pp. 159–163). At the time of the Spanish Conquest, Chatinos were present in the *cacicazgo* of Tututepec in the foothills overlooking the lower Verde's floodplain (Spores, 1993, p. 169) and recent census data record almost equal numbers of Mixtec and Chatino speakers in the *municipio* of Tututepec on the east side of the Río Verde (Aguilar *et al.*, 1994). Early Colonial documents show that while Tututepec was ethnically mixed, the site was ruled by a Mixtec dynasty and was the capital of a powerful Late Postclassic (A.D. 1100–1521) state that dominated much of the Oaxaca Coast (Joyce *et al.*, 2001; Spores, 1993; Smith, 1973). Archaeological and ethnohistoric data indicate that Mixtecs were present in the lower Río Verde throughout the Late Postclassic (Joyce *et al.*, 2001). For example, Late Postclassic Yucudzaa phase ceramic and architectural styles in the lower Verde are very similar to those of the Mixteca Alta (Hutson, 1996; O'Mack, 1990).

The movement of Mixtecs into the lower Río Verde Valley may also have been related to the activities of a famous ruler, Lord 8 Deer “Jaguar Claw,” who is a major figure in several of the Mixtec codices (Byland and Pohl, 1994, pp. 132–138; Caso, 1979; Rabin, 1981; Smith, 1973; Spores, 1993). The codices are Pre-Hispanic and Early Colonial period deerskin books that record aspects of Mixtec religious mythology and political history (Byland and Pohl, 1994). Lord 8 Deer “Jaguar Claw” was born in A.D. 1063, the second son of Lord 5 Alligator, the high priest of the Mixteca Alta town of Tilantongo. In the late eleventh century, 8 Deer probably became ruler of Tututepec. Before his death in A.D. 1115, 8 Deer acquired title to Tilantongo and conquered approximately 100 places recorded in the codices (Spores, 1993, p. 169). It is possible that Lord 8 Deer's journey to

the coast and his accession to the throne of Tututepec may have been part of the process through which the Mixtecs came to dominate the lower Río Verde. The ethnohistoric and linguistic data therefore suggest that the Mixtec movement into the lower Verde region occurred during the Early Postclassic or early in the Late Postclassic period.

Evaluating the possibility of a Mixtec intrusion archaeologically requires close attention to the archaeological literature on ethnicity. The archaeological study of ethnic identities has proven to be difficult and has engendered considerable debate (e.g., Emberling, 1997; Hegmon, 1992; Hodder, 1978, 1982; Jones, 1997; Shennan, 1989). Given this debate, a Mixtec intrusion into the lower Verde region should be argued only with evidence for abrupt changes in multiple categories of archaeological data that have been linked to ethnic identity (Emberling, 1997; Hegmon, 1992; Hodder, 1978, 1982; Shennan, 1989) and only if these changes can be shown to derive from the Mixteca Alta. These data include stylistic patterning of ceramics and architecture as well as mortuary practices and the iconography of carved stone monuments.

The Appendix presents a comparative study of pottery from the Late Classic Yuta Tiyoo phase (A.D. 500–800; see Figs. 10 and 11) and the Early Postclassic Yugüe phase (A.D. 800–1100; see Fig. 12) from the lower Río Verde Valley. This analysis shows continuity in ceramic styles from the Late Classic to the Early Postclassic. While Late Classic and Early Postclassic pottery styles are regionally distinct, there is a trend during this period of increasing stylistic crossties with other regions. Yugüe phase pottery exhibits general similarities to Early Postclassic fine-paste pottery over much of Mesoamerica, although the strongest relationships appear with highland regions to the north, including the Nochixtlán Valley in the Mixteca Alta (Spores, 1972), Cholula in the Puebla–Tlaxcala Valley (McCafferty, 1992, 1996), and Tula in the northern Basin of Mexico (Cobean, 1990; Diehl, 1983, pp. 102–109). Debate over Postclassic ceramics in the Mixteca Alta make specific comparisons with the lower Verde difficult (Byland, 1980; Lind, 1987; Spores, 1972), although stylistic crossties are indicated between Yugüe fine wares and Yanhuitlán fine cream wares, particularly in the use of differential firing and certain rim forms (see Appendix). The painted decorations on the majority of Yanhuitlán red-on-cream bowls, however, differ from Yugüe phase painted fine wares, in that the Nochixtlán examples generally have more finely executed and intricate designs (Hutson, 1996). The Comiyuchi variety, defined by Byland (1980, p. 204) and assigned to the Early Postclassic, may have painted decorations that more closely resemble Yugüe fine ware bowls (also see Lind, 1987, pp. 36–39), but published descriptions are insufficient to make an adequate comparison.

In addition to ceramic comparisons, other data that bear on Mixtec immigration into the lower Verde region are styles of architecture and monumental art as well as mortuary data. Strong similarities between the Yugüe phase and data from the Classic-to-Postclassic transition in the Mixtec Alta would be consistent with

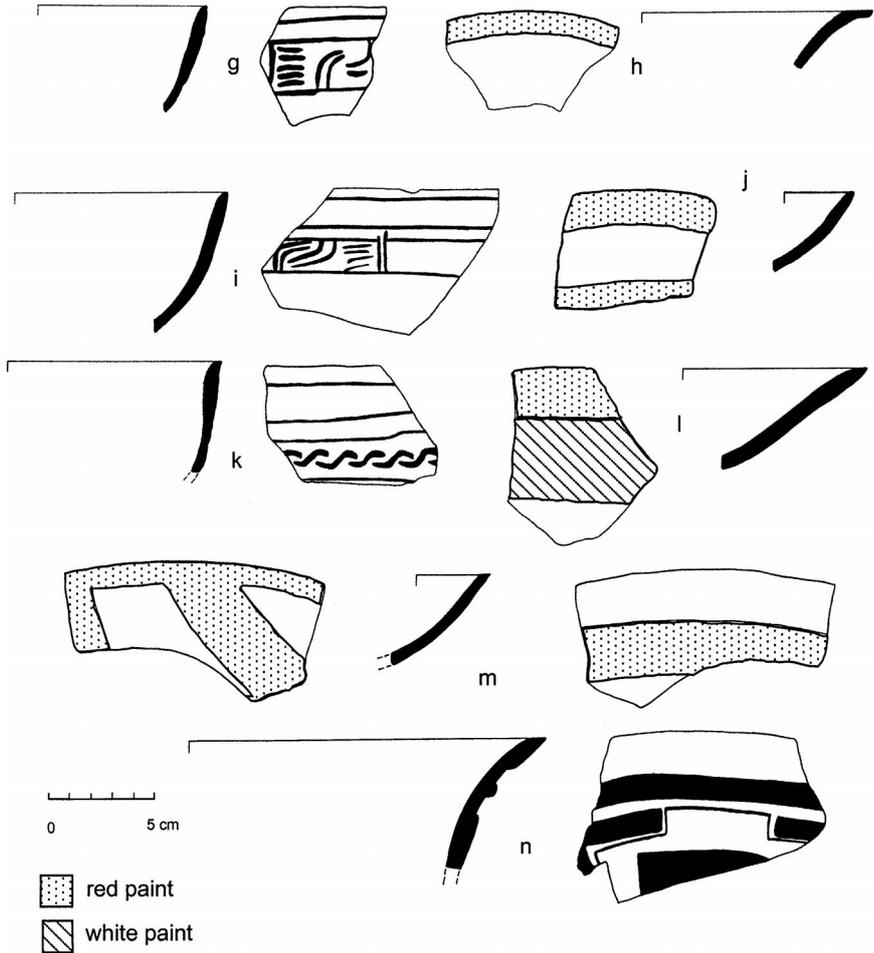


Fig. 10. Late Classic orange ware pottery, lower Río Verde Valley.

the movement of Mixtecs into the lower Río Verde Valley.¹³ The distinctive architectural style of the Yugué phase residences excavated at Río Viejo has not been noted from Late Classic or Postclassic excavations in the Mixteca Alta (Bernal, 1948/1949; Deraga, 1981; Gaxiola, 1984; Lind, 1979; Spores, 1974; Winter, 1986; Winter *et al.*, 1991). Three sculptures from Río Viejo have been tentatively assigned to the Early Postclassic based on stylistic grounds (Urcid and Joyce, 1999, in press).

¹³As previously discussed, however, the Early Postclassic has been difficult to differentiate in the Mixteca Alta and there are no examples of residences or burials unambiguously assigned to this period.

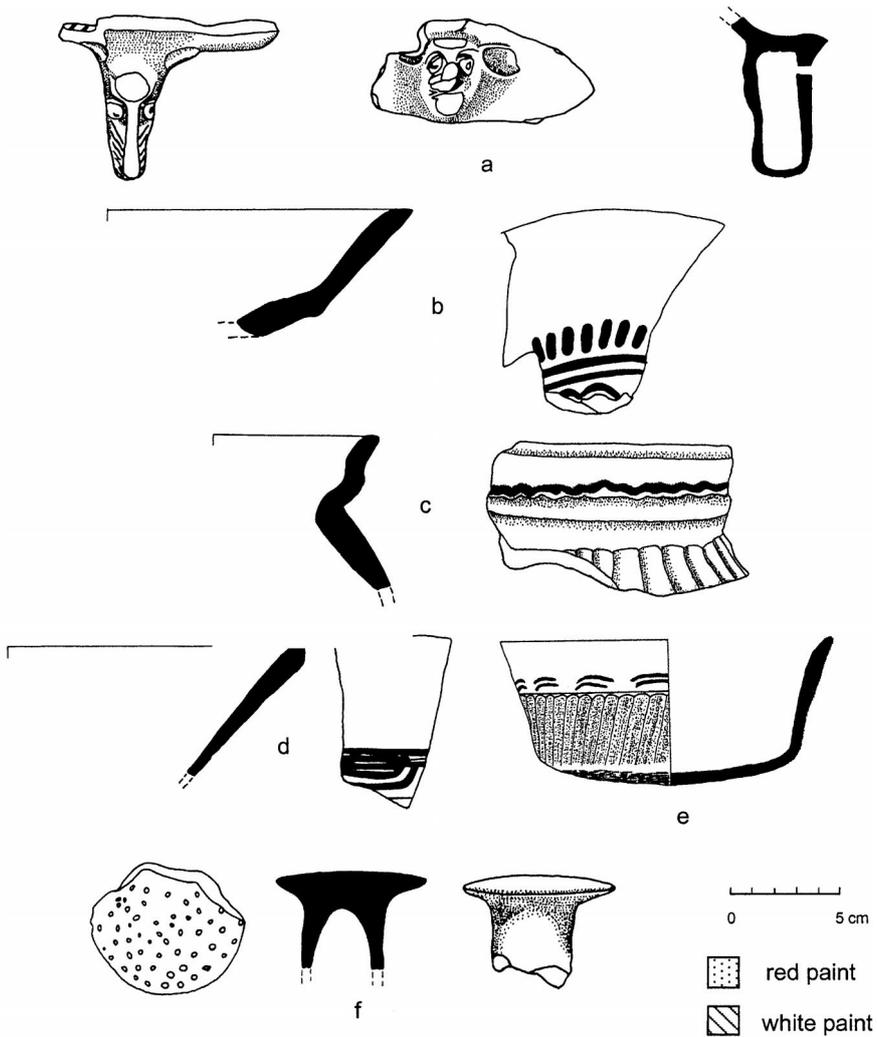


Fig. 11. Late Classic gray ware and coarse brown ware pottery, lower Río Verde Valley.

These sculptures do not resemble Postclassic carved stones from the Mixteca Alta. The iconography of the sculptures is not clear, although they probably represent a royal family, noble ancestors, or deities (Urcid and Joyce, in press; see Fig. 4(d) and (e)). One sculpture clearly depicts a female wearing a skirt with her breasts exposed. This form of dress is similar to the traditional *posahuanco* of the coastal Mixtec region and might suggest that the sculpture depicts a Mixtec noblewoman. Figurines depicting women wearing a similar style of clothing, however, have been

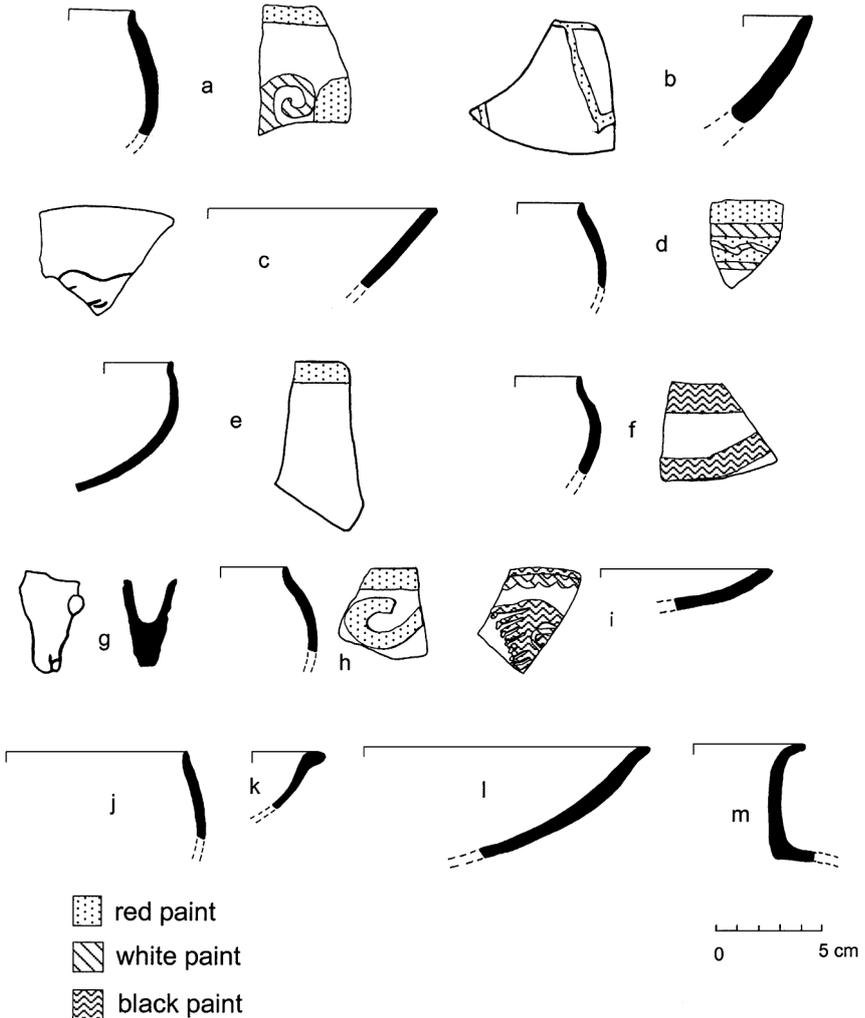


Fig. 12. Early Postclassic fine ware pottery, lower Río Verde Valley.

found for earlier periods in the lower Verde (Fernández, 1989) and occur in other areas of Mesoamerica (R. Joyce, 2000, pp. 105–109), indicating that this style of dress is not restricted to coastal Mixtecs.

Two distinct mortuary patterns are exhibited by the Early Postclassic burials from Río Viejo (Joyce and King, 2001). Those from Op. RV00 B consisted of adults interred beneath structure floors all in an extended, supine position with the head to the south and usually one to three ceramic vessels placed as offerings at the feet of the individual. In Op. RV00 A, burials included adults and children

buried beneath surfaces outside of structures and unaccompanied by offerings. Two of the Op. RV00 A burials were flexed, one was badly disturbed, and a fourth included a flexed interment accompanied by a secondary burial. While the variation in mortuary ritual could reflect ethnic differences, a similar range of variation is noted for earlier burials in the lower Verde (see Christensen, 1999; Joyce *et al.*, 1998b). Strong similarities in mortuary ritual are not apparent between the lower Verde and Late Classic and Postclassic burials from the Mixteca Alta (see Bernal, 1948/1949, pp. 28–30; Deraga, 1981; Gaxiola, 1984; Winter *et al.*, 1991).

Overall, the data at present do not suggest that the lower Río Verde Valley was dominated by Mixtecs during the Early Postclassic. The lower Verde ceramic data indicate continuity from Classic to Postclassic. While there are crossties between the ceramics of the lower Verde and the Mixteca Alta, there are also differences in ceramic, architectural, and art styles as well as mortuary patterns. It is possible that some Mixtecs began to migrate into the lower Verde during the Early Postclassic, accounting for the increasing similarities between ceramics of the Mixteca Alta and the lower Verde, but it is unlikely that highland populations dominated the coast either politically or demographically at this time. Further archaeological excavation in the Mixteca Alta, however, would provide better descriptions of Early Postclassic ceramic, architectural, artistic, and mortuary patterns, allowing for more rigorous interregional comparisons. While the immigration of small numbers of Mixtec peoples may account for some of the changes of the Classic-to-Postclassic transition, it does not at present appear to have been a major factor in demographic and sociopolitical change, including the evidence for denigration of symbols of state power.

CONCLUSIONS: TOWARD AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF COMMONER POWER

The collapse of the Río Viejo polity at ca. A.D. 800 was a local manifestation of social processes occurring throughout Mesoamerica. The period between A.D. 600 and 1000 witnessed the collapse of most of the powerful states that dominated the Classic period political landscape. Urban centers such as Teotihuacan, Monte Albán, and Tikal, which had been the capitals of powerful Classic period states, declined in population size and political importance. Some regions, particularly in the southern Maya lowlands, experienced major declines in regional population. At the same time, new centers such as Xochicalco and Cacaxtla in Central Mexico and Chichén Itzá in the northern Maya lowlands grew in size and political influence. While these Epiclassic and Early Postclassic centers continued some of the institutions and ideologies of the Classic period, they also developed new institutions, ideas and rituals (Diehl and Berlo, 1989; Ringle *et al.*, 1998). Explanations for the major changes in demography, settlement, and sociopolitical organization

that marked the Classic-to-Postclassic transition are crucial for understanding the history of social development in Ancient Mesoamerica. While recent research on the collapse has advanced understanding of the significance of warfare and anthropogenic landscape degradation (Demarest *et al.*, 1997; Dunning and Beach, 1994; Inomata, 1997; Sabloff and Andrews, 1986; Sabloff and Henderson, 1993; Sharer, 1994), these studies have undertheorized the agency of commoners (however see Ashmore *et al.*, in press; Robin, 1999).

The dominant view of the Classic period collapse is representative of much archaeological theory on complex societies and of social theory more generally, which has viewed commoners as passively acquiescing to social changes that were driven by the power of elites (Robin, 1999). In addition to a reliance by archaeologists on social theories that downplay commoners, the focus on top-down models of domination has probably been a function of the muting of commoner power in the empirical record because of both subtle expressions of resistance in hidden transcripts and the exaggeration of elite omnipotence in public transcripts. The Early Postclassic evidence from the lower Verde, however, indicates that commoners were involved in the production and reproduction of social systems and structure. The denigration of the symbols of the ruling institutions of the Río Viejo state shows that commoners had alternative readings of the dominant discourse and were not merely duped into compliance by nobles.

The data from the lower Verde are part of an emerging perspective in archaeology on the role of commoners in the social negotiation of power and domination. Recent archaeological research influenced by poststructuralist and feminist theory has begun to acknowledge the important role of traditionally subordinated groups such as commoners and women (e.g., Brumfiel, 1992, Conkey and Gero, 1997; A. Joyce, 2000; R. Joyce, 2000; McGuire, 1992; Miller *et al.*, 1989; Miller and Tilley, 1984; Patterson and Gailey, 1987; Robin, 1999). These researchers have drawn attention to the social practices of commoners in the production and reproduction of power. To place the data from the lower Verde in a broader perspective we first present a comparative model of commoner involvement in the social negotiation of power. We argue that commoners contribute to the social negotiation of dominant discourses through three overlapping forms of social interaction: engagement, avoidance, and resistance.

Engagement refers to the compromise achieved in a dominant discourse produced through collective engagement of elites and commoners with divergent interests and dispositions (Costin, 1996; A. Joyce, 2000; Pauketat, 2000). While elites have more power in social interaction, commoners can advance their interests and alternative readings of structural principles, which must be accommodated to some extent in the production of a dominant discourse. For example, Pauketat (2000) argues that commoners in early Mississippian communities built monumental buildings at centers like Cahokia and Moundville because they saw these projects and associated rituals in communal terms. While commoners

contributed to their subordination by building monuments, the resulting power system was the product of social negotiations in which commoners were actively engaged. Likewise, Arthur Joyce (2000) argues that the people who founded the Zapotec city of Monte Albán, both nobles and commoners, were attempting to deal with a period of political upheaval and uncertainty by building an *axis mundi* to more effectively contact the sacred and to petition deities for prosperity. Monte Albán grew rapidly into a powerful, urban center because commoners were compelled by and actively participated in the construction of the symbols, ritual practices, and sacred buildings of the city. As with Mississippian polities, however, nobles at Monte Albán increasingly appropriated unifying ritual practices, labor appropriations, and centralizing beliefs, resulting in new forms of domination. Costin (1996) argues that the Inka state distinguished between male and female weavers through linguistic, technological, and structural means so as not to disrupt traditional gender ideologies and risk invoking overt forms of resistance. Sheets (2000) has shown that Maya commoners could choose the regional center from which they obtained exotic goods such as polychrome pottery, obsidian implements, and jade, thereby contributing to the negotiation of exchange values.

In contrast to the Mesoamerican and Mississippian examples, Tilley (1984) shows that in societies with emerging social inequalities, engagement of lower-ranking groups in the social negotiation of power does not always lead to the production of domination. During the Funnel Beaker tradition (2600–2140 B.C.) in southern Sweden, emerging inequality was negotiated through mortuary ritual, feasting, and ceramic decoration. Practices designed to communicate a dominant ideology that legitimated social distinctions both within and between groups ultimately failed, leading to a legitimation crisis and a return to egalitarian social relations with the Battle-Axe tradition (2200–1900 B.C.).

While commoners contribute to the production of dominant discourses through collective engagement with elites, nonelites can also develop alternative discourses and social practices that largely avoid elite sources of power. For example, commoners in rural communities often appear to have had a good deal of independence from regional elites in distant centers (McAnany, 1995; Mehrer, 2000). In these societies, the delegation of authority by commoners may have been just as important to the power of local leaders as the allocation of power to those leaders by regional elites. Research on nonelite households and communities has shown how private and small-scale rituals provide alternative means of contacting the sacred (Robin, 1999; Smith, n.d.). For example, Robin (1999) found that farmers at the lowland Maya settlements of Chan Nòohol and Dos Chombitos Cik'in performed various types of rituals to situate their homes and communities in the center of the world and to petition the sacred independently from the social practices of nobles. While ritual practices by commoners may or may not serve to contest elite sources of power, they are often carried out in separate spatial and

symbolic realms that do not contribute significantly to the negotiation or contestation of the dominant ideology.

Alternatively, commoners may not be engaged in the production and reproduction of a dominant discourse if domination is achieved largely through coercion. For example, as argued by Brumfiel (1998), the Aztec state ideology of warfare and sacrifice was primarily designed to achieve unity among the nobility, while the message directed to commoners was one of coercion, with little apparent concern, for whether or not people penetrated the dominant ideology.

Alternative understandings of structural principles by commoners can embody some notion of resistance to dominant discourses. Archaeologists have begun to examine the wide variety of ways in which resistance can be expressed ranging from the subtle forms of protest found in Scott's (1990) hidden transcript to outright rebellion. Research on the Aztec state has shown that popular representations of women in ceramic figurines embodied an alternative, female discourse that contested the Aztec state ideology of male dominance (Brumfiel, 1996; McCafferty and McCafferty, 1988, 1991, 1999). Official images in state-sponsored art depict women as mutilated or androgynous, or emphasize their roles in production, while figurines from domestic contexts more frequently associate women with reproduction. Rosemary Joyce (1993) demonstrates a similar divergence in state and popular imagery of women for the Classic Maya. Shackel (2000) argues that nineteenth century Harpers Ferry Armory workers expressed resistance to the imposition of industrial capitalism by purchasing out-of-date tablewares rather than more fashionable, mass-produced ceramics. At the Hermitage Plantation in Tennessee, Thomas (1998) argues that resistance by African-American slaves to Planter's social constructions of slave community can be seen in food acquisition patterns, gun use, and extra-plantation economic relations of slaves. Provincial resistance to the Inka Empire, ranged from an unwillingness to pay tribute to open insurrection often begun with the assassination of state officials (Patterson, 1987).

The research in the lower Río Verde Valley contributes to this emerging perspective on commoner power in relation to systems of domination. The data from the lower Verde indicate that rather than passively reacting to the sociopolitical developments of the Classic-to-Postclassic transition, commoners resisted and eventually rejected and transformed many of the ruling institutions and symbols that were central to the dominant ideology of the Late Classic state. Presumably this cultural transformation also involved rejection of the rulers that legitimated their authority through those symbols, institutions, and related social practices. Early Postclassic people reused and changed the meanings of the sacred spaces and objects of the Late Classic state, such as carved stone monuments and the buildings on the acropolis.

During the Late Classic, the lower Río Verde Valley was governed by powerful nobles who resided at Río Viejo and at secondary centers in the region. The city of Río Viejo was the capital of the Late Classic state and was the primary center of a seven-tiered settlement hierarchy. Río Viejo's civic-ceremonial core

was the huge acropolis of Mound 1 with its public buildings, plaza, and sunken patio. The city's powerful nobles were represented on numerous carved stone monuments. Rulers performed important public ceremonies such as sacrifice and ancestor veneration, and were buried in tombs at the ceremonial site of Cerro de los Tepalcates. The commoner subjects of these Late Classic rulers were farmers and crafts persons who lived in modest wattle-and-daub houses. Commoners carried out household rituals using ceramic figurines and presumably participated in large public ceremonies led by nobles.

By the Early Postclassic the evidence from the lower Verde indicates a collapse in the ruling institutions of the state. There was a cessation in the construction of monumental buildings, which had housed politico-religious institutions. The Mound 1 acropolis at Río Viejo was taken over by commoners living in residences whose foundations were apparently built by tearing apart the public buildings of the Late Classic. At least five Late Classic period carved stone monuments were reused in walls and one of these monuments was first broken and reutilized as a *metate*. Only three monumental stone sculptures appear to have been erected at Río Viejo in the Early Postclassic. Río Viejo declined in size as the urban center of San Marquitos grew rapidly in population and the regional settlement hierarchy declined to a four-level one. The regional data, therefore, suggest a fragmentation of political centers and more decentralized political control. There also appears to be a decrease in social stratification and perhaps a shift to a more corporate pattern of political organization (Blanton *et al.*, 1996).

While rulers and political institutions were greatly affected, the Classic-to-Postclassic transition seems to have had a less severe impact on the lives of commoners. In the lower Río Verde Valley, the Classic-to-Postclassic transition was not characterized by a demographic collapse that might suggest emigration or higher mortality rates. Commoners living at Río Viejo in the Early Postclassic participated in a vibrant and diverse domestic economy, suggesting that they were freed somewhat from tributary burdens imposed by the nobility. Relative to domestic remains from earlier periods (A. Joyce, 1991a, 1994, 1999; Joyce *et al.*, 1998a), data from Early Postclassic residences indicate that commoners also had improved access to an array of imported prestige goods, indicating that they had greater involvement in long-distance trade. Rather than a period of decline and hardship, the Early Postclassic for commoners appears to have been a time of relative prosperity.

Explanations for the collapse of Río Viejo's ruling institutions are more difficult to demonstrate. Population decline resulting from environmental factors like landscape degradation or drought are not indicated, although ongoing geomorphological and palynological studies are investigating the possibility of ecological factors in the collapse. Some form of conflict seems to be a more likely factor in the Classic period collapse in the lower Río Verde Valley. The dramatic settlement shift into the piedmont would be consistent with the movement of people to defensive locations. In addition, Early Postclassic settlement is concentrated in a very small area of the piedmont, with 58% of the total occupational area in the

full-coverage survey located within a radius of 3 km from the first-order center of San Marquitos (RV57). This settlement nucleation could have been for defensive purposes. Excavations and surface survey at Early Postclassic sites have recovered large numbers of chert projectile points. For example, ten projectile point fragments were recovered from the Early Postclassic residences on the acropolis. In the lower Verde, projectile points are rare in archaeological deposits that predate the Postclassic. These data could indicate greater conflict in the region, although changes in hunting practices cannot be eliminated as a potential explanation for the increased frequency of projectile points. It is unclear whether conflict was intraregional, involving factions of the fragmented Río Viejo polity, or if it involved incursions by people from outside the region. The evidence for increasing conflict may have been either a cause or an effect of the collapse of ruling institutions. The data do not indicate that significant numbers of highland Mixtecs entered the region until the Late Postclassic, although conflict during the Yugué phase could have resulted from initial incursions of Mixtec armies, prior to significant immigration. The Mixtec codices demonstrate that interpolity conflict was common by the Late Postclassic (Berlin, 1947; Smith, 1973; Spores, 1993).

Regardless of whether conflict was internal or external to the Late Classic Río Viejo state, the data at present suggest that by the Early Postclassic the citizens themselves were rejecting ruling institutions. The Early Postclassic occupation of the acropolis by commoners, the dismantling of public buildings, and the reuse of carved stone monuments for utilitarian purposes suggests the active denigration of earlier sacred spaces, objects, and buildings rather than simply the transformation of those institutions by rulers. Several researchers have suggested that at least in some parts of Mesoamerica, rebellion by commoners may have triggered the Classic period collapse (Millon, 1988; Thompson, 1954). It is not yet clear if lower Verde commoners violently overthrew their rulers at the end of the Classic. Resistance to the dominant ideology is not yet evident in the Late Classic archaeological record in the lower Verde, although this is probably because of commoners having expressed resistance in subtle forms that did not directly confront authority (see Giddens, 1979, pp. 145–150; Scott, 1985) and which would have been less visible in the archaeological record than materializations of the dominant ideology such as the acropolis. The way in which state symbols were treated in the Early Postclassic suggests that commoners increasingly penetrated and perhaps actively resisted the dominant ideology in the years prior to the political collapse. Although the collapse in the lower Verde may not have entailed a commoner rebellion, allegiance to the nobility may have been weak during the Late Classic such that nonelites would not have supported their leaders in the face of external military incursions or internal factional competition. By the Early Postclassic, people were free of the coercive power of Late Classic nobles and were able to publicly oppose and subvert the meanings of traditional symbols of state power via actions such as the reuse of carved stones, the dismantling of public buildings,

and the occupation of previously sacred spaces. This Early Postclassic transformation suggests that the hidden transcript of Late Classic resistance had become public.

In addition to the denigration of Late Classic symbols of state power, several lines of evidence tentatively suggest directions of ideological change. For example, if the monumental stones with ground depressions in Early Postclassic households at Río Viejo were used for sacrifices, it would indicate the appropriation by commoners of sacrificial rituals that had previously been restricted to elite specialists. Sacrificial rituals were important in the communication of dominant ideologies in Mesoamerica (A. Joyce, 2000). A shift away from expressions of dominance is also suggested by the style and location of possible Early Postclassic sculptures, which indicate a change in how important personages were represented. Early Postclassic sculptures were located on a natural hill at the southeastern end of the site as opposed to locations on or near public buildings where most Late Classic carved stones were placed. Late Classic monuments depict individual rulers, often named, emphasizing elaborate elements of royal dress such as jaguar headdresses and masks, staffs of office, and other aspects of personal adornment. The Early Postclassic sculptures depict important people or deities, but lack the glyphs and elaborate ornamentation of the Late Classic carved stones.

The Early Postclassic may have witnessed a change in gender ideologies since Late Classic carved stones appear to depict males, while at least one and perhaps all of the possible Early Postclassic sculptures are female (Urcid and Joyce, in press). A gender ideology that gave greater power to women is also suggested by Early Postclassic spindle whorls. In Classic and Postclassic Mesoamerica, spinning and weaving, along with the processing of maize, were activities associated with women (Brumfiel, 1991; R. Joyce, 2000; McCafferty and McCafferty, 1991). Few spindle whorls have been recovered in deposits that predate the Early Postclassic, indicating the use of impermanent whorls. Early Postclassic baked-clay spindle whorls are common in domestic contexts and usually have stamped or incised decorations, a Postclassic pattern seen in other parts of Mesoamerica (McCafferty and McCafferty, 1991). McCafferty and McCafferty (1991, p. 227) suggest that the symbolic importance of decorated spindle whorls emphasized affiliation with female deities and may have been used in fertility rites, thereby promoting a group identity. The frequency of spindle whorls and bone needles in Early Postclassic residences may also suggest increasing economic power for women. Interestingly, the most elaborate Early Postclassic mortuary ceremony was the burial of an adult female accompanied by a secondary male interment beneath the patio on Mound 1 – Structure 2. We would speculate that Late Classic state ideologies involved male domination, while alternative discourses that became dominant ones in the Early Postclassic involved a greater degree of gender equality. Women may have played a particularly significant role in the subversion of objects that symbolized Late Classic state power, given the reuse as a *metate* of a fragment of a carved stone monument depicting a noble.

Throughout the Classic-to-Postclassic transition, people were linked recursively with spatial structure at Río Viejo so that the “life history” of the acropolis reflected changing power relations (Ashmore, 2000; Barrett, 1999; Bradley, 1993; Knapp and Ashmore, 1999). The Late Classic acropolis was a monument expressing the sacred authority and political power of the nobility. It was easily visible to commoners living at Río Viejo and nearby communities, symbolically reinforcing the dominant position of the nobility, especially in their role as intermediaries between people and the sacred (A. Joyce, 2000). Public rituals on the acropolis, including sacrifice and ancestor veneration, would have even more forcefully enacted the dominant ideology. Presumably, nobles positioned on the monumental buildings of the acropolis would have led public ceremonies, with commoners in attendance on the plaza below amongst the carved stone monuments of their rulers.

The Early Postclassic acropolis evinces a very different dialectic between spatial structure and commoner agency, though one informed by earlier meanings. During the Early Postclassic, the collapse of ruling institutions would have been manifest on a continuous basis as commoners, some living on the acropolis and dismantling its buildings, looked out onto the deteriorating remains of the once sacred space that had been the centerpiece of the Late Classic state. The data indicate that Early Postclassic people were consuming the ideological products of the Late Classic state in very different ways than did their ancestors only a few generations before. The dismantling of public buildings for reuse as foundation stones in houses and reuse of a carved stone as a *metate* and later a foundation stone marked those objects in ways that made them monuments of the new social order of the Early Postclassic (see de Certeau, 1984, pp. 30–34).

A similar marking and reuse of sacred places and objects by Early Postclassic peoples may be seen in other parts of Mesoamerica. At Tikal public buildings and palaces were used for refuse disposal, tombs and caches were looted, and stelae and altars were reused (Culbert, 1973b; Harrison, 1999, pp. 192–198). At Teotihuacan people looted and destroyed ritual objects, set fire to public buildings, and defaced monuments (Manzanilla *et al.*, 1996, p. 247; Millon, 1988). Following the collapse of Dos Pilas, people occupied elite areas of the site, looted materials including tombs, smashed two carved benches, and possibly broke a number of carved stone monuments (Palka, 1997, pp. 300–302). At Copán, Yax Pac’s tomb and funerary temple were looted and there is evidence for the destruction of stelae (Fash, 1991, p. 178). In the civic-ceremonial precinct of Altun Ha, trash was dumped in many buildings during or immediately following the collapse and a tomb was desecrated (Pendergast, 1979, p. 183, 1982). While these activities may have been the result of conflict and termination rituals that led to the collapse of these centers (Freidel 1998; Freidel *et al.*, 1998), the lower Verde data suggest that greater attention should be paid to the role of commoners in the postcollapse denigration and reuse of symbols of state authority.

It is not clear, based on the available data, why people in the lower Río Verde Valley rejected the rulers and ideologies of the Late Classic. Many of the traditional explanations for the Classic period collapse in other parts of Mesoamerica such as interpolity conflict, competition among nobles, greater tribute demands and oppression by the nobility, and resource stress due to ecological change continue to be possible causal factors. One factor that may be underappreciated, however, is the macroregional setting of the Classic-to-Postclassic transition, characterized by the collapse of ruling institutions and networks of interelite interaction that had been central to ruling ideologies (Ringle *et al.*, 1998; Sabloff and Andrews, 1986). The networks of interregional communication that had legitimated rulership through the Classic period may have become a means by which knowledge of the vulnerability of nobles and state institutions spread during the Classic-to-Postclassic transition. As knowledge of the collapse of urban centers like Teotihuacan and Monte Albán spread to the lower Verde, a new awareness amongst commoners would have been created of the fragility of rulers and the institutions and ideas that supported their political power. This knowledge, as much as any other factor, may have created the possibility for the dramatic social changes that marked the Classic-to-Postclassic transition in the lower Verde and elsewhere in Mesoamerica. The data from the lower Río Verde Valley indicate that commoners were actively engaged in the social changes of the Classic-to-Postclassic transition and demonstrate the importance of considering commoner power in theories of the social dynamics of complex societies.

APPENDIX: LATE CLASSIC AND EARLY POSTCLASSIC POTTERY OF THE LOWER RIO VERDE VALLEY

This appendix presents a description and comparative study of pottery from the Late Classic Yuta Tiyoo phase (A.D. 500–800) and the Early Postclassic Yugüe phase (A.D. 800–1100). The emphasis is on stylistic relationships with other regions of Mesoamerica, especially the Mixteca Alta, which might have resulted from shared ethnic identities because of an influx of Mixtec-speaking peoples into the lower Verde region. An abrupt break in ceramic styles from the Late Classic to the Early Postclassic, along with close affiliations between Early Postclassic pottery in the Mixteca Alta and the lower Verde, would be consistent with the immigration of highland Mixtecs. Ceramic styles alone, however, are insufficient to evaluate this hypothesis so that the article also considers architectural, mortuary, and iconographic data.

Late Classic Yuta Tiyoo phase pottery from the lower Río Verde Valley is distinctive relative to highland Oaxaca (Figs. 9 and 10). Yuta Tiyoo phase pottery includes gray wares, orange wares, and coarse brown wares (A. Joyce, 1991a, pp.169–171; Joyce and Hutson, 1998). Coarse brown wares consist of undecorated

utilitarian cooking and storage vessels, especially large jars and bowls, *comales*, and braziers. Yuta Tiyoo phase orange wares consist largely of decorated serving bowls with appliqués, carving, incising, and painting (Fig. 10). The Yuta Tiyoo phase marks the first time that painted decoration is common on lower Verde pottery and painted orange ware bowls include monochromes and bichromes, usually with red and/or white paint (Fig. 10(h), (j), (l), (m)). The most common gray ware types are serving bowls and jars with incised decoration (Fig. 11(b), (c), (d), (e)). A common gray ware diagnostic is a category of conical bowl with an incised base and often with hollow bat effigy supports (Fig. 11(a)). Yuta Tiyoo phase pottery has been observed along the Oaxaca Coast at least as far west as the site of Piedra Parada Jamiltepec, 20 km northwest of the lower Verde region (Brockington, 1957). Yuta Tiyoo phase ceramics have been found at Río Grande, 20 km east of the lower Verde (Zárate, 1995). Late Classic ceramics from the eastern half of the Oaxaca Coast exhibit few crossties with Yuta Tiyoo phase pottery (Brockington, 1966; Long, 1974; Zeitlin, 1978).

Ceramic styles from the Early Postclassic Yugüe phase (A.D. 800–1100) exhibit stylistic continuities with the Yuta Tiyoo phase, but also display an increase in stylistic crossties with other regions (Fig. 12). Yugüe phase ceramics exhibit the general Early Postclassic trend towards fine paste pottery often with painted decoration (Berlin, 1956; Long, 1974; MacNeish *et al.*, 1970; McCafferty, 1992; Medellín, 1955; Pool, 1995; Rands, 1969; Ringle *et al.*, 1998; Sabloff, 1975; Sabloff *et al.*, 1982). Yugüe phase pottery consists of utilitarian coarse brown wares as well as fine paste bowls and small jars that include gray wares, orange wares, and differentially fired orange–gray wares (Hutson, 1996; Joyce and Hutson, 1998). The orange–gray wares exhibit intentionally patterned variation in surface color produced by differential firing with opposition of reduced gray and oxidized orange zones on body rim or interior–exterior. The forms and decorations of the three Yugüe fine wares overlap considerably. Fine ware bowls are dominated by subhemispherical, hemispherical, convergent incurving wall, and conical forms often with distinctive, outcurving rims. Painted decoration is common on smoothed, wiped, or burnished surface. Slips and incising are very rare in the Yugüe phase. Painting includes monochromes and bichromes with red, black, and white paint. The red and black paints are apparently the same pigment, with the latter the reduced form of the former. Painted decorations are usually simple geometric designs including horizontal, vertical, and curvilinear lines as well as volutes and triangles, although more complex designs are also found. One of the most common and distinctive vessel forms is a grater bowl or *molcajete* with an incised interior base (Fig. 12(c)). Hollow zoomorphic supports are also found, often on *molcajetes*, although the supports are usually simple in form so that the type of animal represented is not clear (Fig. 12(g)), although when distinguishable the animal is in the form of a bat. Hollow rounded or mammiform supports with clay pellet rattles are also common.

Yugüe ceramics have been observed at Río Grande about 20 km east of the lower Río Verde Valley (Zárata, 1995). As in the Late Classic, ceramics farther east along the Oaxaca Coast exhibit few cross-ties with lower Verde pottery (see Brockington, 1966; Fernández and Gómez, 1988; Long, 1974; Zeitlin, 1978). Little is known about Early Postclassic pottery on the Oaxaca Coast west of the lower Verde region. In the Mezcala region of Guerrero 250 km west of the Río Verde, general cross-ties are evident with Yestla–Naranjo ceramics such as the high proportion of *molcajetes* and vessels with painted decoration (Schmidt, 1990, pp. 161–185). Few cross-ties are noted between the Yugüe phase and ceramics from coastal Guerrero (Brush, 1969).

Stylistic continuities from the Yuta Tiyoo phase to the Yugüe phase include monochrome and bichrome painted decorations using red and white paints. The zoomorphic supports of the Yugüe phase appear to be smaller and simpler versions of the bat effigy supports that were common in the Yuta Tiyoo phase. A few small versions of these well-executed bat effigy supports have been found in the Yugüe phase. The Yuta Tiyoo phase bat effigy supports are often found on conical bowls with incised interior bases that might have served as *molcajetes* like the grater bowls with zoomorphic supports that are so common in the Yugüe phase. Another diagnostic ceramic category that continues from the Yuta Tiyoo to the Yugüe phase consists of ceramic pestles or pottery-making tools (Fernández, 1989, pp. 273–274; Houston and Wainer, 1971; see Fig. 11(f)). The Early Postclassic version of this distinctive tool type often has an effigy face on the handle (see Houston and Wainer, 1971, Fig. 5) and, interestingly, is virtually identical to ceramic pestles from Macanché Island in the Petén region of Guatemala (Rice, 1987) and similar to examples from Chichén Itzá (Brainerd, 1955, Fig. 72g).

Despite these stylistic continuities, Yugüe pottery is clearly different from that of the Yuta Tiyoo phase. Major differences between the pottery of the two phases include the near disappearance of incised decoration during the Yugüe phase as well as the dominance of semispherical bowl forms relative to conical bowls. The highly distinctive differentially fired orange–gray wares are found only during the Yugüe phase and do not occur in earlier or later periods. Another difference between the Late Classic and Early Postclassic are the increase in stylistic cross-ties that are apparent between lower Verde and highland Mexican pottery during the latter period.

While Yugüe phase pottery exhibits general similarities to Early Postclassic pottery over much of Mesoamerica, the strongest relationships appear with highland regions to the north, including the Nochixtlán Valley in the Mixteca Alta (Spores, 1972), Cholula in the Puebla–Tlaxcala Valley (McCafferty, 1992, 1996), and Tula in the northern Basin of Mexico (Cobean, 1990; Diehl, 1983, pp. 102–109). Early Postclassic pottery from each of these regions includes a high frequency of fine ware bowls, especially oxidized orange or cream wares, with painted decorations often on unslipped (usually smoothed or burnished) surfaces. Semispherical bowl forms (hemispherical, subhemispherical, and convergent incurving

wall) are common as are *molcajetes* (Cobean, 1990; McCafferty, 1992, pp. 314–322; Spores, 1972, pp. 70–71). Stylistic cross-ties between the lower Verde and Cholula pottery appear strongest with Xicalli plain wares and Cocoyotla black-on-natural (McCafferty, 1992, pp. 314–353). For example, a painted design on a Cocoyotla black-on-natural bowl illustrated by McCafferty (1996, Fig. 10(a)) is similar to motifs painted on Yugüe fine wares. Stylistic cross-ties between Yugüe pottery and Tula appear strongest with Macana red-on-brown and Manuelito plain brown ceramics, especially the high frequency of *molcajetes* (Cobean, 1990). *Molcajetes* from Tula include examples with hollow zoomorphic supports and hollow supports with clay pellet rattles (Cobean, 1990, pp. 289–335; Diehl, 1983, pp. 102–103). Painted decoration on earlier Coyotlatelco red-on-brown pottery from Tula resembles those from Yugüe fine wares, although the central Mexican ceramics usually have slipped surfaces.

While debate over Postclassic ceramics in the Mixteca Alta make specific comparisons difficult (Byland, 1980; Lind, 1987; Spores, 1972), stylistic cross-ties are indicated between Yugüe fine wares and Yanhuitlán fine cream wares. Spores's (Spores, 1972, p. 26) description of Yanhuitlán fine cream ware bowls suggests the same type of differential firing as on the Yugüe orange–gray wares. Illustrated examples of Yanhuitlán fine cream wares also include the distinctive outcurving rim form commonly found on Yugüe phase bowls. The painted decorations on the majority of Yanhuitlán red-on-cream bowls differ from Yugüe phase painted fine wares, in that the Nochixtlán examples generally have more finely executed and intricate designs (Hutson, 1996). The Comiyuchi variety, defined by Byland (1980, p. 204) and assigned to the Early Postclassic, appears to have painted decorations that more closely resemble Yugüe fine ware bowls (also see Lind, 1987, pp. 36–39), but published descriptions are insufficient to make an adequate comparison.

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