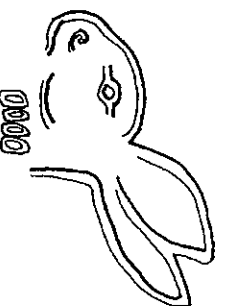


CHAPTER 1



RECONSIDERING WARFARE IN FORMATIVE PERIOD OAXACA

Andrew Workinger and Arthur A. Joyce

Archaeological research in Mesoamerica has increasingly demonstrated the different types of pre-Hispanic warfare as well as their variable causes, goals, and effects. Warfare ranged from small-scale raids and battles in the ritual domain, designed primarily to take captives for sacrifice, to large-scale military actions designed for territorial conquest that could result in political and economic domination (Brown and Stanton 2003; Freidel et al. 1993; Hassig 1988, 1992; Webster 1998). Recent archaeological and epigraphic evidence shows that the Classic Period Maya had glyphs that distinguished at least four types of warfare which varied in scale, intensity, religious significance, and political impact. At least two types of Maya warfare (*chuc'ab* and *ch'ak*) were small scale and did not involve significant demographic or economic consequences, although they were ritually and at times politically important. The nature of warfare also may have changed over time, with data suggesting an increase in scale and intensity toward the end of the Classic Period, particularly in the Maya Lowlands and during the Postclassic in the Mexican highlands. In this paper, we use this emerging perspective on pre-Hispanic warfare to consider evidence for conflict in Formative Period Oaxaca, drawing on comparative archaeological, epigraphic, and ethnohistoric investigations of the Lowland Maya and the Aztecs of Central Mexico (Figure 1.1). Warfare has long been the focus of research in Oaxaca, and the collected data are explored in the second section of this chapter. We end with an alternative approach to current highland interpretations of Late/Terminal Formative conflict, especially those concerning Monte Albán and the polity's territorial ambitions.

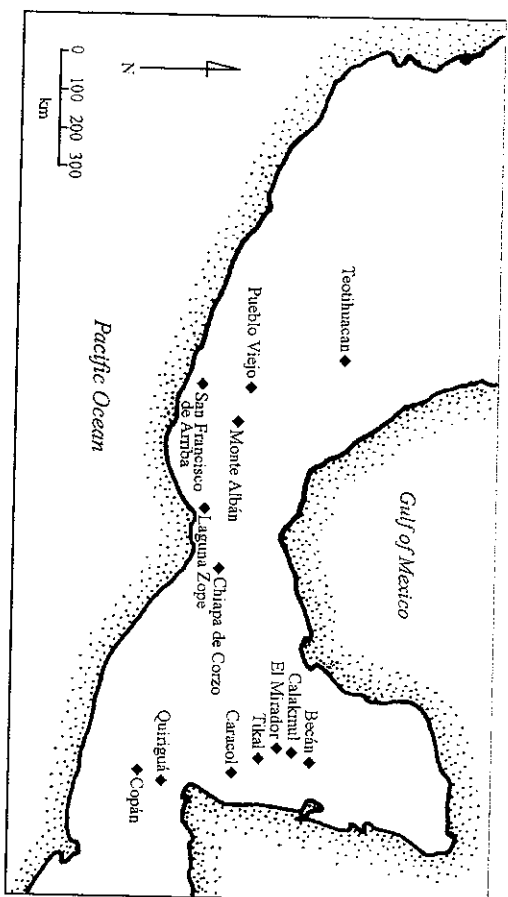


FIGURE 1.1. Map of Mesoamerica including sites mentioned in the text.

Researchers in the Oaxacan highlands, including Kent Flannery, Joyce Marcus, Charles Spencer, and Elsa Redmond, have argued that frequent, large-scale warfare was a key factor in the development of the Monte Albán state at the end of the Formative Period (Flannery and Marcus 2003; Marcus and Flannery 1996; Redmond and Spencer 2006; Spencer 2003, 2007; Spencer and Flannery 2001). According to their model, by the Terminal Formative, Monte Albán had expanded beyond the Valley of Oaxaca to form a territorial empire of some 20,000 km² (Figure 1.2). While we agree that warfare and conquest were important for sociopolitical change at the end of the Formative (for example, Joyce 2000), we argue that their model of predatory state expansion is based on a view of large-scale conflict and territorial conquest that more closely resembles modern Western traditions of warfare than the more varied patterns of conflict indicated for pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica.

We begin with a consideration of recent research on warfare practices in Mesoamerica, particularly in the Maya Lowlands and the Central Mexican highlands. This research shows that the nature, intensity, causes, and effects of warfare in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica are more variable than has been assumed, with ever finer-grained data on specific situations allowing for the detection of significant variation in the record of warfare. Contemporary debates include the degree of military involvement by Teotihuacanos in Early Classic regime change at Tikal (Coe 1999:83–84; Martin and Grube 2000:29–37; Stuart 2000), which

can be considered part of a more general debate over militarism and imperialism associated with Teotihuacan (Braswell 2003; Cowgill 1997; Santley 1989; Smith and Montiel 2001; Strak 1990). Another long-standing debate has been the degree to which Maya warfare involved large armies and territorial conquest or was more limited to ritual competition among the nobility (Freidel 1986; Webster 1998).

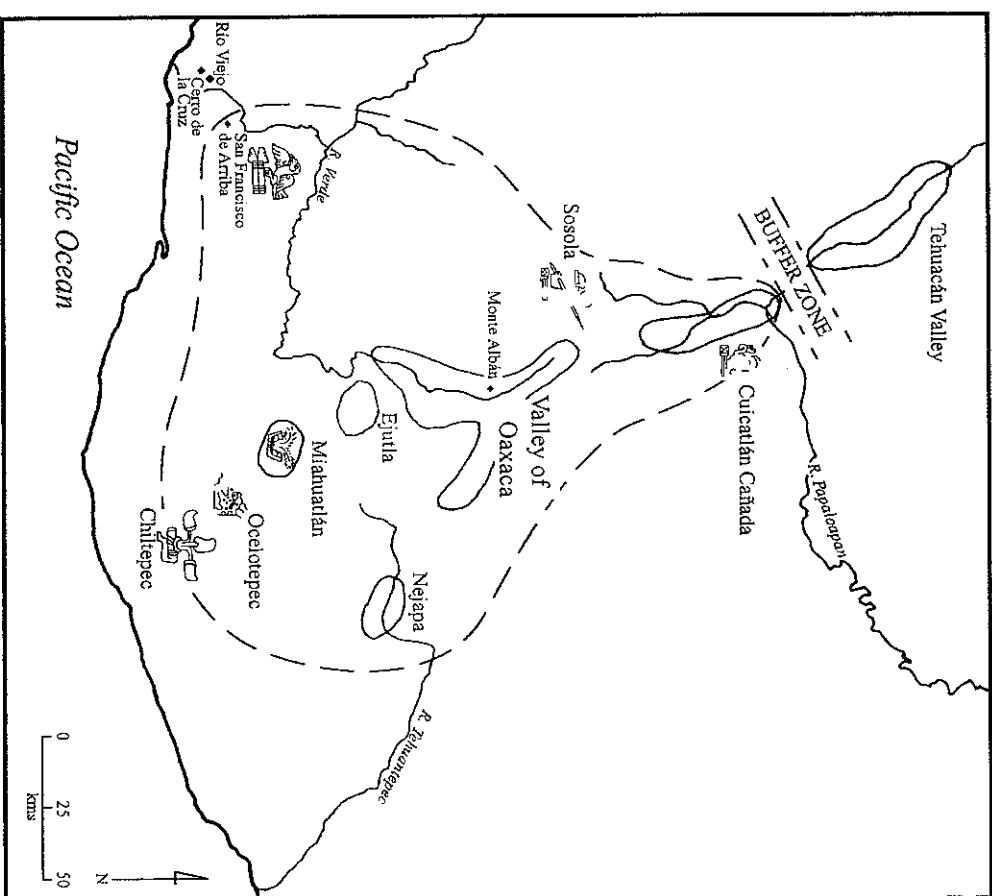


FIGURE 1.2. Proposed extent of the Monte Albán empire.
(After Marcus and Flannery 1996.)

RECENT RESEARCH ON MESOAMERICAN WAREFARE

The difficulty of resolving different opinions on pre-Hispanic warfare stems from the problem that the archaeological record is often ambiguous in terms of its associated variables (Sheets 2003; Vend 1984). Indirect indicators of conflict, such as settlement shifts to higher locations, burned structures, and changes in ceramic styles, can be the result of factors unrelated to war. Changes in settlement patterns could indicate the need to vacate lands that could otherwise be dedicated to agriculture. Changing ceramic styles might well suggest newly forged ties between distant elites or the emulation of styles from a prestigious political center (Stein 1999). Evidence for the burning of structures can be the result of accidental fires or reverential termination rituals as well as from conflict (for example, Walker 1998; Freidel and Schele 1989).

Other categories of data that are often more confidently linked to warfare are also frequently ambiguous. For example, defensive features such as walls and ditches may be designed to protect an entire populace or only site centers targeted by enemies for destruction and denigration. In some cases, earthworks originally interpreted as defensive walls are now being reconsidered. Reevaluation of the wall/earthworks surrounding the Maya center of Tikal suggests that it may not have been defensive, as was first assumed, but instead was some sort of marker of Tikal's territorial boundary (Webster et al. 2004). In the Mixteca Alta region of Oaxaca, ongoing work at the site of Pueblo Viejo de Teposcolula (*Yucundaa*) has uncovered a wall that may have served as a ceremonial pathway linking sacred caves, rather than as a defensive feature (Spoors 2005).

Iconography depicting scenes of conflict, conquest, or sacrifice often fail to provide clear evidence for the intensity of warfare or whether victory involved territorial conquest, site destruction, tribute extraction without territorial incorporation, the capture of rival elites, or other forms of conquest. While multiple independent data sets can help to tease out different forms of conflict, as Diane and Arlen Chase (2003:181) state, "data are more often than not open to multiple interpretations with careful analysis of context providing the only potential resolution of meaning." These methodological problems, which are essentially ones of equifinality, often mean that researchers' interpretations sort according to their theoretical orientations. David Webster (1993, 1998), for example, criticized views emphasizing the ritual dimensions of Maya warfare for projecting a romanticized image of the Maya based more generally on what he termed "the proliferation of mentalist models" in archaeology. In a different vein, Payson Sheets (2003) has cautioned against relying too heavily on Western views and categories of warfare for addressing the pre-Hispanic past. Sheets's point is one that we will return to later in this paper.

Investigations of warfare in ancient Mesoamerica, particularly of the Aztec and Lowland Maya states, have benefited from an approach that combines regional archaeological data with iconographic, epigraphic, and ethnohistorical evidence. This research indicates that rather than being focused solely on territorial conquest on the one hand, or ritualized combat on the other, pre-Hispanic warfare was highly variable in scale, intensity, duration, tactics, goals, and outcomes.

In the case of the Aztec empire, Hassig (1988) has argued that in addition to warfare aimed at conquest, the Aztecs initiated *xochiyaoyotl*, or flowery wars, against formidable enemies such as the Tlaxcalans and the Chalcas. Flowery wars involved low-intensity combat designed to take captives for sacrifice, obtain training for soldiers, probe the strength of the enemy, as well as to demonstrate to others the might of the Aztec army. While Hassig's interpretation of flowery wars has been questioned (Smith 1996:140), Aztec specialists agree that warfare varied in duration and intensity (Hassig 1988; Smith 2003), with outcomes including stalemates, capitulation under threat, victory on the battlefield, and the conquest and partial destruction of settlements. Both flowery wars and conquest warfare included ritualized elements, and military tactics were affected by the need to take captives for sacrifice (Smith 2003:155). This need may have been the principal cause for some battles, especially those that coincided with the inauguration of a new *tlatoani* or the dedication of a new temple. Aztec rulers were required to demonstrate their bravery and skill on the battlefield, and the time between the death of the previous *tlatoani* and the inauguration of his successor was a vital period in which to do so (Conrad and Demarest 1984; Hassig 1988).

Most defeated cities were incorporated as tributaries and not directly administered by the Aztec state, although some indigenous rulers were replaced by imperial administrators in cities near the imperial core (Hodge 1996). Farther afield, logistical and economic constraints forced the Aztecs to rely on the threat of reprisal to keep tributaries in line. Garrisons of Aztec soldiers were originally thought to have enforced tribute schedules and discouraged rebellion, although Smith (1996) finds that their locations were aimed more toward maintaining frontier boundaries than internal control. The Aztecs therefore exhibited what Schreiber (1992) terms a "mosaic of control" across the empire. Most regions within the Aztec empire were dominated indirectly through the cooperation and coercion of local rulers and therefore reflect a hegemonic, rather than a territorial, form of imperialism. Some areas, particularly in Central Mexico, were ruled directly through the imposition of administrators from the imperial core and sometimes the establishment of military garrisons, and so are consistent with a territorial form of imperialism. In certain strategic frontiers,

local rulers were kept in place, although military garrisons staffed by Mexica and/or local forces were established to monitor and defend the boundary.

In the Maya Lowlands, archaeologists have recognized for some time that there were different types of warfare and that conflict varied in intensity throughout the pre-Hispanic period. Possible evidence for warfare in the Lowlands goes back to the Middle Preclassic at Blackman Eddy and Cuella in Belize and includes the burning and destruction of public buildings (Brown and Garber 2003). Iconographic and osteological evidence of human sacrifice, almost certainly associated with warfare, is found throughout the Maya Highlands during the Middle and Late Preclassic; evidence for sacrifice is limited in the Lowlands, however (Joyce 2008). Sacrificial victims in the Maya Highlands are usually associated with rulers in both imagery and burials, but the nature of warfare associated with these sacrificial victims is unclear. The presence of earthworks and ditches at Late Preclassic sites like Tikal, Becán, and El Mirador have been used to suggest large-scale warfare (Webster 1975, 1977). There are few examples of the destruction of buildings or of warfare-related site abandonments, however, and at least in the case of Tikal, the defensive role of these features is now being questioned (Webster et al. 2004). Clark and his colleagues (2000) have suggested that the El Mirador polity may have conquered regions to the north and west, including Chiapa de Corzo in the Late Preclassic, although they admit that alternative explanations are equally plausible.

Evidence for warfare is more common during the Maya Classic Period. The archaeological and particularly the epigraphic records clearly demonstrate a variety of types of warfare by the Late Classic. Recent reviews by Chase and Chase (2003) and by Webster (2000) discuss the variable nature of Maya warfare. The Chases argue that Maya hieroglyphs reference four distinct types of warfare-related events. In their suggested order of scale and intensity, these are (1) capture events (*chucab* in Maya), usually of one or a few opposing warriors; (2) ax (*bataba*) or decapitation (*chak*) events, which refer to victory in battle, with the capture and probably the sacrifice of an important noble; (3) destruction events (*hubi*), which refer to the attainment of specific goals in warfare that suggests a substantial military victory; and (4) shell-star events, which involve territorial conquest and political domination, or conversely, a successful war of independence that can also include the capture and sacrifice of defeated nobles. Archaeological evidence supports this degree of variability, with destruction and shell-star events having the greatest economic, political, and demographic consequences. An example of a shell-star event can be seen in the victory of Caracol and Calakmul over Tikal in A.D. 562, which resulted in a period of political and demographic decline at Tikal, while Caracol grew considerably in size and

prosperity (Chase and Chase 2003:177; Martin and Grube 2000:88–90). Large-scale, destructive warfare seems to have generally increased throughout the Maya Lowlands during the Terminal Classic and into the Postclassic, with evidence of siege warfare and the destruction and sacking of sites particularly evident in the western margins of the region (Webster 2000). Probably the most famous ax event in Mesoamerican history is the capture and sacrifice of Copán's ruler, 18-Rabbit, by Quirigua. Evidence suggests that while this event had a significant impact on governmental institutions in both cities, the general populace was little affected. This ax event, despite the fact that Quirigua claimed to have conquered Copán, was most likely the result of a successful war of independence rather than one aimed at acquiring more territory, and Quirigua appears to have flourished afterward (Fash 2004:99–101).

Exactly who did the fighting when the Maya went to battle is widely debated (Demarest 1978; Freidel 1986; Webster 1998, 1999). Most evidence of warfare in the Classic Period comes from carved stone stelae and murals accompanied with hieroglyphic texts. As the nobility were the people who commissioned these monuments, it is not surprising that the histories inscribed on stelae were overwhelmingly focused on elites dressed in their fine regalia and often shown trampling on the naked bodies of captured enemies (Figure 1.3). Missing are the representations of foot soldiers—armies of commoners of sufficient numbers to suggest that Classic Maya warfare took place on a scale resembling Western forms of warfare, although battle scenes displayed on murals at Bonampak and Chichén Itzá show warriors numbering perhaps in the hundreds. Evidence for fortifications, in some cases hastily constructed, as well as for the destruction of site centers, particularly in the western Lowlands, indicates that by the Late/Terminal Classic, warfare at times involved relatively large armies of both elites and commoners. Lithic studies, however, show that at Aguateca and Copán, Late Classic Maya nobles both manufactured and used projectile points in warfare, and elites may have been more involved in warfare than commoners (Aoyama 2005). By the Postclassic and the colonial era, we have clear evidence from ethnohistory and iconography of commoners fighting alongside the nobility (Pohl and Pohl 1994). Advances in the epigraphic decipherment of Maya texts have also enhanced understandings of the ritual aspects of their warfare. Auspicious dates, often linked to the cycle of Venus (compare Lounsbury 1982; Schele and Freidel 1990), governed the timing of war, and the battles themselves may have had “highly choreographed and stylized phases, and perhaps even been prearranged in some cases” (Webster 1999:347). As with the Aztec, research on the Lowland Maya is therefore increasingly showing the great variability in pre-Hispanic warfare.

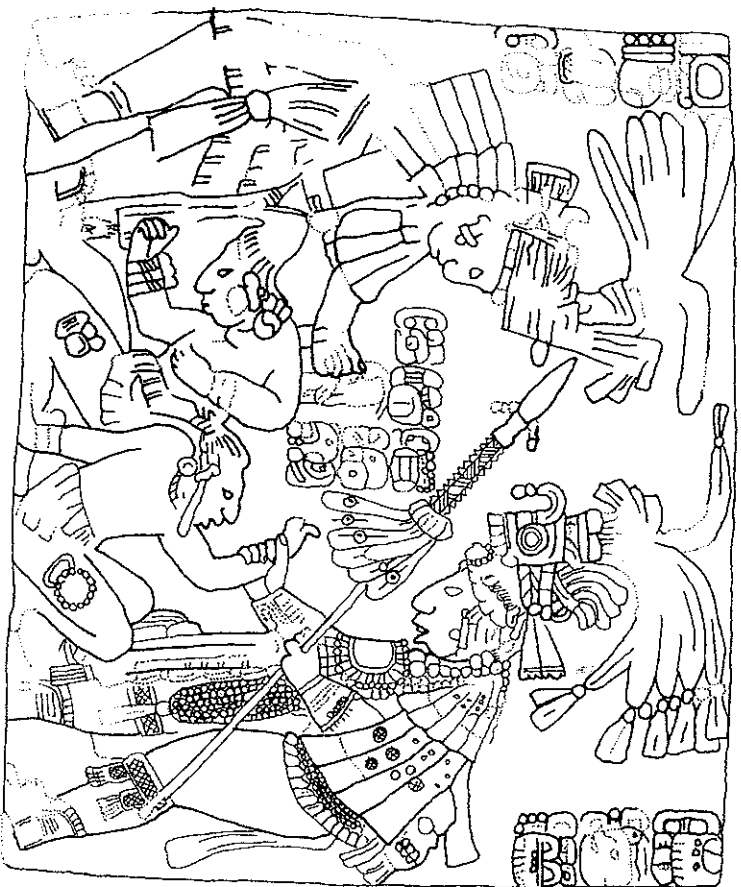


FIGURE 1.3. Yaxchilan Lintel 8 showing the site's ruler, Bird Jaguar (*right*) capturing lord Jewel Skull. Bird Jaguar's subordinate ruler, or *sahab*, is shown taking another named captive. (Redrawn from Sharer 1994.)

WARFARE IN FORMATIVE PERIOD OAXACA

Oaxaca is another region in Mesoamerica that has been a focus of recent research on pre-Hispanic warfare. Research in Oaxaca has concentrated on the Formative Period and the role of warfare in the rise of complex societies and especially the early development of the Monte Albán state in the Valley of Oaxaca. Given the multiple lines of evidence for conflict, the argument for warfare throughout the Oaxacan interior during the Late/Terminal Formative is compelling (Joyce 2003; Marcus and Flannery 1996; Spencer 2003). Possible evidence for conflict includes a shift in settlement to defensible locations, especially involving the development of regional political centers located on hilltops. Some political centers had large walls, such as at Monte Albán as well as at Cerro de las Minas in

the Mixteca Baja region and Yucuita in the Mixteca Alta. There is evidence for burned structures at Yucuita as well as at El Mogote and El Palenque in the Oaxaca Valley and at Llano Perdido in the Cuicatlán Cañada region 50 km north of Monte Albán. Probable trophy skulls have also been found at several sites in the Mixteca Alta, and Spencer (1982:236–239) recovered the remains of a skull rack at La Coyotera. Further compelling evidence of conflict in the Cuicatlán Cañada comes in the following forms: a shift in settlement patterns from the alluvium to the previously unsettled piedmont; an unburied human skeleton lying on a house floor, suggestive of rapid site abandonment; and a sparsely occupied buffer zone between the Cuicatlán Cañada and the Tehuacán Valley, suggesting a political boundary between the Cuicatlán and polities to the north.

Iconographic evidence for warfare comes mainly from Monte Albán. During the Late/Terminal Formative approximately 300 carved stones were erected on the main plaza; most were set in the walls of Building L-sub (Figure 1.4a). These carved stones have been interpreted as victims of human sacrifice (Marcus 1976; Scott 1978a), although a recent reinterpretation of the monuments from Building L-sub argues that most were shown performing auto-sacrifice (Urcid 2008). The Building L-sub program, however, includes four clear depictions of severed heads resulting from decapitation sacrifice. There is almost certainly an element of religious and ideological representation involved in these carvings, as they would have been visible to all who entered the site's main plaza, though the fact that some are accompanied by hieroglyphic names suggests that there is also a historical element. The Building L-sub program was followed late in the Late Formative or early in the Terminal Formative by the Building J tablets, or "conquest slabs" in common parlance, which have been interpreted as places that were subjugated by Monte Albán (Caso 1938, 1947). Carved monuments at the Oaxaca Valley site of Dainzú depict the ritual ballgame (Figure 1.4b), which presupposes armed conflict, the capture of prisoners, their participation in ritual combat, and their eventual sacrifice (Ort 1997, 2003).

Much of the evidence for Late/Terminal Formative Period warfare in Oaxaca has been interpreted as the result of the militaristic expansion of the Monte Albán polity. Flannery and Marcus (2003) and Redmond and Spencer (2006; Spencer 2003) argue that territorial conquest through warfare was an important causal factor in the formation of the Monte Albán state during the Late Formative. According to Flannery and Marcus (2003:6), during Monte Albán's first 400 years the polity would "fight relentlessly to subjugate their political rivals, and raiding would give rise to full-scale war." By the Terminal Formative Period, these researchers argue that Monte Albán's rulers controlled a professional army that allowed them to expand militarily outside of the Valley of Oaxaca. Based largely

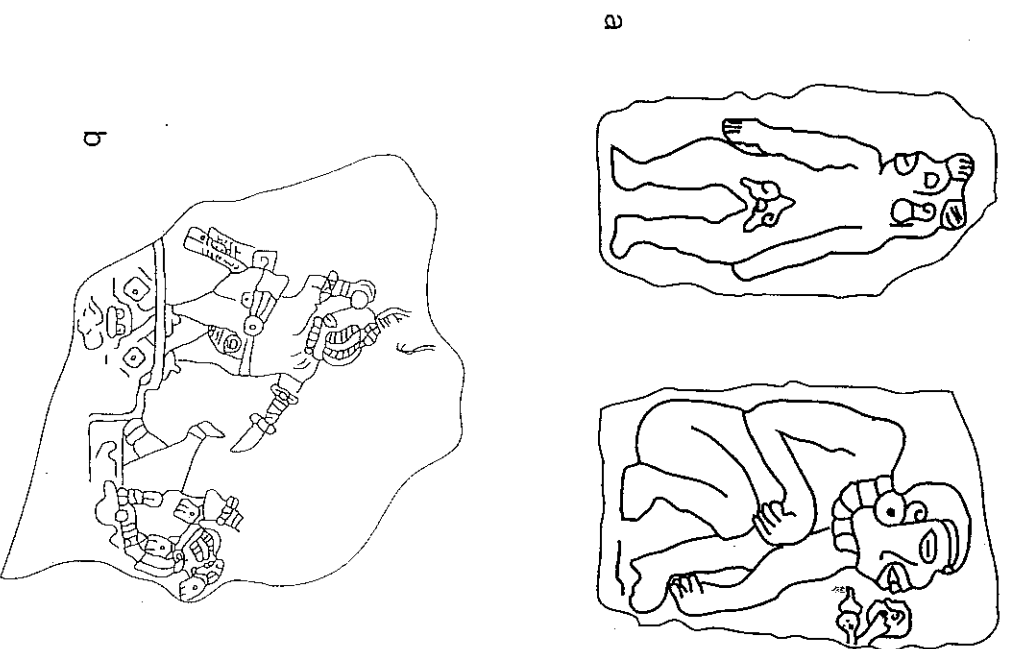


FIGURE 1.4. Late/Terminal Formative Period carved stones from Oaxaca:
a, Sculptures from Monte Albán Building L-sub (redrawn from Scott 1978b);
b, Dainzú ballplayers (redrawn from Orr 1997; fig. 2.26).

on interpretations of the localities depicted on the carved tablets from Building J, Marcus and Flannery (1996) argue that Monte Albán conquered regions as distant as 160 km and eventually dominated a territorial empire covering approximately 20,000 km². Although Marcus and Flannery (1996) recognize multiple

forms of imperial subjugation, especially colonization versus conquest, their model emphasizes a territorial form of imperialism whereby provinces were conquered militarily or colonized and then dominated through the establishment of new administrative centers staffed by Zapotecs from the Valley of Oaxaca which may have also included a military garrison. This form of imperialism has been argued for the Cuicatlan Cañada and suggested for other regions such as the lower Río Verde Valley and the area around Monte Negro in the Mixteca Alta (Marcus and Flannery 1996:198–207; Redmond and Spencer 2006).

Other archaeologists working in Oaxaca, however, disagree with this model of Monte Albán imperialism (Joyce 1991:548–717; 2003; Workinger 2002: 387–393; Zeitlin and Joyce 1999). These researchers argue that it is unlikely that Monte Albán could have dominated such an area, given the logistics required to conquer and control a territorial empire of this scale, especially in a region as rugged as Oaxaca. In addition, most regions within the proposed Monte Albán empire have either been insufficiently investigated or have failed to yield evidence for conquest and political control. Because of the relative lack of archaeological evidence for imperial conquest, except perhaps for the Cuicatlan Cañada, it is worth considering in greater detail the history of Marcus's interpretations of the Building J tablets, since they form the basis of the conquest state model.

Building J and the Conquest State Model

The Building J carvings are argued to represent particular places conquered by Monte Albán, as represented by a standardized "hill" (or place glyph) with another glyph directly above it signifying the name of a particular locale, such as the place of the rabbit (Figure 1.5). Beyond these two elements, the tablets vary, with some containing short hieroglyphic inscriptions. Another clear distinction is that most of the slabs depict an upside-down human head with eyes closed directly beneath the "hill" glyph, which is interpreted as the dead ruler of a conquered locality (Caso 1947). Building upon Caso's interpretation of conquest, Marcus argues that the carvings of Building J are "textual claims" of Monte Albán expansion (Marcus and Flannery 1996). These textual claims form the foundation of the conquest state model, but the specifics of her argument and interpretations have shifted over the last 30 years. It is worthwhile to consider how and why her views have changed in order to understand how her interpretation has slowly become reified and why it has directly led to the acceptance of a Terminal Formative conquest state and the primacy of the Zapotec empire without critical assessment (also see Uricid 1992).

In her initial article on the subject, Marcus (1976) explicitly accepted Caso's hypothesis that the Building J carvings represent the conquests of Monte Albán

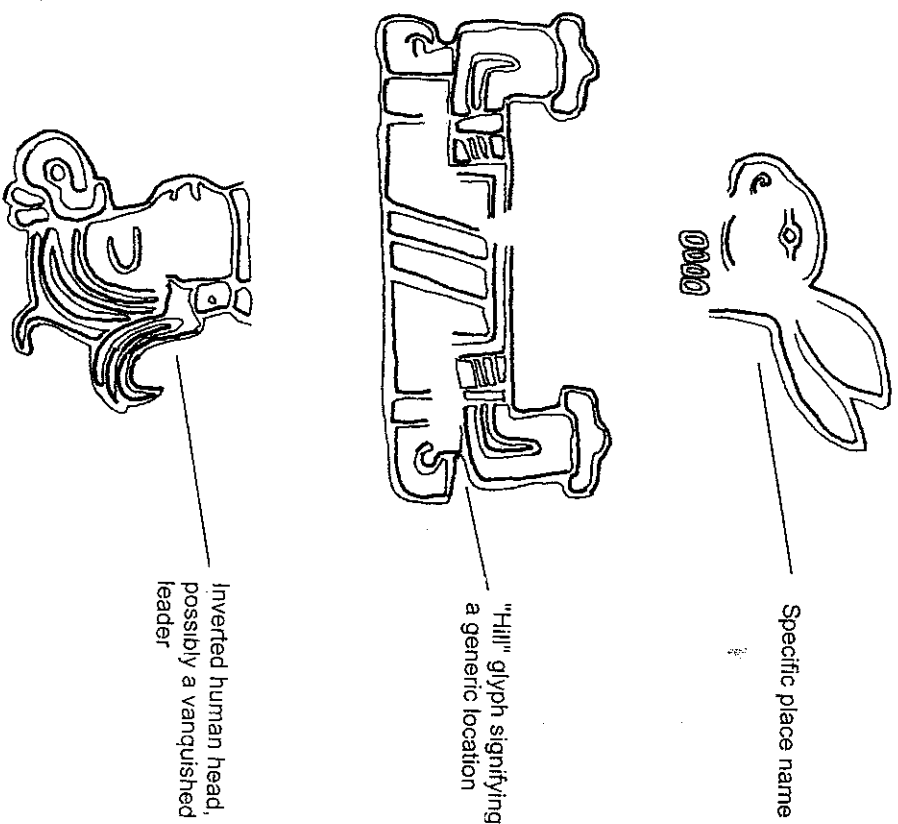


FIGURE 1.5. Common elements of the Building J carved tablets.
(Tablet 34 redrawn from García Moll et al. 1986.)

during the Terminal Formative Period. She took his interpretation one step further by attempting to correlate some of the place names on the carved stones with actual Terminal Formative sites in Oaxaca. To do so, she compared them to toponyms and their glosses from the sixteenth-century Aztec list of tributaries, the *Matricula de Tributos*, and its better-known and more complete copy, the *Codex Mendoza*.¹ Both were painted 1,500 years after the Building J tablets were carved, and their use assumes continuity in town names. Marcus (1976) found that there were five close similarities between the Oaxacan tributary towns in the

Codex Mendoza (fols. 43r–44r; Berdan and Anawalt 1997:91–93) and the Zapotec glyphs on the Building J carvings. These are (with the Nahuatl gloss from similar glyphs in the *Codex Mendoza*, followed by Marcus's proposed Oaxacan equivalents): (1) Tablet 15-Etlan, or Etla, a region in the northern arm of the Valley of Oaxaca; (2) Tablet 43-Miahuaapan, or Miahuatlan, a town 85 km south of Monte Albán;² (3) Tablet 4-Teitipac, or Teitipac, a town in the Tlacolula arm of the Valley of Oaxaca; (4) Tablet 57-Tororepec, or Tururepec, a town on the coast of Oaxaca 160 km southwest of Monte Albán; and (5) Tablet 47-Guicatlán, a town north of the Valley of Oaxaca, between it and the Tehuacán Valley. One further addition is made to Casó's interpretation in that a few of the Building J tablets lack the inverted head underneath the hill sign (for example, Tablet 43, identified by Marcus as Miahuatlan). Marcus believes that those locales capitulated without resistance to colonization or the threat of physical violence by Monte Albán (1976:129).

In 1980, and in more recent articles and a book (1983, 1984, 1992a, 1992b), Marcus returns to her hypotheses concerning the Building J tablets, although the list of identified tablets changes. The second list includes Miahuatlan, Guicatlán, and Tururepec, but omits Etla and Teitipac, adding instead Tablet 23-Ocelotepec. The removal of Etla and Teitipac reflects a change in Marcus's view as to what the carved stones were intended to represent. Originally, she wrote that the tablets chronicled *all* of the conquests of the expanding Monte Albán state. However, in this, the second article, her interpretations shift, as Marcus argues that they document only the *boundaries* of the Terminal Formative Monte Albán polity (1980). Because both Etla and Teitipac are within the Valley of Oaxaca (and would therefore represent the boundaries of a polity much smaller than the empire envisioned by Marcus), they are discarded in favor of Ocelotepec, 140 km away (Uricid 1992).

Marcus's hypothesis that the Building J tablets represent only boundaries is further developed in a 1983 article. In it, she compares them to a sixteenth-century Zapotec *lienzo* from Santiago Guevea de Humboldt, located toward the Isthmus of Tehuantepec at the foot of the Sierra Mixe (Paddock 1983; Oudijk and Jansen 2000). The *Lienzo de Guevea* was written in about 1540 in response to Spanish orders to document local land claims. It is mentioned by Marcus because of the way in which it was modeled, depicting Cerro de Guevea in the center of the map surrounded by various natural landmarks. Marcus (1983) believes that this convention is analogous to the tablets of Building J. Not necessarily sites, the places depicted on Building J could also represent natural landmarks such as mountains, rivers, or even entire regions along the frontier of the Monte Albán state.

Marcus has clearly established her methodology by 1983, and the only material changes to her argument consist of adding or dropping places presumably conquered by Monte Albán. She writes, "perhaps ten [toponyms] can be matched with actual places known today" (Marcus 1992a:176), and in her next article she introduces two more (1992b). These are Tablet 32-Sosola, northwest of the Valley of Oaxaca, and Tablet 3-Chiltepec, east of Ocelotepec toward the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Unlike Marcus's previous interpretations in which she turned to the *Codex Mendoza* for the glosses, Sosola and Chiltepec were identified by the towns' Nahuatl names ("Place of the Pierced Face" and "Hill of the Chile Plants" [Marcus and Flannery 1996:197]). It is unclear if these are Nahuatl translations of the local names or simply new names imposed by the Spanish and their Nahuatl-speaking allies in the sixteenth century. Reliance on Nahuatl designations for locations in Oaxaca is further brought into question by Smith (1973:37), who found that many Nahuatl names varied from local Mixtec ones.

The inclusion of Sosola and Chiltepec with the four other identified places forms a corridor stretching from the Cuicatlan Cañada south to the Pacific coast (Marcus 1992b), implying that Monte Albán was interested in controlling the lucrative trade passing between the Valley of Oaxaca and the Pacific coastal lowlands. It should be noted that Brockington (1966) found no evidence of Zapotec imperialism at the coastal site of Sipolite, which would have formed the terminus of Marcus's "Zapotec corridor." Slightly farther east on the southern Isthmus of Tehuantepec, investigations of Laguna Zope have identified the site as a likely supplier of marine shell to Monte Albán in the Late Formative. Return trade items from the highlands are difficult to discern, but the southern Isthmus did not receive the imported grayware ceramics found farther west in the lower Río Verde region (Zeitlin and Joyce 1999:387–388).

The six identifications introduced in Marcus (1992b) remain the same in recent publications dealing with the Building J tablets (for example, Marcus and Flannery 1996:195–199). It was not until recently, however, that the site of San Francisco de Arriba was specifically named as a boundary of the Zapotec state. This may have been in reaction to research on the floodplain of the lower Río Verde Valley, which found no evidence of conflict (Joyce 1991, 1993, 2003). San Francisco de Arriba, because it had only been briefly visited by archaeologists (DeCicco and Brockington 1956:51–60), still represented a possible site of conquest. But offering interpretations of the Building J carvings is only the first step for those researchers interested in possible Late/Terminal Formative Zapotec expansion. The second step consists of investigating the identified places for evidence of warfare and/or conquest and imperial control.

Archaeological Evidence for the Conquest State Model

Archaeological research in most of Monte Albán's hypothesized empire is either insufficient to support a Zapotec takeover or directly refutes the imperialism model. The conquest model put forth by Marcus and Flannery (1996) includes such sites as Ocelotepec and Chiltepec in the region to the south and east of the Valley of Oaxaca, a region yet to be explored archaeologically (there are actually at least 10 communities named Ocelotepec clustered in the southern Sierra). Miahuatlán, a region 85 km south of the Valley of Oaxaca, is another community claimed to have been incorporated into a Terminal Formative Zapotec empire. And, although a survey of the area has been completed (Markman 1981), the sampling method utilized and the lack of comprehensive excavations make the evaluation of a Zapotec imperial presence difficult.

The best case for a region conquered by Monte Albán comes from the Cuicatlan Cañada region, where Spencer and Redmond (Redmond 1983; Spencer 1982; Spencer and Redmond 1997, 2001) initiated a survey and excavation project to test Marcus's reading of Building J Tablet 47. They argue that several lines of evidence demonstrate military conquest followed by Zapotec imperial administration of the region. The surface survey showed a dramatic shift, at ca. 300 B.C., in settlement patterns from the high alluvium to defensible piedmont locations. The site of Llano Perdido was burned and suddenly abandoned. Excavations at La Coyotera exposed the remains of a skull rack, possibly exhibiting victims of warfare or sacrifice. Conquest by Monte Albán is inferred from similarities in ceramic styles and from a Oaxaca Valley-style tomb eroding from the surface at the fortified site of Quiotepec, which was argued to have been a Zapotec administrative outpost supported by a military garrison. Survey data also showed an unoccupied buffer zone separating the Cañada and the Tehuacán Valley to the north, presumably marking the frontier of Monte Albán control. New forms of political organization were inferred from changes in public architecture and settlement patterns. Spencer (1982:221–231) suggests that the development of irrigation was designed to produce surpluses in the form of tropical crops for tribute payments to Monte Albán.

While Spencer and Redmond provide a strong case for warfare in the Cuicatlan Cañada, the identification of Monte Albán as an imperial conqueror of the region can be questioned. Most damaging has been Urcid's (1994) demonstration that the indigenous Cuicatec name for the region, *Yivacu* or "Hill of the River of Houses," differs from the Aztec *Cuicatlan* or "Place of the Song" which Marcus (1976, 1983) relied on to identify the place shown on the Building J slab. Marcus's reliance on Aztec names recorded in the *Codex Mendoza* 1,500 years

after the Building J tablers were carved is a significant problem for all of the place attributions that she has proposed. The archaeological evidence for a Zapotec presence can also be questioned, since there were close affinities in ceramic styles both before and after the hypothesized conquest (Spencer and Redmond 1982), showing that there was not a dramatic shift in ceramic styles concurrent with the presumed takeover. The Zapotec-style tomb at Quiotepec dates to the Classic Period (Pareyón 1960:101–102), postdating the hypothesized conquest and period of political domination by Monte Albán. While it is possible that the Cuicatlan Cañada was conquered by Monte Albán, the subsequent territorial domination of the region can be questioned. It is also likely the Cuicatlan Cañada engaged in warfare with regions other than the Valley of Oaxaca, since there is evidence for contemporaneous interpolity warfare in both the Mixteca Alta and Mixteca Baja regions, immediately west of the Cuicatlan Cañada, and in the Tehuacán Valley to the north (Joyce 1991:558–567). Communities in the Cuicatlan Cañada may have periodically gone to war with polities in a number of different nearby regions, which is a pattern similar to that seen at the time of the Spanish Conquest (Hunt 1972:208–212).

Another region that highland researchers include in the conquest state model and which has been the focus of intensive, long-term investigation is the lower Río Verde region on the Pacific coast. Singled out for its gray-ware ceramics resembling those from the Valley of Oaxaca as well as for its proximity to the Late Postclassic site of Tututepec, whose toponym is similar to one found on a carved tabor from Building J, San Francisco de Arriba is purported to have been the southernmost Zapotec outpost (Marcus and Flannery 1996). A project combining broad excavations with full-coverage survey was undertaken specifically to test claims of highland conquest (Workinger 2002).

Excavations at San Francisco de Arriba and neutron activation analysis of ceramics revealed that trade with the highlands was abundant, particularly in the Late Formative, yet there was nothing to suggest conflict along the lines of that found in the Cuicatlan Cañada (Spencer and Redmond 1997). San Francisco de Arriba had reached its maximum extent of 94.51 ha in the Late Formative Period and, given its size and internal complexity, had probably reached the level of a chiefdom. Its size, combined with the rugged mountainous terrain separating it from the Valley of Oaxaca, would have made San Francisco de Arriba a difficult target for imperial expansion. Survey of the valley surrounding the site revealed continuity in settlement between the Late Formative and the Terminal Formative, an indication that the inhabitants felt no threat from Monte Albán and also that there was no economic reorganization on the heels of a Zapotec conquest, as was argued for the Cuicatlan Cañada (Spencer 1982).

Excavations in the most defensible areas of the site revealed residential structures dating prior to, during, and after the time of proposed conquest rather than fortifications one might expect from a threatened community (Workinger 2002). Further excavations in and around the site's main plaza failed to find evidence of Zapotec imperial administrators. Instead, the elite of San Francisco de Arriba appear to have been closely allied with fellow nobility at Río Viejo, sharing ceramics imported from the Valley of Oaxaca in the Late Formative, which all but ended by the Terminal Formative—precisely at the time when Zapotecs supposedly arrived on the coast. The Zapotecs had conquered San Francisco de Arriba, one would expect an increase in evidence for exchange with the Oaxaca Valley. Construction of the acropolis at San Francisco de Arriba began at an impressive scale in the Late Formative, further indicating that the community would have posed a hurdle to Zapotecs intent on acquiring coastal trade goods.

San Francisco de Arriba decreased in size during the Terminal Formative Period in response to the rise of a massive regional center on the western side of the Río Verde. There, the site of Río Viejo reached a sprawling 225 ha and was located on the floodplain with apparently little thought given to defense against foreign invasion (Joyce 2003, 2005). Throughout the lower Río Verde region, full-coverage surveys have found largely continuous occupations in the Late and Terminal Formative, and excavations at 13 Late/Terminal Formative Period coastal sites have yet to uncover indications of violence (for example, large-scale burning and/or skeletons exhibiting traumatic injuries), the “swamping” of local ceramic assemblages with highland styles, or the fortifications and the administrative buildings that would accompany territorial conquest. Neither is there evidence for an economic reorganization that might suggest the region had been converted to a tributary state supplying the Valley of Oaxaca with coastal goods such as marine shell, salt, animal pelts and feathers, cacao, and cotton (for extensive discussion of evidence bearing on Zapotec conquest of the lower Río Verde Valley, see Barber 2005; Joyce 1991, 2003; Workinger 2002; Zeitlin and Joyce 1999). The regional survey and excavation data do not indicate a shift to defensible piedmont locations or a disruption of political organization suggestive of Zapotec conquest and domination. The percentage of the occupational area in the piedmont within the 152-km² full-coverage survey zone fluctuated from 43 percent in the Late Formative to 20 percent in the early Terminal Formative to 38 percent in the late Terminal Formative, so there were actually fewer people living in defensible piedmont locations at the time of proposed conquest. Population and indications of social complexity also increased steadily through the Late/Terminal Formative, with the occupational area in the survey zone increasing from

297 ha in the Late Formative to 699 ha by the end of the Terminal Formative and the regional settlement hierarchy increasing from three to five tiers.

In addition to the lack of archaeological support for territorial conquest and political control in most areas of the hypothesized Monte Albán empire, it is unlikely that Monte Albán could have dominated an area of 20,000 km² given the logistics required to conquer and control a territorial empire of this scale, especially in a region as rugged as Oaxaca. Hassig (1988) estimates that a large pre-Hispanic army could have traveled on average 19 km a day, and probably somewhat less through very mountainous terrain. With San Francisco de Arriba situated 160 km south of Monte Albán, it would have taken the Zapotecs eight or nine days to arrive. Provisioning this far from home would have been a major issue, as it is far from clear that the Zapotecs had allies this far south (Workinger 2004) and foraging is not feasible for a sizable military force in such mountainous terrain. Even with porters dedicated to carrying food and nothing else, eight days of travel would probably have been the limit (Hassig 1988:64), with no provisions left for the time engaged in battle nor for the return march home.

Recent Arguments for the Conquest of Coastal Oaxaca

Recently several proponents of the conquest state model have contested our arguments that the lower Río Verde was not incorporated into a Monte Albán empire (Balkansky 1998:469–472; 2001; Redmond and Spencer 2006; Spencer 2007). The thrust of their argument is that conquest and imperial control over the lower Río Verde Valley is shown by significant frequencies of cream-ware ceramics imported from the Oaxaca Valley to the site of San Francisco de Arriba and evidence for a massacre at Cerro de la Cruz. These arguments rely on a brief reconnaissance by DeCicco and Brockington (1956) at San Francisco de Arriba as well as summaries of our research that include many obvious mistakes and omissions of key evidence. We urge scholars to consider the primary sources of evidence (for example, Joyce 1991, 1994, 1999; Joyce et al. 1998; Workinger 2002) rather than problematic characterizations of our work. While we have previously responded to some of the arguments contesting our interpretations (Joyce 2003; Joyce et al. 2000), recent articles by Redmond and Spencer (2006; Spencer 2007) expand misrepresentations of our work and require a response.

Redmond and Spencer (2006; Spencer 2007) cite the results of the reconnaissance by DeCicco and Brockington (1956) to argue that cream wares at San Francisco de Arriba were identical to those from Monte Albán, indicating an imperial takeover. Workinger (2002:355), however, recovered only a single redeposited cream-ware sherd during six months of survey and excavation. In the minds of

some researchers, cream wares appear to be the new gray wares. It was the latter pottery that was once claimed to mark the territorial extent of Monte Albán (Marcus and Flannery 1996), yet because of its ubiquity in Oaxaca during the Terminal Formative Period, that argument has fallen out of favor. Cream wares, on the other hand, were manufactured only in Atzompa, a site a few kilometers from Monte Albán in the Valley of Oaxaca, and are distinguished by their feldspathic temper and compositional chemistry (Joyce et al. 2006:582). Their presence in high frequencies would suggest strong ties with the Zapotecs at Monte Albán.

While San Francisco de Arriba has been singled out for Zapotec conquest or colonization (Marcus and Flannery 1996), highland archaeologists have consistently ignored the site's larger social and political context (for example, Marcus and Flannery 1996:201). San Francisco de Arriba is located in a secondary valley but shares ceramic and architectural styles, sources of obsidian, and patterns of interaction with other sites in the lower Río Verde Valley, including Cerro de la Cruz and Río Viejo. Spencer (2007:68–69) suggests that the scale of the excavations and survey might have caused Workinger to miss the cream-ware sherds at San Francisco de Arriba. The 124 m³ of excavated material (Workinger 2002:97) should, however, reveal a far more representative sample than the 28 rim sherds (including four purported cream wares) from surface collections that DeCicco and Brockington (1956:56) made over the course of a few days and which Spencer (2007) favors over Workinger's (2002) dissertation project. Moreover, the survey of the Río San Francisco valley encompasses only a portion of the larger 152-km² full-coverage regional survey (Joyce 2003). Valley of Oaxaca cream wares were not found in surface collections at other sites in the lower Río Verde, and extensive excavations at Cerro de la Cruz and Río Viejo have recovered only three imported cream-ware rim sherds from unmixed deposits out of a total of 7,781 rims, for a proportion of 0.0004 (compare with Spencer 2007: table 3.1).

DeCicco and Brockington (1956:55), in consultation with highland archaeologist John Paddock, describe the cream-ware sherds from San Francisco de Arriba as fitting "perfectly in the classification of Monte Albán." Spencer (2007) assumes that these sherds were from vessels imported from Atzompa, while we find the wording of DeCicco and Brockington (1956:55) to be ambiguous. Based on the illustrated examples in DeCicco and Brockington (1956:57), they were likely referring to what we call fine brown wares in the lower Río Verde Valley ceramic typology (Joyce 1991:130–132; Workinger 2002:255). The illustrated sherds do not resemble the cream wares found in the Valley of Oaxaca (Caso et al. 1967:44–49). Indeed, the cream-ware designation appears to have been applied to a wide range of ceramic pastes during the coastal reconnaissance of DeCicco and Brockington (1956). DeCicco and Brockington (1956) distinguish

between fine and coarse cream wares and report collecting fine cream wares from the site of Cerro de los Pájaros, 5 km southwest of San Francisco de Arriba, where they included examples painted with polychrome decoration (DeCicco and Brockington 1956:64). More recent investigators in the lower Verde have classified this type of paste as a locally made fine brown ware (Leyne 2007:257–268). Coarse cream wares most likely refer to our coarse brown wares, which are tempered with large inclusions of granodiorite, the local bedrock (compare with DeCicco and Brockington 1956: lám. V; Joyce et al. 1998: figs. 2.7, 2.8). We believe that this may have led Paddock to mistakenly label them as cream wares.

Redmond and Spencer (2006:376; Spencer 2007) continue to cite and expand upon Balkansky's (1998) erroneous interpretation of Late Formative burials from Structure 1 at Cerro de la Cruz as a massacre, despite clear evidence that the burials had been interred in a communal cemetery used over the course of at least several generations (see Joyce 1991, 1994, 2003; Joyce et al. 1998). For example, Balkansky (2001:560) states that "the still-articulated bodies, moreover, are piled together in rooms without apparent disturbance," and Redmond and Spencer (2006:376) claim that the burials from Cerro de la Cruz were found lying on the uppermost floor of Structure 1. Published descriptions of the stratigraphy clearly show that the burials were interred *beneath* the uppermost two floors of Structure 1 (Joyce 1991:213–214; 1994:158; Joyce et al. 1998:65). Balkansky (1998) and Spencer (2007) also ignore considerable evidence for sequential intentional interments in Structure 1 as well as in other burials on the terrace on which Structure 1 was built (Joyce 1991, 1994, 2005; Joyce et al. 1998). The burials in Structure 1 included articulated primary interments oriented within 10 degrees of the cardinal directions, and disturbed and/or secondary burials (Figure 1.6). There were frequent instances of later burials having truncated earlier ones, showing that they were interred over a significant period of time, probably several generations. An analysis from the southern half of Structure 1, where stratigraphic relationships among burials could be clearly discerned, indicates that there were between 6 and 21 separate burial events (Joyce 1991:732–739). Likewise, Spencer's (2007:70) discussion of nine individuals interred one on top of the other along a section of the wall retaining the terrace on which Structure 1 was built omits the evidence of stratigraphic breaks and disturbances of earlier burials, which demonstrates that these interments involved six distinct burial events over a significant period (some were multiple interments; Joyce 1991:252–253, 339–340, 740–744).

Osteological analyses of the Cerro de la Cruz material have failed to yield evidence of traumatic wounds (Alexander Christensen, personal communication 2001; Joyce 1991: appendix 1). It is also puzzling as to why these researchers

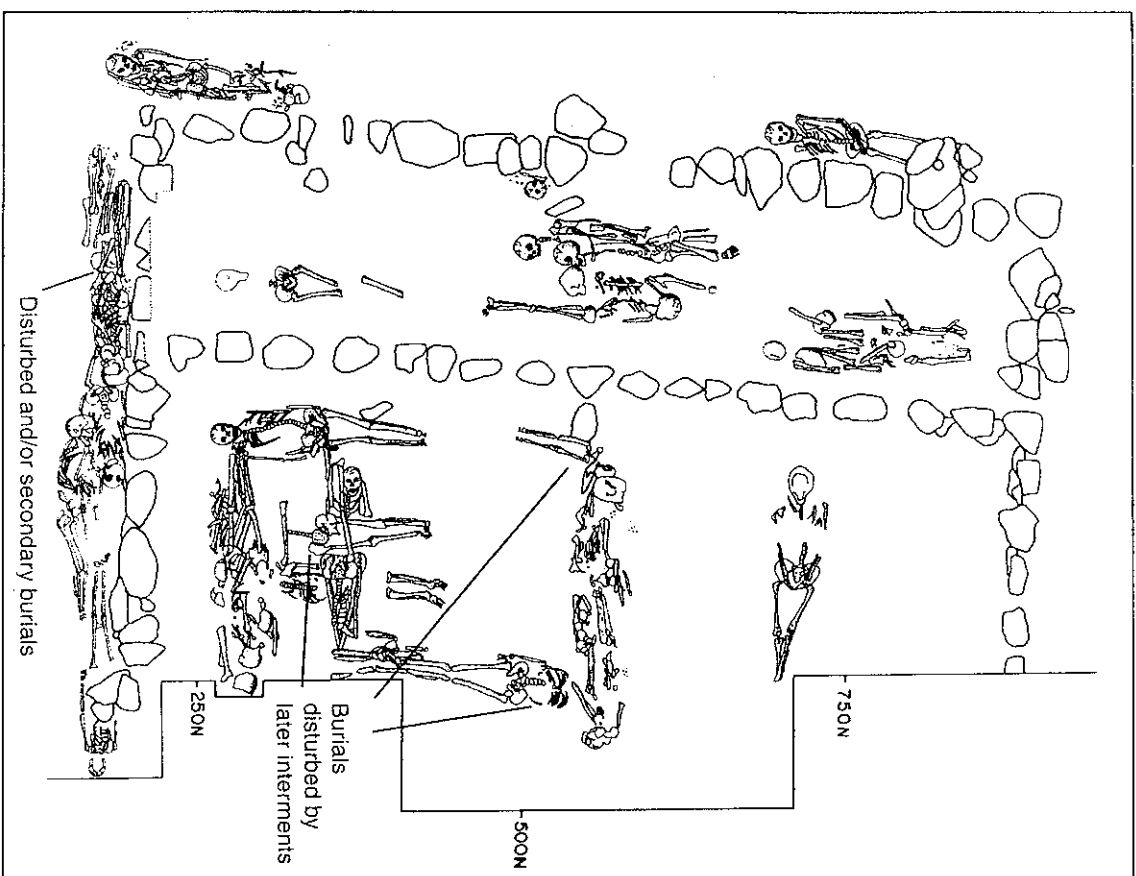


FIGURE 1.6. Plan of Structure 1 cemetery at Cerro de la Cruz, showing primary and secondary interments as well as skeletons disturbed by later burials.

(Balkansky 2001:560; Spencer 2007:69–70) believe that the absence of grave goods, the large number of interments, an age profile consisting almost entirely of

adults, and evidence of "intensive funerary activity" are inconsistent with a cemetery. Late/Terminal Formative burials found throughout the lower Río Verde Valley rarely have grave offerings (see Barber 2005; Joyce 1991, 1999). Large numbers of interments and intensive funerary activities seem to us to be defining characteristics of cemeteries. Joyce (1991:255; 1994:158; Joyce et al. 1998:65) estimates the rate of interment in Structure 1 to have been one every 3.7 years, which does not seem unusual for a communal cemetery. The age profile of the Cerro de la Cruz cemetery, with its preponderance of adults, is consistent with other Formative cemeteries in Oaxaca and suggests that only people who had reached adulthood were allowed to be interred in the cemetery (see Joyce 1991:255; 1994:158; Joyce et al. 1998:65). Redmond and Spencer (2006:376; Spencer 2007) also ignore the late Terminal Formative cemetery excavated by Barber (2005) at Yügü in the lower Río Verde Valley, demonstrating a long-term tradition in the use of communal cemeteries (see Barber and Joyce 2007).

Spencer (2007:70–71) further suggests that there is "considerable evidence for burning" associated with Structure 1, implying that the building may have been destroyed in an attack. While floors associated with three of the five building phases of Structure 1 exhibited burned patches (ranging from 0.3 to 1.5 m²), and there were remains of one fired adobe and small quantities of burned daub (Joyce 1991:182–183, 297–299), we view these data as better explained by cooking and/or the burning of incense associated with mortuary ceremonies, rather than by the destruction of the building by fire (compare Spencer 1982:70). Spencer (2007:70–71) further obfuscates matters when he argues that "[s]everal areas of charcoal are located as features on the plan of Structure 1; some appear much too large and irregular to have been simple hearths (Joyce, Winter, and Mueller 1998: fig. 3.3). One of these large charcoal concentrations is Elemento 1." *Elemento* or Feature 1, however, is clearly described by Joyce (1994:152) as a large hearth "containing deposits of burned wood, ash, and fire-altered rock" that was intruded 30 to 40 cm into the patio (that is, Feature 1 was not found in Structure 1). Structure 1 was part of an architectural complex on the uppermost terrace at Cerro de la Cruz that also included a granite flagstone patio, three storerooms (Structures 2–4), and a possible residence (Structure 5). We assert that the patio, large hearth (Feature 1), storerooms, and cemetery were part of a public area where communal mortuary ceremonies and ritual feasting were carried out. Spencer (2007:71) is also incorrect when he writes that Cerro de la Cruz was largely abandoned at the end of the Late Formative, since survey data show an increase in settlement from 1.0 ha in the Late Formative to 1.5 ha in the Terminal Formative, and excavations exposed numerous Terminal Formative features (Joyce 1991:236–240).

Given the evidence (for example, Barber 2005; Barber and Joyce 2007; Joyce 1991, 1994, 1999, 2003; Joyce et al. 1998; Levine 2002; Workinger 2002),³ we find it highly unlikely that the lower Verde region was subjugated by Monte Albán via large-scale conquest and/or colonization or that Zapotecs established an administrative center in the region (see Smith and Montiel 2001:270 for a concurring opinion). We leave open the possibility that the lower Verde may have been involved in less intensive and less archaeologically visible forms of conflict that could have occasionally involved Monte Albán, although there are no data as yet that support this hypothesis. In the next section, we consider alternatives to the conquest state model in the Valley of Oaxaca, where we agree that there is evidence for warfare.

ALTERNATIVES TO LARGE-SCALE CONQUEST WARFARE

Regardless of one's position in relation to the debate over Monte Albán imperialism, the focus has been on evidence of territorial conquest, including large-scale military actions and the establishment of administrative and military garrisons to maintain control of subjugated provinces. Few researchers have considered the possibility that Late/Terminal Formative Period warfare in Oaxaca may have been variable in scale, intensity, and impact, like the patterns found with Aztec and Maya polities. In fact, it is instructive to keep in mind that territorial conquest followed by long-term political domination of the subjugated region was rare in the Maya Lowlands and even in the case of the much larger and militarily organized Aztec empire. Such domination would have been extremely costly in terms of both labor and the resources necessary to maintain garrisoned troops.

Alternative interpretations of the Oaxacan data suggest a more varied pattern of conflict. For example, Spencer and Redmond (2001; Spencer 2003) have convincingly argued that the site of El Mogote in the southern arm of the Oaxaca Valley was attacked and its main plaza partially burned by Monte Albán ca. 300 B.C. The site center was then relocated to a more defensible position at the site of El Palenque, and a defensive wall was built, although the majority of the populace remained outside the wall at El Mogote. Spencer and Redmond (2001) show how architecture and ceramics at both sites continued to diverge from patterns seen at Monte Albán for at least two more centuries, suggesting that the area continued to resist incorporation into the Zapotec polity. At ca. 20 B.C. the El Palenque site center was burned and the site abandoned, again apparently as the result of an attack by Monte Albán. By focusing on these instances of abandonment and destruction, it appears as if warfare were large-scale and "relentless." On the other hand, the fact that the inhabitants of El Mogote and El Palenque were able to hold

out for at least 300 years against the much larger polity of Monte Albán indicates that warfare may not always have been so large-scale, destructive, and relentless. Monte Albán was more than six times the size of the combined El Mogote/El Palenque site, and estimates suggest that almost 70 percent of the valley's population was concentrated near Monte Albán during the Late Formative. If warfare involved large armies, including both nobles and commoners, it is unlikely that El Mogote/El Palenque could have held out for such a long period given Monte Albán's demographic advantage.

The almost 3-km-long wall surrounding much of the main plaza at Monte Albán can also be questioned as evidence supporting a model of large-scale warfare. During the Late Formative, Monte Albán was home to approximately 15,000 people (Blanton 1978), and there were an estimated 28,500 people living in the Central and Etla areas of the Valley of Oaxaca (that is, those under the control of Monte Albán; Kowalewski 1983). While still not in complete control of the Valley of Oaxaca (see Spencer and Redmond 2001), Monte Albán had no rivals capable of mounting a serious threat if warfare involved the kinds of large-scale engagements envisioned by some scholars. Conversely, by controlling the flow of people into the city, the wall could still have served a defensive function as long as warfare was restricted to the nobility and was more rule-based (see Orr and Koontz, this volume; Introduction) than the kind of all-out aggression fought by large-scale professional armies envisioned by Marcus, Flannery, Spencer, and others. If wars were fought by smaller forces intent not on territorial conquest but on the taking of elite captives and the destruction of important political and religious buildings, then Monte Albán's nobility might still have faced significant threats that were discouraged and/or defended against through construction of a defensive wall around the site center. Rather than being solely defensive, the wall may also have been designed to control the flow of people from surrounding communities into the site during important ceremonies or for economic activities (Blanton 1978:52). The wall might then embody some degree of tension between Monte Albán's nobility and commoners within the polity. It is possible that the wall also embodied ideological messages by underscoring the idea of an external threat, real or imagined (Joyce and Winter 1996). For Mississippian chieftons of the American Southeast, Anderson (1994) indicates that the continual warfare recounted by the members of the De Soto expedition may have been a tool used to reinforce elite status and enhance their ability to control by effectively circumscribing the commoner population. The leadership at Monte Albán during the Formative may have taken the same approach to conflict, using it to secure their elevated status as much as a means of territorial expansion. Of course, the wall probably was used for a variety of purposes, which changed through time. At pres-

ent, the history of the construction and use of the wall is known only from survey and a single test trench (Blanton 1978:52); future research might support or refute some of these alternatives.

The iconographic data from Monte Albán can be interpreted as indicating variation in militarism. Stylistic and stratigraphic analyses of the Building L-sub monuments and the carved slabs set into the foundations of Building J show that they overlapped in time as coherent iconographic programs prior to their dismantling at the end of the Formative (Scott 1978a; Urcid 1994, 2008). The Dainzú ballplayers also overlap in time with the Building L-sub and Building J carvings. Late/Terminal Formative Period iconography therefore seems to foreground different elements of conflict. The Building J tablets are interpreted as representations of conquered places, some apparently including the decapitated head of the site's ruler. The Building L-sub and Dainzú monuments focus more on individuals than on conquered places. At least four and perhaps most of the Building L-sub monuments represent sacrificial victims, presumably captured in battle. As argued by Orr (1997, 2003), the Dainzú monuments depict one-on-one confrontations involving ritual combat, with victorious ballplayers dominating defeated ones. The Dainzú ballplayers are elaborately attired and probably represent nobles who were sacrificed once they had been defeated in ritual combat in the context of the ballgame. Since the ballplayers in the Dainzú images appear on place signs, they may also have been associated with competing polities and might represent conflict analogous to Maya *ax* events. Monument J-41 at Monte Albán, which does not appear to belong to either the original Building L-sub or the Building J program, depicts a ruler of Monte Albán in the act of decapitation sacrifice (Urcid and Winter 2003). In addition, while the interpretation of the Building J carvings as documents of conquest is plausible, it is not clear that the "victories" referenced on the tablets were territorial in nature. The different carved elements in the Building J slabs might reflect variation in the intensity and scale of combat, perhaps analogous to the *ax* and capture events in the Maya Lowlands. It is also possible that the tablets from Building J are not militaristic, but instead celebrate political or economic alliances or memorialize dead warriors (Javier Urcid, personal communication 2006).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the comparative data from other regions of Mesoamerica as well as on the archaeological and iconographic record from Oaxaca, we question whether territorial conquest was the only form of warfare and whether it was as pervasive as Marcus, Flannery, and others have argued. The conquest state model's singular focus on

frequent, large-scale warfare brings to mind Payson Sheets's (2003) cautions against an overreliance on modern Western conceptions of warfare and territorial conquest. This type of large-scale, unrelenting warfare with professional armies bent on territorial conquest and political control may be so compelling because it reflects our own history and cultural assumptions about the nature and causes of war. The commitment to this singular Western view of warfare may explain why proponents of the conquest state model continue to insist that regions such as the lower Río Verde Valley were conquered and administered by Monte Albán (Redmond and Spencer 2006; Spencer 2003) despite 20 years of field research that has found no evidence to support such a claim (Joyce 2003; Workinger 2002).

Current models of warfare in Formative Oaxaca are also heavily evolutionist, arguing that peaceful Archaic forager farmers gave rise to agricultural villages, with low-intensity raiding, and then raiding intensified with the advent of chiefdoms and gave rise to full-scale war and imperialistic conquest with the rise of the state (Flannery and Marcus 2003; Redmond and Spencer 2006; Spencer 2003; compare Marcus 1992a). In their model, this latter form of war persists until the Spanish Conquest; archaeologists have cited early colonial ethnohistories, particularly the writings of Fray Francisco de Burgoa (1989a, 1989b), in arguing for this type of intensive, large-scale conquest warfare at the time of the conquest. It seems as if the Monte Albán conquest state model suggests that cultural evolution leads inexorably toward modern, Western forms of warfare.

Yet a closer reading of Burgoa's writings suggests a similar range of variability in Oaxacan warfare practices at the time of the conquest, as has been indicated for pre-Hispanic Aztec and Maya polities. In addition to mentioning instances of pre-warfare involving "fuego y sangre" (fire and blood), he also states that "the motives for wars generally among the Indians, were not pillaging or taking of tribute, they were only occasions for fighting and vengeance" (Burgoa 1989a: 376; also see Dahlgren 1990:154–160; translation by the authors). This is very similar to ethnohistoric reports of conflict from the southeastern United States: "Almost all the provinces that these Spaniards traversed were at war with each other. . . . One should know that this was not a conflict of force with an organized army or with pitched battles, except in rare instances, or a conflict instigated by the lust and ambition of some lords to seize the estates of others" (Vega in Anderson 1994:65). Likewise, Mary Elizabeth Smith identifies three variants of the Late Postclassic Mixtec glyph for conquest, perhaps suggesting variation in conflict (Smith 1973:33–34).

In considering the comparative data on pre-Columbian warfare in Mesoamerica as well as the archaeological and ethnohistoric evidence from Oaxaca, we question whether intensive, large-scale conquest warfare was as important or frequent as is assumed by the Monte Albán conquest state model.⁴ Our view of the evidence is that Monte Albán may have controlled a much smaller hegemonic

empire, subjugating weak polities within and immediately surrounding the Oaxaca Valley and perhaps at times raiding more distant areas. Indeed, as Marcus (1992a:353) cautions, "We have perhaps overlooked the significance of small-scale raids [in Mesoamerica], partly because it is more difficult to detect them archaeologically, and partly because we have used Aztec imperial expansion as the 'ideal model' or standard by which we evaluate the impact of other kinds of military activity." Taking heed of this warning, it is clear that Oaxacan archaeologists need to consider a broader range of warfare practices, similar to what has been found in other regions of Mesoamerica.

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NOTES

- 1 Marcus's methodology assumes that the iconicity of the signs on the Building J slabs is transparent, which leads to an obvious semantic reading. Caso (1947:25, 1965:938–939) and Urcid (1992:61) caution that Zapotec script, like other Mesoamerican writing systems, may have had phonetic elements that resist such a transparent reading.

- 2 Urcid (personal communication 2006) argues that the toponym from the *Codex Mendoza* that Marcus used in the identification of Tablet 43 was actually from Miahuapán, a tributary town in the province of Tuxpan, northern Veracruz. This calls into question Marcus's identification of Miahuatlán, the valley south of the Oaxaca Valley.
- 3 Our work in the lower Rio Verde Valley has now included 22 years of field research, including a regional full-coverage survey over 152 km² that has recorded 85 sites, and a nonsystematic reconnaissance over the entire region. Spencer (2007:68) omits the fact that Workinger's (2002) survey around San Francisco de Arriba was part of a larger full-coverage regional survey of the lower Rio Verde Valley. The regional survey in the lower Rio Verde uses the same methods as full-coverage surveys in the Oaxacan Highlands, including a reliance on opportunistic samples (for example, Balkansky 2002:29; Blanton et al. 1982:7–8). Detailed topographic maps have been made for major Late/Terminal Formative sites like Rio Viejo (250 ha total site area), San Francisco de Arriba (92 ha), and Cerro del Chivo (29 ha). Major horizontal and/or block excavations have been carried out at five Late/Terminal Formative sites, with test excavations at another eight sites from this period.
- 4 In a recent article, Spencer and his colleagues (2008:337–338) leave room for more varied forms of interaction between Monte Albán and surrounding regions, although they emphasize the model of territorial conquest.

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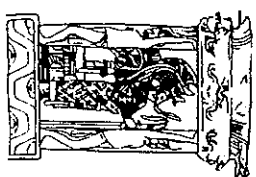
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CHAPTER 2



WARRIOR QUEENS AMONG THE CLASSIC MAYA

Kathryn Reese-Taylor, Peter Mathews,
 Julia Guernsey, and Marlene Fritzler

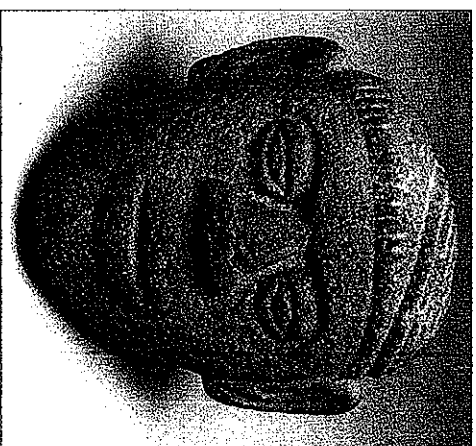
The importance of women in Maya society is no longer in question. Recent studies have highlighted the important roles played by women, particularly those in the royal courts (Ardren 2002; Joyce 2000). Not only were alliances between kingdoms solidified by marriage to royal women, but royal women occasionally ruled kingdoms in their own right (Bell 2002; Jossereand 2002; Schele and Mathews 1991). Furthermore, queens were often ambassadors for their respective kingdoms (Freidel and Guenter 2003; Schele and Mathews 1991).

A case in point is recounted in the hieroglyphic inscriptions from a panel attributed to the site of Sak N'iké' (La Corona), which record the arrival of three royal women from the Kaan kingdom to this small center, the first in 520, the second in 679, and the final in 721.¹ The earliest queen and the final queen to arrive at Sak N'iké' are portrayed in the imagery on the relief carving (Freidel and Guenter 2003; Martin 2008) (Figure 2.1). Ix ? Naah EK?² the first Kaan queen and wife of Tuun K'ab' Hix, stands in a battle palanquin formed by a large standing jaguar.³ Ix Ti',⁴ the wife of an unknown Sak N'iké' ruler and the daughter of Yuknoom Took K'awil, stands in a palanquin crowned by a watery serpent. The panel, commissioned to commemorate the arrival of Ix Ti', uses the earlier arrivals to contextualize this important royal visit. Texts describing all of the women refer to their husbands and include parallel parentage statements identifying both their fathers and mothers, royal couples from the Kaan polity (Martin 2008)

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BLOOD AND BEAUTY
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