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Ideology, Power, and Urban Society in Pre-Hispanic Oaxaca[1]

by Arthur A. Joyce and Marcus Winter

This article adopts an actor-based theoretical approach to the origins and evolution of urban society in highland Oaxaca from 500 B.C. to A.D. 800, arguing that the development of urban societies was driven by the behavioral strategies of individuals rather than by cultural or ecological systems. Settlement patterns, mortuary practices, architecture, ceramics, writing, calendrics, and iconography are used to trace changes in behavioral strategies during the urban period in pre-Hispanic Oaxaca beginning with the founding of the political center of Monte Albán. Elite manipulation of ideology is identified as a key factor in the development of urban society in Oaxaca. This ideological change involved the increasing control of ritual knowledge and authority by the elite, the promotion of external conflict, and the development of an elite social identity.

ARTHUR A. JOYCE is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Vanderbilt University (Nashville, Tenn. 37235, U.S.A.). Born in 1958, he was educated at the University of Delaware (B.A., 1980) and Rutgers University (M.A., 1984; Ph.D., 1991). He taught at Rutgers from 1989 to 1993 and has directed archaeological field research projects in Oaxaca, Belize, and eastern North America. His publications include "Formative Period Social Change in the Lower Río Verde Valley, Oaxaca, Mexico" (*Latin American Antiquity* 2:126–50), "Interregional Interaction and Social Development on the Oaxaca Coast" (*Ancient Mesoamerica* 4:67–84), and (with R. G. Mueller) "The Social Impact of Anthropogenic Landscape Modification in the Río Verde Drainage Basin, Oaxaca, Mexico" (*Geoarchaeology* 7:503–26).

MARCUS WINTER is Research Archaeologist with the Oaxaca Center of the Mexican National Institute of Anthropology and History. He was born in 1943 and received his B.A. from Amherst College in 1965 and his Ph.D. from the University of Arizona in 1972. For the past five years he has been involved in archaeological explorations of early cities in Oaxaca: Cerro de las Minas, Huamelulpan, Monte Albán, and Yucuita. Among his publications are "Oaxaca: La herencia mixteco-zapoteca," in *México en el mundo de las colecciones de arte*, edited by María Olga Sáenz González, directed by María Luisa Sabau García (México, D.F., 1994), (with Cira Martínez López) *Figurillas y silbatos de cerámica de Monte Albán* (Proyecto Especial Monte Albán 1992–1994, Contribución 5), and the edited volume *Escritura zapoteca prehispánica: Nuevas aportaciones* (Proyecto Especial Monte Albán 1992–1994, Contribución 4).

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Archaeological research in highland Oaxaca (fig. 1) has traced the origins, development, and collapse of urban societies from 500 B.C. to A.D. 800 (Blanton 1978, Flannery and Marcus 1983*a*, Kowalewski et al. 1989, Winter 1989*a*). Explanations for the origins and development of urban societies in highland Oaxaca and elsewhere in Mesoamerica have been largely derived from cultural ecology (Sanders and Nichols 1988, Sanders and Price 1968) and ecological systems theory (Flannery 1972, Spencer 1982, Wright 1977). These approaches share a materialist perspective which assumes that human groups (variously modeled as societies, cultures, or populations) are the units that drive social developments such as urbanization and state formation (Orlove 1980). They rely on an organismic analogy that likens the society, culture, or ecosystem to a functioning organism. As useful as cultural ecology and systems theory have been for modeling social evolution, they have been criticized on a variety of theoretical and empirical grounds by biologists, ecologists, and anthropologists (Athens 1977, Colinvaux 1973, Hodder 1982*b*, Peoples 1982, Slobodkin 1972, Vayda and McCay 1975). These critics have shown that cultural ecologists and systems theorists have been unable to demonstrate that discrete systems actually occur at the level of populations, cultures, and ecosystems. In addition, a focus on population-level systems ignores the goal-driven behavior of social actors and intrasocietal (class, ethnic, racial) conflict among those actors (Brumfiel 1992, Cowgill 1993, Hodder 1982*b*).

In this article we examine the origins, development, and collapse of urban states in highland Oaxaca from an actor-based perspective that avoids attributing systemic properties to social groups (Joyce 1991, 1994*a*, *b*). In particular, we consider how ideology was used to initiate many of the sociocultural changes involved in the development of urban societies. We view people as dynamic actors in a social process rather than as components of a system or passive responders to the environment. We assume that it is the behavior of individuals rather than the functioning of social or ecological systems that causes changes in the properties of social groups.

Theoretical Perspective

Our theoretical perspective follows other actor-based approaches by examining individual-level behavioral strategies in relation to the biophysical and sociocultural environment (Giddens 1984, Mithen 1990, Orlove 1980, Vayda 1986). People pursue particular behavioral strategies to acquire and use resources, including information, for themselves and their close kin in competition with

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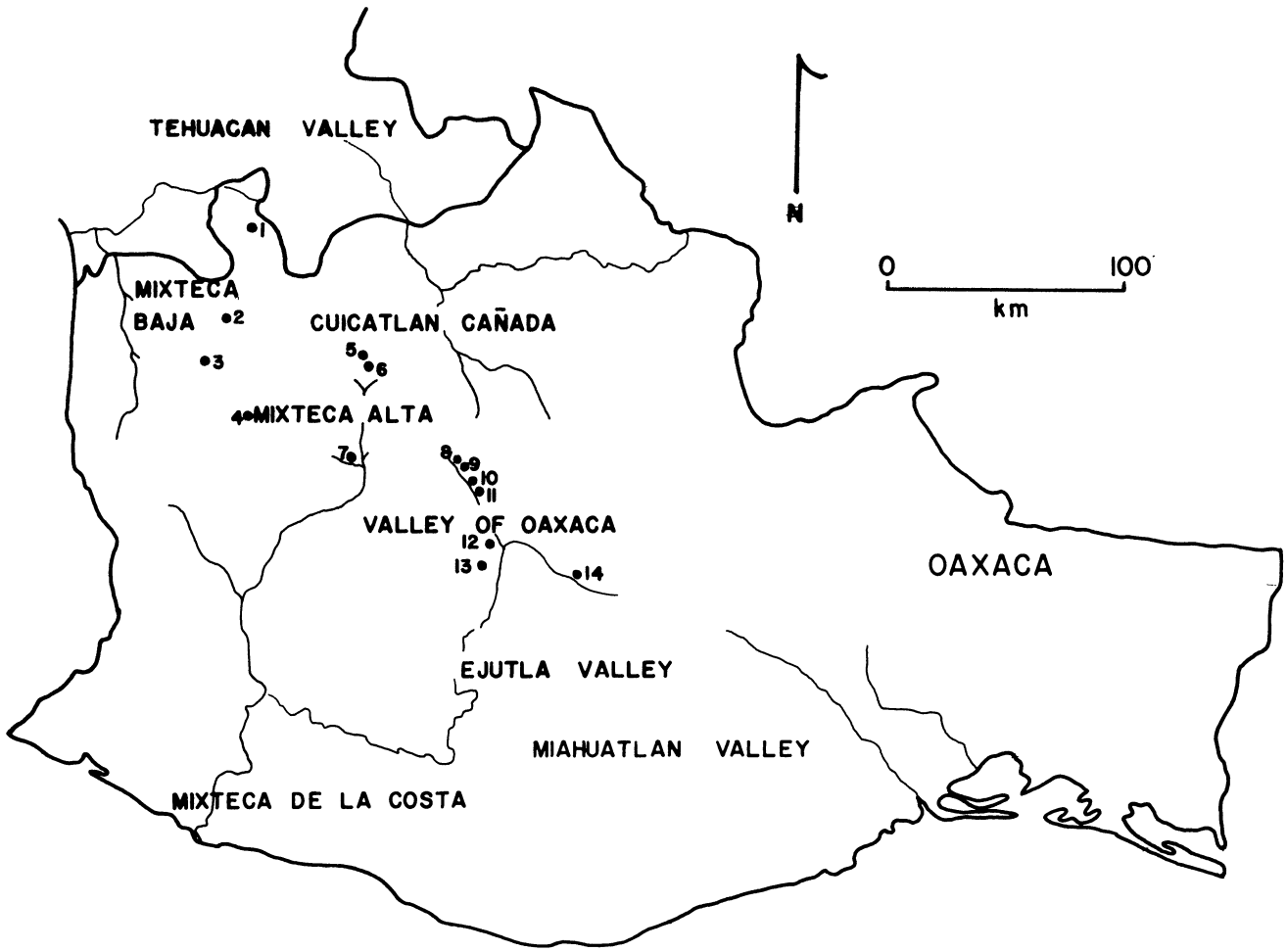

FIG. 1. *Oaxaca, showing regions and sites mentioned in the text.* 1, *Tequixtepec;* 2, *Cerro de las Minas;* 3, *Diquiyú;* 4, *Huamelulpan;* 5, *Yucuñudahui;* 6, *Yucuita;* 7, *Monte Negro;* 8, *Barrio del Rosario Huitzo;* 9, *Cerro de la Campana;* 10, *Reyes Etla;* 11, *San José Mogote;* 12, *Monte Albán;* 13, *Cuilapan;* 14, *Lambityeco.*

other people (Joyce 1991:603–16; 1994*a*, *b*). The behavioral strategies of individuals and their relative success in controlling resources are operationalized here using the concept of social identity. Social identities consist of two types of variables (McGuire 1983): social roles and social statuses (Joyce 1991:269–81, 602–707). Social roles specify strategies used by people to control, acquire, store, and use resources; they include behaviors defined by factors such as gender, occupation, kinship, ethnicity, and religion. Social status is a measure of an individual's ability to control material resources and information relative to other members of society. Social roles and statuses may covary, as when occupation or lineage define status, or they may be independent of one another (McGuire 1983).

Social status as defined here reflects two usually related factors: power and wealth. Power is the ability to control resources, including other people and information, and is often a product of and a means to obtain wealth. Power depends on the capabilities of strategizing actors as well as on the properties of the biophysical and sociocultural environment, which create asymmetries among actors in resources available to be mobilized (see Giddens 1984:15–16). Wealth is a measure of the relative amount of resources that a person has accumulated. Status differences may be continuous within a society, or there may be distinct breaks in status creating clearly defined social classes. While power and wealth usually covary, they can also be decoupled, as when religious practitioners are restricted from using their power for the accumulation of personal wealth. For purposes of this article, however, power and wealth are assumed to covary with status.

It is possible to infer social identities because their effects are archaeologically visible, especially the effects of identities adopted by many people (e.g., low-status farmers) or those of a few people who had a great impact on society (e.g., rulers). While archaeological data do not allow the delineation of all the social identities of the past, they do permit access to the more visible, institutionalized, and widely shared ones, such as occupations, ethnic affiliations, and statuses (Schortman 1989).

Variation in social identities also provides a means for identifying social complexity through estimates of heterogeneity and inequality (Blau 1977, McGuire 1983). Societies become more complex with increases in heterogeneity and inequality, which measure variability in the social identities of group members. Heterogeneity is a measure of the frequency of distinct social roles and status levels in a society. The development of craft and other types of economic specialization and the differentiation of administrative roles among political elites are examples of increases in heterogeneity. Inequality is a measure of status differentiation. The unequal social relations that largely define complex societies such as states[2] must be understood in terms of the flow of resources among individuals channeled by power differentials. In nonindustrial societies, such as those in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica, wealth above a relatively low level must be accumulated as a result of the labor of other people. Therefore, inequality in these societies largely involves the ability of some members to create, legitimate, and institutionalize a positive net flow of resources from others. Relationships of power among individuals are created and legitimated by the material benefits that they provide and/or by ideologies that make them seem beneficial and/or unalterable. Inequality is generally derived from three overlapping types of power relations: reciprocity, coercion, and ideology.

Power arises from reciprocity when nonelites provide material resources to elites in return for benefits in the form of information—often some type of administrative input that allows individuals to coordinate their actions more efficiently and/or more accurately predict environmental contingencies (e.g., drought, flood, disease). In a reciprocal relationship, the information input provided by elites results in real material benefits for nonelites. Elites gain disproportionately in material resources because of the extra share they take in return for their administrative efforts. However, nonelites also gain relative to their likely condition in the absence of elite administration.

Coercive power involves the use of threats and force by elites to compel nonelites to cooperate and provide resources. The threat can include potential physical harm or the withholding of critical resources. Coercive power requires elite control of a desired resource and/or some type of coercive apparatus such as a police force.

Ideological power depends on the concealment of the interests of the elites by representing those interests as universal, by denying intrasocietal conflicts of interest, and by naturalizing the present to preserve the elites' dominant position (Giddens 1979:193–97). Ideology often conceals elite interests by creating the belief that nonelites are engaged in a reciprocal relationship with elites despite their net loss of resources. Nonelites may, in effect, be deceived into supporting the elites even if neither group is fully conscious of the deception (Godelier 1978). Ideologies often promote abstract symbols of authority such as deities, flags, and patriotism that cloud the relationship between elite interests and political decision making (Cohen 1981, Edelman 1964, Mack 1983). The psychology of dominance/deference relations may reinforce ideological power, since people seem to be prone to relinquish power and autonomy to authority figures, especially during times of crisis (Caspary 1993, Milgram 1974, Volkan 1985). In addition, it is difficult to separate a dominant ideology that masks inequality from an ethos that explains many elements of existence for people at all status levels (Giddens 1979:184–96). However, to the extent that people are able to penetrate a dominant ideology, elite power will fail unless supported by coercion or reciprocity.

The theoretical perspective outlined here views people as dynamic actors in a social process. Population-level phenomena such as social organization and subsistence patterns are viewed as the outcome of behavioral strategies which are both enabled and constrained by the biophysical and sociocultural environment (Giddens 1984). Tracking changes in behavioral strategies through time will allow the evaluation of hypotheses concerning the conditions that led to these changes. As people develop novel behavioral strategies, these strategies and their material and ideological correlates in turn become part of subsequent environments.

While we share a number of concerns with many postprocessual archaeologists, we hesitate to label ourselves as such because of the diversity of positions subsumed under that label (see Hodder 1991, Preucel 1991). Our actor-based perspective, like much of postprocessual archaeology (Hodder 1982*b*, 1991; Shanks and Tilley 1988; 1992:52–53; Tilley 1982), has emerged from a critique of the functionalist focus of processual archaeology (Joyce 1991). Ideology, power, and social agency are themes that are also shared by postprocessual and marxist archaeologists (Hodder 1982*a*, 1991; McGuire 1992; Miller 1985; Miller and Tilley 1984; Shanks and Tilley 1992; Spriggs 1984) and increasingly by neopositivist/processual archaeologists (Demarest and Conrad 1992; Earle and Preucel 1987:510–13; Spencer 1993). We agree with Hodder (1987, 1991), however, that it is crucial to understand the two-way relationship between agency and structure and to examine how "rationality" may be affected by social and cultural conditions.

Monte Albán and the Origins of Urban Society

The urban period in Oaxaca began about 500 B.C. with the founding of the hilltop center of Monte Albán in the Valley of Oaxaca. Survey data suggest that soon after its founding Monte Albán was the largest community in

2. From this perspective, the state can be defined as a polity with heterogeneity in the administrative roles of political elites (i.e., specialized decision making or government) as well as great inequality implying social stratification and political centralization (Wright 1977:385). In addition, the power of political elites is usually manifest in their ability to draft soldiers, levy taxes, and exact tribute (Flannery 1972:404). Taxes and tribute are used in part to construct and/or maintain public buildings, works, and services, including the institutions and personnel of a state religion.

the valley (Kowalewski et al. 1989) with settlement reaching 442 ha by 100 B.C. and an estimated population of 10,200–20,400 (Blanton 1978:44). Even during its first few centuries Monte Albán's political and ritual importance was reflected in its monumental architecture, high-status burials, and carved stone monuments, including some of the earliest examples of hieroglyphic writing known for Mesoamerica. The site may have been a market center, and it seems to have been a point for the concentration and redistribution of imported goods such as pottery, obsidian, shell, and greenstone (Winter 1984, 1989*a*). Overall, the evidence suggests that shortly after its founding the size and complexity of Monte Albán would have made it an urban center.

THE ORIGINS OF URBAN SOCIETY IN OAXACA

The origins and early development of Monte Albán occurred during the Late Formative period,[3] which lasted from 500 B.C. to A.D. 200 and included Periods Ia (500–300 B.C.), Ic (300–100 B.C.), and II (100 B.C.–A.D. 200) of the Valley of Oaxaca ceramic sequence (Caso, Bernal, and Acosta 1967). Social complexity increased considerably during the Late Formative. Increasing heterogeneity is suggested by evidence for the emergence of a variety of craft specialist roles among nonelites, while elites appear to have taken on the role of ritual specialists. Increasing inequality is reflected by great increases in the wealth and power of elites. Many researchers argue that a state polity arose in the Valley of Oaxaca with Monte Albán as its capital (Blanton et al. 1982:69–71; Flannery and Marcus 1983*a*; Spencer 1982:12–31), although others debate this claim (Sanders and Nichols 1988).

Late Formative population growth in the Valley of Oaxaca was tremendous, with estimates from survey data suggesting a 27-fold increase during Period I (Kowalewski et al. 1989:90, 123–26). Most of this growth occurred at Monte Albán and within 20 km of the urban center. The majority of new sites in this core region, including Monte Albán, were located in the piedmont. Moving from the valley floor into the piedmont would have been an energetically costly and ecologically risky strategy given the high erosion potential and relatively lower productivity of piedmont soils (Kirkby 1973).

Archaeological data suggest that the rising status of the elites at Monte Albán was built on tribute in the form of labor and resources provided by nonelites, especially those living in the core region. These communities were evidently using small-scale irrigation to generate agricultural surpluses to provision the large number of people living on the infertile slopes of Monte Albán (Kowalewski et al. 1989:123–24; O'Brien et al. 1982; Winter 1988:82–84). Nonelites contributed corvée labor for massive building projects at Monte Albán and lesser centers in the valley such as San José Mogote (Acosta 1965:818; Flannery and Marcus 1983*b*). They may also have provided their services as soldiers, since the Late Formative appears to have been a period of frequent conflict (Joyce 1991:558–67).

Rising labor demands created an opportunity for some individuals and communities to specialize in the production of crafts such as pottery, chipped stone tools, salt, and lime (Feinman 1986; Hewitt, Winter, and Peterson 1987; Parry 1987; Whalen 1988; Winter 1984: 198–200). Craft specialists probably took advantage of the fact that most people would have had less time to carry out the full array of productive tasks that they had previously undertaken. Increased labor demands may also explain the rapid growth in population.

The increased labor output of nonelites primarily benefited a small emerging elite class increasingly removed from agricultural production. The nonagrarian role of the elites is suggested by evidence that they increasingly acted as ritual specialists, directing religious ceremonies, especially those in public settings (Flannery and Marcus 1976*a*:382–83; 1976*b*:217–19; 1983*a*). Elites controlled certain ritually significant forms of esoteric knowledge, including astronomy and the calendar, and were able to communicate this information via writing. Communal rituals appear to have been carried out by elites in distinct precincts characterized by monumental public buildings and elite residences as well as large plazas or patios such as the Main Plaza at Monte Albán (Flannery and Marcus 1983*b*; Whalen 1981:104; Winter and Joyce 1994). Symbols and artifacts used in ritual contexts, including hieroglyphic writing, calendrics, urns, and incense burners, have been found almost exclusively within these precincts, often as offerings in high-status burials (Feinman 1986:365; Flannery and Marcus 1983*c*; Marcus 1983*a*; Winter 1989*a*,:48–61). Elites probably also had key roles in directing the production of monumental architecture and certain prestige items.

Status inequality during this period was considerably greater than before and seems to have continued to increase (Joyce 1991:644–48). Status distinctions are most clearly demonstrated by mortuary data (Autry 1973; Drennan 1976*a*:appendix 14; Flannery and Marcus 1983*c*; Whalen 1988:300–302). The majority of Late Formative burials were interred in simple graves that either lacked offerings or included from one to three ceramic vessels and at times other items such as obsidian blades and shell artifacts. A smaller number of high-status burials were often in formal tombs with abundant offerings of items such as ceramic vessels, jade, shell, and obsidian. In addition to the mortuary data there is evidence from the sites of Monte Albán, Barrio del Rosario Huitzo, Tomaltepec, San Agustín de las Juntas, and San José Mogote that elites may have lived in larger and more elaborate houses (Flannery and Marcus 1983*b*; Whalen 1981:85–86; Winter 1986:342; Winter and Joyce 1994).

IDEOLOGY AND THE GROWTH OF URBAN SOCIETY

The behavioral strategies of elites during the Late Formative were successful in mobilizing resources. The key

3. The Late Formative is often divided into Late (500–100 B.C.) and Terminal (100 B.C.–A.D. 200). For convenience we refer to the entire period as the Late Formative.

theoretical problem, however, is to explain why nonelites moved to denser communities and increasingly supported an emerging elite class when both behaviors were often materially detrimental. Given the propositions outlined earlier, we expect that they must have been compelled to support the elite through reciprocity, coercion, and/or ideology.

We find little evidence that it was reciprocity or coercion that induced the Late Formative changes in power relations (Joyce 1991:650–54). There is no evidence for economic stress (e.g., population pressure) that might have provided an opportunity for the elite reciprocally to manage agricultural production, storage, or distribution (Nicholas 1989:491–94). Large-scale irrigation or market systems requiring elite administration do not appear to have been present prior to the founding of Monte Albán (Winter 1984, 1988). It is also unlikely that coercion was the primary source of elite power; this would have required a large, well-organized army that was probably beyond the capacity of Rosario-phase (700–500 B.C.) or Period Ia polities. In addition, there is no evidence for forced resettlement or for widespread conflict before the Late Formative.

Instead of reciprocity or coercion, we argue, elite power during the Late Formative resulted primarily from an ideological transformation, probably initiated by the elites, that resulted in their becoming ritual specialists.[4] The ritual role of elites gave them more ability to influence the workings of the natural and supernatural world and to intercede on the behalf of nonelites (Demarest 1992, Grove and Gillespie 1992*a*, Masson, Orr, and Urcid 1992, Monaghan 1994, Schele and Freidel 1990, Spores 1983*a*). Elites served as cosmic mediators for their followers through the performance of rituals such as bloodletting, human sacrifice, and divination. Political power and wealth resulted from ritual power; nonelites provided the elites with productive resources, such as foodstuffs and labor, often in ritualized contexts that supported the elites and their special abilities to affect the cosmos.[5] Because these affairs were intimately associated with production, health, and well-being, the intervention of elites counterbalanced the loss of resources by nonelites and created for the latter a situation of material obligation and deference. Of course, this ideology was in fact deceptive, since elites had little empirical control over conditions such as rainfall, drought, and disease that affected productivity and health. The ideological changes of the Late Formative would have represented the interests of the elites as universal, everyone being dependent on the effectiveness of their ritual.

Ideological power involving ritual control has deep roots in Mesoamerican culture (Drennan 1976*b*, 1983*a*; Flannery and Marcus 1983*d*:64; Grove and Gillespie 1992*a*, *b*). Grove and Gillespie (1992*a*) argue that high status was legitimated by the ritual role of elites as far back as the Early Formative (1500–800 B.C.), although elites did not monopolize ritual authority to the extent that they would during later periods. Ideology may be fundamental to power relations in chiefdoms, since elite power appears to be dependent on public demonstrations of sanctity and sacred knowledge, especially the ritual redistribution of prestige goods (Earle 1991; Feinman 1991; Helms 1979, 1988; Steponaitis 1991).

The existence of an ideology involving the ritual control of natural and supernatural forces would explain the actions of nonelites at the beginning of Period I. The establishment of a politico-religious center at Monte Albán would have drawn people interested in maintaining good relations with natural and supernatural forces. The early years of Monte Albán, however, involved more than simply the migration of elites and their followers. The increasingly restricted association of ritual paraphernalia with indications of high status suggests that elites manipulated the preexisting ideology so that it was primarily they who administered religious affairs. The specialized ritual role of elites would have given them greater power to compel people to relocate and provide tribute in the form of agricultural surpluses and corvée labor. Elites therefore manipulated the cultural environment which allowed them to mobilize resources more effectively. An element of coercive power may have been involved, given that the elite controlled the acquisition of prestige goods and represented the apex of the redistributive/ritual network. The movement of elites to Monte Albán would therefore have provided an inducement for lower-level elites and their followers to relocate (see Helms 1979, Millon 1974, Sanders and Webster 1988).

Elites consolidated power by naturalizing their roles as ritual specialists, making those roles part of the sacred assumptions of Zapotec culture (Drennan 1976*b*: 348). Elite power, however, may have been legitimated primarily through the sanctification of politico-religious institutions rather than of specific individuals or kin groups. There are only a few depictions of local elites on the numerous Late Formative carved stone monuments at Monte Albán. Instead, nearly all of the carved stones set into the foundations of public buildings depict slain or sacrificial victims and subjugated localities (Caso 1938, 1947; Marcus 1992*a*). While elites apparently directed public rituals, the most visible symbols of sacred power were the monumental public buildings in which these ceremonies were produced. The Monte Albán hilltop itself may have been a sacred monument, visually and perhaps symbolically dominating the val-

4. The recovery of small numbers of ceramic figurines in low-status domestic contexts (Whalen 1981:96; Winter 1974:982) suggests, however, that nonelites continued to perform some private, household rituals much as they do today throughout Mesoamerica.

5. The special abilities and status of the elites were symbolized by certain materials and ideas to which only they had access (Chase and Chase 1992). For example, at the time of the Spanish conquest the Zapotec nobility was differentiated from commoners by mode of dress, diet, marriage, and speech as well as literacy and preferential access to prestige goods (Marcus 1992*b*; Spores and Flannery 1983; Whitecotton 1977:142–43). These materials and ideas marked their separate social identities. At the time of the conquest, the fundamental distinction in the social identities of elites and nonelites was seen to have emanated from their separate origins and descent; it was believed that elites had descended from supernatural beings (Marcus 1992*a*, *b*).

ley. Throughout Mesoamerica, hilltops were often seen as sacred places, and several scholars have argued that pre-Hispanic pyramids were representations of sacred hills (Schele and Freidel 1990). The focus on sacred institutions could have been a way of concealing the actual locus of elite power.

The founding of Monte Albán was a key event in the ideological and social changes of the Late Formative. Recent excavations demonstrate that Monte Albán's first few centuries witnessed the rapid construction of monumental architecture around the Main Plaza on a scale far larger than had been seen in the valley before (Winter and Joyce 1994). It is possible that the establishment of Monte Albán was in part a strategy to free its founders from the kind of interelite competition that often creates political instability in chiefdoms (Wright 1977). The control of prestige goods, used to legitimate elites and to cement ties among them, appears to have been a key source of power in earlier chiefdoms (Marcus 1989*a*), Grove and Gillespie 1992*a*). The Main Plaza, with its impressive public buildings visible throughout much of the valley below, would have been a permanent source of prestige and sacred power that could not have been accessed by other elites except through cooperation with Monte Albán's rulers or conquest. Prestige goods continued to be used to negotiate interelite relations and symbolize the separateness of royalty, but the ideological changes of the Late Formative may have made them less central to the legitimation of power between elites and nonelites.

The sanctity of the elites was also expressed by the development of highly standardized and elaborate forms of symbolic expression, including hieroglyphic and calendric inscriptions (Marcus 1992*a*) and the marking of astronomical phenomena (Peeler 1989), that represented a growing body of knowledge accessible only to the elite. The Late Formative marks the earliest appearance of pottery vessels with representations of Cocijo, the Zapotec god of lightning. Cocijo is depicted only on elaborate vessels, including urns, usually recovered from high-status burials, public buildings, or elite residences (Caso, Bernal, and Acosta 1967). Ethnohistorical sources show that Cocijo was perhaps the most powerful Zapotec supernatural, controlling forces such as clouds, wind, and rain (Marcus 1983*b*). Elites and especially royal ancestors were seen as having special relationships with this deity. Therefore, literacy, calendric and astronomical knowledge, and associations with Cocijo were symbols of an emerging elite identity separate from that of nonelites.

While elites apparently acted as mediators between divine forces and nonelites, their ritual and political responsibilities may also have involved ensuring success against human enemies (Joyce 1991, 1994*b*, *c*). Evidence of militaristic and defensive concerns is common at Monte Albán during the Late Formative. The central position of Monte Albán within the valley and its elevation above the valley floor made it an excellent location for both political control and defense. The construction of defensive walls around parts of the site at this time would have gone beyond their obvious utility (i.e., to keep enemies out) to serve as a form of propaganda promoting the external threat and enhancing messages of control and the exclusivity of the precinct. The construction of the Period II ball court in the Main Plaza at Monte Albán might also reflect a concern with conflict, since the pre-Hispanic ball game seems to have acted as a boundary mechanism symbolically expressing and resolving both inter- and intrasocietal conflict (Gillespie 1991, Schele and Miller 1986).

Themes of conflict are depicted in the approximately 360 carved stones set into monumental buildings in the Main Plaza, including the so-called *danzantes* and conquest slabs (figs. 2 and 3). The Period I *danzantes* depict male figures in various contorted positions, sometimes with brief hieroglyphic inscriptions, and are generally viewed as representations of slain or sacrificed individuals. The Period II conquest slabs consist of about 50 carved stones depicting places conquered by and/or paying tribute to Monte Albán (Caso 1938, 1947; Marcus 1992*a*:394–400). These carved stones could have carried a forceful message of the consequences of opposing the elites from either within or without.

Conflict with polities outside the Valley of Oaxaca is supported by evidence for the conquest of the Cuicatlán Cañada by Monte Albán (Redmond 1983, Spencer 1982). Other regions such as the Ejutla and Miahuatlán Valleys and mountainous areas near the Valley of Oaxaca may have been incorporated into the Monte Albán polity (Drennan 1983*b*; Feinman and Nicholas 1990:230–34; Winter 1989*a*;63). In the Mixteca Alta and Baja as well as in the Tehuacán Valley there is evidence for an increase in interpolity conflict, although it is unlikely that these regions were subjugated by Monte Albán (Joyce 1991:563–67; 1994*c*).

The coordination of defensive measures may have served as a source of ideological power for the elite and an inducement for nonelites to surrender autonomy and tribute. The presence of an external threat provides elites with power through the organization of military measures including the formation of an army and the construction of defensive works.[6] To the degree that the threats are real and unprovoked, the elites are acting reciprocally with nonelites for collective defense. However, these conditions also make it advantageous for the elites to promote the perception of external threats through propaganda in order to extract resources from commoners. While the promotion of the threat may lead to actual conflict, the nature of elite power under these circumstances is ideological. The threat is used to represent elite interests as universal and to transmute intrasocietal conflicts of interest (Lane 1966, Tilly 1985). The promotion of external threats could also have legiti-

6. Even small-scale, ritualized warfare among elites could have posed a perceived threat if rulers were ritual specialists mediating with the cosmos on behalf of commoners. A victory would then have demonstrated the divine efficacy of the elites, while defeat would have had disastrous consequences for the entire society's relationship with the supernatural.

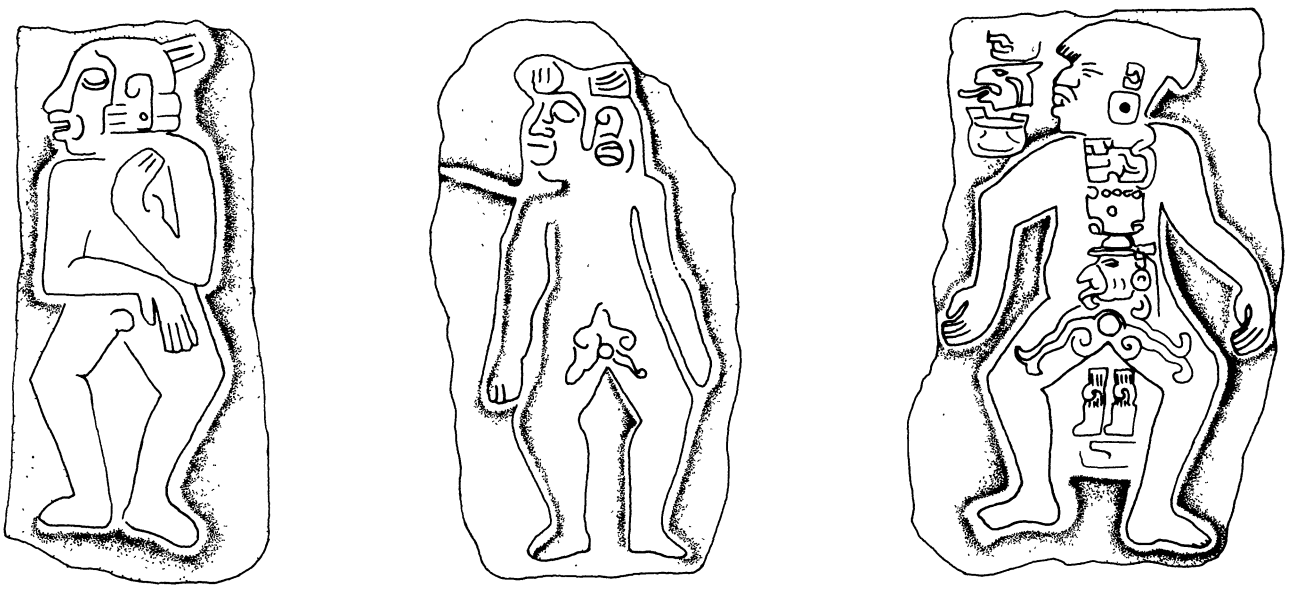

FIG. 2. *Late Formative carved stones from the Main Plaza at Monte Albán:* danzantes (left to right, *D11, D12, and D55), redrawn from Scott (1978).*

mated the creation of a potentially coercive military force. Viewed in this way, the promotion of interpolity conflict in the Valley of Oaxaca would have been beneficial to the elites regardless of the quantity of resources obtained from conquered or intimidated regions.

The two main sources of elite power, religion and warfare, were probably part of a complex ideology. A major link between religion and warfare with deep roots in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica was the ritual sacrifice of war captives (Boone 1984, Freidel 1986). If most of the *danzantes* represent sacrificial victims, then the sacrifices may have taken place among the public buildings of the Main Plaza in ritual contexts. Ethnohistorical data show that war captives were sacrificed to Cocijo (Marcus 1983*b*), the deity on many Period II urns. The appearance of ball courts during Period II may also reflect the linkage between religion and warfare (Orr 1993).

In summary, a key factor in the social changes of the Late Formative in the Valley of Oaxaca was an elite strategy involving the manipulation of ideology (Joyce 1991:642–68). The ideological changes that this strategy engendered included the promotion of interpolity conflict and the increasing control of ritual knowledge and authority by the elites. Both of these factors could have compelled nonelites to provide resources in return for the apparent protective services of the elites. The promotion of external threats would have allowed elites to extract resources for the organization of military measures. The control of ritual knowledge and authority would have allowed the elites to provide protection from perceived natural and supernatural threats. This ideology created and legitimated the power of the elites, leading directly to increasing inequality and indirectly to increasing heterogeneity, population growth, and interpolity conflict.

Ideology and Urban Society in the Mixteca

Evidence from the Mixteca suggests that the development of complex urban societies occurred there during the Late Formative, probably a century or two after the founding of Monte Albán (Gaxiola 1984, Spores 1983*a*, Winter 1994). In the Mixteca Alta the Late Formative includes Periods I (400–100 B.C.) and II (100 B.C.–A.D. 200) at Huamelulpan and the Ramos phase (500 B.C.–A.D. 300) in the Nochixtlán Valley. In the Mixteca Baja it encompasses the Ñudee phase (500 B.C.–A.D. 300). During the Late Formative urban centers arose at Yucuita, Huamelulpan, and Monte Negro in the Mixteca Alta and at Cerro de las Minas and Diquiyú in the Mixteca Baja. These urban centers were smaller than Monte Albán, with settlement ranging from 50 to 100 ha and populations probably no greater than 3,000 (Spores 1983*b*, Winter 1994).[7] They were similar to Monte Albán, however, in that they were nucleated centers with monumental architecture, carved stones with hieroglyphic writing, and possibly markets. Yucuita seems to have been a center for the concentration and redistribution of imported goods such as pottery, obsidian, shell, and greenstone (Winter 1984). Data from the Mixteca[8]

7. The Late Formative and Classic centers of the Mixteca were probably at the lower end of the size range for urban sites, but their nucleation, monumental architecture, and apparent political and ritual functions have led many archaeologists to consider them urban (Flannery and Marcus 1983*a*:83; Gaxiola 1984; Joyce 1994*c*; Spores 1983*b*, *d*; Winter 1989*a*, 1992, 1994).

8. "Mixteca" here means only the Alta and the Baja; the coastal region now known as the Mixteca de la Costa was probably not inhabited by Mixtecs until the Postclassic period (Joyce and Winter 1989). In addition, despite fluctuating degrees of similarity in elite and nonelite culture during the Formative and Classic Periods, the

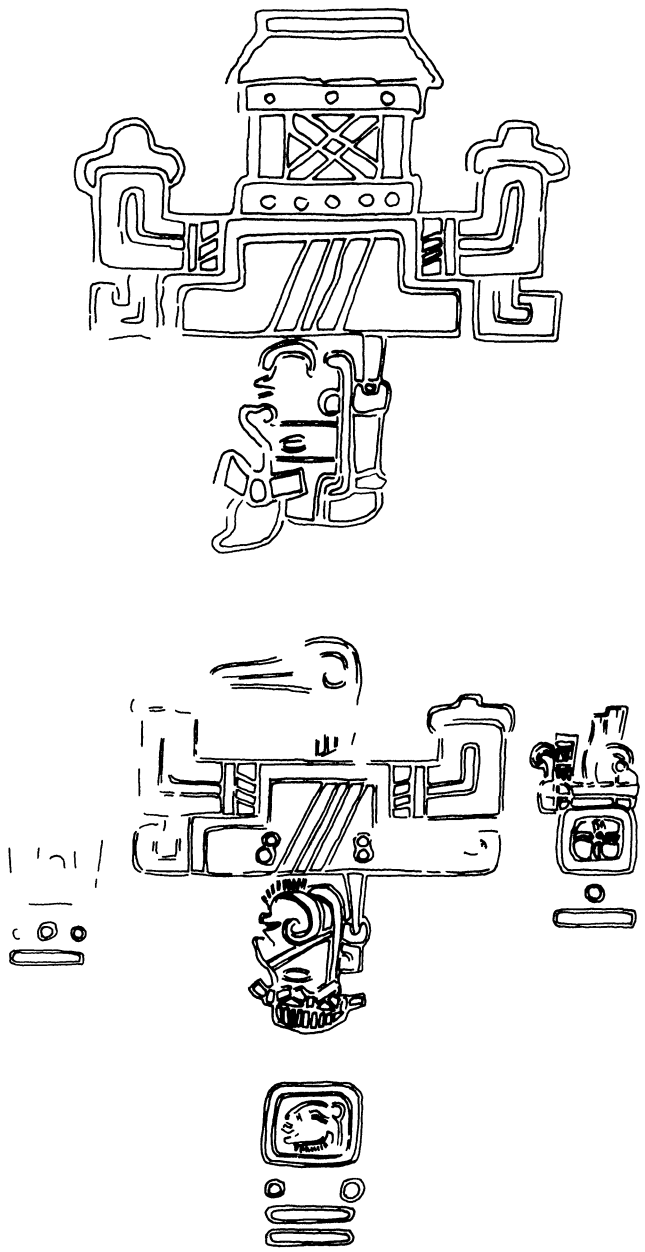

FIG. 3. *Late Formative glyphs from the Building J conquest slabs (*top, *Lápida 4;* bottom, *Lápida 10), redrawn from Caso (1947).*

also suggest a variety of correspondences with the Valley of Oaxaca sequence, including increasing inequality and conflict as well as the adoption of a similar elite culture and ideology.

Before about 500 B.C. inequality was limited in the Mixteca (Winter 1994). During the Late Formative, however, mortuary and residential data suggest a significant increase in status differences. In the Mixteca, most individuals were interred in simple graves with modest offerings, although at Yucuita, Monte Negro, and Huamelulpan tombs of adobe blocks, stone, or both were constructed (Acosta and Romero 1992; Gaxiola 1984: 60–63; Robles García 1988; Winter 1986, 1991*a*). There seems to have been a continuum, however, in the quantity and quality of offerings, even between simple graves and tombs, suggesting that elite and nonelite statuses were not as sharply segregated as in the Valley of Oaxaca. Data on variability in the size and architectural complexity of residences more clearly suggest inequality (Fernández 1981, Robles García 1988, Winter 1986). At Yucuita, residential units M5 and A1 are inferred to have been high-status residences on the basis of their relatively large size and number of rooms, their stuccoed floors, and their more elaborate architecture. Beneath the central patio of A1, Fernández (1981:53) found a tomb constructed of stone with niches and stuccoed walls. Similar elite residences have been exposed at Monte Negro and Huamelulpan (Acosta and Romero 1992, Gaxiola 1984), although excavations at these sites have not yet provided a comparative sample of nonelite houses.

The power of the Mixtec elites is also suggested by the scale of Late Formative building activities. The mobilization of large labor forces would have been required to construct monumental public buildings at Yucuita, Huamelulpan, Monte Negro, and Cerro de las Minas (Acosta and Romero 1992; Gaxiola 1984; Winter 1989*a*: 123; 1994). In addition, some elite residences, such as A1 at Yucuita, may have been palaces, with both residential and politico-religious administrative functions (Fernández 1981; Winter 1986:350). Evidence from Yucuita suggests that the size of elite residences increased during the Late Formative (Fernández 1981).

Heterogeneity in the Mixteca was less than in the Valley of Oaxaca. Presumably there would have been a small number of specialized artisans who manufactured anthropomorphic urns and carved stones. There must also have been architectural specialists who directed the construction of monumental buildings. It is uncertain whether these roles were pursued by elites themselves or by others under their supervision. Mixtec elites appear to have increasingly taken on the role of ritual specialists during the Late Formative (Spores 1983*a*). Elite residences in the Mixteca Alta were generally located in distinct precincts along with public buildings. At Monte Negro, high-status houses were connected to temples by roofed corridors, and tombs were often located beneath the temple floors (Acosta and Romero 1992). At Yucuita, the large public platform associated with A1 suggests that the inhabitants of this elite residence had some type of religious-administrative role (Winter 1986:348–50). Ritually significant objects and symbols such as carved stones with hieroglyphic writing and urns are found almost exclusively in elite-administrative precincts in the Mixteca Alta (Acosta and Romero 1992; Gaxiola 1984; Winter 1986:346–52) and in association with monumental architecture of uncertain function at Cerro de las Minas in the Mixteca Baja (Winter 1991*b*).

Mixteca and the Zapotec Valley of Oaxaca appear from both archaeological and linguistic data to have been ethnically distinct (Josserand, Winter, and Hopkins 1984, Marcus 1983*e*, Winter 1989*a*).

Many of the ritually significant artifacts and symbols that are found associated with elites in the Mixteca appear to have been adopted from the Valley of Oaxaca. While rare in the Mixteca during the Late Formative, hieroglyphic writing, including calendric notations, was executed in a style very similar to that of the Oaxaca Valley (Marcus 1992*a*:120). Locally made gray ware anthropomorphic urns at Huamelulpan and Cerro de las Minas are similar in style to those from the Valley of Oaxaca (fig. 4). Several of these urns depict variants of Dzahui, the rain-lightning deity, which closely resembles contemporaneous representations of the Zapotec deity Cocijo (Gaxiola 1978, Winter 1994). Certain features of monumental architecture, such as I-shaped ball courts, *adoratorios*, and large stone columns are found in both the Oaxaca Valley and the Mixteca at this time. These data suggest that Mixtec elites may have promoted and legitimated increasing inequality of wealth and power by adopting aspects of the Zapotec ideology described above (Joyce 1991, 1994*c*).

Elites in the Mixteca may also have promoted interpolity conflict as a way to consolidate power. The data suggest that warfare in the Mixteca may have been more prevalent and destabilizing than in the Oaxaca Valley. All of the Late Formative centers in the Mixteca were constructed with defensive considerations in mind. Monte Negro, Cerro de las Minas, and Diquiyú were constructed on imposing hilltops, while Yucuita and Huamelulpan were built on lower ridges. Defensive walls were built around parts of Yucuita, Cerro de las

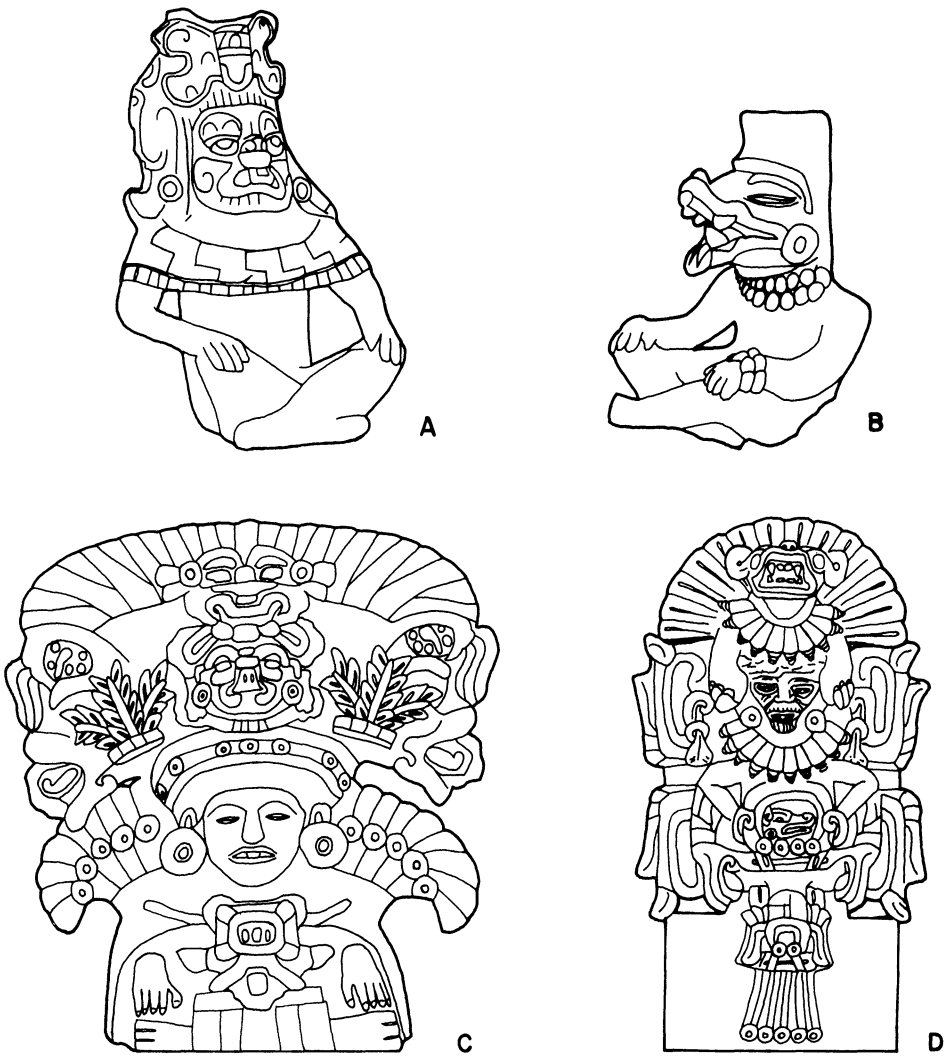

FIG. 4. *Oaxacan urns (not to scale), showing the divergence of styles over time in the Valley of Oaxaca and the Mixteca.* A, *Late Formative grayware urn from Huamelulpan in the Mixteca Alta (from the collection of the community museum, San Martín Huamelulpan, Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca);* B, *Late Formative urn from the Valley of Oaxaca, redrawn from Caso and Bernal (1952);* C, *Classic-period urn from the Valley of Oaxaca, redrawn from a photograph of an urn in the Frissell Museum;* D, *Classic-period Ñuiñe urn from Cerro de las Minas in the Mixteca Baja, redrawn from a photograph of an urn in the Frissell Museum.*

Minas, and Diquiyú. Towards the end of the Late Formative, settlement declined significantly at Yucuita, Monte Negro, and Cerro de las Minas, possibly as a result of conflict. The proximity of these sites could have intensified competition and led to frequent and destructive warfare. In addition, Mixtec elites may have had some difficulty in promoting a set of Zapotec-inspired beliefs as a means to political control, perhaps necessitating the development of a coercive military force.

The evidence from the Mixteca suggests that Late Formative polities were probably in conflict with each other and possibly also with the Valley of Oaxaca (Joyce 1991:672–73, 1994*c*; Winter 1989*a*:37–38). Yet there is no evidence for the long-term subjugation of any part of the Mixteca by Monte Albán. It seems more likely that there was a shifting pattern of alliance formation and conflict among elites of the more powerful polities of the Oaxacan highlands.

Overall, the data from the Mixteca suggest that elites adopted some ideological innovations from the Valley of Oaxaca. Religion and warfare were also probably linked in the Mixteca through ritual sacrifice and ballgame ceremonialism. Carved into the risers of some of the steps on Temple T at Monte Negro is the circle-and-triangle "blood" glyph (Acosta and Romero 1992:32) which appears on carved stones in the Valley of Oaxaca, including on several of the *danzantes* (Urcid 1993:151). While the *danzantes* appear to be explicit representations of sacrificial victims (possibly war captives) who were dispatched during ceremonies on Building L (Marcus 1976), the carved blood glyph on the risers of Temple T may be a more abstract representation of a similar ceremony (i.e., blood spilled on the temple stairs). The most compelling evidence for the linkage between religion and warfare comes from the Altar de los Cráneos at Huamelulpan. This feature is a stone altar located in an elite-administrative precinct (Gaxiola 1984). Above the plaster surface of the altar were found four trophy skulls, five Oaxaca Valley–style anthropomorphic urns manufactured locally (including one with a glyph), and prestige goods including several imported shell objects and a greenstone celt.

The increasing convergence of elite culture in the Valley of Oaxaca and the Mixteca during the Late Formative resembles what Schortman (1989) has termed an elite salient identity network. In this case, elites in the two regions shared an identity characterized by similar ideas and practices related to religion, warfare, and political control. The development of a shared identity would have been advantageous to elites in both regions by differentiating them from nonelites, thereby reinforcing the idea that the elites had a special role in the cosmos. The political importance of maintaining this shared identity would have compelled elites to compete among themselves for access to prestigious goods, ideas, and social contacts. Thus, while elites benefited from this shared identity, their behavior would also have been constrained by it. The shared identities of Oaxacan nobles were probably more broadly tied to an elite identity emerging in many regions of Mesoamerica (Joyce 1991: 678–84). Despite a convergence in elite culture between the Mixteca and the Valley of Oaxaca, there appears to have been a trend towards regionalization in aspects of nonelite culture such as ceramic and metate styles (Winter 1989*a*:67).

The Late Formative seems to have been a time of dramatic sociocultural change. The size and complexity—architectural, economic, social, and political—of Monte Albán far exceeded anything that had occurred previously. The Mixtec centers were not as large and complex as Monte Albán, but they too exhibited the organizational properties and settlement characteristics of urban sites (Spores 1983*b*). Evidence for many of the features that have been used to define the state also appeared for the first time during the Late Formative in highland Oaxaca (Flannery and Marcus 1983*a*; Joyce 1991:663–64; Kowalewski et al. 1989; Spencer 1982; Winter 1974, 1989*a*). These features included the emergence of distinct social strata, political centralization, elite control of a centralized religion, elite control of production in the form of tribute extraction, elite-sponsored warfare, and a four-tiered settlement hierarchy. It has also been argued that by the Late Formative specialized political decision-making roles had developed among elites (Spencer 1982). The changes in sociopolitical organization during the Late Formative represent the beginnings of a pattern that reached its apogee with the Classic-period polities of Oaxaca.

The Classic-Period Institutionalization of Power

State societies with complex urban centers emerged in highland Oaxaca by the Classic period (A.D. 200–800). The Classic encompasses Periods IIIa (A.D. 200–500) and IIIb–IV (A.D. 500–800) in the Valley of Oaxaca (Caso, Bernal, and Acosta 1967). In the Mixteca Alta, it consists of Periods Early III (A.D. 200–400) and Late III (A.D. 400–600 at Huamelulpan (Gaxiola 1984) and the Las Flores phase (A.D. 300–800) in the Nochixtlán Valley (Spores 1972). The Classic period in the Mixteca Baja consists of the Ñuiñe phase (A.D. 300–800 [Winter 1989*a*]). The Late Formative had established the general pattern of urban society in Oaxaca with great inequality in status created and legitimated by an ideology that linked religion and warfare. During the Classic period there appear to have been no major changes in the size and complexity of urban centers or in the degree of heterogeneity or the ideological foundations of power. There was, however, increasing institutionalization of power within ruling-class families, and there were also important changes in interregional relations and inequality.

CLASSIC-PERIOD SOCIETY IN THE VALLEY OF OAXACA

During the Classic period, Monte Albán grew to 650 ha, with an estimated population of 15,000–30,000 (Blanton 1978). Monumental construction activities continued in the Main Plaza and elsewhere at the site. The Monte

Albán polity probably dominated the entire Valley of Oaxaca (Blanton et al. 1982, Kowalewski et al. 1989). Data from the Cuicatlán Cañada suggest, however, that its influence outside the valley may have been declining, possibly because of competition with the huge urban center of Teotihuacan in the Basin of Mexico (Redmond 1983:145–54).

Heterogeneity in the Valley of Oaxaca was probably similar to that of the Late Formative. Nonelites pursued a relatively generalized set of social roles including agricultural and domestic activities as well as providing corvée labor to elites. Agricultural practices varied somewhat (Kowalewski et al. 1989:204), and specialization continued in the production of lithics and ceramics (Feinman 1980, Kowalewski et al. 1989) and the processing of salt (Peterson 1976). Elites continued to perform their specialized roles as political administrators and religious specialists (Flannery 1983*a*, Masson 1994, Winter 1989*a*). The production of many elements of elite-ritual culture required highly skilled specialists such as architects, muralists, urn makers, bone carvers, and scribes.

Residential data suggest that there were at least three social strata in the Valley of Oaxaca during the Classic period. Social strata are inferred from variation in residence size, number of houses, architectural complexity, wealth of associated artifacts, and proximity to public buildings as well as the wealth and elaboration of mortuary customs (Winter 1974; 1986; 1989*a*:41–42).

Inequality increased considerably during the Classic period, primarily as a result of the growing wealth and power of the elites. The most elaborate residences were monumental in scale and probably accommodated administrative activities (Flannery 1983*a*, Winter 1974). Elite subpatio tombs were made of stone masonry with niches and often included painted murals, carved stone door jambs, and elaborate offerings. The power of Classic-period elites continued to be manifest in their ability to mobilize labor for the construction of monumental structures such as the South Platform at Monte Albán and the temple-patio-altar complexes at sites such as Cerro de la Campana, Reyes Etla, and Lambityeco.

CLASSIC-PERIOD SOCIETY IN THE MIXTECA

While the end of the Formative marked Monte Albán's greatest interregional influence, in the Mixteca it was a time of conflict and instability that resulted in a shift to political power from the Mixteca Alta to the Mixteca Baja (Winter 1994). The most influential Classic-period site in the Mixteca seems to have been Cerro de las Minas (Winter 1991*c*, 1994). Recent research has shown that after a possible decline in settlement at the end of the Formative, Cerro de las Minas grew to 55 ha, with its civic-ceremonial core concentrated on a ridgetop 100 m above the valley floor. It is similar to other centers in the Mixteca in having monumental public buildings and elite residences but distinct in that it was a major center for the production of the elite goods and ideas that in large part define the Ñuiñe style (Moser 1977; Paddock 1966; Winter 1991*c*,1994). These elements of elite culture include (1) painted anthropomorphic urns, often with representations of the old fire god wearing a mask and seated on a square pedestal (fig. 4), (2) a system of hieroglyphic writing, including calendric inscriptions, that differed from writing in the Valley of Oaxaca, (3) carved stone monuments with distinctive iconography (fig. 5), (4) small portable stone sculptures often depicting human or animal heads, and (5) mold-made retouched figurines representing humans and animals. Other important Ñuiñe centers with carved stones, writing, and monumental architecture include Diquiyú and Tequixtepec.

Several sites in the Mixteca Alta also had relatively large populations and monumental architecture. The largest Classic-period center in the Mixteca Alta developed at Yucuñudahui. The site is estimated to have been about 200 ha in extent and probably had a population of several thousand (Spores 1983*c*:154). The civic-ceremonial precinct was located on an L-shaped ridgetop with monumental public buildings, tombs, and probable elite residences. Low-status residences were located on terraces along the hillslopes. Despite the size and impressive architecture of the Mixteca Alta centers, archaeological investigations have recovered relatively few urns, carved stones, and figurines. These sites appear provincial in comparison with Cerro de las Minas and may have been largely consumers of elite culture and ideology (Winter 1994).

Social complexity in the Mixteca, as in the Valley of Oaxaca, increased during the Classic period. The limited evidence available at present suggests little heterogeneity for nonelites. There is evidence for distinct roles involving the production of elements of elite culture, including scribes and architects as well as possible specialists in the production of stone sculpture, onyx vessels, and ceramic urns (Winter 1994). Elites in the Mixteca also continued to perform their roles as political administrators and religious specialists. These roles are suggested by the association of elite residences with public buildings in distinct precincts (Caso 1938; Gaxiola 1984; Spores 1983*d*; Winter 1991*a*, *b*, *c*). Ritual symbols and paraphernalia are found primarily in elite residences and tombs.

By the Classic period inequality in the Mixteca was great. Elites continued to mobilize large labor forces to build monumental structures at sites such as Yucuñudahui, Huamelulpan, and Cerro de las Minas. Elite houses were larger and more elaborate than those of nonelites (Deraga 1981, Gaxiola 1984, Montague and Winter 1991, Acosta and Tercero 1991, Winter 1991*a*, Winter and Acosta 1991), and some high-status residences, such as G3 at Cerro de las Minas, appear to have been palaces.

Mortuary data suggest that there may have been three status levels in Classic-period Mixtec society (Caso 1938; Deraga 1981; Gaxiola 1984; Winter 1991*a*, *b*). Most burials in the Mixteca were simple graves with as many as 10 ceramic vessels as offerings. Intermediate burials consisted of rectangular tombs and, at least in the Mixteca Baja, secondary interments in square or

FIG. 5. *The Huajuapan lintel, a Classic-period Ñuiñe-style carved stone presumably from Cerro de las Minas, redrawn from Moser (1977).*

rectangle cists. Both cist burials and rectangular tombs were often reused and contained offerings usually ranging from 10 to 25 vessels, although Tomb 2 at Huamelulpan had 68 (Gaxiola 1984:68–69). Ruling-class elites were interred in stone masonry tombs with square chambers. Only three examples of this type of tomb have been recovered: Cerro de las Minas Tomb 5, Yucuñudahui Tomb 1, and Huamelulpan Tomb 7. Yucuñudahui Tomb 1 contained two painted plaster murals. Offerings consisted of as many as 74 ceramic vessels (in Tomb 5 from Cerro de las Minas) as well as urns, projectile points, and beads. The existence of three status levels is supported by residential data (Acosta and Tercero 1991, Deraga 1981).

IDEOLOGY AND THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF POWER

Greater inequality appears to have been the major difference in social organization between the Late Formative and the Classic period in both the Valley of Oaxaca and the Mixteca. Elites created and legitimated increasing inequality and were able to link high status with kinship. This linkage is suggested by elite residences occupied over long periods and tombs apparently reused by multiple generations of the same family. Ethnohistorical data suggest that this linkage continued until the Spanish conquest. The restriction of noble status to certain kinship groups would have been another means of naturalizing the status quo in favor of elite interests. This pattern contrasts with that of the Late Formative, when high status seems to have been more fluid and was perhaps tied as much to politico-religious institutions as to kinship. The relatively high proportion of elites depicted on carved stones is possibly another indication of the personal and familial power of Classic-period nobles.

The control of ritual knowledge and authority by the elites was undoubtedly a major factor in the linkage of power with certain kin groups. Ethnohistorical sources indicate that noble status was inherited and therefore kinship was a major determinant of the ritual abilities of elites to affect the cosmos and, especially after death, become mediators between mortals and supernaturals (Marcus 1992*b*). Classic-period iconographic data from the Valley of Oaxaca suggest an increasing concern with genealogy among the elites. Marcus (1983*c*; 1992*a*:281–83) argues that the painted mural on Monte Albán Tomb 104 depicts living relatives of the deceased along with a venerated ancestor. The *fauces del cielo* (jaws of the sky) symbol (Caso 1928), a common element of Classic-period elite iconography, probably also reflects this concern with genealogy. The *fauces del cielo* is associated with deceased royal ancestors and may reflect their place in the heavens and close association with supernaturals (Marcus 1992*a*:238; Urcid 1992).

This concern increased towards the end of the Classic with the introduction of the so-called genealogical registers (Marcus 1992*a*:238–49). These carved stone slabs depict royal marriages, with the couple shown kneeling beneath the *fauces del cielo* (fig. 6). Often the slabs include several registers depicting different generations of a royal family and at times what appear to be textual

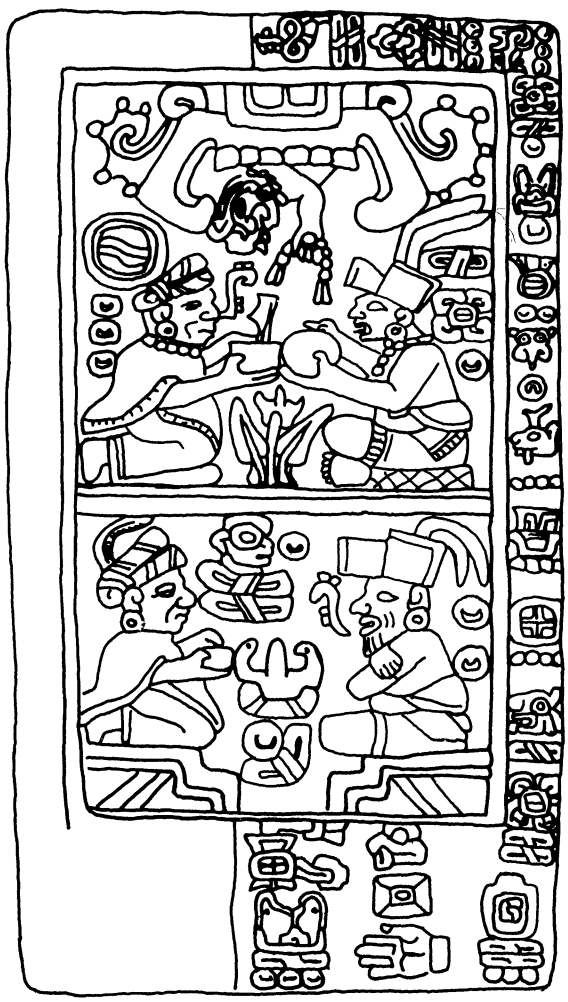

FIG. 6. *A Valley of Oaxaca genealogical register showing the* fauces del cielo motif *(Lápida MNA-1), redrawn from Urcid (1989).*

references to genealogy. A near-obsession with genealogy is evident in the Postclassic Mixtec codices (A.D. 800–1521 [Smith 1973, 1983]) and in early colonial documents (Paddock 1983*a*, Parmenter 1982).

The restriction of noble status to a small number of kin groups may in part reflect the relative stability of political power. Sites such as Monte Albán, Cerro de las Minas, Diquiyú, and Yucuñudahui continued as powerful urban centers throughout the Classic. There do not appear to have been periods of political instability marked by the collapse of polities as there were during the Late Formative at Yucuita and Monte Negro. We are not suggesting, however, that conflict and competition did not occur during the Classic period. The stability of hierarchical political relations with continued competition among elites is suggested by iconographic and epigraphic data, at least in the Valley of Oaxaca. At Monte Albán, much of the public art consists of multistela programs depicting bound elite captives (e.g., stela 2) and victorious rulers (e.g., stela 1; see fig. 7). A dramatic decline in public art (García Moll, Patterson Brown, and Winter 1986), however, suggests that elite strategies shifted towards propaganda directed to a restricted audience of other elites (Marcus 1992*a*:238). This is probably best exemplified by the elaborate tomb art of the Classic period, which primarily involved genealogy and relationships with supernaturals. It may be that the death of a noble was a time of crisis for that person's kinship group, requiring affirmation of the ritual authority of the group and the renegotiation of alliances. If threats to political authority came primarily from other elites, the death of a noble may have required intensive propaganda, especially if some of the people involved in the mortuary ceremony were potential competitors. Classic-period elites may have been more concerned with competition from other elites than with rebellion by nonelites.

Another change involved elite strategies for the creation and dissemination of ideology. During the Late Formative important elements of Mixtec elite culture were appropriated from Monte Albán. There continued to be cross-ties linking the Mixteca, Valley of Oaxaca, and other areas of Mesoamerica. However, by the Classic period elite culture, at least in the Mixteca Baja, had developed distinctive (Ñuiñe) styles in writing, stone sculpture, monumental architecture, figurines, and urns (Moser 1977; Winter 1991*c*, 1992, 1994). This may represent a strategy by elites at Cerro de las Minas and other centers in the Mixteca Baja to assert their own ethnic and political identities.

Despite the emergence of the Ñuiñe style, interactions with elites in distant regions of Mesoamerica continued to be an important political strategy of rulers in both the Valley of Oaxaca and the Mixteca. Evidence from throughout Oaxaca suggests that elites were involved in the exchange of exotic goods and ideas that continued to symbolize their special status and ritual abilities (Feinman and Nicholas 1993, Joyce 1993, Marcus 1983*d*, Urcid 1993, Zeitlin 1993). Elite social identities therefore expressed both regional/ethnic affiliations and membership in a group of like-minded elites from other parts of Mesoamerica.

Data from highland Oaxaca suggest that elites participated in the extensive interaction network linked to Teotihuacan. These data include stylistic cross-ties in ceramics, iconography, architecture, and writing sys-

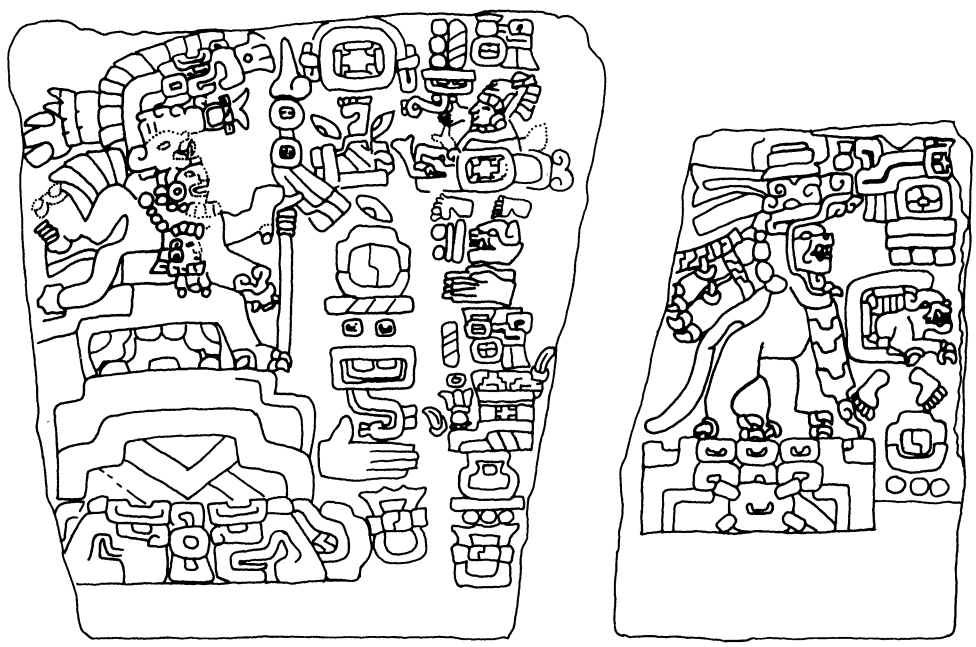

FIG. 7. *Classic-period carved stones from the Main Plaza at Monte Albán.* A, *stela 1;* B, *stela 2, redrawn from Urcid (1992).*

tems as well as evidence for the exchange of materials such as obsidian, pottery, and mica (Caso, Bernal, and Acosta 1967; Joyce 1993:75; Marcus 1983*c*; Martínez López 1994; Winter 1994). Elites in the Valley of Oaxaca may have had relations with Teotihuacan beyond exchange; the well-known Oaxaca Barrio of Tlailotlacan shows that ethnic Zapotecs lived at Teotihuacan for several centuries, beginning as early as the end of the Late Formative (Paddock 1983*b*; Peeler, Winter, and Peterson 1992).

A key element in interelite relations during the entire urban period was the exchange of ideas concerning the ideological underpinnings of rulership. It is possible that the continuing success of the Cerro de las Minas and Monte Albán polities was in part due to the success of their rulers in participating in a network of interelite interaction that helped define and legitimate high status throughout Mesoamerica. Sandwiched between these two powerful polities, elites in the Mixteca Alta may have had less success in gaining access to exotic goods and ideas.

Conclusions

We have described the development of urban society in Oaxaca as resulting from the interplay between the behavioral strategies of individuals and the biophysical and sociocultural environment. This approach avoids the pitfalls of systems theory and cultural ecology by placing causation with social actors as well as the social and ecological conditions that affect them. For example, we do not view management of irrigation or market systems by the elite as a major causal factor in urban development as has been argued by cultural ecologists (Sanders and Nichols 1988:51; Santley 1980) and countered by Oaxacan archaeologists (e.g., Blanton 1980, 1983*a*, 1988; Blanton et al.1981:70; Feinman and Nicholas 1988; Kowalewski 1980). We do not rely on population pressure, whether regional (Sanders and Nichols 1988; Santley 1980:141–42) or local (Spencer 1982:210), as a major causal factor in sociopolitical change, and therefore we need not attempt to estimate carrying capacity and population levels (see O'Brien and Lewarch 1992). Our explanation for interpolity conflict during the Late Formative does not require population pressure as a cause (Sanders and Nichols 1988) or increasing tribute extraction as a result (Spencer 1982), neither of which has been empirically demonstrated (Joyce 1991:587–98).

Instead we explain population growth, craft specialization, and agricultural intensification as the result of changes in nonelite behavioral strategies that were largely independent of direct managerial control by the elites. We argue that given the cultural and ecological setting of the Late Formative, increasing family size and agricultural production were rational strategies that allowed people to generate tribute to pay for the ritual services of rulers living in the urban centers. Craft specialization was a strategy that allowed some people to take advantage of the increasing agricultural focus of most families. Interpolity conflict and monumental art dedicated to themes of conflict were elite strategies to increase group cohesion and mobilize tribute. That these strategies were risky is perhaps demonstrated by the collapse of several Mixtec centers.

We recognize both ideological and material conditions as important and inseparable influences in the development of urban societies. Obviously, large populations with complex social organization arose in regions such as the Valley of Oaxaca because of advantageous ecological conditions, and economic factors such as craft specialization, exchange, and tribute extraction were important in their development. We argue, however, that an elite strategy of ideological manipulation was a major factor in the origin and development of urban society. Elites manipulated ideology to control religious institutions. Their special ritual role created and legitimated their political power and compelled nonelites to provide tribute, leading to increasing inequality. Elites used ideology to compel people to move to urban centers and into ecologically unstable piedmont areas, both of which had economic and ecological consequences. Elites also appear to have promoted interpolity conflict as a means of unifying people and extracting resources for military measures. While these ideological innovations appeared first in the Valley of Oaxaca, they were apparently adopted soon thereafter in the Mixteca.

During the Classic period, inequality continued to increase as elites linked high status and politico-religious authority to kinship. The nature of politico-religious power, at least in the Valley of Oaxaca, shifted from an institutional to a more personal basis (see Grove and Gillespie 1992*a*:35–36), perhaps intermediate between the ruler-centered power of the Maya lowlands (Schele and Freidel 1990, Schele and Miller 1986) and the impersonal, institutional power of Teotihuacan (Cowgill 1992*a*, *b*).

While we have focused on dominant ideologies that supported elite interests, we recognize that nonelites may have developed alternative ideologies that reflected strategies of resistance (Giddens 1979:145–50). It is possible that some of the ideological changes of the urban period were initiated by elites in response to resistance resulting from nonelite penetration of the dominant ideology. Nonelites' lack of access to the production of monumental art and other forms of enduring iconography makes it difficult to identify these strategies in the archaeological record. This highlights the need for future research that will better define social identities, especially with regard to gender, factional associations, and nonelite occupations (e.g., McCafferty and McCafferty 1994). It is possible to show, however, that the behavioral strategies of nonelites had unintended consequences. For example, agrarian communities moved into the piedmont in the Valley of Oaxaca during both Periods I and IIIa (Kowalewski et al. 1989). While these communities may have gained initially from their close association with Monte Albán, intensive agriculture led to erosion and soil depletion (Joyce and Mueller 1992, Mueller and Joyce 1993). A few centuries after both pe-

riods of piedmont expansion, many of these communities collapsed.

Elites were not immune from the long-term consequences of their behavioral strategies. While elite status increased dramatically during the Late Formative and Classic, it is possible that the ideology that legitimated their power also contributed to its sudden collapse. The collapse of Classic-period polities is not well understood, although it probably involved a combination of ecological, economic, and sociopolitical factors (Blanton 1983*a*, Culbert 1973, Winter 1989*b*). It is possible that as factors such as environmental degradation, warfare, and inequality intensified, people began to question the dominant ideology. The relatively sudden collapse of sites like Monte Albán, Cerro de las Minas, and Yucuñudahui might have occurred when people abandoned the dominant ideology as well as the rulers it supported (see Habermas 1975). The shared identity of elites might also have facilitated the collapse of many Mesoamerican polities between about A.D. 700 and 900. If the dominant ideology could be overthrown or abandoned in one region, there would be greater reason to question it in others. Regardless of the causes for decline of the urban centers, it would seem that the elite strategies that had held these polities together for centuries ceased to be effective. We do not know whether the final collapse was peaceful or violent, but it certainly would not have occurred in a vacuum. Other leaders probably took over in the resulting chaos and began to recast their ideology to support the developing political relations of the Postclassic city-states.

Comments

WENDY ASHMORE
Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa. 19104, U.S.A. (washmore@mail.sas.upenn.edu). 14 VII 95

These papers make it clear that agency, ideology, and power have come of age as foci in archaeological modeling. Two of the three sets of authors here link these developments explicitly to theoretical trends labeled as varieties of processual and postprocessual archaeologies. As important, in my view, is the degree to which these formerly minority perspectives—particularly the emphases on agency and ideology—are now incorporated as robust contributors to theory by a broadening spectrum of mainstream archaeologists. This is cutting-edge stuff, and the blade is growing stronger.

Joyce and Winter and Blanton et al. are concerned with strategies for accumulating power and manipulating ideology and the development of models invoking such strategies to account for the archaeological record of ancient social complexity. DeMarrais, Castillo, and Earle, in contrast, examine the materialization of ideology through a partitioned set of means—they outline the tools for the strategists that the others write about. All the articles are stimulating; for space reasons, I do not comment equally on the three.

Joyce and Winter and Blanton and his associates attack head-on the shortcomings of neoevolutionary theory in accounting for social change. Their points are well taken, but I do not now envision the utter demise of systems thinking or evolutionary categorization. For example, although evolutionary and similar categories do embrace much internal variability in a largely static manner, they nevertheless continue to capture regularities in the social and cultural order and generate useful inquiry as to the nature of both regularities and variation (e.g., Earle 1991*b*, Price and Brown 1985). At the same time, changing the focus of inquiry from these broad categories to actors and their behavioral strategies enables these writers to specify individual-level behavioral processes and thereby to account more fully for the diversity and dynamism in individual trajectories of social evolution.

Blanton and his colleagues' exclusionary and corporate strategies point to important organizational characteristics and developmental potentials in societies otherwise at the "same" evolutionary level. It is behaviorally important that variants and hybrids of these strategies are also implied. Indeed, Joyce and Winter demonstrate the utility of emphasizing fine-grained fluctuation in specific power strategies within a broad ideological tradition; they are also more explicit about the trigger for the sequence.

The contrasts that Blanton and his colleagues depict within Mesoamerica struck me as convergent with characterizations derived from quite different analyses by David Grove and Susan Gillespie, cited in passing by Blanton and colleagues and by Joyce and Winter. Grove and Gillespie (Gillespie 1993, Grove 1993, Grove and Gillespie 1992*a*) contrast lowland or eastern Mesoamerican (e.g., Olmec, Maya) personalization of rulership and power with a more abstract and corporate embodiment of authority in highland or western Mesoamerican societies. There are differences between the two analyses; for example, Grove and Gillespie choose to highlight the enduring differences between the two generalized traditions, whereas Blanton and his associates emphasize the potentials for change in strategy. Nevertheless, the convergent recognition of parallel distinctions is noteworthy and suggests fundamental cultural distinctions.

Blanton and his colleagues, in emphasizing the potential for shifts in strategy, note that at different times the Maya lowlands hosted both corporate and network-based polities. As they observe, the real point is that both strategies were latent; in the Maya instance, the corporate order of Chichen Itza was prefigured in the council houses of Late Classic and probably earlier times (e.g., at Copan [Fash et al. 1992]), but the exclusionary strategy prevailed in the Classic. I strongly agree with their conclusion that concerted effort should be devoted to understanding the conditions under which the two