

# **DOMESTIC RITUAL IN ANCIENT MESOAMERICA**

Edited by Patricia Plunket

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The Cotsen Institute of Archaeology  
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# DOMESTIC RITUAL IN ANCIENT MESOAMERICA

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The Cotsen Institute of Archaeology  
University of California  
Los Angeles  
2002

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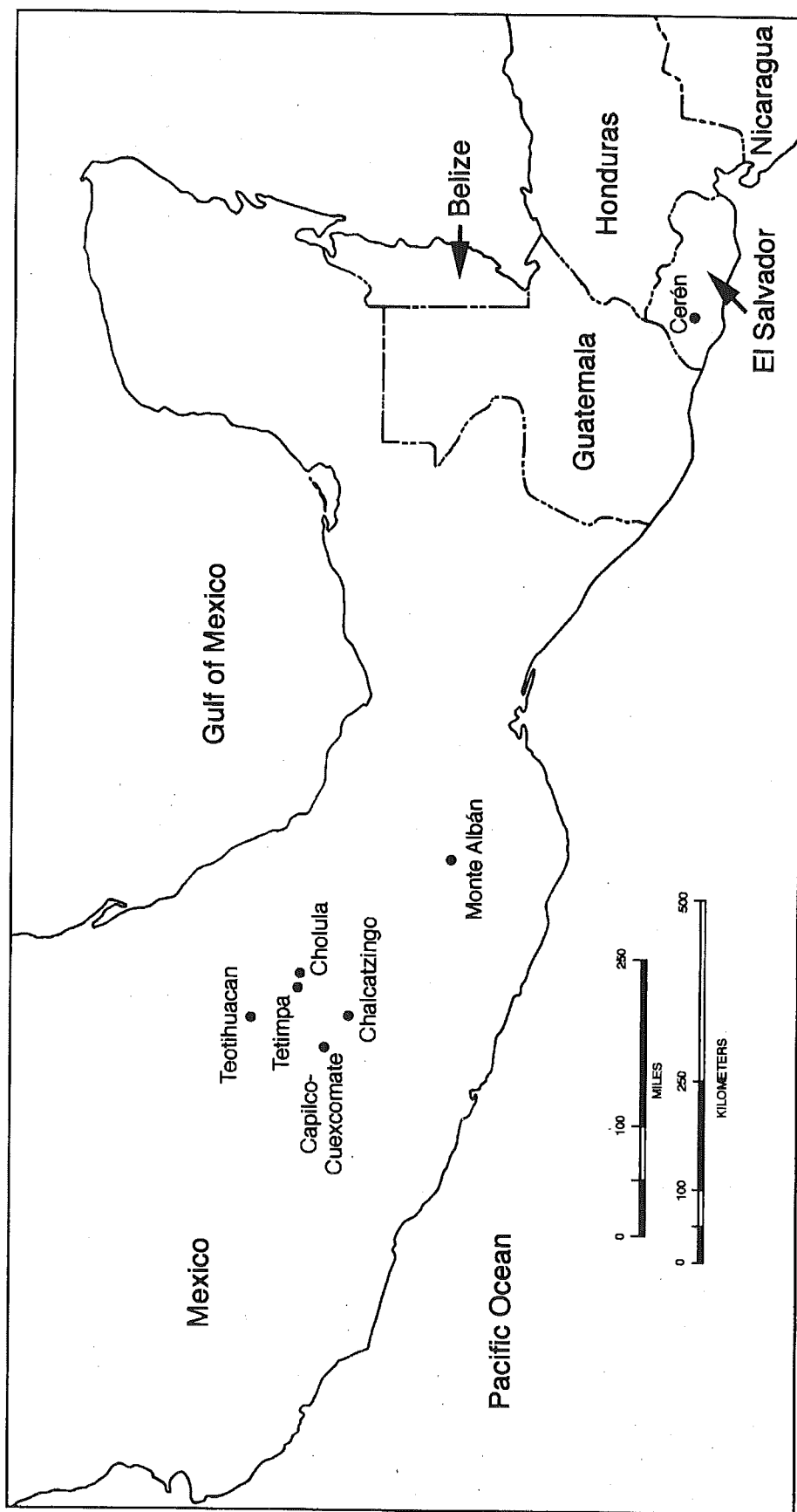


Figure 1.1 Map of Mesoamerica locating sites discussed in this volume

# Introduction

*Patricia Plunket*

**T**his book seeks to compare the manifestations of domestic ritual across time, space, and different levels of sociocultural integration in ancient Mesoamerica. As the title indicates, it focuses on ritual expression at the household level, but the authors do not limit their discussions to this domain as they explore the ways in which cosmological principles and concepts of the sacred are used in the construction of ritual space and practice, how local landscapes provide templates for the images and paraphernalia we recover from archaeological contexts, how foreign groups rely on ritual for social reproduction, and how domestic ritual is related to, and indeed embedded in, institutionalized state religions. It follows in the footsteps of a growing body of literature concerned with the nature of pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican ritual (for example, Drennan 1983; Flannery 1976; Gillespie 2000c; Grove and Joyce 1999; Manzanilla 1996; Manzanilla and Carreón 1991; Marcus 1998 and 1999; Marcus and Flannery 1994; Masson 1999; McAnany and López 1999; Mock 1998b; Ortiz Diaz 1993; Pohl 1983; Rice 1999; Sanders 1966; Sanders, Parsons, and Santley 1979) and employs a perspective rooted primarily in, although not limited to, the traditions of central Mexico. The inclusion of data from Monte Albán, for example, enriches understanding of domestic ritual in Mesoamerican urban settings, and also helps contextualize the Zapotec presence at Tlailotlacan, the Oaxaca Barrio in Teotihuacan. The exceptional preservation of dwellings and activity areas at Cerén in El Salvador offers important insights into household and community ritual practice at the village level, a category often overlooked by archaeologists after the emergence of cities and states (figure 1.1).

Although the concepts and patterns of ritual vary

through time in relation to general sociopolitical transformations and local culture-historical traditions (Bell 1997; Marcus 1998:17–23), most Mesoamericanists would agree that there were certain underlying themes and structures that have modeled the ritual manifestations of this area (for example, Gossen 1986a; Joralemon 1996; Joyce and Grove 1999). At the household level, some of these shared concepts were expressed through the production and use of equipment such as incense burners and bloodletting instruments that were similar from one tradition to another, while other concepts were materialized in the architectural format and decoration of the residential units themselves. Following Bourdieu (1977), Blanton (1994:9–10; 106–110) notes that houses are often vehicles for canonical communication. They contain the evidence of lineage ideology and liminal space, and their orientation and location reflect basic cosmological principles. Delimiting the physical space where household members create and express relationships, they are therefore a primary source of social identity (Gillespie 2000a:476; Hendon 1999). By presenting studies from the Formative through the Postclassic periods (figure 1.2), from nonstratified and stratified societies and from both village and urban settings, the chapters included in this volume provide insights into the shared fundamentals of Mesoamerican domestic ritual as well as considerations of how these fundamentals were adapted and changed through time according to historical circumstances, social processes, and political evolution.

## Ritual and the Mesoamerican Tradition

For some scholars the shared ritual concepts and practices of the Mesoamerican tradition suggest a model of divergence through time as competitive interacting popula-

	Period	Chalcatzingo	Tetimpa	Teotihuacan	Monte Albán	Cerén	Morelos
1550	Late Postclassic		Los Ranchos		Liobaa	Cerén	LPC-B
1350	Middle Postclassic						LPC-A
1150							
900	Early Postclassic						
	Epiclassic						
700	Classic		Abandonment Nealtican	Metepc Xolalpan Tlamimilolpa Miccaotli	MA IIIB-IV (Xoo) MA IIIA Late MA II		
500							
AD 150	Terminal Formative		Abandonment Late Tetimpa	Tzacualli	Early MA II		
BC 150							
	Late Formative	Abandonment	Patlachique	MA I			
500		Cantera	Early Tetimpa	Cuanalán Chiconautla			
700	Middle Formative						
1000	Early Formative					Barranca Amate	
1500							

Figure 1.2 Chronology of sites considered in this volume

tions adapted to local landscapes (Flannery 1983:2; Flannery and Marcus 2000:33). Others find the explanations for these parallels in a common, collective history (Kirchhoff 1952) or in the continuous interactions of elites within specific geographical boundaries (Blanton et al. 1993:219–222). It would seem that each of these factors—divergence, descent, history, and the processes of sociopolitical interaction—have played fundamental roles in the formation of the Mesoamerican tradition that the sixteenth-century historical sources describe. In her study of ritual, Catherine Bell observes that “theoretical approaches to the notion of ‘tradition,’ particularly in relation to ritual activities, are structured around the familiar problem of continuity and change” (1992:118–119) and that in effect, tradition is a paradox between the unchanging structure of an ideal atemporal order and the world of temporal historical change and compromise. Mesoamericanists have long understood that tradition “is not created once and left to its own momentum” but that it is “constantly produced and reproduced” (Bell 1992:123).

Marcus (1999:94) suggests that the emergence of inequality and ritual specialists in many parts of Mesoamerica during the Formative period significantly altered the nature and function of ritual that was previously centered in the house and performed by individual household members. New power structures developed, eventually resulting in chiefly centers and cities with impressive monuments and architecture that defined cer-

emonial stages for rulers and priests. Although many aspects of ritual developed beyond the household level as societies became segregated into endogamous strata and rulers established monopolies over the connections to the more important supernaturals (Marcus and Feinman 1998:6), ritual continued to be used to create and express relationships between household members, among different households, and between individual households and other sectors of society (Gillespie 2000a; Monaghan 1996).

Our ability as archaeologists to understand the changing nature of the Mesoamerican ritual tradition and its relationship to social identity and cosmology in addition to evolving social, political, and economic institutions in what was certainly an ethnically and culturally diverse area, however, depends on how well we can document ritual manifestations through time and at different organizational levels (Marcus 1999). Household archaeology has most often focused on the economic organization and productive strategies of domestic units (however, see Sanders 1966 or Flannery 1976), but as more and more houses are excavated under controlled conditions, the visibility of ritual in the home environment should increase. A growing number of studies dedicate at least passing attention to the evidence of ritual action within the house (for example, Healan 1993; Hendon 1999; Manzanilla 1993c; McAnany 1995; Sanders, Parsons, and Santley 1979; Widmer and Storey 1993), and a few seek to use ritual events as the centerpiece of their analysis



(for example, Garber et al. 1998; Marcus 1999). As Marcus cautions, however, "speculation tends to outstrip solid archaeological data" (1999:67). This problem is not limited to Mesoamerican archaeology, and in general it seems that "the study of ritual and religion in archaeology... lacks a solid background of straightforward descriptive study" (Whitehouse 1996:10).

An important sequel to this requisite descriptive study involves the contextual analysis advocated by Flannery (1976) to identify ritual activity at the different levels of society and determine how these were related to one another. Context, however, can only be established through eschatological studies that involve a detailed understanding of the modes of abandonment (Cameron and Tomka 1993; Inomata and Sheets 2000; Schiffer 1985). Schiffer (1987) has articulated many of the complexities of identifying context in his research on site formation processes. Initially emphasis was usually placed on the role played by such environmental or cultural processes as recycling, curation, and discard, but recent studies have increasingly viewed ritual as a significant agent in the formation of domestic archaeological assemblages (for example, Garber et al. 1998; Masson 1999; Plunket and Uruñuela 2000). LaMotta and Schiffer (1999:23) discuss ritual formation processes as another "family" of processes that can skew floor assemblages and lead to erroneous conclusions about structure abandonment since they do not necessarily conform to least-effort expectations. As archaeologists focus on the contextual analysis of ritual evidence and better document and develop the concepts of ritual formation processes, we can expect to see more discussion of ritual action in the archaeological literature. Ultimately, we might be able to offer ideas, and even perhaps explanations, about ritual density, specifically, "why some societies or historical periods have more ritual than others" (Bell 1997:173).

Archaeologists have had to grapple with the problem of identifying and explaining the elements of ritual in societies that existed centuries or millennia before the advent of the written historical sources that they so often rely upon for interpretation. In some cases, such as the Valley of Oaxaca, the direct historical approach has been employed effectively in the explanation of ancient practices (Marcus and Flannery 1994), but for the Formative and Classic societies of central Mexico, it is more difficult to argue that Sahagún's (1950-82, Bk. 2) informants or Durán's (1975) *tlacuilos* (scribes) can fully enlighten us about the meaning of ritual, particularly household ritual, in the societies that preceded them by a millennium or

more. Both the archaeological record and the historical source materials document important population movements and cultural shifts for the central highlands that suggest significant obstacles to the successful application of the direct historical approach in this region (for example, Carrasco 1971; Kirchhoff, Odena, and Reyes 1976; Ringle, Gallaretta, and Bey 1998). Ethnohistory is, as Allison contends, an "essential tool for exploring the possibilities" (1999:3) of the archaeological record, but archaeology, and in particular the archaeology of houses and their occupants, is an even more appropriate way to see and understand those parts of ancient societies that were not included in the written sources which focused so strongly on state ceremony.

The problems of disjunction and continuity have been a perpetual dilemma for Mesoamerican scholars (Carrasco, Jones, and Sessions 2000). As pre-Hispanic societies underwent socioeconomic, political, and historical changes that altered their worldview, their institutions, and their outside contacts, they also sustained related changes in their ritual systems (Bell 1997:190). In any archaeological study of ancient Mesoamerican ritual, we will always be concerned with whether concepts and meanings suffer extinctions (Kubler 1964) or are "simply layered and relayed with new connotations and nuances" (Bell 1997:211; Eliade 1959; see also Insoll 2001:20-23). On the question of change and continuity, Mesoamericanists might consider Bell's observation:

... ritual must have both a convincing continuity with remembered rites and a convincing coherence with community life. As one of the most visible and conservative embodiments of tradition in oral societies, ritual ratifies "the traditional" in general even as it recreates and revises it in the specifics of each performance. (1997:203)

Like ethnohistorians, archaeologists have concentrated almost exclusively on the core societies of Mesoamerica so that little is known about the outlying regions. This tendency has led us to underestimate the cultural diversity that existed in pre-Hispanic times and often exclude diversity as a relevant agent of change (Adams 1992). John Chance (1989:xiii) has emphasized the importance of considering diversity within the Mesoamerican tradition not only between core and periphery or from region to region but also within regions. Archaeologists tend to consider a region, such as the Basin of Mexico or the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley, to be fairly homogeneous in cultural terms (Adams 1992), but when we begin to study the details of different communities within each region, it be-



comes apparent that there was significant variation not only between communities but also within communities. This variation is particularly visible between elites and commoners, but it also existed among households of the same social strata. Allison (1999) has discussed the problems of homogeneity and diversity in the field of household archaeology. Just as Chance sees diversity as essential for understanding the Mesoamerican tradition, she argues that there is much greater complexity and variety in the organization and roles of households in past societies than archaeologists generally recognize. By stressing household uniformity, what she calls the "normalizations of past domestic behaviour" (Allison 1999:3), archaeologists have overlooked the importance of this variation.

Ritual diversity—whether it be within the Mesoamerican tradition, among the communities of a region, or among the households of an ancient settlement—needs to be included as a significant concern to archaeologists if we are to understand the interplay between the "official transcripts" of the dominant ideologies and the "other transcripts" (Love 1999:129) that household archaeology can provide (Allison 1999:3). When ritual diversity is considered at the level of Mesoamerican tradition, it tells us much about the relationship between core and periphery, about orthodoxy and local practice, and about the appropriation of local cults into formal pantheons as a strategy for political expansion (Bell 1992:129; López Austin and López Luján 2000). The study of ritual diversity at the community and household level can provide important insights into what Kemp has called "submerged local identities" (1991:52), the parochial and more informal traditions of "folk culture" that all but disappear at the expense of the "court cultures" of chiefdoms and newly formed states (Kemp 1991:65). Diversity is a fundamental aspect of the Mesoamerican tradition. By documenting and discussing this diversity in the arena of domestic ritual, the contributors to this volume lay important foundations for future considerations of the role it played in shaping both the court cultures, generally based on kingly power and the arts of governance (Baines and Yoffee 1998; Clark 1997; Inomata and Houston 2001), and the local identities, so strongly tied to place of residence (Chance 2000; Gillespie 2000a,c; Hendon 1999; Monaghan 1996), of Mesoamerican civilization.

### Domestic Ritual in Mesoamerica

Ritual activity is a powerful medium by which groups define themselves and their traditions (Bell 1997:197). Although it cannot be easily separated from other types

of activity and is often difficult to identify in archaeological contexts, ritual has long held a particular fascination for archaeologists. In Mesoamerica, most studies of ancient ritual have concentrated on the politico-religious nature of the "great styles" (Willey 1962) created by the major civilizations that built the temples, ballcourts, palaces, and other material manifestations of what Kemp (1991:64) has referred to as "tourist culture." The contributions to this volume depart from that tradition to explore ritual practice in the daily lives of the peoples of Mesoamerica and search for the events that punctuated their social and biological cycles. Domestic ritual is seen as both a source for ideas used to create court culture and as a recipient of many of those newly "codified traditions" as they expanded at the expense of local traditions (Bell 1997:188; Kemp 1991:64-65). The archaeological record is examined to identify and reconstruct the ritual practices of different kinds of households to enlighten us about social organization and political control in the cities and villages of both cores and peripheries.

Societies tend to have more than one ritual system, and people generally participate in these various systems without worrying about how they are articulated (Bell 1997:174). In ancient Mesoamerica, domestic ritual, court ritual, and public state and/or popular ritual can be seen as overlapping systems that sometimes interacted harmoniously but often may have contributed a significant amount of tension and conflict to the social environment. It is impossible to separate these systems, and a discussion of one necessitates reference to the others (for example, Inomata and Houston 2001).

Following Douglas (1973), Bell (1997:185-191) has developed a typology of four ritual styles to describe the different modes of ritual action she has detected in the ethnographic and historic literature: (1) appeal and appeasement, (2) cosmological ordering, (3) ethical-moral, and (4) privatized spirituality. Two of these styles, "appeal and appeasement" and "cosmological ordering," provide a convenient framework for a discussion of ritual systems in Mesoamerica in that they respectively seem to describe the nature of domestic and court ritual. The "appeal and appeasement" ritual style—with its emphasis on practices designed to placate gods, spirits, and ancestors and to secure their help or avoid their anger—is characteristic of Mesoamerican domestic ritual in both commoner and royal settings (McAnany and Plank 2001:97-99). Overlapping with and building upon this domestic mode is the "cosmological ordering" style that best describes

Mesoamerican court and public ritual. Here the focus is on a single cosmological order brought to life with elaborate pageantry that tends to appear with kingly power as monarchs "synchronize themselves with this larger order and legitimate their position" (Bell 1997:187). The emphasis on cosmological equilibrium, calendrical cycles, astronomical events, and hierarchical ordering in Mesoamerican court and state-sponsored public ritual suggests that the "cosmological ordering" style emerged with the concept of inequality during the Formative period and became entrenched in the Mesoamerican tradition during the Classic period as state societies flourished.

Joralemon provides us with another typology for the "system of thought and practice [that] played a unifying role in the history of the religion" in ancient Mesoamerica (1996:52–53). He isolates three "religious traditions" that in some ways parallel Bell's religious styles, and he ties these, as do Bell and others (for example, Douglas 1973), to subsistence and social organization, although his approach is explicitly developmental. For Joralemon, the shamanic tradition of the Early Hunters provided the essential concepts of the Mesoamerican worldview along with ecstatic techniques for spiritual travel. During the Archaic and Early Formative periods, he sees the emergence of an agricultural ideology centered on natural forces, sacred places, and ancestor veneration. The third religious tradition, strongly focused on the divine ruler and his ritual obligations to ensure cosmic equilibrium, emerged just before the "Olmec" manifestation in the Early Formative period. All three traditions contributed strategies and concepts to domestic ritual, and each provided a new set of templates and maps for household organization and the creation of relationships both inside and outside the house (Gillespie 2000b).

### Ritual Action in Ancient Mesoamerica

Archaeologists have drawn heavily on ethnographers' descriptions in their attempts to recreate and explain the ancient rituals produced by these styles and traditions. Some of the more fortunate efforts to view the archaeological evidence for ritual through an ethnographic lens have been provided by Flannery and Marcus in their analyses of Formative communities in the Valley of Oaxaca (Flannery 1968, 1976; Marcus 1983c, 1998, 1999; Marcus and Flannery 1994). Even though archaeologists explore the ethnographic record for analogies in their attempts to understand ancient ritual practice and the rules of ritual logic, we cannot, however,

see past ritual in action the way ethnographers do. We are often left with serious problems that even the best use of analogy cannot solve.

One of the main difficulties, particularly at the household level, is how we differentiate between ritual and practical objects since these are not necessarily separate and discrete categories (Binford 1962; Deal 1988). An obsidian blade may have been used in a bloodletting rite, but it also may have been used to skin a rabbit or strip bark from a branch. As Whitehouse cautions, "many known ritual objects are practical objects (for example, cups, spoons and knives) being used for special ritual purposes" (1996:9). Additionally, the less obvious the function of an artifact, the more likely we are to assign it a ritual function. Teotihuacan *candeleros* (see figure 5.4), for example, are considered ritual objects in part because they appear to have been "deliberately broken and discarded" (Widmer and Storey 1993:92) but perhaps even more importantly because we have not been able to identify any other function for them. Plants and animals can also be ritual objects (for example, Masson 1999; Pohl 1983), but distinguishing between their ritual and gastronomical functions can be difficult since these are usually not distinct categories. Eating and drinking are important aspects of ritual action, and household members probably consumed many food offerings and sacrificed animals just as they do in the towns and villages of modern Mexico (for example, Lipp 1991:102).

Whitehouse has concluded that ritual objects, defined as artifacts "valued primarily for their symbolic content and not their utilitarian function," do not constitute a particularly useful category for archaeological analysis (1996:28). The definition is simply too broad. Instead, she suggests the division of ritual objects into six subtypes based primarily on their role in the human-divine ritual relationship (1996:13). *Sacra* consist of objects considered to be divine or to represent the divine. Mesoamerican *sacra* might include cult statues, sacred bundles, and many of the sacred objects located in temples and shrines. *Votaries* are defined as representations of the worshipper as opposed to that which is worshipped, and some Mesoamerican figurines may belong to this subtype. Offerings are identified as items provided for a deity's use and include food, incense, sacrificed animals, and objects used for the consecration or termination of buildings. A fourth subtype consists of ritual equipment, the actual objects used to execute the rites but not considered sacred in themselves. This paraphernalia includes costumes, censers, bloodletting instruments, and other

items of material culture required for the ritual performance. Grave goods, objects placed with the dead, constitute the easiest category for archaeological identification, and they are therefore the most commonly reported of Whitehouse's six subtypes, and perhaps the most often discussed ritual objects in the literature. Amulets are personal ritual objects that are often worn or carried by individuals. These are reported in the ethnographic literature (for example, Dow 1986:25; Tedlock 1982:81), and Brown has recently discussed these "personal sacra" from archaeological contexts at Cerén (2000). Although this basic typology may need adjustments and fine-tuning for the study of Mesoamerican ritual, it can provide us with more precise analytic categories.

The evidence presented by the various authors included in this book provide archaeologists with a list of ritual objects that can be categorized according to Whitehouse's typology and used to reconstruct ritual performance and logic at the domestic level in ancient Mesoamerica. As we might expect (Whitehouse 1996:15), sacra are the least common ritual objects found in households. They are the actual objects of veneration and most frequently appear in temples, shrines, caves, and other places of worship. In past Mesoamerican households, acts of worship—of appeal and appeasement—probably took place in a special room or within the limits of a central courtyard. Tetimpa, Teotihuacan, and Monte Albán provide evidence for ritual action around central courtyard altars (see chapters 4, 5, and 7), and for Tetimpa and Teotihuacan, the authors suggest that the statuary associated with them may represent the sacra of the domestic level—ancestors, lineage gods, earth spirits, hearth gods, or other supernaturals. Another possible type of household sacra might be the bodies of the ancestors themselves. Although we rarely think of bodies as ritual objects, they were an important focus of household ritual action (for example, Lind and Urcid 1983) and were venerated even beyond the domestic arena (for example, Headrick 1999), but we still know little about how corporeal relics may have been used in ritual.

Figurines constitute a category of ritual object that seems to crosscut Whitehouse's typology for the simple reason that figurines were used in many different ways in ancient Mesoamerica. Some may have been votaries, or representations of the worshipper, but others may have been sacra, representations of gods or other supernaturals. The *antiguas*, dolls or pre-Hispanic figurines collected and used by modern Otomí shamans (Dow 1986:25-28), for example, are considered animate

beings and, like sacra, are supplied with food offerings including sacrificed fowl, *anis*, and sugar syrup. Some Formative female figurines may, however, have been requisite equipment for the correct enactment of a ritual. Cyphers (1993) suggests that Chalcatzingo's female figurines were used in curing and women's life-cycle rituals, while Marcus (1998) argues that in Formative Oaxaca, female figurines were made and used by women within the house for invoking recent ancestors. Grove and Gillespie (1984; see also chapter 2) have proposed that the C-8 male figurines from Chalcatzingo may represent ancestors or rulers, and Marcus (1999:83-84) has related seated male figurines of the San José phase in Oaxaca to positions of authority. Like their Formative female counterparts, these male figures also occur in domestic contexts, but we have yet to explore how they may have been used in household ritual.

In the Valley of Oaxaca, at both the village level and in the urban setting of Monte Albán, figurines were occasionally arranged in scenes (Marcus 1998:177-181; Paddock 1970:150; Pimentel 1997:345). Some of these vignettes might best be categorized as a subgroup of votaries since they seem to be recreating scenes of graveside ritual action that actually took place at the time of burial. The vast quantities of repetitive mold-made figurines and temple effigies found at many Postclassic central Mexican sites (see chapter 9) also may have been votaries, or even sacred souvenirs, associated with pilgrimage activity (Grennes-Ravitz and Coleman 1976:205).

Figurines do not usually appear as offerings in Mesoamerican archaeological contexts. They are found most frequently in trash middens or mixed in with construction fill. Among the modern Lacandon, small anthropomorphic figures made of rubber are burned in censers, or "god pots," as offerings (McGee 1990:45) but in general figurines do not appear to have functioned importantly as offerings in Mesoamerica, except perhaps in the sense that some grave goods might be considered offerings. Grave goods may overlap substantially with Whitehouse's other categories of ritual objects—particularly offerings, ritual equipment, and personal sacra—since these items probably were considered useful to the deceased in his or her travels to the next world. At San José Mogote (Marcus 1998), Tlatilco (Joyce 1999), and Chupícuaro (Porter 1956) figurines are commonly included with burials and can be classified as grave goods; but at other sites, such as at Tetimpa (Clear and Plunket 1998:1841), Cholula (López, Lagunas, and Serrano 1976; Uruñuela 1989:75-76), Teotihuacan (Barbour 1975:78), or provincial

Morelos (see chapter 9), they rarely or never occur with burials and generally cannot be classified within this subtype.

The impressive female figurine caches at Xochitécatl (Serra, Lazcano, and Torres 1999) provide evidence of figurine use in supra-domestic contexts and posit another, more public, scenario for the ritual use of these artifacts, although, as Smith (chapter 9) points out, figurines are rarely associated with this level of ritual activity. It is also likely that many figurines were not ritual objects at all but toys. The nature and use of figurines obviously varied significantly across time and space. Unlike other sets of objects, figurines do not allow for simple generalizations and their functional and symbolic interpretation requires fine-grained contextual analysis.

Offerings are one of the least visible categories of ritual objects in ancient Mesoamerican households. Ethnohistorical and ethnographic sources indicate that a great many offerings involved perishable materials: incense, blood, rubber, tobacco, pine splints, feathers, flowers, *tzoalli* (amaranth dough), food, drink, sacrificed animals (particularly fowl), prayer, music, dance, and song (for example, Dalhgren 1979; Dow 1986; Lipp 1991; McGee 1990; Monaghan 1995; Rojas 1927; Sahagún 1950-82, Bk. 2). Architectural plans and details like niches or central courtyard altars indicate the locus of domestic ritual activity (Deal 1988), but the performance of the rituals themselves does not often leave a legible archaeological signature. Fortunately, one of the most pervasive ritual activities in ancient Mesoamerican houses was, and still is, burning materials in order to transform them for the ancestors or other supernaturals. This activity usually involved incense, *copal* or *pom*, melted on hot coals in special censers. These censers, or fragments of them, occur wherever ritual took place—in the houses, at provincial temples, and at major temples in the large cities—thus linking ritual at the different levels of society through a common ritual practice. Burning is also a practice that can be identified by chemical analysis although it may be difficult to distinguish ritual burning from other incendiary activities (Aguirre 2000; Barba et al. 2000). The burning of different materials in the censers suggests that transformation and purification were two of the essential elements of Mesoamerican religion (Rice 1999).

The profusion of termination rites with their corresponding offerings in the Maya area (for example, Mock 1998b) contrasts with their paucity, or at least our lack of recognition of them, in central Mexico. Grove and Gillespie (chapter 2) suggest that figurine decapitation

was essentially a termination rite and that the mutilation of anthropomorphic representations in general was a common type of ritual across time and space in Mesoamerica. They also document the scattering of thin greenstone fragments upon the ashy remains of burned houses and submit that this represents one part of the ritual practices associated with the destruction and renewal of residential structures. Manzanilla (chapter 5) also touches upon abandonment ceremonies that involved concentrations of candeleros and “killed” vessels or layers of shell, ceramic vessels, and human mandibles separated by strata of earth, in the apartment compounds of Oztotyahualco and Teopancazco in Teotihuacan. Perhaps houses were animated and extinguished in different ways in the various regions of Mesoamerican, but household archaeology in central Mexico might benefit by incorporating studies designed to identify the ritual behavior associated with both of these practices in residential structures.

In spite of the overlap between ritual and practical objects discussed above, ritual equipment is a fairly straightforward category. Rice (1999) has recently discussed the ceramic censers that were used at all levels of ritual action and most ceramic collections from Mesoamerican households include examples of these vessels (for example, Healan 1993:113; Masson 1999:58; Sanders 1966:138; Webb and Hirth 2000:102; see also chapter 9). With the possible exception of grave goods, they are, perhaps, the single most important evidence of ritual performance in the domestic arena. Their association with central courtyard altars and mortuary contexts at both Tetimpa (chapters 3 and 4) and Teotihuacan (chapter 5) suggests that they played a major role in the veneration of ancestors within the house. They continue to be important components of house altars in modern times and are sold in most markets prior to the widespread ceremonies for the Day of the Dead in all parts of Mexico (Deal 1988).

Another common item of ritual equipment is the bloodletting instrument. Although many different devices were used in bloodletting rites—stingray spines, jade punches, maguey spines—the vast majority of these instruments were simple obsidian blades, although some of these are very finely worked. They sometimes occur on or around the altars of Tetimpa (chapter 4) or associated with special rooms (Sanders, Parsons, and Santley 1979:327); most often, however, they are found in burials and can thus be linked to individual sacrifice performed by the household members not only during their lifetimes but also in the afterlife. Blood was a common offering in

ancient Mesoamerica, and it is still used in many rituals today although now it usually comes from sacrificed chickens (for example, Dow 1986:36; Lipp 1991:73). It is likely that blood, dripped onto paper, was one of the materials burned in the censers as a generalized expression of respect and veneration.

Musical instruments must also have been important in household ritual practices, as both Grove and Gillespie (chapter 2) and Smith (chapter 9) suggest. Sahagún (1969a: 200) recorded the use of whistles in household rituals performed for the feast of Tepeilhuitl, and the relative abundance of whistles and turtle-shell drums in discard areas of Mesoamerican domestic units indicates that household ritual was probably a noisy affair. Little attention, however, has been paid to the type of music produced and the relationship between instrument sound, iconography, and the distinctive ritual practices associated with each event.

Considering the importance of feasting in ancient ritual, many of the ceramic vessels recovered from the middens and houses of ancient Mesoamerica must have at least occasionally served as ritual equipment. In certain circumstances, like the Tlaloc vessels of Teotihuacan (chapter 5), the iconography itself suggests a ritual function, but Spence's (chapter 6) careful analysis of vessel pairs buried in the patio's of Tlailotlacan demonstrates that undecorated ceramics were also used for ritual purposes. Most intact vessels from archaeological sites in Mesoamerica come from burial contexts and fall within Whitehouse's grave goods category. As discussed above, grave goods can include many other kinds of ritual objects and is not so much a category of ritual objects as it is a context for the final discard of items that may or may not include ritual within their personal biographies.

Burials, however, are among the most frequently encountered evidence of ritual action within the domestic setting, and most of the contributors to this volume address funerary ritual. In the Formative and Classic periods, many, but not all, household members were interred within the house, and there has been a marked tendency to interpret much of the ritual activity within the house in terms of ancestor veneration in lineage-based societies (for example, Gillespie 2000a; Healan 1993; Marcus 1998, 1999; McAnany 1995; Sanders 1966; Sanders, Parsons, and Santley 1979; Widmer and Storey 1993). The shrines that occupy the center of domestic courtyards at such sites as Tetimpa (chapter 4), Teotihuacan (chapter 5), and Tula (Diehl 1999; Healan 1993:112) were evidently used primarily for ancestor rituals. The location of shrines or tombs

at the patio center indicates that this was considered the liminal space appropriate for making connections between the different levels of existence. The absence of central courtyard shrines and adult burials at the houses of Capilco and Cuexcomate in Postclassic Morelos (chapter 9; Smith 1992) is significant and suggests important conceptual and structural transformations with the development of an expansionist Aztec state. This transformation may have involved the emergence of a new ritual mode, perhaps another of Bell's (1997) ritual styles, that was more relevant to the new social order. Smith (chapter 9) points out that the data from Aztec period Morelos do not support a model of ancestor veneration at the domestic level. He suggests that the structure of Late Postclassic Aztec society—bilateral kinship and a land tenure system tied to extra-familial relationships (see Chance 2000:497–499)—was not conducive to a ritual life focused on obsolete ancestors as divine intercessors.

Birth is an event that until recent times, was usually associated with the house. Children were born at home and often the afterbirth and umbilical cord were buried within the house, sometimes by the hearth (Sahagún 1950-82, Bk.6:169–171). Archaeologically, birth has been most often registered as death in the sense that archaeologists find neonatal remains buried under the patio floor (see chapters 3, 5, and 6) or within midden deposits (for example, Storey 1985). Birth may also leave a recognizable archaeological marker. In his study of Tlailotlacan, a Zapotec residential area in the city of Teotihuacan, Spence (chapter 6) uses ethnographic data collected in Mitla during the 1930s to suggest that complementary orange and black bowls buried in the courtyard may reflect the burial of afterbirths. The other rituals that punctuate the social and biological life cycles of the peoples of ancient Mesoamerica, such as puberty and marriage, may not have been household events but rather community affairs. Gabriel de Rojas's (1927:163) description of a marriage ceremony in Postclassic Cholula suggests, however, that often these rituals left little trace in the archaeological record. According to Rojas's account, marriage took place in the home. The couple was covered with a blanket, and a bundle of pine splints was lit in front of them. When the fire went out, the ceremony was finished. Although many rites of passage may be absent from the houses of ancient Mesoamerica, some may be so simple that they leave no distinguishable trace. In spite of this, we need to expend more analytical energy establishing the characteristics of specific ritual actions and validating their imprint in the archaeological record.

Marcus has proposed a tripartite framework for studying ritual that focuses on the subject matter of ritual (content), the place where rites were performed (locus), and the individuals who performed the ritual (1999:70–71). Household ritual by definition would seem to be limited to the rituals performed by household members within the confines of the house. As Brown and her colleagues (chapter 8) point out, much of the ritual paraphernalia that is found in the houses of Cerén and other Mesoamerican villages probably relates to village-wide festivities that did not take place within the domestic unit. Their analysis indicates that not everything found in the middens, fill, and storage areas of houses should be considered indicative of ritual performance that took place within the residential space. Community rituals require the participation of the members of the community (that is, householders) who would have been responsible for the production and storage of the costumes, masks, musical instruments, and other required equipment. The presence of these items in each house may tell us much about the ritual role played by the members of each household, but we would be wise not to assume automatically that what is in the house was used *only* in the house. Household members probably used what was disposed of in the residential space, but the locus of the ritual action may have been a community temple, a cave, or a mountaintop shrine. Only the fixtures and facilities of the house—the altars, the burned areas, the buried offerings, the special rooms, and the graves—provide us with clear evidence of ritual action within the residential space.

Winter (chapter 7) concentrates on the relationship between household and community, although he is concerned primarily with how individual households may have maintained their independence by reinforcing domestic ritual activities. He suggests that the elaboration of mortuary practices during Monte Albán Periods I and II reflects this autonomy and then discusses how Period IIIA dwellings incorporate new traits, such as distinctive burial

customs and the construction of courtyard altars, that express Teotihuacan's influence at the household level during this time. Until we can identify a Teotihuacan residence at Monte Albán, however, we can only guess at how expatriate Teotihuacanos adjusted to life in the Zapotec capital. Spence (chapter 6) explores the household ritual of Zapotec expatriates in Teotihuacan in detail. His examination of how foreigners seek to reproduce their values and create group solidarity as they live as a minority in a large city resonates strongly on a personal level since I myself am an expatriate. The confrontation of different ethnic groups in the same setting where the structures of dominance mold decisions about acceptance and rejection is perhaps one of the most basic problems addressed by anthropological inquiry.

The chapters included in this volume explore the evidence for ritual action at the household level. They document the use of common paraphernalia and practices that suggest shared concepts, but they also suggest that these concepts were adapted to very different social contexts of the evolving pre-Columbian world. Older data sets are confronted with newer ones, and old ideas are examined in light of new evidence. Most of the contributions do not explicitly deal with the function of domestic ritual, but many of the traditional interpretations of ritual function are implicit in their discussions. The most prevalent tenet that underlies the following chapters is that ritual serves to create and foment social solidarity (Durkheim 1995), often by resolving conflict (Gluckman 1962). Similarly, it is viewed as a primary way to forge group identity (Douglas 1973) and provide the means for the social transitions required by the human life cycle (Marcus 1994; Rappaport 1999; Van Gennep 1961). Importantly, the authors assign particular value to the communicative aspects of ritual (Drennan 1976; Flannery 1976), both within the household and the community, but also with supernatural beings—gods, spirits or ancestors—that form part of the animated nature of the Mesoamerican universe.





# Middle Formative Domestic Ritual at Chalcatzingo, Morelos

*David C. Grove and Susan D. Gillespie*

**T**he beginning of the Formative period in Mesoamerica is marked by the appearance of pottery in the archaeological record. Those initial pottery-using communities also provide some of the best early archaeological evidence of agriculture and sedentary life, developments that compelled new forms of social control and property rights over land, water, and labor (for example, Gossen 1996:292). The need to define and maintain relatively stable, probably multifamily social units over generations is witnessed in the archaeological record by the appearance of villages with substantial domestic architecture. That architecture should be considered as far more than mere shelters for households and their belongings. The house was a locus for the enactment of collective economic and ritual actions carried out by household members as a means to express their identity as a group, define intergroup roles and relationships, and distinguish their group from other households (Hendon 1999:98). If contemporary village life in central Mexico can be used as an interpretive guide, household membership was not based solely on the biology of kinship. It was continually enacted in practices confirming joint investment in a single shared food supply and by ritual references to common origins, often represented as group ancestors (for example, Sandstrom 2000; see also Vogt 1969:144). The veneration of ancestors or founders of the social group—as attested by mortuary ritual and the curation of heirlooms as signs of the household's origins and history—are practices that are closely tied to identity, property rights, and social status (Gossen 1996:292). As an important locus of ritual activities and also of deceased household members and their possessions, the house itself became a sanctified structure, a holy place (McAnany 1998), such that domestic ritual was

not substantively different from public ritual.

In this chapter we review and discuss the archaeological data from household contexts at Chalcatzingo that may serve to elucidate Middle Formative period domestic rituals at the site. Our review concludes with evidence suggesting that two structures at the site underwent a transformation from domestic house to religious shrine.

## Chalcatzingo

Chalcatzingo, in the Amatzinac Valley of eastern Morelos, provides good archaeological evidence for aspects of domestic ritual and the sanctification of the house in the Middle Formative period. This site has become well known over the last fifty years for its Olmec-like stone monuments from the Middle Formative period. The carvings were associated with—and in some instances integrated into—the thriving settlement of houses, house gardens, and public architecture. Chalcatzingo was the chiefly center of the Amatzinac Valley, and it was also an active participant in long-distance exchange with centers in other regions, including the Basin of Mexico, Guerrero, Puebla, Oaxaca, and the Gulf coast (Grove 1987c, 1989; Grove et al. 1976:1209-1210; Hirth 1978).

A large-scale research project carried out at Chalcatzingo in the 1970s under the codirection of David Grove, Jorge Angulo, and Raul Arana (Grove 1984, 1987a) excavated many of its domestic structures, making Chalcatzingo the most extensively researched Middle Formative village site in the central highlands of Mexico. That research emphasized the study of domestic architecture, but the initial stages of the investigations also included stratigraphic excavations to ascertain the site's settlement history and ceramic chronology, because so

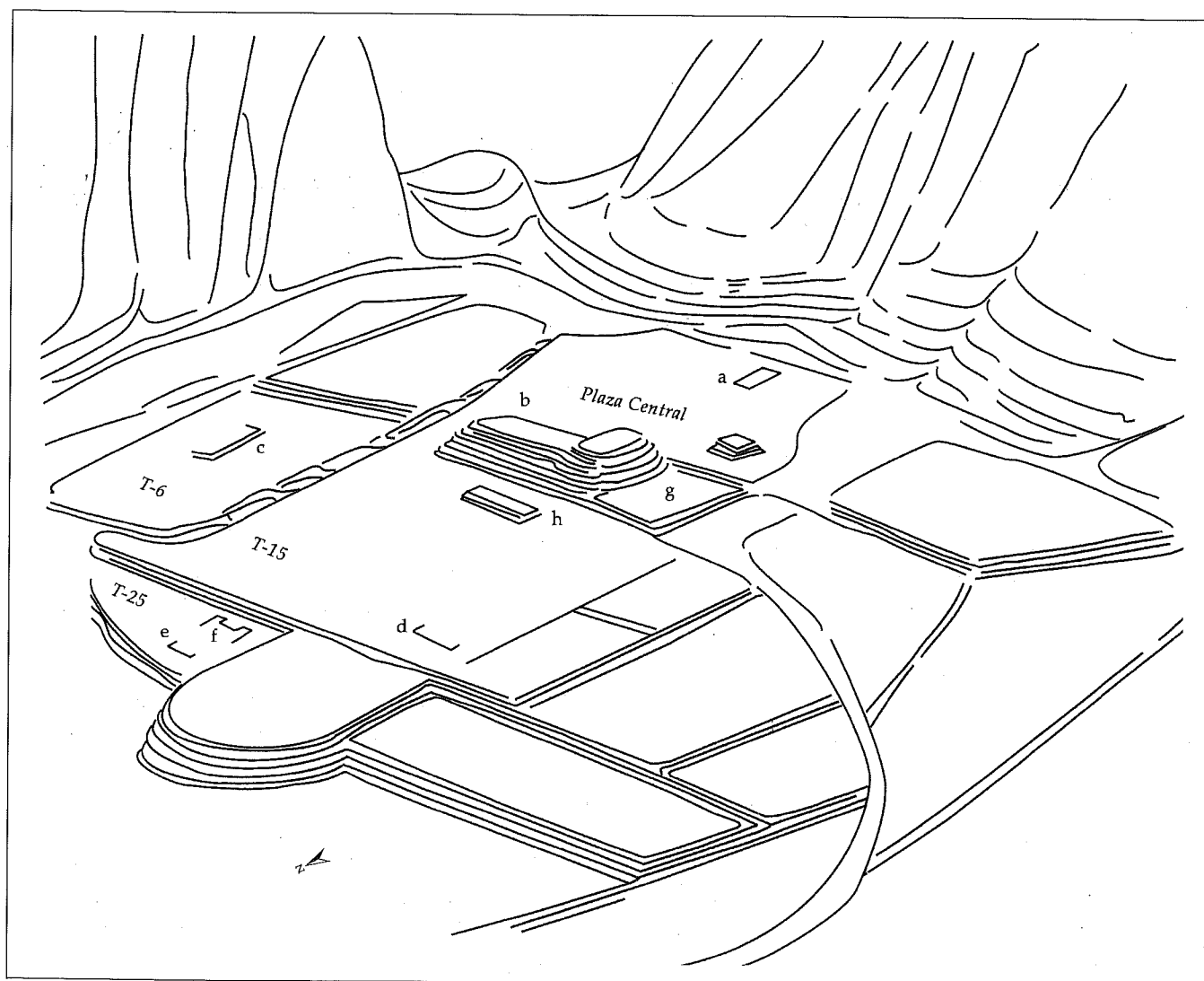


Figure 2.1 Schematic map of Chalcatzingo showing Formative period terraces and platforms: a, structure 1, Plaza Central; b, structure 4, Plaza Central; c, terrace 6, structure 1; d, terrace 15, structure 5; e, terrace 25, structure 2; f, Cantera phase sunken patio with tabletop altar, and Barranca phase terrace-25 structure 1; g, Classic period mounds and plaza; h, Classic period ballcourt

little was then known about the site. Those latter excavations served to define three major cultural phases of the Formative period: Amate (1500–1100 BC), Barranca (1100–700 BC), and Cantera (700–500 BC) (Cyphers and Grove 1987).

Chalcatzingo is situated at the base of two highly visible landmarks in eastern Morelos, the Cerro Delgado and the Cerro Chalcatzingo, conjoined hills that rise abruptly from the floor of the Amatzinac Valley. The natural hill slopes at the western base of those peaks were an attractive location for the site's earliest settlers, Amate phase farmers. There they found fertile soils for their

crops, a spring at the base of the hill for water, and a wide variety of wild flora and fauna in the various ecological zones of the *cerros* (hills) to provide them with an abundance of collectible foods. Even as early as the Amate phase, the settlement at Chalcatzingo seems to have been the valley's major village and chiefly center, a position it held to the end of the Middle Formative period. At that early date Chalcatzingo was already unique in the highlands for its "public" mound and platform architecture (Grove 1996:108, 111; Prindiville and Grove 1987:65, 78). Early in the following Barranca phase, after 1100 BC, the site's inhabitants extensively modified the natural hill slopes into a series of broad terraces with a series of cut-and-fill operations and that terracing remains a readily apparent feature of the landscape today (figure 2.1). The Barranca phase village extended across those terraces, as did the subsequent Cantera phase settlement (Prindiville and Grove 1987:79–80).

Archaeological and iconographic evidence indicate that Chalcatzingo's famed stone monumental art was carved and erected during the Cantera phase (for example, Grove 1987b:426, 1989:132–139), and the archaeological excavations of the Cantera phase village was a primary goal of the 1970s research. Those investigations were significantly aided by the fact that the forces of erosion and deposition on the site's many terraces seem to have maintained an equilibrium over the past 2500 years. Therefore, the terrace's ground surfaces today are in most cases the equivalent of their Cantera phase surfaces. Although vestiges of Cantera phase constructions should occur at the present surface level, the terraces have been plowed and planted extensively over the past century, so that most archaeological features in the upper 0 to 40 cm constituting the plow zone have been obscured or destroyed. On the other hand, because of that destruction, the locations of Cantera phase domestic structures on the terraces were relatively easy to identify by a distinctive surface concentration of Cantera phase white-ware potsherds (Prindiville and Grove 1987:66).

Evidence from surface concentrations of pottery, plus the project's extensive excavations, indicate that the Cantera phase village was a dispersed settlement, with just one domestic structure per terrace (Grove 1987b:421; Prindiville and Grove 1987:79–80). Dominating the dispersed village, near its center, was a massive 70-m-long Cantera phase earthen platform mound (Plaza Central [PC] structure 4), one of the very rare examples of public mound architecture in central Mexico before 500 BC (see figure 2.1).<sup>1</sup> Smaller Cantera phase rectangular platforms, each stone-faced and with in situ stelae, occur on terraces 6, 15, and 25 to the north of the earthen platform mound, PC structure 4 (Grove 1984:57–65; Prindiville and Grove 1987:63–66). Terrace 25 is also the location of a Cantera phase stone-walled sunken patio containing the only Gulf coast-style tabletop throne/altar known outside of the Olmec heartland (Fash 1987; Grove 1984:65–68, 1989:137–139).

The project's excavations of ten partial or complete Cantera phase domestic structures<sup>2</sup> revealed that they were large by Middle Formative period standards, with interior floor areas averaging slightly over 60 m<sup>2</sup>. Their front walls had been constructed of wattle and daub, while the back and side walls were adobe brick (Prindiville and Grove 1987:66–71). Because of recent plowing, however, all that actually remained of most of those structures were their stone foundation walls, subfloor fill, and subfloor burials. It is to those data that

we therefore turn for evidence of domestic rituals at Chalcatzingo.

## Domestic Ritual

The task of elucidating ritual activities strictly from a domestic structure's artifact content is both difficult and speculative at best, even when the interior living floor of a structure is intact and not destroyed by plowing and erosion, and most of the floors in the Chalcatzingo sample have been destroyed. However, we believe that at least three categories of data from the excavation of Chalcatzingo's Cantera phase houses are useful in elucidating domestic ritual, and we discuss each in turn: house subfloor burials, nonutilitarian artifacts from the house context, and the houses themselves.

## Mortuary rituals

While mortuary ritual is not usually thought of as "domestic," the practice of burying a deceased person beneath the floor of his or her house was relatively common in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica. In such instances the rituals accompanying those interments can be considered as within the realm of domestic ritual. Such burials reflect specific decisions made by the surviving kin and/or community members to inter the deceased within that structure rather than in some other, nondomestic location (for example, Joyce 1999:18). Julia Hendon (2000) observed that burials, together with buried caches and items placed in storage units, reflect practices that contribute to the construction of social memory within the household, further shaping its self-identity. Since the dead were likely transformed into ancestors as a result of mortuary rituals, including rites subsequent to the primary interment, burial within the house can also serve to maintain spatial contiguity between the living household members and their ancestors (Gillespie *ND*; McAnany 1995).

Subfloor graves were present in every Cantera phase domestic structure excavated at Chalcatzingo. Those graves exhibited great variability in terms of the labor associated with their preparation and also in the quantity and variety of artifacts found within them.<sup>3</sup> Much of what has been published on the burials has considered their variability according to how it might reflect and elucidate Cantera phase social rankings (for example, Grove and Gillespie 1992; Merry de Morales 1987a), while less attention was given to information the burial data might provide on mortuary ritual. That neglect is perhaps understandable, for while the nonperishable objects placed

within and around graves probably represent a partial reflection of the mortuary ritual behavior; they are seldom very illuminating as to the nature of the actual rituals. One exception worth noting is the presence of white-ware double-loop handle censers (Merry de Morales 1987a:Fig. 8.1d) in approximately 10% of the graves. Those censers are significant because many exhibit charred interior bases, indicating that a substance such as copal incense had probably been burned in them as part of the mortuary ritual. It is additionally noteworthy that similar censer sherds were also recovered in the refuse deposits of every excavated Barranca and Cantera phase domestic structure, suggesting that incense burning in special censers was also a practice of nonmortuary domestic rituals as well.

One domestic structure, PC structure 1 (figure 2.1a), is unique for several reasons. Its subfloor area yielded 38 burials, the greatest number of burials occurring in any of Chalcatzingo's structures. It is also the only residence containing crypt graves constructed of stone slabs ( $n=8$ ; Merry de Morales 1987a:95, 103; 1987b), and six apparently purposely "paired" sets of burials occur among its interments (1987a:104–107, Table 8.2). Crypt graves appear to be associated with high-rank individuals, and PC structure 1 has therefore been interpreted as the residence of the highest status family unit in the community, that of the village's leaders. They must have held their apical position for some time, indicating the presence of ascribed ranking (Grove 1987b:421; Grove and Gillespie 1992:192–193, 199; Merry de Morales 1987a:98). The presence of a statue head in the crypt of burial 3 (see below) within this house helps to validate that interpretation.

On the assumption that some domestic mortuary ritual behavior was carried out to maintain links with particular deceased persons as ancestors, we consider PC structure 1's burial pairs to be significant. No indications suggest that the individuals within paired graves had been interred at the same time. From the stratigraphic positioning of the graves, it is possible that the burials may have occurred years apart.<sup>4</sup> If so, it indicates that the social memory of burial locations was important and conserved within the household group. It is noteworthy that two of the six paired sets of burials are crypt burial pairs; in fact, those pairs first called our attention to the phenomenon of pairing. The crypt of burial 3 (near the plow zone and damaged by plowing) was positioned directly above the crypt of burial 33, but at a right angle to it. Both crypts contained unique offerings that also link them as a pair: a stone statue head (monument 17) at the

feet of burial 3, and a greenstone were-jaguar figurine and a fragment of a jadeite bloodletter with burial 33 (Merry de Morales 1987a:103, Fig. 8.9). The inclusion of the statue head within burial 3's crypt led Grove (1981) to reconsider the then-current iconoclast-based theories relating to "monument mutilation" at Gulf coast Olmec sites (and at Chalcatzingo) and to posit instead that the decapitation of statues had more probably taken place upon the death of the individual portrayed in those monuments as part of the use life of this imagery. Burial 3 might therefore be the personage portrayed in monument 17, and the decapitation of his statue would probably have been part of the postmortem rituals carried out prior to the closing of the crypt.

The second crypt pair, burials 5 and 34, followed the pattern of the burial 3 and 33 pair, with the superimposed crypts set at right angles to each other. Interestingly, the bodies in both burials 5 and 34 were those of subadults. Only a gray-ware bowl occurred with burial 5, while burial 34 lacked any nonperishable offerings within the crypt but had two white double-loop handle censers on the exterior of the crypt, indicating that censuring continued after the capstones were placed over the crypt. The remaining four pairs (burials 10 and 27, 15 and 30, 19 and 32, and 21 and 31) were all direct (noncrypt) interments, and with the exception of a double-loop handle censer with burial 27, they provide little obvious data on mortuary ritual practice.

In sum, an extraordinary quality of PC structure 1 was materially marked by the continuity—over a significant period of time—of burials within this residence. The pairing of burials in particular indicates the importance of the remembered location of prior interments, as well as the linking of individuals in dyadic (if not larger) sets. In the conclusion to this chapter, we will return to consider the significance of such multiple burials in a single structure, home to a high-ranking family group, in terms of a likely transformation in its function.

### General domestic rituals

For a consideration of the possible evidence of non-mortuary domestic rituals, we turn to the nonutilitarian artifacts that co-occur in almost every house context across the site. (The probable use of recognizably utilitarian artifacts in ritual actions cannot be considered here.) These objects present intriguing possibilities for a variety of ritual contexts, and many of them reflect widespread practices and beliefs. The large inventory of ceramic objects considered to have ritual functions

includes anthropomorphic and animal figurines; roller seals and flat stamps; whistles, ocarinas, and flutes; masks; and miniature vessels, decorated bars, and hollow spheres (for example, Grove 1987d:273–292, Tables 16.1–16.3). Among the lithic artifacts, polished greenstone “awl points,” well-made bifacial obsidian “needles,” and *pulidores* may have had ritual functions (Grove 1987d:291–292, Fig. 16.25; Thomson 1987:302–303, Figs. 17.12, 17.13). Here we limit our discussion to four of these artifact categories: ceramic figurines and masks, greenstone awl points, and obsidian needles.

Mesoamerican clay figurines have traditionally been viewed as cult objects (for example, Lee 1969:62–65), and figurines are thus one of the most obvious ritual artifact categories found in house contexts. Susan Gillespie’s (1987) analysis of the typological distribution of anthropomorphic figurines among the various residential structures at Chalcatzingo reveals a relatively homogeneous distribution, indicating that rituals which may have utilized specific figurine types were nonetheless common to all houses within the settlement.

We are able to deduce a common ritual practice and two ritual cult themes from Chalcatzingo’s figurine sample. The ritual practice is almost too obvious to mention but its significance too often goes unrecognized, namely, that the overwhelming majority of figurines recovered at sites of the Early and Middle Formative period in Mesoamerica, including Chalcatzingo, were purposely broken, usually by snapping their heads off in an act of decapitation. This practice is already evident in the earliest figurine assemblages known in Mesoamerica, the Barra and Locona phase figurines of the Chiapas coast (Blake et al. 1995:Fig. 7; Ceja Tenoio 1985: Fig. 45; John Clark, personal communication), suggesting it has antiquity beyond our present knowledge. It endured after the Formative period, and its near ubiquity across both space and time in Mesoamerica demonstrate that it was a fundamental ritual practice. In the Formative period this means of terminating the use life of anthropomorphic representations in clay was replicated when human images were later crafted in stone sculpture, although the latter practice is frequently mislabeled “Olmec monument mutilation” (Grove 1981).

One cult theme has been suggested for Chalcatzingo figures by Ann Cyphers, based upon her detailed analysis of the large (more than 4000 fragments) Chalcatzingo figurine sample. Cyphers (1988, 1990, 1993) concluded that the majority of the site’s figurines were related to female life-cycle rituals. Her analysis also indicates that an-

thropomorphic figurines occur in domestic contexts at the site and within those contexts are found primarily in the food preparation area (that is, women’s work space).<sup>5</sup>

The most important figurine type at Cantera phase Chalcatzingo is the one designated C-8 in the Vaillant typology (Vaillant 1930:112). While C-8 figurines occur in minor numbers at other Middle Formative sites in central Mexico, they represent 41% of the total figurine sample recovered at Chalcatzingo (Grove 1987b:423). Unlike the rather generic quality of most figurines of the Middle Formative period, the facial features on C-8 figurines have a portrait-like aspect, and we have been able to define at least twenty different individuals in multiple occurrences in our sample. We believe that these figurines probably represent specific persons, most likely leaders or ancestral founders. They were probably used in ritual activities we once referred to as the “cult of the ruler” (Grove and Gillespie 1984; Gillespie 1987:269–270; Grove 1987b:423–426), although we now realize the greater likelihood that ancestors are portrayed in the imagery (Gillespie 1999). While at Chalcatzingo and Gulf coast Olmec sites this cult is also represented in stone portraiture restricted to the elites, we find it significant that at Chalcatzingo it is heavily represented by C-8 figurines in every excavated Cantera phase house in the settlement (Gillespie 1987:Figs. 15.3–15.10).

Zoomorphic figurines also occur primarily in house contexts, however, many of them had hollow bodies and apparently functioned as whistles and ocarinas. Nonanimal effigy whistles and ocarinas were also found predominantly in domestic contexts, suggesting that music was a component of domestic rituals.

A different artifact category clearly related to ritual activity is the ceramic mask. While such masks may certainly have been worn by participants in publicly witnessed community rituals, it is interesting to note that all of those found at Chalcatzingo come from domestic contexts (Grove 1987d:Table 16.2). Their presence in that context may simply be owing to their storage within a dwelling, but it may indicate that they functioned in both community and domestic rituals, possibly serving as the durable faces of household effigy figures made of more perishable materials. Donald Cordry, citing Fray Juan de Torquemada, observed that in the Late Postclassic period in central Mexico, the use of masks on “idols” was a common practice, and Cordry further suggested that some masks found in burials might have adorned “wooden idols” placed as burial furniture (1980:86).

It is significant that while the general appearances of

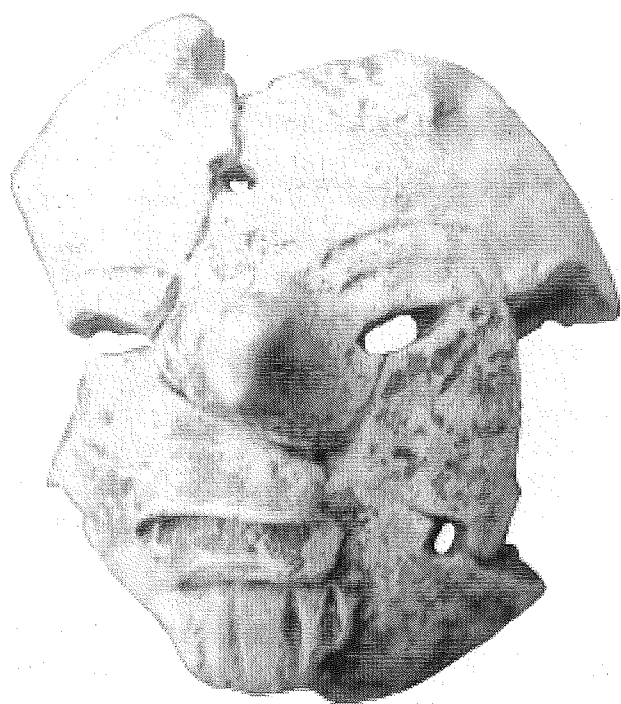


Figure 2.2 Clay mask of an "Old Man" with a small beard and two forehead tufts and lines and crease marks on the cheek (diameter: 16 cm)

the masks in the Chalcatzingo sample vary somewhat in eye form, ear treatment, and so forth, they all depict a fundamentally similar image of an old man—a face with a small beard and two tufts on the forehead and often lines forming creases in the cheek area (figure 2.2). The same image is also found among masks from Middle Formative (Zacatenco phase) Zohapilco (Niederberger 1976:Pl. 88, #1, 3) and Zacatenco (Vaillant 1930:Pl. 39, bottom row #1, 8) in the Basin of Mexico. The homogeneity of this image is intriguing, and importantly, the same face never appears in Chalcatzingo's extremely large figurine sample. In contrast to these Middle Formative objects, masks from the Early Formative period, as exemplified by those recovered at Tlatilco, are quite varied in their imagery (see, for example, Coe 1965:Figs. 161–169; García Moll et al. 1991:Burials 8, 22, 53, 57, 74; Piña Chán 1955:Pls. 19, 20, 27, 28). However, only a small number of the published masks from the Early Formative exhibit any attribute combinations similar to those of the masks from the Middle Formative in Chalcatzingo, such as forehead tufts (but singular in the Early Formative), beards, and cheek lines (Coe 1965:Fig. 162; García Moll et al. 1991:Burial 57; Piña Chán 1971:Fig. 20 a, b). The great individuality shown in the published Early Formative examples and the unusual homogeneity of the Middle Formative masks from Chalcatzingo and the Basin of

Mexico, if truly representative samples of masks and their changes over time, may signify an important ideological evolution toward a shared image. The attributes of that image suggest that it may be antecedent to the Late Formative development of recognizable Huehuetotl ("Old God") braziers in central Mexico (for example, at Cuicuilco; Piña Chán 1955:Figs. 23, 24), which were iconographically linked to similar forms in the later Classic and Postclassic periods.

Bloodletting or autosacrifice—the piercing or cutting of body parts to produce blood droplets as a sacrificial offering or ritual veneration—has been a popular topic of discussion among Mesoamerican scholars since the 1980s (for example, Joyce et al. 1991; Schele and Miller 1986). Despite its notable association with kingship rites (Schele and Miller 1986; Stuart 1988), autosacrifice seems to have been carried out by most members of pre-Hispanic societies, including in association with domestic ritual in a familial setting. A variety of objects is now commonly identified in archaeological assemblages as possibly having functioned as bloodletters, including stingray spines, greenstone awl points, obsidian needles, and shark's teeth (for example, Flannery 1976:341–344).

Within the Chalcatzingo inventory, two stingray spines were recovered in the excavations, but only one came from an unambiguous context—Barranca phase burial 107, interred within a large subsurface pit feature associated with a Barranca phase house on terrace 25 (figure 2.1, f; Fash 1987:86, Figs. 7.9–7.11). Greenstone awl points were also rare, with two recovered from the PC structure 1 house, one from the terrace 9A house, and one from the surface near the Barranca phase house on terrace 9B (Thomson 1987:302, Fig. 17.12). In contrast to this paucity of high-valued bloodletters, numerous small, finely bifacially flaked obsidian needles and some larger "lacerators" were recovered from nearly every domestic structure excavated (Grove 1987d:291–292, Fig. 16.25). While such objects could also have served mundane domestic tasks related to working leather or wood, it is equally probable that they functioned as bloodletters. Bloodletting could also have been carried out utilizing perishable implements, including cactus and *huizache* (*Acacia*) spines as shown in the Aztec *Codex Magliabecchiano* (Boone 1983:Folio 79r), as well as with the obsidian blades that are so common in household refuse.

#### Rituals of the domestic structure

Evidence exists for one further important dimension of domestic rites that should be obvious but is often

ignored, for it involves the actual house structure as an entity that was a focus of ritual action. At Chalcatzingo the significance of rituals devoted to the house itself became apparent from the clear evidence that domestic structures were periodically demolished, burned, and then rebuilt in the same location (Grove 1987b:422–423; Prindiville and Grove 1987:74–75). Primary indications for this repeated occurrence come from the structures' subfloor areas and consist of ash, burned daub fragments, and sections of earlier foundation walls. Houses were apparently partially dismantled, and reusable materials such as adobe bricks and roof beams were removed and saved, because burned adobes and large pieces of wood charcoal were generally not found. On the other hand, roof thatch, cane, and wattle-and-daub walls were burned. The renovation of a structure by dismantling and burning served pragmatic purposes; over time the cane, branches, and roof thatch deteriorate, and the walls and roof become infested with wasps, spiders, scorpions, and other vermin. Nevertheless, more than simple extermination was involved, for there is other ritual evidence associated with periodic house renewal, and the maintenance of the residence in exactly the same location must have been meaningful.

Ethnographic data elsewhere in Mesoamerica reveal that houses are considered to be living beings, often believed to have a "soul" or resident spirit. They must be ritually dedicated before they can be inhabited, continually nourished, cleansed of negative influences that could bring illness or misfortune to their inhabitants, and mourned when abandoned. In short, houses generally have a life-cycle parallel to that of the humans who co-occupy that space with them (Gillespie 2000c). Along these lines, archaeologists have begun to recognize evidence of "termination rituals," for instance, associated with Maya public architecture (for example, Garber 1983; Mock 1998b). Similar rituals apparently took place at Chalcatzingo (Grove 1987b:422–423). Notable among the ashy debris from the burning of the Chalcatzingo houses were tiny pieces of greenstone artifacts, primarily fragments of thin jadeite earspools, which seem to have been randomly scattered (see chapter 5). Greenstone was highly restricted at Chalcatzingo, yet these fragments (more than a hundred were recovered) occur within the subfloor ash at houses where there is no other archaeological evidence of greenstone use by that structure's inhabitants. People apparently scattered the greenstone fragments between the time of burning and the time of rebuilding as part of a ritual behavior associated with the

destruction and renewal of house structures (Grove 1987b:422–423).<sup>6</sup> It is also likely that at least some of the potsherds that occur in the ashy subfloor context may not represent normal domestic trash but may instead have belonged to vessels broken during the same rituals.

Rebuilding the house in the same location is evidence of the association of individual household units with a specific locus in space. This was another important means for constructing and affirming their separate identities and their long-lived positions within the spatio-social network of the larger community. The longevity of house location also relates to the maintenance of social memory and ancestral ties that provide a unique history for each household. As Ruth Tringham (2000) observed for Neolithic Europe, the burning of a mud structure is as much an act of conservation as of destruction. The heat converts mudbrick and daub into an enduring material, which Neolithic householders took pains to incorporate into their new structures, to help ensure the continuity of the materiality of the house in its place, metaphorically associated with the continuity of the household that inhabited it.

### From House to Shrine

In conclusion, domestic ritual framed by the sanctified house structure, served significant sociological functions of defining and preserving household identity and property, thereby facilitating its social reproduction, as well as the more obvious religious functions of maintaining prescribed relationships with the spirit world. Ancestors served as mediators in both respects, for ancestral origin was an important source of identity and legitimate rights to property, while ancestral spirits likely functioned as familiar intervenors with the more formidable cosmic forces.

We end this chapter with a hypothesis that we intend to test through new excavations at Chalcatzingo and through an extensive reanalysis of some of the 1970s data. We are intrigued by the possibility that at least two domestic structures at Chalcatzingo—the Cantera phase PC structure1 (figure 2.1, a) and the Barranca phase terrace 25 structure1 (figure 2.1, f)—actually underwent a transformation of function from houses to shrines. Patricia McAnany (1998) has suggested such a phenomenon for the Maya, and Patrick Kirch (2000) has documented this transition in Polynesian archaeological contexts. In Kirch's interpretation, certain households were able to maintain a significant social presence over generations and thereby accumulate many burials within their resi-



dences, to the point where the houses became too sacred to live in. As repositories for ancestors and their spirits and also for heirloomed possessions, the dwellings became sanctified, functioning more as shrines for a burgeoning ancestral cult and serving as focus for a political network of related families, if not the entire community. Village leaders would have linked their authority to such structures, even if they no longer resided in them.

The 1970s Chalcatzingo research disclosed that three terraces in the northern site area had each been the location of Cantera phase stone-faced platform mounds—terrace 6 structure 1, terrace 15 structure 5, and terrace 25 structure 2 (figure 2.1 c,d,e; Fash 1987:92, Fig. 7.23; Grove and Cyphers 1987:35–36, 43–44, 48, Figs. 4.16, 4.27). Chalcatzingo's stone-faced platforms are unique within the archaeological record of the Middle Formative period in central Mexico. Furthermore, adjacent to each platform were one or more stelae depicting specific personages, perhaps Chalcatzingo's important leaders and ancestors (Grove 1984:57–62, 1987b:430–431, 1999:262–265). Because the upper surfaces of the platforms occur within the modern plow zone and have been destroyed, the 1970s excavations focused primarily on such basic concerns as their size and construction. While it seems likely that the platforms served as the substructures for elite domestic buildings (perhaps the residences of individuals depicted in the stelae or their descendants), that remains an unresolved question that we intend to investigate through new excavations.

As noted above, PC structure 1, at the extreme southern edge of the Cantera phase village, is the only excavated domestic structure with subfloor stone crypt graves. This observation is one of the reasons for the interpretation of PC structure 1 as the site's major elite residence, likely home to its rulers (for example, Grove 1987b:421–422; Merry de Morales 1987a:99). Our present suggestion that the stone-faced platforms in the northern site area were probably the location of elite residences does not negate the earlier interpretation but merely modifies it, for the northern platforms may postdate the PC structure 1 residence and signify a shift in location for the elites. That scenario may also help to explain why PC structure 1 has more than five times as many subfloor interments (38) as any of the other excavated Cantera phase domestic structures (each with 7 or fewer burials). Although the stratigraphic excavations of PC structure 1 indicate it had undergone several rebuildings and exhibited a great longevity (Grove and Cyphers 1987:27; Merry de Morales 1987a:Figs. 8.5–8.7), its age alone does

not account for the high number of burials, for most of the other excavated structures also seem to have had equal longevity. We hypothesize that the function of PC structure 1 may have gradually shifted from a domestic structure to a principal locus of ancestral rites and a hallowed burial location for particular individuals, thus accounting for a large subfloor burial population even after the building was no longer habited. The house was transformed from domestic structure to shrine.

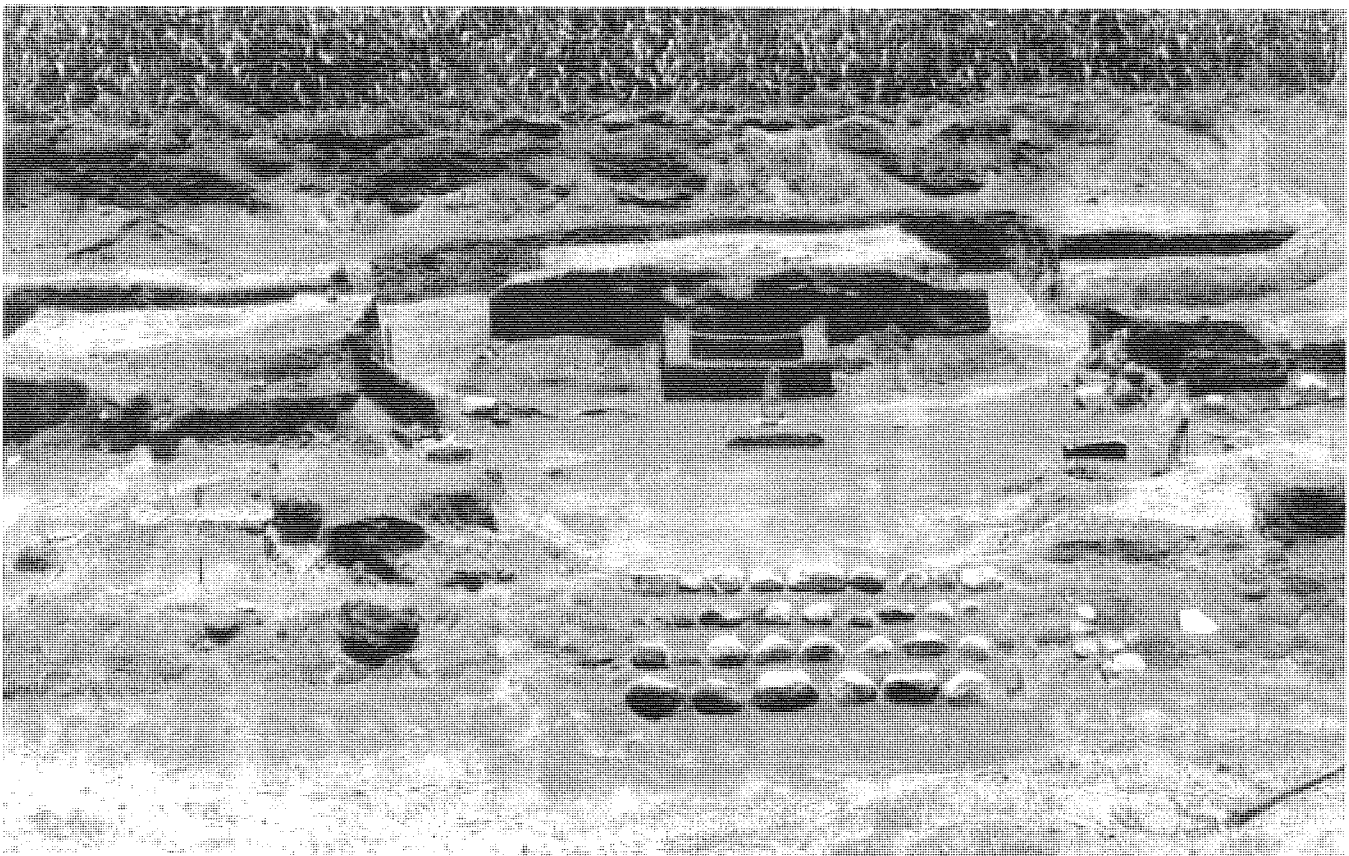
Although no other Cantera phase domestic structure matches the number of interments found within PC structure 1, a second large grouping of Cantera phase burials occurs on terrace 25, in the area of platform mounds in the northern area of the settlement (figure 2.1, f), a contrast with the southern location of the PC structures. Here sixteen Cantera phase burials were interred below the surface of a stone-walled sunken patio and also within the tabletop altar/throne situated against the patio's south wall. Two of those burials were stone crypt graves. The sunken patio is a Cantera phase construction, but it was built over the location of a Barranca phase domestic structure (terrace 25, structure 1). A small section of house floor, a large trash pit, and six burials remained from that Barranca phase dwelling (Fash 1987:85–91; Merry de Morales 1987b). This juxtaposition suggests that the Barranca phase structure was the residential focus of another important household, whose location became so sacred that it was transformed into a singular ritual space, into which even more of the ancestors were interred.

Finally, the spatial orientation along a north-south axis of what were likely two coeval multigenerational, high-ranked, extended family households fits within the orienting pattern of the site's constructed landscape (Grove 1999). That is, the households maintained their roles and identities within the larger community structure in part by the patterned placement of their domestic structures, reinforced by rituals focused on their dwellings and their ancestors in those locales. Altogether these data also illustrate the crucial role of house-based ritual in considering important questions about the nature and development of social and political organization of Middle Formative period in Chalcatzingo.

**Acknowledgments.** We gratefully acknowledge Patricia Plunket and Gabriela Uruñuela, Ann Cyphers, Rosemary A. Joyce, Joyce Marcus, and many others whose ideas and comments have stimulated our thinking about the possible domestic rituals carried out at Chalcatzingo.

## Notes

1. Cantera phase PC structure 4 is the most recent of four identifiable building stages of the mound. Excavation data suggest that the earliest stage may date to the Amate phase (Grove and Cyphers 1987:29-30; Prindiville and Grove 1987:63, Fig.6.2).
2. The ten structures are Plaza Central structure 1, terrace 4 structure 2, terrace-9A structure 1, terrace-11 structure 1, terrace-20 structure 1, terrace-23 structure 1, terrace-24 structure 1, terrace-27 structure 1, terrace-29 structure 1, and terrace S-39 (see Grove and Cyphers 1987:23-51). Figure 2.1 gives only the location of Plaza Central structure 1.
3. Data on each Chalcatzingo burial and its associated grave goods are presented in Merry de Morales (1987b) and therefore will not be individually cited in this chapter.
4. Because of the poor condition of most of the burials recovered, their gender could not be determined. While we suspect from the grave furniture that some burial pairs may have consisted of a male and a female (husband and wife?), we cannot prove that to be the case.
5. For detailed discussions of women's rituals during the Formative period, see Marcus (1998, 1999).
6. Among the contemporary Maya, the color green indicates that an object is "alive" and has a resident soul or animating force (Sosa 1989:137). It is possible that within the Chalcatzingo house renewal ceremony, the scattering of greenstone pieces, no matter how small, was a way of "enlivening" the house.



Top, 3.1 View of operation 13 on the northeastern slopes of the Popocatepetl

Bottom, 3.2 House compound on basal platform, operation 11. Reprinted by permission from Latin American Antiquity 9(4)

# Lineages and Ancestors

## The Formative Mortuary Assemblages of Tetimpa, Puebla

Gabriela Uruñuela and Patricia Plunket

**O**n the northeastern flank of the Popocatepetl (figure 3.1), the village of Tetimpa was sealed by over a meter of volcanic ash at the end of the first century AD. This deposit preserved intact the contexts of the Late Tetimpa phase (50 BC–AD 100), when the settlement covered at least 2 km<sup>2</sup> with a semidispersed pattern of between four and six hundred household units separated from one another by agricultural fields; a previous occupation, the Early Tetimpa phase (700–200 BC), corresponds to the initial settlement of the site (Plunket and Uruñuela 1998b:292–293). Despite the apparent temporal hiatus, the cultural continuity between the two phases allows us to take advantage of information derived from the long, continuous sequence of Early Tetimpa, as well as of the extraordinary data provided by both *in locus agendi* (abrupt abandonment) and *de facto* (gradual abandonment) contexts (Manzanilla 1990:14) produced by the site's rapid depopulation which prematurely ended the short Late Tetimpa occupation (Plunket and Uruñuela NDB).

Links identified between the privileged contexts of Late Tetimpa and the funerary assemblages of Early Tetimpa suggest that specific ritual activities can be associated with particular members of the domestic group; additionally, the analysis of these data leads us to propose that the mortuary program of the early Tetimpeños reflects a lineage structure and a tradition of ancestor veneration that were among the underlying factors that ordered the ancient village social structure.

### Late Tetimpa Domestic Compounds

Since the best-preserved archaeological evidence of the local Formative culture is that which was sealed by the

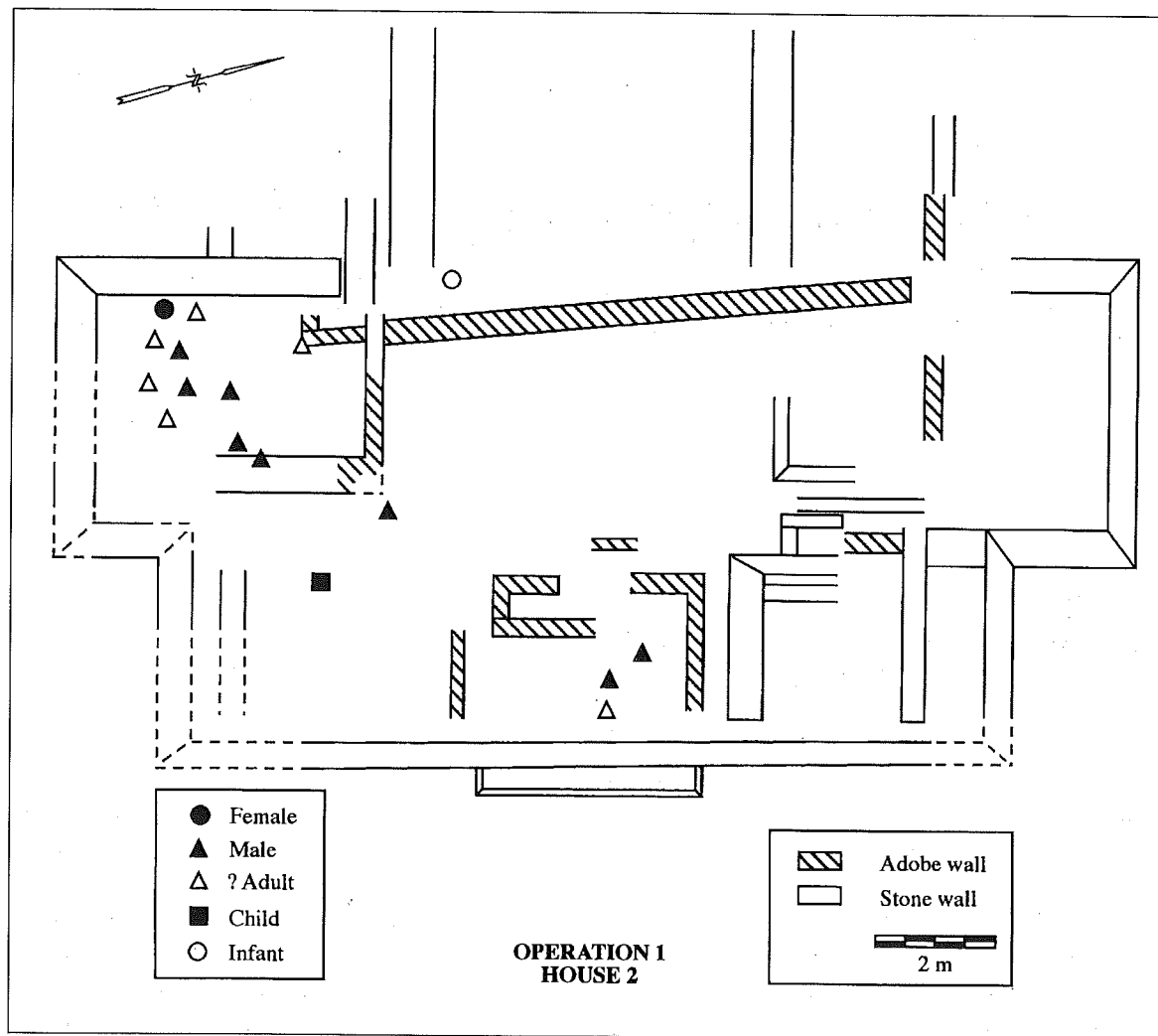
eruption, we will briefly describe it to provide a general panorama of the residential setting that will aid our understanding as we look backward for its antecedents in earlier times.

The 21 Late Tetimpa domestic compounds recorded to date document a highly standardized building program. They usually have a central courtyard surrounded by two to four stone platforms that supported wattle-and-daub rooms with mud-and-pumitic-gravel floors. The structures utilize the talud-tablero system to frame a central staircase on their main façade. On sloping terrain, a compensatory basal platform with three to four steps leading to the agricultural fields is added to the front of the compound (figure 3.2). Several *cuexcomates* for grain storage flank the courtyard's entrance—perhaps as visual social indicators of the family's accumulative capacity—whereas small rooms located in the back corners were used to accommodate household goods. Other activity areas, such as those for food processing and domestic ritual, are discrete and easily identified, systematically occupying specific zones of the multifunctional courtyard (Uruñuela and Plunket 1998).

The entire residential space is defined by two perpendicular axes that intersect at the center of the courtyard. Here, there is often a small shrine that usually includes motifs alluding to the Popocatepetl volcano (Plunket and Uruñuela 1998a, chapter 4), and even in those exceptional cases that lack a formal shrine, this center is marked with a stone, clearly emphasizing the special character of this point.

Both the location and design features of the rooms suggest that there were functional differences among them. The main structure, situated behind the shrine op-

### 3.3 Distribution of burials, operation 1, house 2



posite the compound's entrance, constitutes the visual focus of the house. When cult objects, such as censers, occur outside the courtyard, they are always in this room; additionally, its wide doorway indicates that it was used for communal functions. The lateral rooms are smaller than the central one, with narrower entries that would have been more appropriate for activities demanding greater privacy.

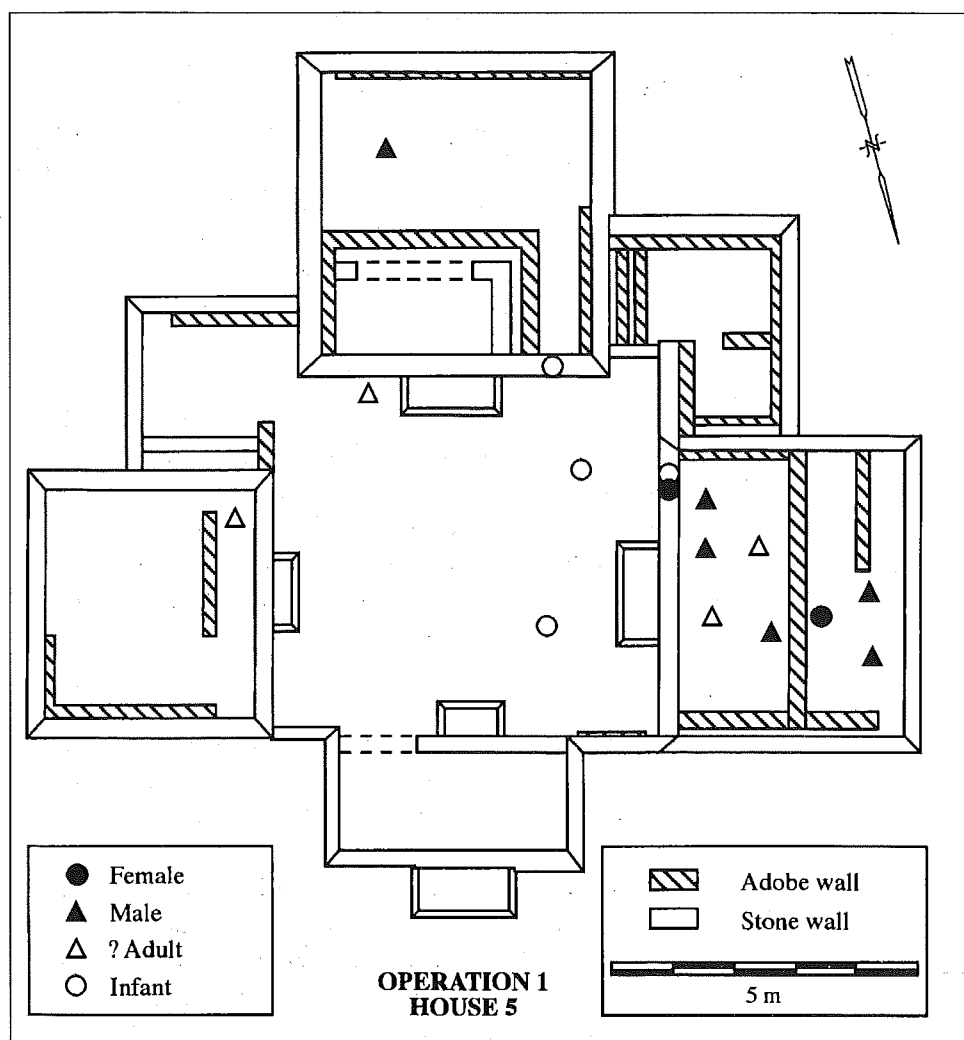
The uniformity of this layout at all Tetimpa houses reflects a strong adherence to social prescriptions used to generate the domestic setting.

### Early Tetimpa Domestic Compounds

Bearing in mind the pattern described above, we can seek to identify its roots in the remains of the older, Early Tetimpa phase settlement. We have excavated two residential units, both built and left to decay during this earlier period, and six others that correspond to substructures of Late Tetimpa phase houses. Although less well preserved than their later counterparts and more highly

modified because of their longer use life, all these cases share the Late Tetimpa distributional pattern. The main differences between the early and late houses are that for Early Tetimpa we have not documented shrines, floors were not made with gravel but of polished clay, and bell-shaped pits were used for storage instead of the above-ground cuexcomates. Otherwise, it seems clear that the domestic architectural format of Late Tetimpa emerged from the cultural tradition established during this earlier phase.

But there is a category of information we have found only at Early Tetimpa houses: the burials. The inhumation of family members in the domestic space of Early Tetimpa disappears in Late Tetimpa, perhaps to be substituted by another kind of mortuary treatment or placement. An analysis of these features leads us to propose the two main ideas that we will explore in this chapter: (1) that certain ritual activities appear to have been enacted by a family member with a specific domestic so-



3.4 Distribution of burials,  
operation 1, house 5

cial identity, that is, the household head, and (2) that a lineage structure and its associated ancestor veneration were at least partially responsible for the composition and distribution of the mortuary population represented at these houses. To substantiate these ideas, we will briefly review the data of the two compounds inhabited only in Early Tetimpa (operation 1: houses 2 and 5), and then look in more detail at the best-preserved case, one of the substructures of a Late Tetimpa house (operation 13). The data from the remaining five cases of Late Tetimpa substructures (operations 17, 18, 19, 20, and 22) have not been subject to a detailed analysis since they were only recently excavated, but based on our field observations, those that have burials (operations 17, 18, and 19) appear to conform to the general pattern that we report below.

#### Operation 1, Houses 2 and 5

Houses 2 and 5 at operation 1 were the first Early Tetimpa residential units excavated (Uruñuela and

Plunket 1995; Uruñuela, Plunket, and Hernández 1996). We registered seventeen human skeletons in house 2 (figure 3.3) and sixteen in house 5 (figure 3.4). Even though rodent burrowing and sequential burial activities had left the bones in very poor condition, we were able to make some general statements about the funerary pattern (table 3.1, and see also figures 3.3 and 3.4):

- most individuals were adults;
- most adults were males;
- most adults were placed under the floor of the platforms, most of them under the same room;
- infants and children<sup>1</sup> were buried under the courtyard or within the walls of the platforms facing it;
- with the exception of two collapsed or dismantled tombs in house 5 and possibly another two in house 2, interments were made in simple graves;
- the skeletons were always flexed, either dorsally or laterally;

Table 3.1 Burials characteristics, operation 1, houses 2 and 5

		HOUSE 2	HOUSE 5
Total of individuals		17	16
Location	South room	11	1
	West room	-	8
	East room	3	1
	Courtyard & walls	3	6
Age	Adult	15	12
	Infant	1	4
	Child	1	-
Sex (Adults)	Male	8	6
	Undetermined	6	4
	Female	1	2
Offerings	Male	5 of 8 (2-13 objs.)	6 of 6 (3-15 objs.)
	Adult (non-sexed)	5 of 6 (1-5 objs.)	4 of 4 (1-5 objs.)
	Female	None of 1	1 of 2 (5 objs.)
	Child	1 of 1 (1 bird)	
	Infant	None of 1	None of 4
Deposit	Simple grave	15	14
	Destroyed tomb	2	2
Orientation	Head to the south	8	6
	Head to the east	1	
	Head to the north	1	
Position	Flexed, lateral	7	4
	Flexed, dorsal	3	2

Table 3.2 Burials characteristics, operation 13

Total of individuals		19
Location	West room	12
	North room	3
	East room	3
	Courtyard	1
Age	Adult	18
	Child	1
Sex (Adults)	Male	14
	Female	4
Offerings	Male	11 of 14 (1-35 objs.)
	Female	2 of 4 (1-3 objs.)
	Child	1 of 1 (1 bird & 1 obj.)
Deposit	Simple grave	14
	Tomb	3
	Destroyed tomb	2
Orientation	Head to the south	10
	Head to the north	3
	Head to the west	1
Position	Flexed, lateral	10
	Flexed, dorsal	3
	Flexed, ventral	1

- the predominant orientation was with the skull to the south;
- most men and nonsexed individuals had grave goods, only one female did, infants had none, and the sole child was associated with a bird whose remains were mixed with a few obsidian blades; and
- certain grave goods, that is, ceramic goblets, obsidian and chert artifacts, and stone bark beaters, only occurred with men.

Although the disparity between males and females was striking (eight men versus one woman in house 2 and six men versus two women in house 5), it seemed that perhaps the nonsexed adults (six in house 2 and four in house 5) might account for at least part of this difference. The other intriguing feature was the scarcity of infants and children (only one child and one infant in house 2 and four infants in house 5).

### Operation 13

Operation 13 corresponded to a compound with both Early and Late Tetimpa occupation (Uruñuela, Plunket, and Hernández 1998) where we registered fourteen Early Tetimpa burials with nineteen individuals. The better preservation of these bones allowed us to document age and sex groups more precisely than at operation 1, so that operation 13 proved crucial to our understanding of the local mortuary variability and its social implications.

The burials here (figure 3.5; table 3.2) fit well into the generalizations already made:

- most individuals were adults;
- most adults were males;
- most adults were placed under the floor of the platforms, most of them under the same room;
- one child was placed beneath the courtyard;
- three skeletons were found in two tombs, and two more in a partially collapsed tomb, while all the others were placed in simple graves;
- the skeletons were always flexed, either dorsally, laterally, or ventrally;
- the predominant orientation was with the skull to the south;
- eleven of the fourteen men had grave goods (two of the three males without them were either secondary or partially removed interments), two of the four females had them, and the only child registered was associated with an obsidian scraper and a bird with two obsidian flakes mixed with its bones; and



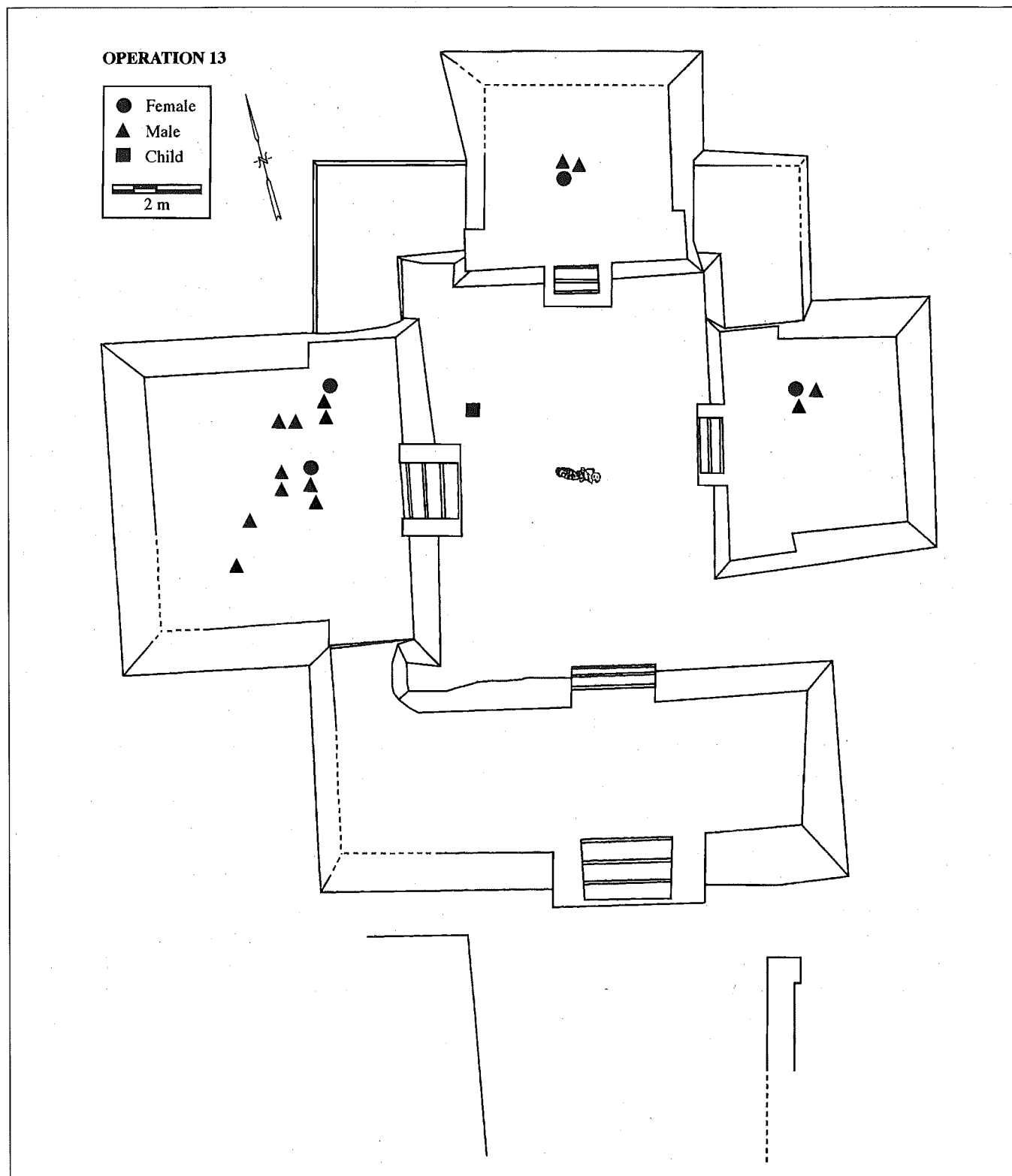


Figure 3.5 Distribution of burials, operation 13

- only males had ceramic goblets, obsidian and chert artifacts, and stone bark beaters.

The more accurate information on age and sex permitted us to add further observations regarding the general mortuary pattern:

- the birds associated with the children differentiate them from the infants who had no offerings at all; and
- ceramic censers were found exclusively with males.

Also, at operation 13 it became clear that the disparity between males and females and between adults and nonadults observed at the other houses did not result from a lack of information but was rather a pattern that demanded explanation. By focusing on the data at operation 13, we can begin to discern the ordering system employed in the arrangement of the mortuary remains within the domestic space.

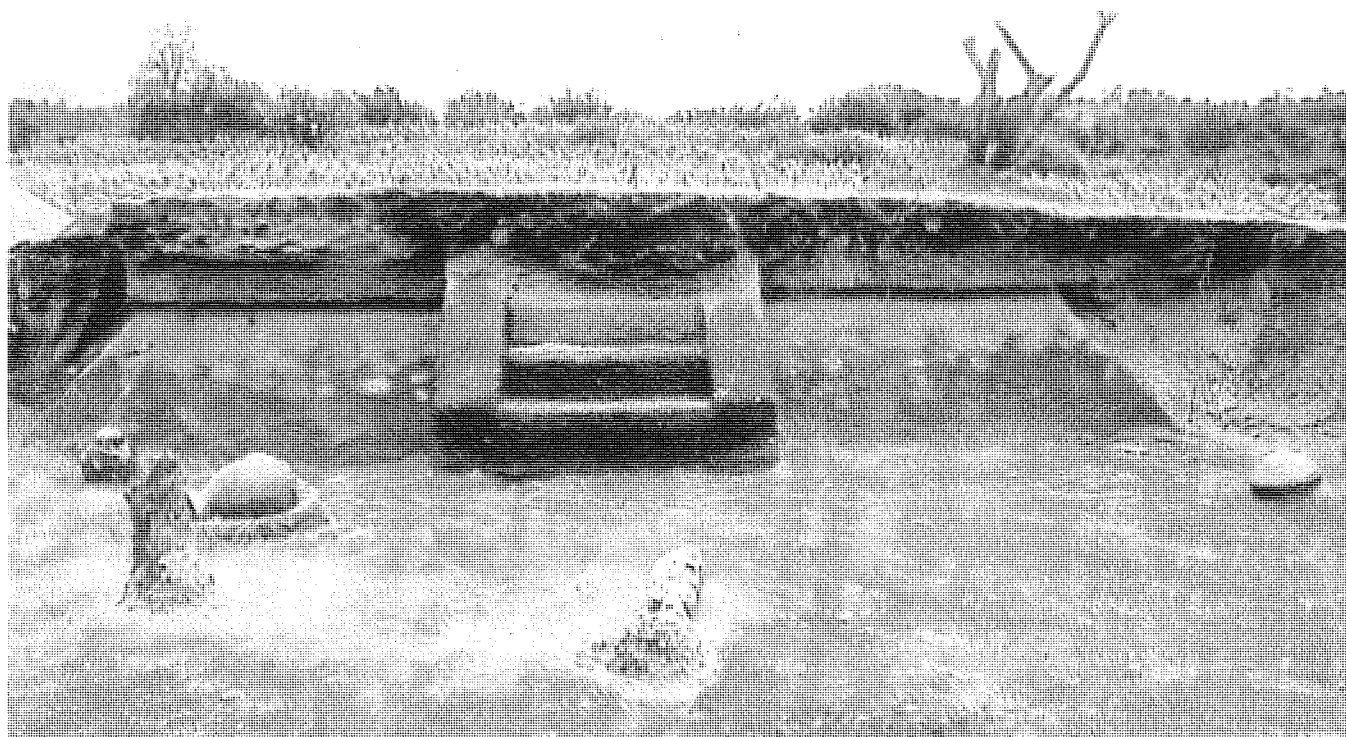
### Funerary Patterns of Early Tetimpa: Lineages and Ancestors

Many aspects of ancient mortuary programs do not survive in the archaeological record, for example, the food, the taboos, the dances, the speeches, the prayers, the songs, the mourning traditions; as Parker points out, we "cannot dig up funerals, only the deposits resulting from their terminating practices" (1999:49). Still, the variation in material remains from those deposits can give us some idea of the differences among individuals, providing us with the means to link that variability with the social organization that produced it (Binford 1971), especially if we apply a multidimensional approach to the burial attributes of the sample (Ravesloot 1988:19).

From a demographic perspective, the number of people buried in each Early Tetimpa house is surprisingly small considering the length of the occupation. The ceramic offerings indicate a span of at least 300 years, from 500 to 200 BC at operation 13 (although a shaft tomb is probably earlier), and nineteen skeletons are too few for such a long time, even more so if we take into account the disparities in age and sex. This population does not comprise all of the inhabitants of the house and therefore these burials do not express the entire range of the Tetimpa mortuary program; it seems that a privileged few were chosen to be buried at home while most family members were deposited elsewhere or were subject to other kinds of funerary manipulations. Selective disposal of the dead is well documented ethnographically and we

find cases where, for instance, only the grandparents have the right to be interred in the houses while the rest of the family members receive treatments that vary according to age, sex, and even cause of death (Goody 1962:143–155). Ethnohistorical sources for highland Mesoamerica report that variation in the treatment of the corpse, place of deposit, and even the soul's final destiny might depend either on a person's occupation or on specific aspects or circumstances of his or her death (Durán 1971:121–122 and 267; Sahagún 1969, Vol. I:293–297, Vol. II:180–181). Assuming that the mortuary differentiation accorded an individual is consistent with her/his social position in the living society (O'Shea 1984:21), the selectivity at Tetimpa is crucial to our argument, since qualitative distinctions in burial treatments are usually related to qualitative differences in the social identities represented, and, as such, are symbols of rank and/or authority usually associated with ascriptive ranking (Ravesloot 1988:19).

The fourteen males buried at operation 13 were adults between 25 to 40 years old, and judging from the stratigraphy they well might belong to different generations. If we think of them as family heads, and if each one held that position for an average of 20 years, then we can account for 280 years, amazingly close to the 300 years of occupation calculated. The most complex burials tend to be located towards the center of the main platform behind the shrine, beneath the floor of the room where we have proposed that communal functions, including rituals, took place, thus linking the most important ancestors with those activities. Although we do not have burials for Late Tetimpa, the courtyards of this phase contain several elements that evoke the ancestors: (1) a skull was deposited under one of the shrines; (2) the end of the shrine closest to the main platform usually has ash, one or two obsidian flakes, and many small stones identical to those placed beneath and on top of the Early Tetimpa burials; and (3) the subterranean chimneys under the shrine stones evidently produced smoke emulating that of the volcano, although they might also represent portals to the underworld where the ancestors reside (chapter 4). In addition, the Late Tetimpa reoccupation at operation 13 maintained the platform with the most important Early Tetimpa burials as the main building of the compound (figure 3.6); some of the men deposited there were interred with censers (figure 3.7), an article that also was found exclusively with men at other houses. Symbols of authority must be evaluated in terms of both cost and their distribution within the archaeological record to understand their meaning within the social system (Braun

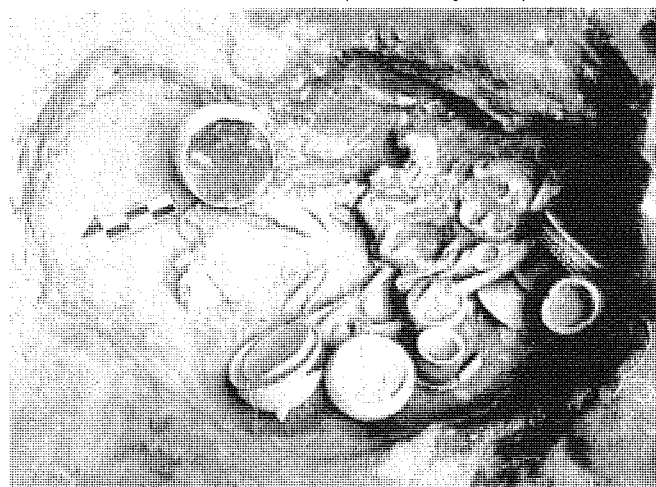


1981:412). While these pedestal censors were fairly crude, low-cost artifacts, they are similar to one found in a *in locus agendi* context in front of the Late Tetimpa household shrine at operation 13 (Uruñuela and Plunket 1998), and thus they provide a link between the Early Tetimpa funerary deposits and the Late Tetimpa domestic ritual activities (figure 3.8).

There are no high-value exotic materials included in the Tetimpa burial assemblages nor any trace of mortuary body adornment. Even the plain ceramic earspools that are typical of the local clay figurines (Clear and Plunket 1998) and commonly occur in the middens and construction fill, do not appear in the burials. The hyperflexed position of most of the skeletons suggests that they were bound as bundles, a fact that could explain the absence of funerary costume ornaments employed by other Formative groups (Joyce 1999). Additionally, there are no figurines or miniature vessels; most of the surviving objects deposited in the sepultures were either serving vessels or stone tools. The pedestal censors constitute the sole article that cannot be assigned utilitarian functions. Like those from the Chalcatzingo burials (chapter 2), these censors exhibit charred interiors; they also have residues that appear to be copal, indicating their use either as part of the mortuary ritual or, just as likely, by the deceased during his lifetime.

Grove (1987e) has proposed that torches were symbols

3.6 Operation 13. The main building of the Late Tetimpa occupation, behind the shrine, contains the most important Early Tetimpa burials.



3.7 Burial 10, operation 13, censor associated with male skeleton

of rulership in Early and Middle Formative Mesoamerica, and his idea has recently been applied to Teotihuacan (Cowgill 1997:150). Ethnographically, censors are still essential items of ritual paraphernalia in Mexico, and their use is sometimes tied to figures of authority. Among the isthmian Zapotec, the *xuaanas* are the *barrio* (ward) headmen whose most important ritual action is to "cense" with copal the church altar, the mayordomos' shrines, the sacred plants, the saints and candles of family altars, and during a wake, the corpse. Interestingly, the word *xuaana*



Top, 3.8 Censer left in front of the shrine, operation 13  
 Bottom, 3.9 One of the tombs (burial 5), operation 13, after removal of the overlapping andesitic flagstones used for the roof

is derived from *xuu*, "earthquake," "force," or "power," and *naa*, "hand," and can be translated as "he who holds the power in his hand" (Münch 1999:118–120; chapter 9). It is worth mentioning that the Tetimpa censers are portable handheld objects, an attribute that would attach them symbolically to the person bearing them. Perhaps in the case that concerns us here, these articles were equivalent authority symbols at the family, "house" (Gillespie 2000a; Joyce 1999; chapter 6), or lineage level, and as such were sometimes placed with the bodies of individuals who in life were in charge of presiding over domestic rituals that incorporate the use of incense, an activity attested to in Late Tetimpa by the censer left in front of the shrine at operation 13. If our proposal based on the selectivity of the burials, the number of skeletons, and the length of the occupation is correct, the inclusion of censers among the grave goods of certain males might identify at least those individuals as family or "house" heads.

Binford (1971:17; 1972:225–226) points out that two social components must be evaluated to understand the types of social phenomena symbolized in a burial situation: the social persona of the deceased—a composite of the social identities maintained in life and recognized as appropriate for consideration at death (Goodenough 1965:7)—and the composition and size of the social unit having status responsibilities to the deceased. Depending on the relative rank of the social position that the deceased occupied in life, the facets of the social persona symbolically recognized would shift with the levels of corporate participation in that ritual, and burials within the domestic space tend to imply that the corporate involvement is largely at the family level (Binford 1971:17, 22). Among those individuals selected for burial in the Tetimpa houses, there are some obvious distinctions in terms of location—such as in the platforms or in the courtyard—and in the quality, quantity, and variety of the grave goods; as well as in the energy invested in the creation of the funerary deposit. If the objects and labor were offered by the family members themselves, the quantitative heterogeneity could reflect not only differential wealth within each generation but also the personal achievements of the departed as well as disparities in such factors as age, experience, skill, and knowledge that might have influenced the variation in respect, authority, value, and recognition accorded to them (Joyce and Grove 1999:3). Also, persons buried with more grave goods and whose funerary deposits required a larger investment of labor (figure 3.9) might belong to lineages with a greater temporal depth and hence encompass a

more numerous kin group to partake in the mortuary rituals. The selectiveness of interments placed in the domestic space indicates that the decisive unit recognizing status responsibilities to the deceased would have been the family, for whom the identity as family head would have been a leading dimensional feature of the social persona to be buried there. If this indeed served as a basic characteristic of the differential mortuary treatment, it would help to explain the prevalence of masculine skeletons.

Why are there then some women in these houses? Maybe they were unmarried or women with special prerogatives who, as reported in some ethnographies (for example, Ahern 1973:128; Goody 1962:71), were treated as men. It also might be attributed to unpredictable variability related to the operation of personal identities (O'Shea 1984:12) or even to peculiar circumstances surrounding the death that might have altered the expected funerary recognition of other components of their social identity, giving them the postmortem right to be members of this selected group (Binford 1971:17). Although various examples of this kind of situation can be found in ancient Mesoamerica, by far the most well-known is that of Aztec women who died in childbirth. They were given a mortuary treatment similar to that provided for deceased warriors, and their souls were destined to the same afterworld in the western sky (Sahagún 1969, Vol. II:180–181). Interestingly, in patrilineages with patrilocal residence, the funerary disposal of women tends to be the least standardized (Goody 1962:52–55). The possible explanations are so numerous and our data so limited that, until further information is available, we can come to no conclusions except to say that most women were given some other kind of mortuary treatment.

And how can we explain the presence of a minimal number of infants and children? It has often been proposed (for example, Gordon and Buikstra 1981) that because nonadult bones are thinner, smaller, and more fragile, they are less likely to survive, and that this, added to poorly performed or biased excavations, results in their under-representation in skeletal samples (Mays 1998:21–22; Saunders, Herring, and Boyce 1995:77). Although bone preservation at Tetimpa is far from good, the few child and infant skeletons found demonstrate, however, that this kind of evidence does not disappear entirely from the archaeological record at this site. Additionally, our excavations have been very careful and detailed, so that although some small bone fragments might have been lost, it is unlikely that we could have completely missed the presence of one of these individuals. Under

these circumstances, we must assume that all of those subadults registered are in fact all who were deposited there, so that we have to explain both their presence as well as their paucity.

As we have seen, adults are buried in the platforms, while children and infants are always beneath the courtyard or in the walls of the platforms facing it. One might think that this spatial difference signified a distinction in age status and it probably did, but it is not so simple. For pre-Hispanic times, Genovés (1962:26) has suggested that infant mortality should have been about 55%, while Nutini (1988:133) reports a 50% rate for modern Tlaxcala. The scarcity of infants and children inhumed in the Tetimpa houses indicates that those that do occur are selected nonadults, with a social identity distinct from the many infants, children, and even adults who were deposited elsewhere or given alternate mortuary treatments, and this suggests a principle of social ranking by hereditary ascription (Ravesloot 1988:16). This selection might be explained if these individuals were potential family heads who died ahead of time but maintained the ritually symbolized right to be buried in the house they otherwise would have owned someday. Their placement in the courtyard might indicate that they had not yet passed the initiation ceremonies which would have distinguished them as the lineage heirs. The ethnographic record shows that frequently infants and children are not recognized within the adult social sphere until after those rites have been performed (Ravesloot 1988:18). This reasoning has also been used to explain the segregation of infant burials in other Mesoamerican sites such as Teotihuacan (Manzanilla, Millones, and Civera 1999:255). Also, infants and children were not biological ancestors, and this may be an additional and even more compelling reason for their exclusion from the platforms. Yet another explanation might be found in Nutini's (1988:135) observation that in modern Mexican towns, villagers believe that dead infants are in this world for such a short time that they are the best intermediaries with the sacred world. In this case, their burial placement in Tetimpa might denote their close bond with the spirits propitiated by family members at the center of the courtyard.

Finally, the apparent distinction between infants with no grave goods and children associated with birds is not unexpected, given that in many societies the death of a child is not treated the same way as that of an infant (Goody 1962:149–150; Nutini 1988:139), but more cases need to be documented before we can consider this to be an actual pattern at Tetimpa.

## Conclusions

Burial is just one of several possible alternatives a society has to dispose of the mortal remains of its members. In fact, in many cases the mortuary population recovered by archaeologists is much too small to account even for the minimum expected living population of a given site. For example, Sempowski (1999) has calculated that each Teotihuacan residential compound with 400 years of continuous occupation should have between a thousand and sixteen hundred skeletons if all of its inhabitants were buried within its confines. If one takes the time to count all the reported individuals excavated to date at that ancient city—a tedious but possible task if one carefully sifts through the recently edited volume by Manzanilla and Serrano (1999)—the total comes to about 1,647, barely a few more than the number suggested for just one of the hundreds of residential compounds (chapter 5). As at Tetimpa, even considering the possible loss of skeletons because of later disturbance or the absence of others because of the use of informal deposits in midden areas, it is clear that burial did not constitute the regular form of mortuary treatment at Teotihuacan. Colonial period chroniclers (for example, Durán 1964:175; 1971:122, 267; Sahagún 1969, Vol. I:293–297, Vol. IV:51) recorded that at the time of the Spanish conquest, there existed several ways to dispose of human corpses in central Mexico; cremation in fact may have been the most common (but see chapter 9), and it is not hard to imagine that practices like this might have had an extended temporal depth.

The explanation for the absence of part of the population in the archaeological record should not, however, be necessarily the same for different sites; other contextual data need to be taken into consideration in each particular case to provide an interpretation for the structure of the specific sample. In Early Tetimpa, it seems that certain prescriptive criteria were applied to select the individuals who were to be interred in the domestic space. We do not know the final destination of the mortal remains of those who were not disposed of within the house, and there is little we can do to solve this problem, but we can try to detect regularities and shared characteristics among the sample that was deposited in the house compounds. Although each residential complex at Tetimpa is slightly different from the other, they all were built according to a basic, recognizable pattern. The

same is true of the burials. Even though there is some variation, certain traits are repeated from house to house:

- the number of skeletons is insufficient to account for all the inhabitants;
- the majority of the human remains corresponds to adults;
- the few infants or children are differentiated from the adults both by the specific burial location as well as by the associated grave goods or lack of them;
- most adults are males, and among them, the more elaborate sepultures tend to be placed under the floor of the central platform; and finally,
- the mortuary equipment of some of these males includes pedestal censers similar to the one found in situ at the Late Tetimpa courtyard shrine of operation 13.

A critical link between mortuary data and social inference is that funerary differentiation is conditioned by the organization of the society that produced it (O'Shea 1984:8). If, as it has been frequently stated, the typical congregation of the ancestral cult is not the cognatically constituted family but the unilineal descent group—the clan or the lineage (Goody 1962:19)—and if operation 13 is representative of Early Tetimpa society, the best explanation for the selectivity of who was to be buried in the houses and in which part of them, as well as the preponderance of males in these burials, may be that Tetimpa was a lineage-based society, probably patrilineal and patrilocal, that venerated its ancestors at the family shrines at the center of the courtyard.

**Acknowledgments.** We thank the Mesoamerican Research Foundation, the Sistema de Investigación Ignacio Zaragoza, the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, and the Instituto de Investigación y Posgrado of the Universidad de las Américas-Puebla for their generous support of our research at Tetimpa. The Consejo de Arqueología of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia granted the official permit for this project and has provided assistance and advice that are much appreciated.

## Notes

1. We consider infants to be individuals between 0 and 2 years of age at death and children to be between 3 and 12.

# Shrines, Ancestors, and the Volcanic Landscape at Tetimpa, Puebla

*Patricia Plunket and Gabriela Uruñuela*

**I**n chapter three we suggested that the patterning illustrated by the burial programs at Tetimpa is consistent with the precepts of lineage systems and that this central highland village most likely was organized into patrilineages, as were, apparently, several other Formative Mesoamerican societies (see, for example, Marcus and Flannery 1996). We assume that most of the social and ritual patterns of the Late Formative occupation at Tetimpa continued into the Terminal Formative period and that the remains of domestic activity preserved by the volcanic ash which buried the village during the latter part of the first century AD (Plunket and Uruñuela 1998b, 2000, chapter 3) were generated largely by the organizational features of the lineage system and its strategies for social reproduction (Blanton 1994:102–114). The uniform layout of the Tetimpa houses suggests a symbolism structured by ancient Mesoamerican cosmological principles within the context of the regional volcanic landscape. Building upon these premises, this chapter explores the nature of Terminal Formative domestic ritual practices embedded in the archaeological record at Tetimpa.

## Courtyards and Shrines

Our first concern is to understand how the shrines and shrine stones that we find in the courtyards of the house compounds at Tetimpa are related to both Mesoamerican cosmology and lineage systems that use genealogies to structure the relationships between the living and the dead (Goody 1962; McAnany 1995; Middleton 1987). The invariable placement of shrines at the center of each house patio indicates that this location was considered pivotal for ritual purposes (figures 3.2, 4.1). Central courtyard shrines are common features of Mesoamerican resi-

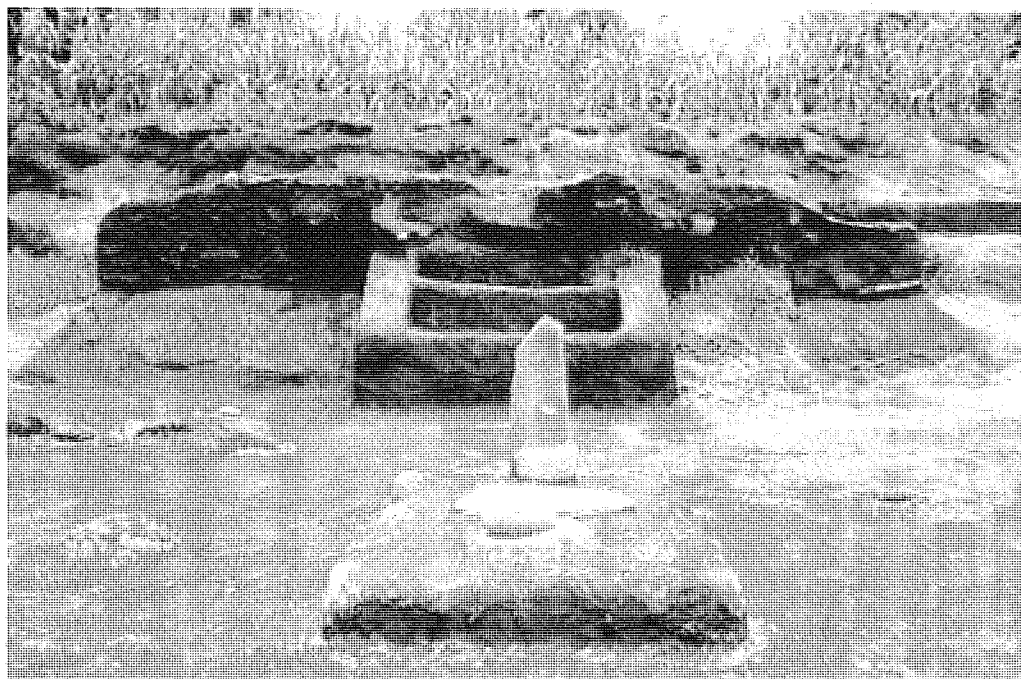
dential architecture (for example, Deal 1988; Gillespie 2000c; Healan 1982:130–131, chapter 5; Sanders 1966:137–138; Sanders et al. 1979:337; Séjourné 1966: Fig. 1; Winter 1986, chapter 7), and their location perhaps stems from the conception of a cosmos structured by the four directions of the universe that intersect at a fifth, vertical direction connecting the underworld, the earth, and the heavens (Eliade 1959:37; Joralemon 1996:52; Nicholson 1971:403–408). The central position of the shrines at Tetimpa houses suggests that they served to designate a point of contact with the underworld where the ancestors reside, the most important of whom were buried in the fill of the main platform directly behind the shrine (chapter 3); thus, the shrines created a boundary between this world and the supernatural, a liminal space where celebrants might perform ritual acts (Renfrew 1994:51). The patio with its central shrine is an image that recalls the Aztec conception of the central direction as the navel from which the “four quadrants extend out to the four directions” (Nicholson 1971:403); the shrine itself is an anchoring device that provides each house and its members with a center and place of origin (Gillespie 2000c).<sup>1</sup>

In his study of the family altar tradition among the Maya, Deal (1988:87–89) proposes that free-standing domestic altars were associated with ancestor worship and that their independent, unattached design stemmed from concepts of ritual purity that required the separation of sacred and profane space so that the impurities of daily life would not jeopardize the health and fortune of the family.

The specific nature of the Tetimpa shrines and their associated stones presents a much more complex problem. To date, we have at least partial information from



4.1 Terminal Formative patio  
with central shrine, operation 11



4.2 Shrine with carved  
zoomorphic stone and basalt  
sphere, operation 4



twenty-one Late Tetimpa phase (50 BC–AD 100) domestic structures or house compounds. Sometimes our data are incomplete because the patio of the house had been previously affected by commercial mining activities which removed the volcanic ash from the surface of the ancient village or because the courtyard itself extends into a neighboring field that has not been affected by the mining.<sup>2</sup> In spite of these problems, it is clear that some house compounds and detached kitchens had altar-like shrines.<sup>3</sup> At others the center of the patio or dooryard was marked

by the presence of a carved effigy stone or occasionally a plain river cobble.<sup>4</sup> Of the sixteen patios or dooryards for which we have complete data, six had altar-like shrines; the center at the other ten units was marked only by carved stones and/or smooth cobbles.

We have registered a total of twenty-seven shrine stones (table 4.1). Nine of these were found in situ on or embedded in altars, while eleven more were positioned at the patio center without evidence of a shrine structure. The presence of shrine stones in the absence of altar

Table 4.1 Distribution of shrine stones and upright flagstones at the Terminal Formative houses of Tetimpa

Operation*	Stones w/central shrine	Altar structure	Chimneys (animal)	Serpent/ feline	Furrowed hair	Turban	Earth spirit	Plain stone	Upright flagstone
1.3	1	—	x	—	1	—	—	—	—
2	2	x	x	—	1	—	1	—	1
2E**	2	?	?	—	1	—	1	—	?
3	?	?	?	—	—	—	—	—	1
4	2	—	x	1	—	—	—	1	1
5	1	—	?	1	—	—	—	—	—
6	1	—	x	1***	1	—	2	—	—
10	1	—	x	—	—	—	—	1	—
11	1	x	—	—	—	—	—	—	2****
12	3	x	x	1	—	—	2*****	—	—
13	2	—	x	—	—	1	1	—	1
17	1	?	?	—	1	—	—	—	—
18	1	?	?	—	1	—	—	—	—
19	2	—	x	1	—	—	—	1	1
20	1	—	x	—	—	—	—	1	—
22	1	x	x	—	—	—	—	1	—
23	1	x	x	—	1	—	—	—	—
24	1	x	x	—	1	—	—	—	—
Total	24	6	12	5	8	1	7	5	7

\* At operations 3, 8, 9, and 21 we were unable to recover complete information from the patio; operation 7 is a Classic period house, operations 14 to 16 are agricultural fields.

\*\* 2E refers to the two carved stones located in the rubble of a mined field to the east of operation 2.

\*\*\* This was the central shrine stone; the other three stones were associated with cuexcomates

\*\*\*\* One of these was the central shrine stone

\*\*\*\*\* Includes "lord of underworld" figure embedded in the basal platform

structures at some Tetimpa houses may indicate that often perishable materials were used in their construction. Although we have no postholes or other archaeological evidence that can confirm the existence of wooden shrine structures, the carved zoomorphic shrine stone at operation 4 was found lying on its side (figure 4.2) rather than facing up or forward like the stones associated with altar structures. Its position gave us the impression that it might have toppled off a wooden base, which had decayed long ago. Commenting on a similar phenomenon in Maya houses, Deal (1988:89) points to the possibility that independent masonry altars may have been limited to the elite families while commoners used perishable shrines.

The remaining seven stones occurred in a variety of contexts that suggest that these sacra could be moved and repositioned, sometimes as part of the abandonment process. One had been placed next to the staircase of a lateral platform; three others were reused to support the wattle-and-daub storage bins (cuexcomates) at a detached kitchen; another was found toppled over in front of a small, partially destroyed platform; and finally, two were recovered from the house rubble cleared from an already

mined field. It seems likely that all houses and detached kitchens had some kind of stone or shrine structure marking the center of their courtyard or dooryard.

The reuse of three carved stones as supports for cuexcomates at one of the detached kitchens (operation 6) is anomalous. If these stones were sacra (Whitehouse 1996) and thought to possess some vestigial power, it is unlikely that they would have been recycled in the same manner as many other practical features of abandoned houses (Plunket and Uruñuela NDb). In fact, their placement as supports for the storage bins might be viewed best as an aspect of ritual formation processes (LaMotta and Schiffer 1999:23) at Tetimpa. This deviant use of shrine stones occurred at a newly founded residence with no ancestors, who could be called upon for favors, buried within its platforms. The carved images might have been placed under the storage bins precisely because, as sacra, their residual power could be channeled toward agricultural fertility or the protection and enhancement of the seed inside the cuexcomates until the next planting season. Shrine stones never occur in platform fill, in midden areas, or outside the courtyards, and this suggests that they were not easily discarded items precisely because of

their sacred nature. Middleton documented a similar concept in East Africa. The individual ancestor shrines of the Lugubara, plain granite stones that are transformed into sacred objects once they are erected and used for sacrifice, never lose their sacredness and will be moved to new house sites, whereas other stones, including other similar pieces of granite, may be discarded (Middleton 1987:46).

#### Ritual activity at the central shrines

We usually find areas of reddened earth and gray ash at the center of the patio near the stones or on the altar surface. Our excavations have provided conclusive evidence that pedestal incense burners were placed in front of the shrines (chapter 3, figure 3.8) and were essential paraphernalia for the ritual activities at the center of the courtyard. An alternate type of censer, a small mug-sized vessel decorated with conical spikes, was also involved in the patio rituals. One of these was found smashed under a heavy carved stone (operation 6); another had been stored along with a *florero*-like vessel and a small olla beneath a cuexcomate to one side of the patio (operation 10). As we mentioned in the previous chapter, censers often are found on the floor or steps of the central room of the house where the most important burials were placed.

Burning incense and other materials is a common way to transfer messages and other items to the ancestors in another world. Among the Ch'inan of Taiwan, for instance, play money is burned in order to transmute it into a useful medium of exchange for the deceased (Ahern 1973). The sixteenth-century Zapotec burned incense as a "way to address one's ancestors so that they could intercede on one's behalf" (Marcus and Flannery 1994:61). Ancestor veneration, with its emphasis on "appeal and appeasement" (Bell 1997:185), appears to have formed an important part of the domestic rituals of many lineage-based Mesoamerican societies (Byland and Pohl 1994; Marcus and Flannery 1996; McAnany 1995; McAnany et al. 1999). Within this context, censers used to transfer messages and materials to the ancestors would be basic ritual equipment. In general, censers were fundamental components of household ritual paraphernalia in many parts of ancient Mesoamerica (for example, chapter 2; Manzanilla and Carreón 1991; Marcus and Flannery 1996:131; Rice 1999, chapter 9). At Tetimpa, they appear to play an important role in ritual activities performed by senior lineage men at the patio shrines (chapter 3).

Bloodletting is another action associated with the shrines. At operation 19 the remains of a small bird, apparently a sacrificial offering, had been deposited inside one of the subfloor chimneys where it was subsequently

cremated. In seven cases we have found one or more obsidian blades lying on top of the altar, directly behind it or inside the chimneys. Most of the patios at Tetimpa are quite clean, and stray lithic fragments are very rare. The ollas, *cazuelas*, and metates were stored along the perimeter of the courtyard while such smaller items as chert scrapers, obsidian fragments, and small ceramic vessels were placed under the cuexcomates. Obsidian or chert flakes or blades do not occur on the patio floor, except for an occasional fragment near the kitchen. The presence of a few obsidian blades on or around the altar shrines suggests that the Tetimpeños included traditional Mesoamerican bloodletting rites among their corpus of domestic rituals.

The Tetimpa shrines and the ritual activity we can infer from their associated artifacts conform well to Deal's ethnoarchaeological model of family altars among the Maya. This model stipulates an altar structure, stone images, burning of incense, resinous pine and agricultural products, flowers, and bloodletting (either human or animal) (Deal 1988:89). With the possible exception of flowers, all of these are present at the center of Tetimpa's domestic courtyards.

#### Altar shrines

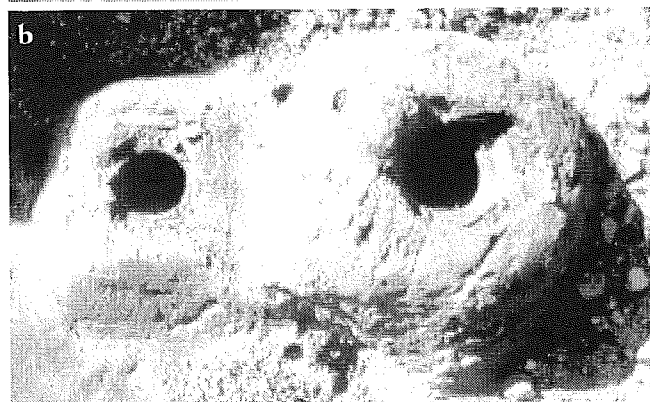
The six altar shrines are similar but not identical in format. In general they are low, rectangular platforms made of small andesitic slabs, sherds, stones, mud, and daub plaster. With one exception (figure 4.1), the altar shrines were constructed around one, and sometimes two, chimneys that penetrated beneath the surface of the patio. The chimneys themselves were fashioned from olla neck-and-rim fragments, and the carved shrine stones or plain cobbles were placed on top of each flue. The five altar structures with chimneys are effigies of the Popocatepetl volcano, whose crater lies only 13 km to the southwest. When we discovered the first volcano shrine at operation 2 in 1994 (figure 4.3a; Plunket and Uruñuela 1998a, 1998b), we speculated that the double platform, each with its own chimney, was a model of the two mountains of the Sierra Nevada, Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl. But Iztaccíhuatl has been extinct for millennia and only Popocatepetl was and is a live, smoking volcano. The altar at operation 12 (figure 4.4) made it clear that the dual chimneys did not specify the two great mountains, since there was only one volcano effigy rising from the altar's basal platform. The second chimney might refer, then, to another volcanic crater—perhaps the small extinct cinder cone known as El Tecajete that emerges on the valley floor at the edge of the northeastern flank of Popocatepetl

not far from Cholula—or a ceremonial cave.

The chimneys allow us to relate the central courtyard shrines to the volcano and its own particular symbolism as a center and place of origin. At least on ritual occasions, the chimneys were filled with pine (*ocote*) splints that when lit, produced plumes of smoke and ash that puffed out from beneath the stone figures capping the flues (figure 4.3b). These altars were not static images but were brought to life with fire and smoke to imitate the volcano that modern local peasants refer to as "Don Gregorio," a living being who still receives offerings in a sacred rock shelter—*El Olmbligo* (the Navel)—located on his northeastern slope (Glockner 1996). Patios and dooryards that lacked formal or surviving shrine structures also made reference to this imagery. In eight cases we have found formal chimneys (for example, figure 4.5) and in four others holes filled with dirt and ash beneath the carved stones or cobbles at the courtyard center. Simple chimney holes may have existed in all cases, but we are not always able to recover this information because of the rescue nature of our work.

#### Other domestic shrines

Although our focus here is on the central courtyard shrines, we believe that there were various other kinds of shrines present in these houses, the most recognizable of which are the upright flagstones that occur in association with cuexcomates, kitchens, and maize-grinding areas (Uruñuela and Plunket 1998:11). In one case, an elongated flagstone was embedded into one extreme of the central shrine (figure 4.1), thus providing us with compelling evidence that these vertically placed andesitic slabs should be considered *sacra* rather than utilitarian items functionally related to food processing. Their common association with food storage and processing areas suggests that they may have been used by women as matrilineal or fertility shrines. Middleton's (1987:25–78) study of Lugubara religion provides insights into the disparities among domestic shrines by documenting the many different kinds of shrines and shrine locations used to negotiate the relations between living individuals and their dead kin—various types of ghost shrines, ancestor shrines, women's shrines, matrilineal shrines, external lineage shrines, and fertility shrines.



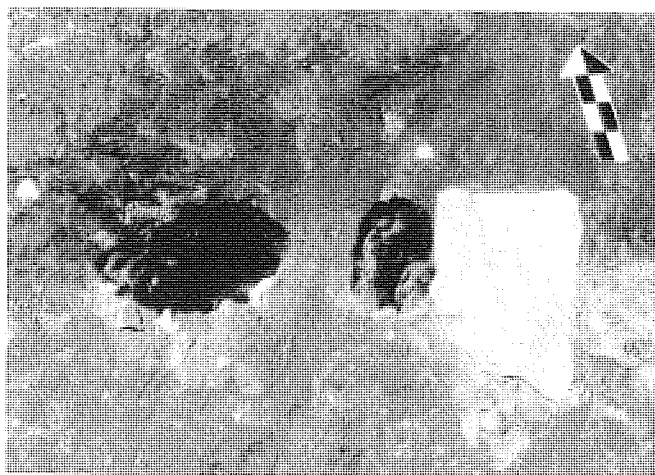
Top, 4.3 *Volcano effigy shrine, operation 2:*

*a, carved stones in situ;*

*b, dual chimney shafts beneath carved stones*

(Reprinted by permission from *Latin American Antiquity* 9[4])

Bottom, 4.4 *Volcano effigy shrine, operation 12*



4.5 Subfloor chimneys under the carved shrine stones, operation 13 (compare with 3.8 where shrines stones and pedestal censer are in situ)



4.6 Carved stone from the smaller chimney of the shrine, operation 2 (height: 18 cm). Illustration by Elvia Sánchez de la Barquera



4.7 Carved stone with furrowed hair from the volcano effigy shrine, operation 2 (height: 23 cm). Illustration by Elvia Sánchez de la Barquera

The diversity of shrines described by Middleton and our interpretation of certain stones in specific contexts as a pre-Hispanic manifestation of different types of domestic shrines at Tetimpa, coincides with the idea that the house is a setting where the "conflicting obligations of descent and alliance" (Gillespie 2000b:35) are materialized by the various household members. Not all ritual activity in the domestic sphere should be seen as a result of patrilineal ancestor veneration since households include persons who do not belong to the patrilineage. These secondary ritual manifestations, however, lie beyond the scope of the present study. Here we will concentrate on the stones associated with chimney shrines since, as we have shown above, these structures themselves provide us with important contextual clues that are not available for all of the stones.

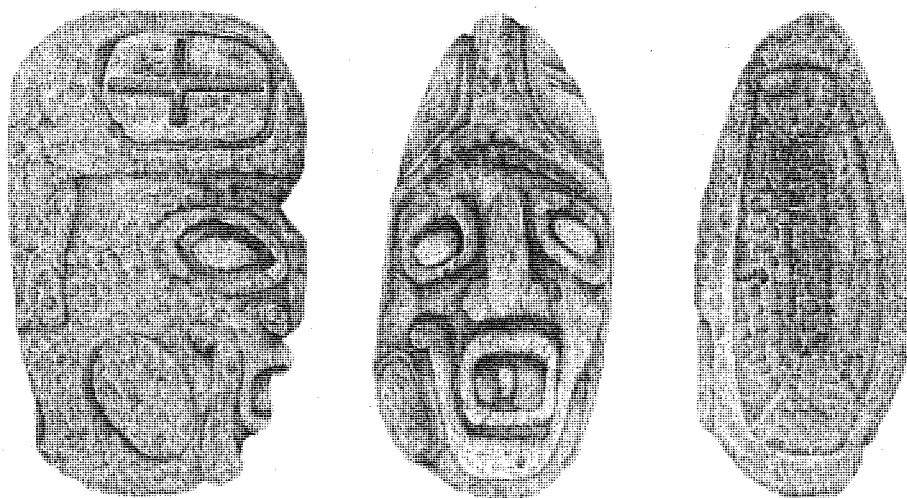
### Shrine Stones

Although there are similarities among some of the carved stones, no two are exactly the same. The differences in subject matter, specific attributes, type of stone, and quality of workmanship hamper any facile identification of patterns that might help us identify specific references or an underlying symbolic structure. These variations illustrate one of the dilemmas archaeologists face in the study of ritual. Although this kind of activity is characterized by the repetitiveness and redundancy (Rappaport 1999:50; Renfrew 1994:50–53) that should ideally provide clear-cut patterns for us to isolate and analyze, individual performance is variable and imprecise (Rappaport 1999:36), whether that performance be a ritual act itself or the making of ritual paraphernalia. The variation in the shrines at Tetimpa may reflect meaningful aspects of the belief system, but it could also be the product of each household's individual history; in some cases it may result from the irregularities of individual performance, reflecting the changes that take place with each creation and performance as tradition is "constantly produced and reproduced" (Bell 1992:123).

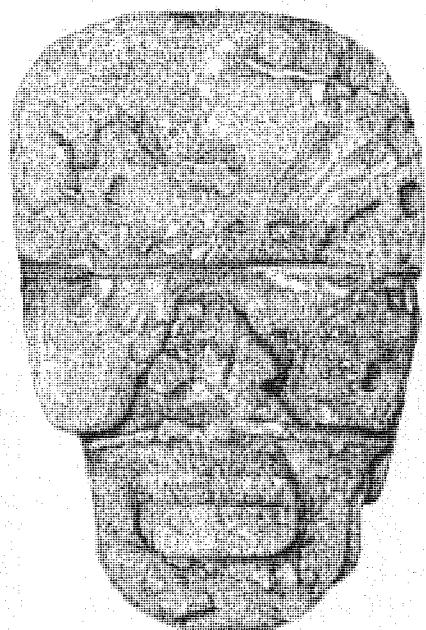
### Multiple stone shrines

In each of the five cases<sup>5</sup> where we found more than one stone associated with the central courtyard shrine, these were placed single-file along the central axis of the house compound, always facing the entrance. The shrines at operations 2 (figures 4.3, 4.6, and 4.7), 4 (figure 4.2), 13 (figures 3.8, 4.12, and 4.13), and 19 (figure 4.11) had two stones each while the altar at operation 12 (figures 4.4, 4.8, 4.9, and 4.10) had three. At both operations 2 and 13

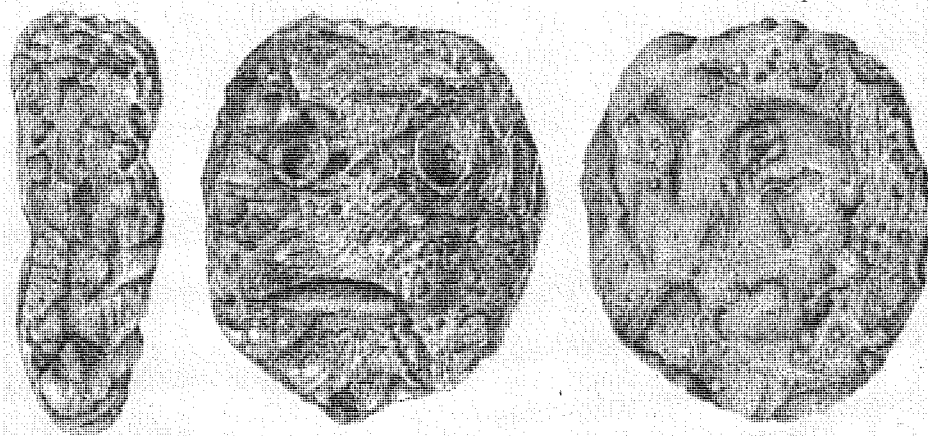
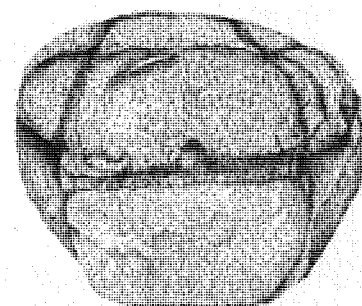
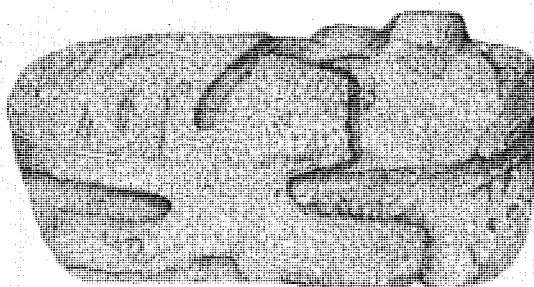




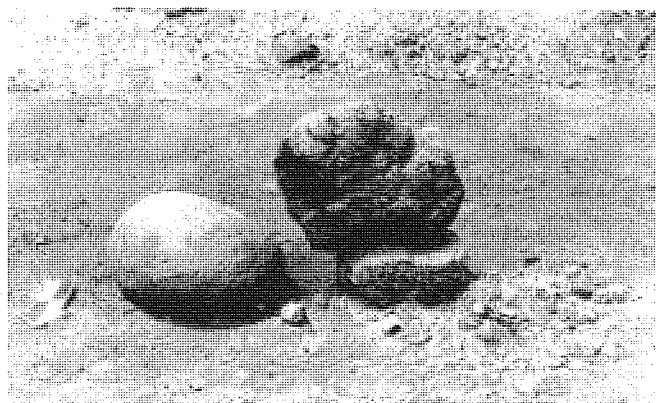
4.8 Carved stone from the basal platform of the shrine, operation 12 (height: 22 cm). Illustration by Ginette Farreny



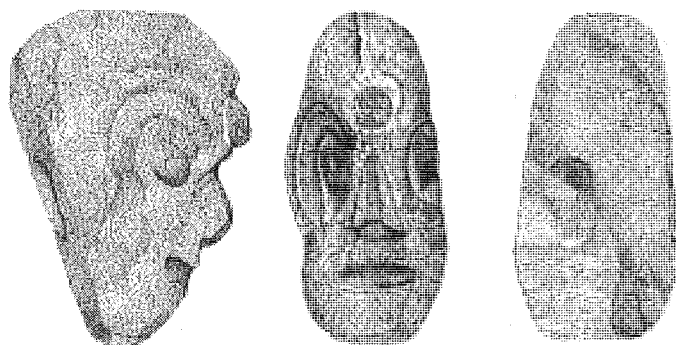
4.9 Serpent stone found on top of the volcano effigy of the shrine, operation 12 (length: 28 cm). Illustration by Ginette Farreny



4.10 Small anthropomorphic carved stone from the altar-shrine, operation 12 (height: 18 cm). Illustration by Ginette Farreny



4.11 Shrine with carved zoomorphic stone and plain river cobble, operation 19



4.12 Small carved stone from the shrine, operation 13 (height: 22 cm).

Illustration by Ginette Farreny



4.13 Figure with turban from chimney shrine, operation 13 (height: 38 cm). Illustration by Ginette Farreny

the carved anthropomorphic stones were found resting on top of the chimney flues; although this arrangement also characterized operations 4 and 19, the first stone of these shrines was zoomorphic, perhaps feline, while the one behind it was plain. At operation 12, however, a carved serpent head (figure 4.9) had been placed upon the shaft of the modeled volcano effigy; a crude anthropomorphic stone head (figure 4.10) rested on a secondary "false" flue; and a third ax-shaped human effigy head<sup>6</sup> (figure 4.8) was set into the base of the rectangular altar. The anomalous placement of the third stone at operation 12 suggests that it is an image that does not appear at the other houses we have explored so far. Indeed, it has several unique features including a skeletalized mandible, a central fang, and a tight-fitting cap decorated on either side with a cartouche enclosing a cross (Plunket and Uruñuela 1998a:41). Both the placement and the features of this effigy suggest an association with the underworld where the ancestors reside.

If we exclude this unique "lord of the underworld" from our discussion, we are left with carved stones that were placed on top of chimney flues. With the exception of operations 4 and 19, the image placed closest to the entrance to the house compound is the smaller of the paired stones and rested upon a lower platform and/or a shallower chimney. This pattern is also apparent at operation 23, which we have not included in the present discussion because the figure capping the shrine's volcano effigy was missing (figure 4.14); however, a small stone head was situated at the entrance end of the house atop a chimney at the base of the volcano effigy. These small stone images tend to be more crudely carved than the larger figures that rest on top of the volcano effigies. They are all anthropomorphic and usually bear traces of red pigment. The eyes are circular, defined either by a raised outline or a drilled hole. In spite of their differences, the location and some shared characteristics suggest a common identity.

The carved stones at the other extreme of these shrines, closest to the main, central platform of the house compound, are always the largest. In each of the three cases documented so far, they rest on top of chimneys, and two crown effigy volcanoes, but again they share few other common traits. One is an anthropomorphic head with furrowed hair, round bulbous eyes, puffed cheeks, and thick lips that define the open mouth (figure 4.7); another is an elongated human face with sunken pupils within rectangular eyes, dimpled cheeks, an asymmetrically downturned, open mouth, and a turban adorned

with a central medallion (figure 4.13). The third stone is a stylized image of a serpent's head (figure 4.9). Only the serpent bears any traces of red pigment, limited in this case to its mouth, and may be evidence of "ritual feeding" (McGee 1990). Although we are tempted to interpret these images as manifestations of the "spirit" or the "lord" of the volcano because of their location on top of the mountain effigies, we find it troublesome that a single identity would be represented by these diverse manifestations unless these images are but distinct facets of the same concept that varies according to some aspect of the household structure or ritual organization.

Part of the problem is that we have such a small sample of altar shrines. If we survey the other images provided by carved stones not associated with altar-like structures, however, we find that there is some repetition. The figure with furrowed hair occurs at five other houses (for example, figure 4.15), including operation 24 where it again rested upon a volcano effigy, indicating that this was a specific reference understood by all members of the community. A serpent appears as the single element of the family shrine at another house (figure 4.16) (operation 5 and again at its detached kitchen, operation 6), and we would argue that the possibility of separating the serpent from the rest of the altar composition implies a semantic difference we will explore below. The elongated human head wearing a turban with medallion has been found only once.

The paired stones, however, suggest a hierarchical ordering. Those closest to the entrance to the house are smaller, cruder, and lower in relation to the larger, better executed, and elevated stones that cap the volcano effigies or subfloor chimneys. This hierarchical ordering may have been copied from the natural landscape of the western fringe of the Puebla Valley where a similar image is provided by El Tecajete, a small cinder cone of red volcanic rock, rising at the foot of Popocatepetl. Both the volcano and the cinder cone have chimneys, but they are not equal in size or importance.

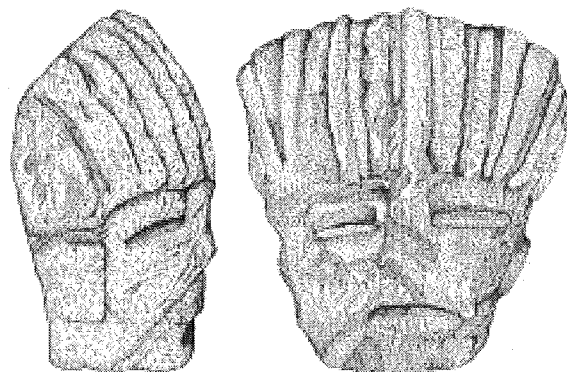
Another pattern can be found at operations 4 (figure 4.2) and 19 (figure 4.11). Here the first stone is a carved zoomorphic image, probably feline, while the second stone is either a spherical piece of vesicular basalt with dots of red pigment or a plain river cobble.

#### Ancestors and earth spirits

If we return to our basic premise that along with fundamental cosmological concepts and the volcanic landscape, the images at Tetimpa are structured within a lin-



4.14 Effigy shrine of Popocatepetl, operation 23



4.15 Figure with furrowed hair used as a support for a cuexcomate, operation 6 (height: 23 cm). Illustration by Ginette Farreny



4.16 Carved serpent from operation 5 (height: 50 cm). Photograph by John O'Leary



eage framework, then the shrine stones should be viewed in terms of these principles. Although the altar shrine at operation 12 seems to be a *mappa mundi* with representations of the underworld, the earth's surface, and Popocatepetl, most of the courtyard shrines are much simpler. They tend to incorporate two basic elements: a chimney and a stone. As we have mentioned, the central placement of the shrines suggests that they mark the fifth, vertical direction that links the three levels of the cosmos; the chimneys that penetrate the patio floor are "navels" in the same way that the fifth direction and Popocatepetl itself are. Thus, the shrine might define the liminality of the patio center, a point where the earth's surface makes contact with the underworld inhabited by the earth lord, spirits, and ancestors.

In a general sense the shrine stones are similar to the Mixtec *ñuhu*, earth spirits who inhabit the supernatural world and who are identified by their place of residence: lakes, forests (Byland and Pohl 1994:73, 114), stones, and volcanoes (Anders et al. 1992:113). The modern Mixtec consider the *ñuhu* to be the spirit or owner of the land, a being who must grant permission for the planting of a milpa or the building of a house (Anders et al. 1992:125). The *ñuhu* is often represented by a special stone. In the *Codex Vindobonensis* and other Mixtec books, the *ñuhu* is shown as a stone being or bundle, frequently painted red, with circular eyes and large teeth or fangs; it repeatedly appears with the sacred bundle that is associated with ancestors and the dynastic cult (Jansen 1992:23). The *ñuhu* is sometimes provided with burnt offerings, including rubber and paper, and is associated with the flames of torches and New Fire ceremonies (Anders et al. 1992:140–141, 230, 232, and 234). Following Caso (1962:127), Byland and Pohl (1994:119–120) point out that in Mixtec the word for "the dead" (*ñuu*) is related symbolically and conceptually to the term for "earth" (*ñuhu*), providing another link between the *ñuhu*, the ancestors, and the underworld.

Tlaloc, another circular-eyed personage, was sometimes depicted at shrine sites as a boulder. According to Townsend (1992:114), the god's Nahuatl name means "something lying upon the (earth's) surface" and evokes the clouds that rise from the canyons and gather on mountaintops. Karttunen is more cautious, stating only that the plural form of the god's name might refer to "something covered with earth" (1992:276), an interpretation that suggests a link between the deity and the earth, much like the Mixtec *ñuhu*. In formal terms, the fanged faces with circular "death eyes" that mark the joints of

Aztec earth deities (Boone 1999:190–194), including some *tlalocoid* figures (Nicholson 1967:87), are very similar to the Mixtec *ñuhu*. Tlaloc emerges as a recognizable icon during the Terminal Formative period in Teotihuacan (Cook de Leonard 1971:192; Millon et al. 1965:69, Fig. 95) in the form of small vessels that occur with burials at Plaza One (Cook de Leonard 1957; Rattray 1992:4–7, Pl. II)—an early three-temple complex that has the same architectural layout as the Tetimpa houses (Plunket and Uruñuela NDA)—and inside the Sun (Millon et al. 1965:69), Moon (Cabrera and Sugiyama 1999:31), and Feathered Serpent pyramids (Sugiyama 1992:223). Pasztory (1974:18–19; see also Heyden 1975:141) has suggested that Tlaloc was a water and earth god; in addition, she notes that Aztec Earth Monsters and Tlalocs share many features, in particular the fact that both are used on the underside of sculptures as earth symbols. Possibly, the Teotihuacan Tlaloc was derived from a more generalized ancient concept, similar to the Mixtec *ñuhu* and the shrine stones of Tetimpa, related to earth spirits and ancestors as the owners of the land.

The larger stone heads with furrowed hair or turbans with medallions perhaps might represent lineage founders, and thus explain the repetition of some of these images at different domestic units. Their placement on top of a volcano effigy, or a subfloor chimney, may symbolize their elevated position as lineage founders, as opposed to household heads, associating them with the Popocatepetl volcano, the ultimate shrine and place of origin. With the evidence at hand, we might suggest that two of Tetimpa's patrilineages were represented by these images—one by the furrowed-hair figure and another by the turban-medallion personage—but we obviously need more examples in order to explore this idea. We also expect that further research will turn up yet more variation among these stones.

The use of serpent imagery focusing on the reptile's head also can be tied to ancient concepts in Mesoamerican iconography. The serpent's open mouth was used as a standard representation for an entrance to the otherworld, an opening in the earth such as a cave (for example, Angulo 1987; Byland and Pohl 1994:83–84; Stross 1996) or the doorway to a temple (for example, Gendrop 1985; Schele and Freidel 1990:70–72; Townsend 1982:124–127). Baudez (1994) notes the relation between serpents and the celestial realm, in addition to their association with ancestor figures in Classic Maya sculpture. In Olmec iconography serpents sometimes are associated with the image of the ruler as the world tree that links

the terrestrial surface with the celestial realm and the underworld (Reilly 1996:38, Fig. 25), and Taube (1996) has argued that Olmec serpents may be related to rain and lightning.

At Tetimpa, the location of an open-mouthed feathered serpent at the center of the courtyard at operation 5 (figure 4.16), for example, may be a reference to these concepts by marking the liminal space where rainmaking rituals were enacted by senior lineage men. The carved serpent that crowns the volcano effigy at operation 12 is perhaps a device that defines the volcano's chimney as an entrance to the world of ancestors and earth spirits or locates the celestial serpent in the realm of the rain clouds that gather around the volcano. It might also define the volcano as a place of origin, specifically an ancient version of Coatepec, or "Snake Mountain," a recurring theme in later Mesoamerican iconography (Schele and Mathews 1998:37–38; Schele and Kappelman 2001). Eliade (1959:38–39) has discussed the widespread symbolism of the cosmic mountain that manifests the connection between heaven and earth at the same time that it represents the center of the world. We would suggest that the Tetimpa shrines, and the volcano effigies in particular, are essentially portrayals of the Tetimpeño cosmos, although most are highly abbreviated.

The feline imagery present at two houses can also be related to this Mesoamerican cosmos. Felines, particularly jaguars, are symbolically linked to the earth, mountains, caves and the underworld, shamans, rulership, remote ancestors, sacrifice, and sacred bundles (Benson 1972, 1998; Saunders 1998), aspects that compliment our proposal that the courtyard shrines were conceived of as the fifth direction and sacred spaces designed for rituals for the ancestors. In both houses with feline motifs (operations 4 and 19), the zoomorphic effigies occur together with plain stones, suggesting a conceptual relationship. The fact that both feline and serpent imagery are found in these Terminal Formative residences also poses the possibility that Tetimpa, like San José Mogote (Marcus 1999), employed the opposing motifs of sky/lightning (serpents) and earth/earthquake (felines) as structuring devices in its kinship system.

Why do some houses have representations of the human faces that we have tentatively associated with lineage founders while others have serpent or feline heads? The answer to this question may have to do with whether the founder of the domestic unit was alive or dead. At operation 13 where the turbaned figure appears, we have unquestionable evidence that there is a long line of an-

cestors buried in the fill of the main platform, including four that were placed in tombs (chapter 3). At operation 2, where the furrowed-hair image is used, we could not explore the main platform, but this house had been torn down and rebuilt between the Early and Late Tetimpa phases, and we think there were also ancestors buried here. The furrowed-hair image also occurs in association with volcano shrines at operations 23 and 24, but again, we were not able to explore the inside of the platforms. The shrine at operation 23 (figure 4.14) had been rebuilt twice, suggesting that this was not a new household, but the furrowed-hair image corresponded to the small stone on the lower chimney; as we have already mentioned, the larger stone was missing.

At operation 5, where serpent imagery is used, we excavated inside two of the platforms, including the main structure, and found no burials; this is also true of the detached kitchen of this house (operation 6) that had its own serpent stone in the patio. Operation 5 provided evidence of a single construction phase and appears to be a newly founded house compound. Feline imagery was employed at operation 4, and we found no evidence of burials within its two platforms. At operation 12, we were again unable to excavate inside the main platform, and so we do not know whether there were burials there or not, but the construction seemed to be quite new since the daub plaster on the platforms and the polished daub floors showed almost no signs of wear. Additionally, an examination of the cut made by the front-end loader used by the local ash miners into one of the lateral platforms of this house provided no evidence of burials or superimposed floors. Finally, the other two domestic units (operations 10 and 11) in the same field as operation 12 were both newly founded Late Tetimpa households, and neither had carved anthropomorphic stones. The single-chimney volcano shrine at operation 22 was associated with a plain river cobble and while our excavations inside the platforms provided evidence of two constructions phases, there were no burials.

At operation 19, where a carved feline and a plain river cobble rested on the two chimney flues at the patio center, the situation was much more complex and is currently under analysis. The main platform contained a large number of burials, but the house appears to have been violently destroyed and subsequently reoccupied by a less prosperous family, perhaps of a different lineage, toward the end of the Early Tetimpa phase. This distinctive household history might help explain the lack of an anthropomorphic stone on the ancestral shrine.

We suggest, therefore, that houses that contain buried male ancestors used specific representations related to family founders, while newly established households where no important members of the patrilineage had yet died used serpent or feline imagery and more generalized references to the boundary with the underworld at the center of the patio.

### Final Comments

We have attempted to analyze the central courtyard shrines of Tetimpa as products of a lineage-based society that ordered its world through basic cosmological principles shared with many other Mesoamerican communities. Although there does appear to be an internal consistency that suggests strong links between the social organization, the mortuary programs, the highly patterned house layout, and the shrines, we do not believe that we have yet captured the full range of variation or the true nature of all of the ritual references within this highland village. At first glance, our data and our sample size appear to provide the solid, empirical evidence required for isolating and explaining behavioral patterns of the past, but as we pursue this endeavor we find that the individual biographies of each family unit have altered the archetype in ways that will require fine-grained analysis. Each house we have excavated has changed our perspective in some way, and just as we think we have come to understand this rural Mesoamerican Pompeii, we discover another detail that leads us in new directions and underlines the complexity and diversity of household ritual.

As we continue to rescue what we can of Tetimpa, we wonder about what lay beyond its horizons during the latter part of the Formative period. What other towns and villages dotted the landscape? Were they organized along similar lines? Did they all participate in the same regional ritual activities? And what about Cholula, visible in the valley about 15 km to the east? What role did this developing sacred city play in the ritual life of Tetimpa and other nearby villages? Bell (1997:188) has commented on the tensions that can emerge as new ritual styles develop with social and historical changes and on the conflicts that unfold as traditional local practices are seen to violate the newly defined hierarchy of communication with

the supernatural by the leaders of emerging states. Our consideration of domestic ritual at Tetimpa has not addressed this question, but we hope it has provided some of the essential aspects of household ritual and organization that can be used to explore this underdeveloped area of anthropological study.

**Acknowledgments.** We thank the Mesoamerican Research Foundation, the Sistema de Investigación Ignacio Zaragoza, the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, and the Instituto de Investigación y Posgrado of the Universidad de las Américas-Puebla for their generous support of our research at Tetimpa. The Consejo de Arqueología of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia granted the official permit for this project and has provided assistance and advice that are much appreciated.

### Notes

1. See Headrick (2001) for a discussion of the three-stone "Hearth of Creation" and its expression in the tripartite configuration of the Three Temple Complexes of Teotihuacan that echo the layout in earlier Tetimpa houses.
2. The *xaltete*, or lapilli, that covers the archaeological site and surrounding regions is presently being mined by the local inhabitants to make pressed concrete blocks for construction. This volcanic ash protects the archaeological remains, but we do not intervene unless the front-end loaders of the miners encounter structures.
3. We use the term *altar* to designate shrines that include low rectangular platforms made of volcanic tuff, stone, sherds, and daub plaster. With one exception (operation 11), these altar shrines appear to be effigies of the Popocatepetl volcano.
4. One of these stones (operation 4) is a well-rounded lava sphere painted with red dots; another four (operations 10, 19, 20, and 22) are smooth river cobbles, which measure between 18 and 22 cm.
5. In Table 4.1 six cases of multiple shrine stones are listed (operations 2, 2E, 4, 12, 13, and 19). However, we have omitted operation 2E from our discussion since these stones were not found in primary context as were the others. At operation 23 there were probably two stones, each associated with its own chimney, but by the time we were informed of the presence of this domestic unit, there was no carved stone on top of the main chimney. It may have been loaded into one of the dump trucks before the miners realized there was a structure present.
6. The ax shape of this elaborately carved stone head is reminiscent of the Gulf coast *bachas*.

# *Living with the Ancestors and Offering to the Gods*

## Domestic Ritual at Teotihuacan

*Linda Manzanilla*

**D**uring the first six centuries AD, a vast multiethnic city emerged as one of the foremost polities of the Classic horizon. Teotihuacan was an anomaly: The lack of dynastic iconography and the emphasis on collectivity, on offices more than office-holders (Cowgill 1997:137), stresses the possibility that the administrative, political, and ritual authority of the city was a collective entity (Manzanilla 1998b, ND). This corporate rulership frequently was depicted in the mural art as processions of anonymous priests.

Millon has established that priests played a major role in the city, and he suggests that its integration could have been achieved through constant pilgrimage to temples and exchange sites, so that politics became sacralized (Millon 1988:109). A model of the Mesoamerican cosmos, Teotihuacan was the main pilgrimage center and holy city of the Mexican highlands (Manzanilla 1997) (figure 5.1).

In our reconstruction of the economic organization of the Teotihuacan priesthood (Manzanilla 1993a), we have proposed that the rulers who administered Teotihuacan created various redistributive networks to assure the maintenance of the bureaucracy as well as full-time state-sponsored craftsmen (figure 5.2). It is also possible that by ritualizing offerings, the rulers fostered centralized storage in order to maintain these redistributive networks (Manzanilla 1993a).

One of the hallmarks of Teotihuacan was the existence of multifamily dwellings, called apartment compounds (Millon 1973). Each apartment generally consisted of several rooms at slightly different levels, arranged around open spaces, while the compounds comprised various apartments joined by passages for circulation; they included domestic sanctuaries, and the entire complex was

enclosed by an exterior wall (figure 5.3). It is believed that these compounds were occupied by corporate groups sharing kinship, residence, and occupation.

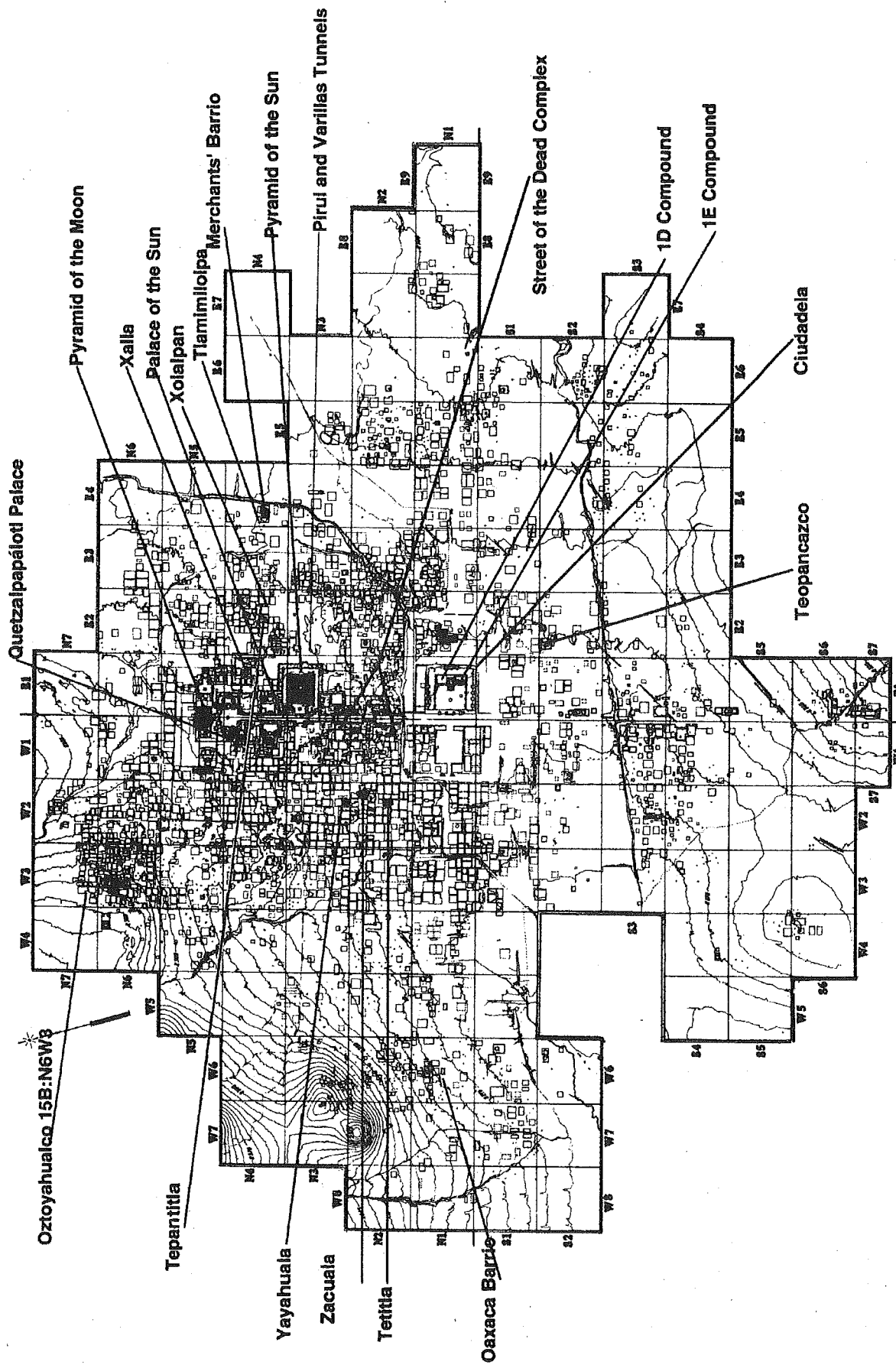
Many of the three-temple plazas found throughout the northern part of the ancient city may have been neighborhood centers for the cult and exchange activities of a number of specialized corporate groups living in surrounding apartment compounds. Other types of wards that did not involve three-temple complexes may be distinguished in the southern part of the city (Cabrera 1996).

We may envision domestic cult as the main low-level integrative device that the state had to integrate progressively larger social units such as household groups, barrios, districts, and finally the city itself. Domestic cult at Teotihuacan may be divided into three main categories: domestic ritual performed in courtyards, funerary cults, and abandonment rites. We will briefly review some of the elements of each of these.

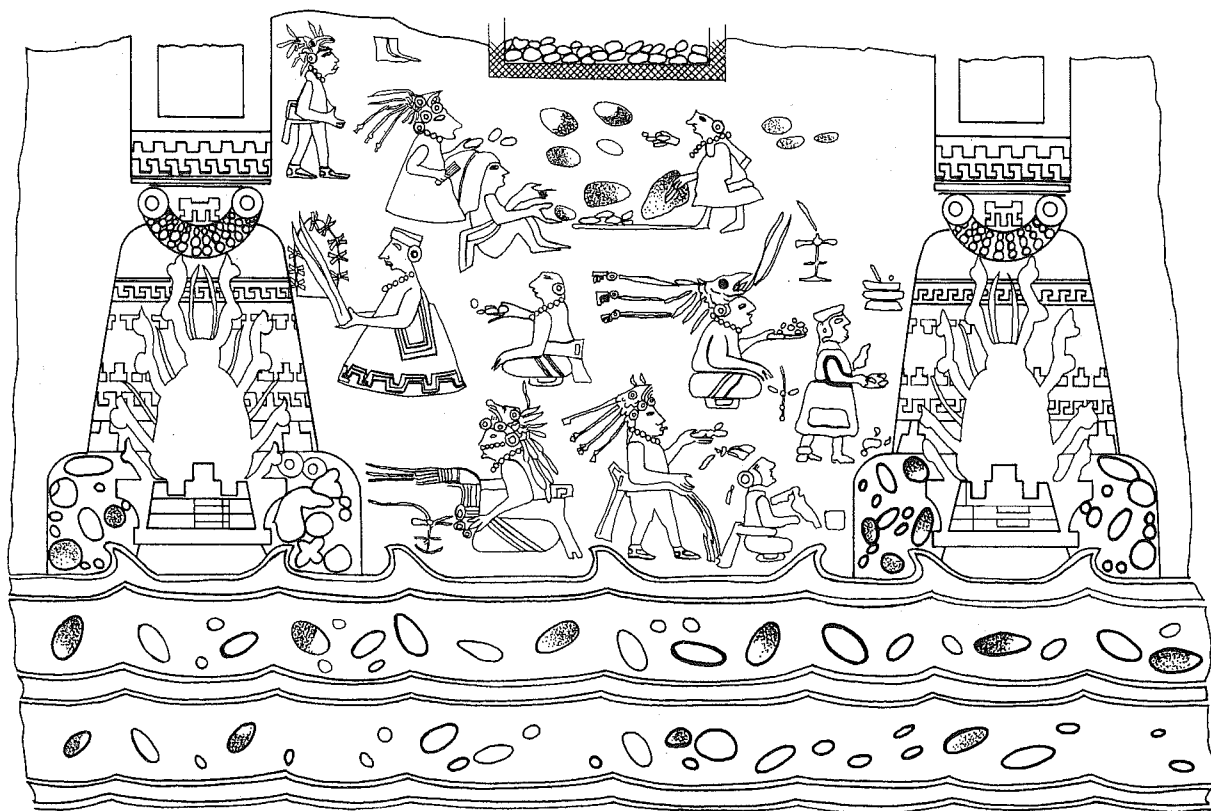
### Domestic Ritual in Courtyards

In Teotihuacan, domestic ritual is related particularly with the ritual courtyard of each household of each apartment compound (Manzanilla 1993b; Sanders 1966), which may involve a central altar, a small temple or sanctuary, and the adjacent rooms. Zacuala, Yayahuala, and Tepantitla had their temple structures set to the east of the main courtyard. At Zacuala (figure 5.3), the temple was substantial and consisted of a portico and two inner rooms; its roof was decorated with merlons (Séjourné 1966:118–126). At Yayahuala, the temple was large enough to be interpreted as a neighborhood temple (Séjourné 1966:213).

Elements related to domestic ritual, such as Tlaloc



5.4 Map of the city of Teotihuacan, with sites mentioned in the text. After Millon 1973

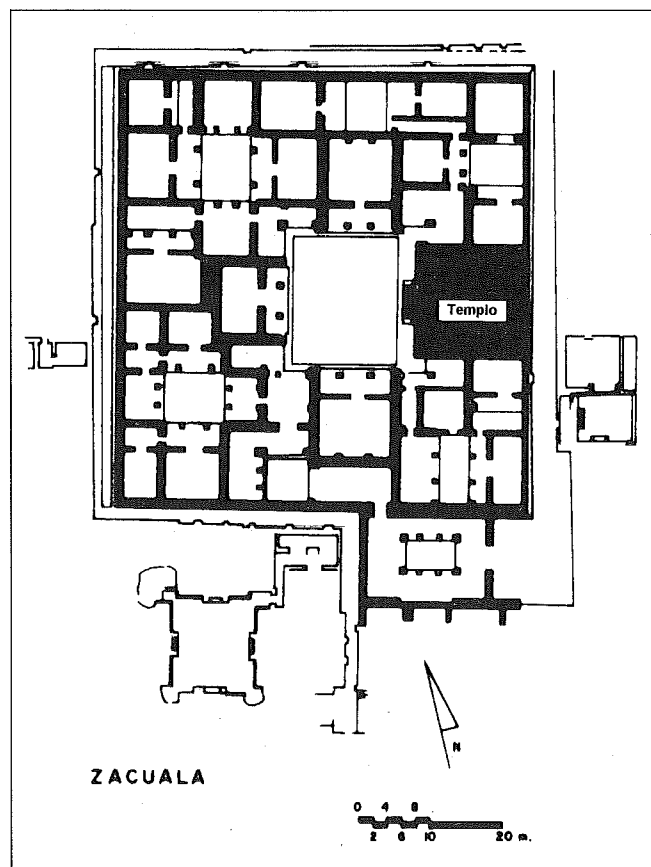


5.2 Mural painting from the Temple of Agriculture, showing urban ritual that may be recreated also at a domestic level. After Gamio 1922, I, Lám. 33

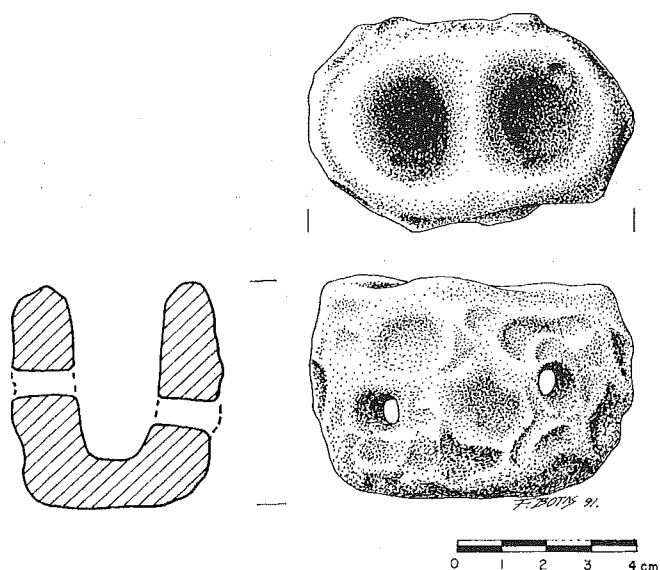
vases (associated with either burials or abandonment rites), Huehuetotl sculptures, theater censers, *talud-tablero* temple models, *candeleros* (figure 5.4), and other items, normally occur in the ritual courtyards or in the adjoining rooms, but they disappear from the archaeological record after the fall of the city (Cowgill 1997), a fact that strongly supports the idea that domestic ritual was deeply embedded within the state religion of Teotihuacan (see chapter 9).

To assess the components and spatial distribution of domestic ritual, as well as other activity areas in apartment compounds, we employed an interdisciplinary strategy that took into consideration chemical traces of activities on the plastered floors, paleobiological macroremains and microscopic evidence, architectural and funerary data, in addition to the distribution of artifacts and debris on floors of two compounds, Ozttoyahualco 15B:N6W3 and Teopancatzco 1NW:S2E2 (Barba et al. 1987; Manzanilla 1988-89; Manzanilla 1993b, 1996; Manzanilla and Barba 1990).

At Ozttoyahualco (figure 5.5), a middle-class domestic



5.3 The residential compound of Zacuala. After Séjourné 1966



Top, 5.4 Candelero found at Oztoyahualco 15B:N6W3. Manzanilla 1993b:Fig. 127. Reproduced with permission

Bottom, 5.5 View of excavations at the Oztoyahualco apartment compound in the northwestern fringe of the city

compound on the northwestern fringe of the city, there was, in general, a clear functional differentiation among the various sectors of the structural complex. The southern sector was associated with refuse; areas for food preparation and consumption, as well as sleeping quarters, were set around the central portion of the compound; the eastern sector was rich in funerary and ritual components; the western sector was devoted to storage; and finally, the northwestern sector had the largest courtyard, probably the compound's meeting place.

As a result of our detailed mapping at Oztoyahualco (figure 5.6; Manzanilla 1993b), we can suggest that one household in each compound was more active than the others in bonding the corporate group to the urban hierarchy. For Oztoyahualco this appears to have been

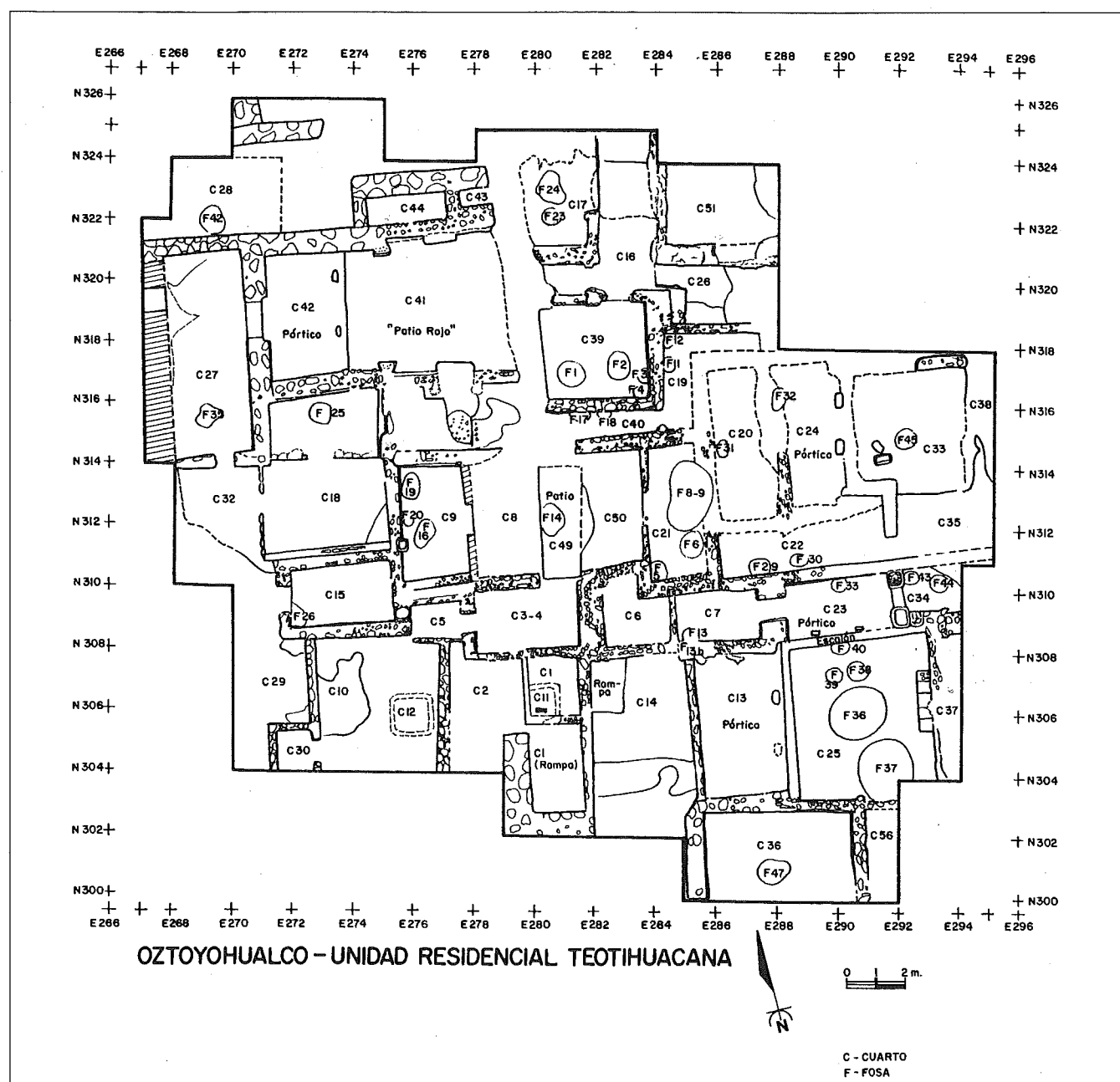
household 3, where the relation to Tlaloc, the state deity, is expressed by the presence of Tlaloc vases (figure 5.7), Tlaloc figurines, and Tlaloc depictions on handled covers (figure 5.8); this household also had the richest burials.

As Sanders (1966) noted for the Maquixco houses, in the Oztoyahualco compound (figure 5.6) there were three ritual courtyards—C41, n. 25, and n. 33—each corresponding to an individual household; the largest of these, C41, probably also served as the gathering place for the compound group as a whole. It was designated the "Red Courtyard," because of the painted geometrical designs that ornamented its walls. This courtyard was the only one with a central altar in its earliest construction level. It had a sanctuary to the south (C57). To the north, two burned areas were detected by high pH and carbonate signatures, while to the south, the high phosphate anomalies perhaps resulted from the pouring of liquids in particular ceremonies (Ortiz and Barba 1993). We might suspect that the practice of pouring water together with seeds, a common depiction in Teotihuacan mural art, could have also been practiced in the ritual courtyards.

Some activity areas related to ritual preparation were detected around this main ritual courtyard. For example, in the corner of C9 (just to the south of the sanctuary C57), we found a concentration of fifty-eight obsidian prismatic blade fragments, a basalt percussor, and a limestone half sphere with radial cutmarks that probably resulted from the continuous cutting of rabbit and hare legs (figure 5.9) (Hernández 1993; Manzanilla 1993b).

The second ritual courtyard, n. 25, had evidence of a set of objects also found in other ritual courtyards: A sectional temple model (Manzanilla and Ortiz 1991), plaques from theater censers, three portrait figurines, two puppet figurines, candeleros, stone balls and hemispheres, a stucco polisher, and other artifacts, as well as portable stoves and indications of burning (Manzanilla 1993b:140–152). This courtyard had a sanctuary to the east (C37) that also contained fragments of puppet figurines.

The third ritual courtyard, n. 33, had a complete portable basalt temple model crowned by a rabbit sculpture (figure 5.10), two puppet figurines, two candeleros, and two stucco polishers. In the southwestern corner, near the temple model, high phosphate and pH anomalies, together with the blackening of the stucco and the presence of three-pronged portable stoves, indicated burning as well as liquid pouring (Manzanilla 1993b:163–164). Near this courtyard, portico 24 and room 20 had high pH values indicating that certain ritual actions took place there (Ortiz and Barba 1993:637). The ritual use of fire,



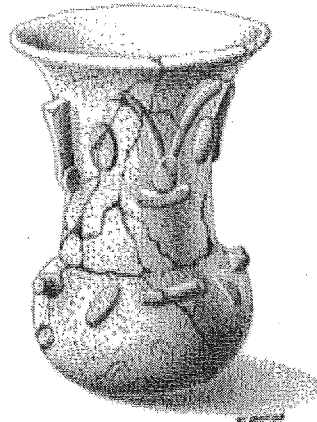
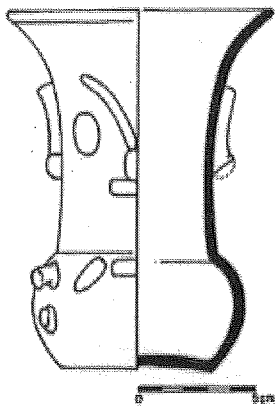
5.6 Map of the Oztoyahualco apartment compound in the northwestern fringe of the city.

Manzanilla 1993b. Reproduced with permission

evidenced by blackened floors and theater censers, had already been noted by Séjourné (1966:165) in courtyards at Zacuala, Yahualala, and Tetitla. At Oztoyahualco we documented numerous pits, particularly in the eastern half of the compound, which were used either for the burial of newborn babies (figure 5.11) or for the placement of offerings, often accompanied by flowers or *Gramineae* (for example, millet and maize). The northeastern household (n. 3) had most of the burials and also the greatest amount of foreign fauna.

Sanders (1966:138) has suggested that the rooms bordering ritual courtyards with altars at Maquixco may have served to store religious paraphernalia. Based on our data from Oztoyahualco, we propose that some of the preparation of ritual activities actually took place in these kinds of adjoining rooms. Theater censers were used profusely at the Xolalpan apartment compound, where they were found within the altar and in a western courtyard (Linné 1934:48), and at the Tlamimilolpa compound, where they were grouped around burial 4 and kept dismantled in





Top, 5.7 Tlaloc vase from room 51 at Oztoyahualco 15B:N6W3.

Manzanilla 1993b:Fig. 111. Reproduced with permission

Middle, 5.8 Handled cover from room 22 at Oztoyahualco 15B:N6W3 displaying a Tlaloc with the amamalácotl plant.

Manzanilla 1993b:Fig. 120. Reproduced with permission

Bottom, 5.9 Limestone half sphere from activity area 17 in room 9, Oztoyahualco 15B:N6W3.

Manzanilla 1993b:Fig. 393. Reproduced with permission

caches, ready for ritual use (Linné 1942:141). Decorated cylindrical tripod vessels, usually considered to be ritual in function, are common at Xolalpan and Tlamimilolpa, rare at Oztoyahualco, and recently two were found as part of a termination ritual dating to Late Tlamimilolpa/Early Xolalpan at Teopancazco (Manzanilla 1999, 2000).

Huehuetotl sculptures are often found in ritual courtyards (Linné 1934:48) or in the eastern rooms of apartment compounds (Manzanilla 1993b). At Teopancazco, a complete sculpture of the Fire God was found in a western inner room, thrown from its pedestal and lying face-down on the floor (figure 5.12) (Manzanilla 1998a).

Lineage gods were patrons of lines of descent, and above them probably stood neighborhood and occupational deities, gods of specific priestly groups, and state deities such as Tlaloc, patron of the city (López Austin 1989; Manzanilla 1993b). Tlaloc vases are often found in association with domestic cult either as grave goods, as can be seen at Oztoyahualco, Xolalpan, Tetitla, Zacuala Patios, and La Ventilla (Manzanilla 1993b; Sempowski 1987:126; Linné 1934:70), or as part of abandonment rites like the one recently documented at Teopancazco (Manzanilla 1998a).

The central altars of ritual courtyards often house important burials that include offerings of jadeite, slate, marine shells, miniature vases, and *floreros*, among other items (Sánchez 1989:373–375).

In sum, ritual courtyards in apartment compounds seem to be gathering places for one or all the households in the compound, and ritual actions appear to have been centered particularly around patron gods; ritual was one of the main integrating activities inside the compounds and promoted group cohesion and solidarity. Processional activities involved in the compound rituals may be traced by chemical analyses of stucco floors because liquids are spilled and burning takes place in portable theater censers, both of which leave characteristic signatures.

Top, 5.10 Temple model surmounted by a rabbit patron god, courtyard 33, Oztoyahualco 15B:N6W3.

Manzanilla 1993b:Fig. 384. Reproduced with permission

Middle, 5.11 Neonate burial (n. 11), room 22, Oztoyahualco 15B:N6W3.

Manzanilla 1993b:Fig. 81. Reproduced with permission

Bottom, 5.12 Fire God (Huehueoteotl) sculpture found in room 17 at Teopanazco, lying face down as if purposely thrown from its pedestal.

Manzanilla 1998a. Reproduced with permission

## Funerary Rituals

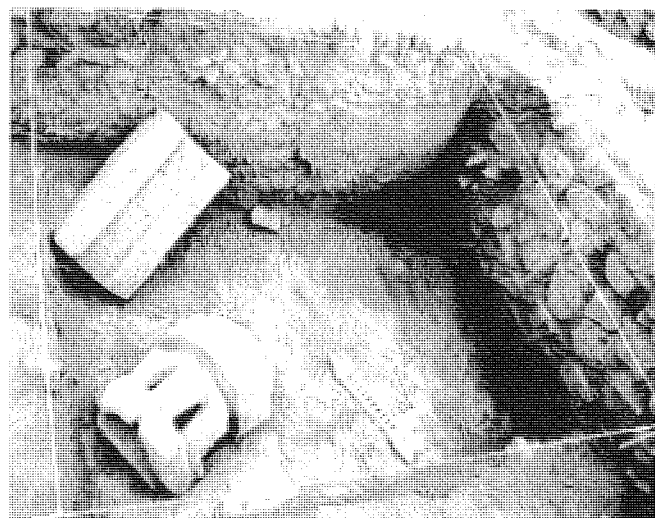
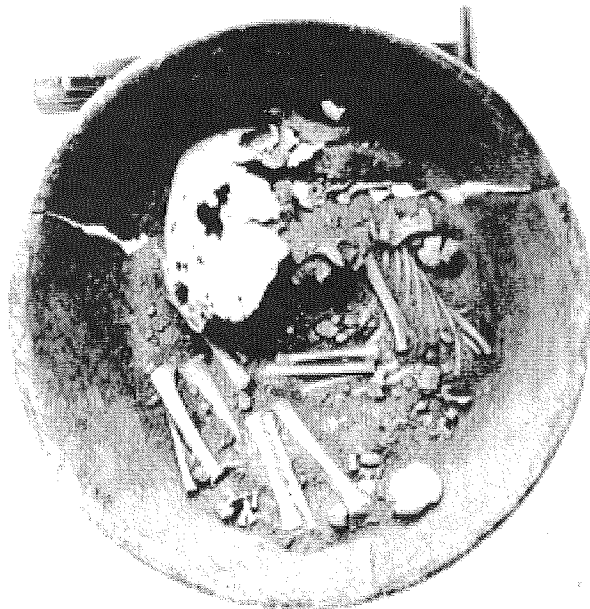
The existence of multiple kin and ethnic groups throughout the city's long period of occupation is evidenced by diverse burial patterns that can be broadly summarized as follows. Teotihuacan's local population buried their dead according to local canons: The deceased were placed in a seated or flexed position and buried in pits excavated into the apartment compound floors. The specific location of the burial as well as the funerary rites and associated offerings varied both within and between apartment compounds.

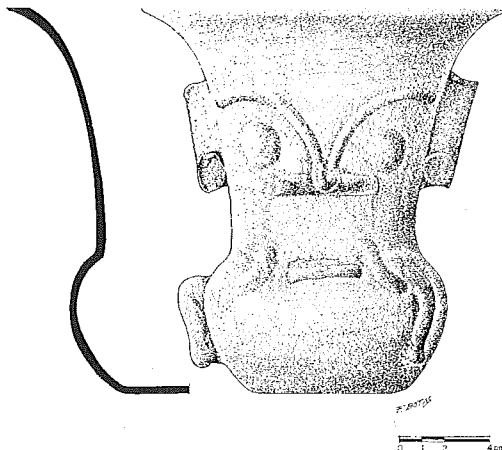
Foreigners were interred according to their specific cultural traditions although their burials often adopted some Teotihuacan practices. An example of this is found in the Oaxaca Barrio, Tlailotlacan, where burials are Zapotec in style, with regard to location, container, position, and funerary rites (notably the placement of the dead in an extended position, the prevalence of multiple burials, and the use of formal tombs), but include both Zapotec and Teotihuacan grave goods (see chapter 6).

Burials are common in Teotihuacan domestic contexts, revealing the likely existence of an ancestors' cult. With the exception of Tlajinga 33 and probably La Ventilla, however, the number of adults interred in each compound is too low, relative to the area of the compound, to account for most of its inhabitants (Sempowski 1992:30; see chapter 3).

Certain burials in each compound had very rich offerings. At Oztoyahualco, burial 8 was exceptional, for it contained an adult male in his twenties accompanied by a theater incense burner depicting a human male figure wearing an impressive headdress and the image of a huge stylized butterfly on his chest (Manzanilla and Carreón 1991) (figure 5.13). The funerary ritual involved the following actions:

- the incense burner appliques were removed from the lid, and all were placed around the deceased within the grave;





Top, 5.13 Theater censer associated with burial 8 at Oztotzabualco 15B:N6W3. Manzanilla 1993b, II:494. Reproduced with permission  
 Middle, 5.15 Huebueotl sculpture found at Teopancazco, room 17, as part of the abandonment rites. Illustration by Fernando Botas  
 Bottom, 5.16 Tlaloc vase found at Teopancazco, room 25, as part of the abandonment rites. Illustration by Fernando Botas

- the chimney was deposited toward the west, with the lid and the butterfly priest to the east of the skull, and
- the appliquéd representations of plants and sustenance (ears of corn, squash, squash flowers, cotton, tamales, tortillas, and perhaps amaranth bread and pulque) were placed to the south, while the four-petaled flowers, roundels representing feathers, and mica disks were set to both the east and west.

At Xolalpan nearly all the burials were grouped in the southwestern section of the compound, while at Tlamimilolpa, they were concentrated in the central-southern section; at Tetitla, most burials were in the northeastern section, and at Oztotzabualco, they were found primarily in the eastern sector.

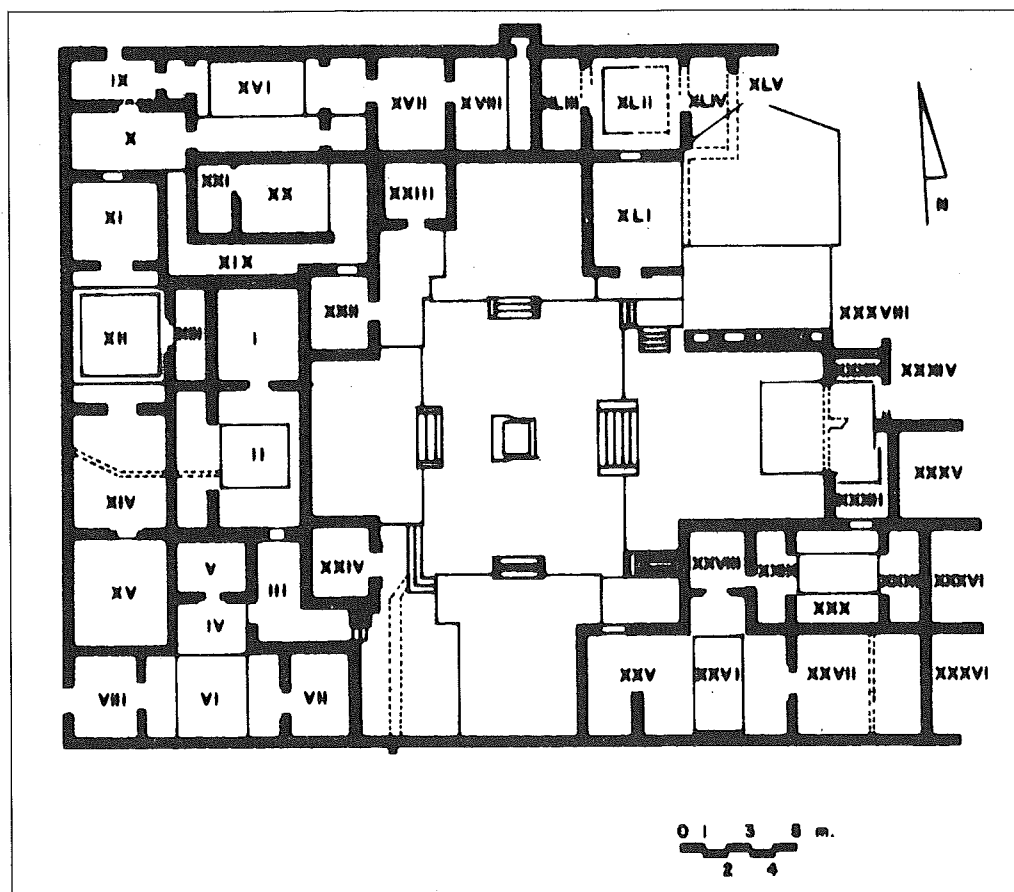
Other types of funerary rituals have been detected elsewhere. In burial 1 at Tetitla, Moore (1966:79) describes a rite that involved the throwing of earth together with miniature pots and plates. In burial 1 at Tlamimilolpa, Linné (1942:126-132) noted a cremated skeleton with stacked vases as well as other tripods that were "killed" and then tossed inside the grave, together with candeleros, obsidian instruments, miniature grinding stones, bone instruments, ornaments of bone, jade and slate, pyrite disks and objects, figurine heads, mats, textiles, and bark cloth, and censer plaques. A fire was then lit on top of the offerings.

Burial practices may have been markers of social identity, which would have been important in a huge multiethnic city such as Teotihuacan. Funerary patterns reflected social status based on descent, gender, age and/or occupation, and appear to mirror the hierarchical organization inside each apartment compound (Manzanilla 1996), as well as the external urban hierarchy (see Millon 1976).

### Termination and Abandonment Rituals

Evidence of fire has been detected by Millon (1988:149-152) in nearly all monumental structures along the Street of the Dead (Teotihuacan's main north-south axis), and in the temples and associated public buildings throughout the rest of the city. Yet, of the 965 apartment compounds examined, only 45 (5%) showed clear evidence of burning. In general, burning was found in front of and on both sides of the staircases, and on top of the temple platforms (Millon 1988:150).

As part of the aforementioned events, many ritual elements were left on top of the last occupation floors in different parts of the city. Millon (1988:151) has noted the



5.14 Map of the apartment compound of Xolalpan.  
After Linné 1934

violent burning and destruction of the Puma Group, located on the east side of the Street of the Dead, where a green onyx sculpture was smashed and its fragments then scattered over the floor, an act that suggests a ritual component in the ravaging of the city (see chapter 2). In structure 1D, the northern palace of the Ciudadela, the remains of violent destruction have also been reported (Jarquín and Martínez 1982:103); these include shattered Tlaloc vases, Tlaloc disks, Huehuateotl burners, masks, theater censers, Olmec-style sculptures, obsidian eccentrics, jade beads, decorated slate plaques, zoomorphic sculptures, and concentrations of candeleros (one of these, in the central courtyard of structure 1D, consisted of 160 candeleros).

In apartment compounds, such as Xolalpan, situated northeast of the Pyramid of the Sun, Linné (1934:48) registered evidence of the destruction of the main central red altar (figure 5.14). The ritual objects related to this structure—ornamented cylindrical and circular plaques, greenstone plaques, theater censers, a Huehuateotl brazier, and other items—were found scattered between the altar and the staircase of the eastern platform.

The frequent finds of Huehuateotl braziers on the lat-

est occupation floors, as exemplified by the northern palace of the Ciudadela or the Xolalpan apartment compound, are reminiscent of what we have found at more peripheral apartment compounds, such as Oztoyahualco (Manzanilla 1993b:108), where fragments of similar braziers were found strewn on the floor of room 7. Shattered pottery vessels were also documented on top of the floors (Manzanilla 1993b:109, Figs. 61 and 62). At Teopanaczo, an apartment compound to the southeast of the Ciudadela, we found a complete Huehuateotl brazier lying face down just above the floor of room 17, as if it had been thrown down from a low pedestal; the carving on the anterior surface had been effaced (figure 5.15; see also figure 5.12). A Tlaloc vase was found smashed on top of room 25, the face of the god turned towards the floor (figure 5.16) (Manzanilla 1998a). It is interesting to note this same type of behavior in various different sectors of the city.

At Tlamimilolpa, another apartment compound, Linné (1942:115) describes "a systematic tearing down and breaking up of large and complicated 'incense burners' to form part of the filling on top of which the new floors were laid." This type of ritual action suggests that each

new construction stage was accompanied by termination and renewal rites (see chapter 6).

In our explorations at Oztoyahualco and Teopancazco, we have detected what seem to be the remains of abandonment ceremonies. At Teopancazco these involve concentrations of *candeleros*, "killed" vessels that include exceptional stucco-decorated tripods, three-prong ceramic burners, and other items (Manzanilla 1998a), while at Oztoyahualco they consisted of human mandibles deposited together with layers of ceramic pots and seashells, each layer separated by thrown earth (Manzanilla 1993b:101, Fig. 101). In both Teopancazco and Oztoyahualco we documented examples of killed stone vessels (Hernández 1993:447, Fig. 331).

Termination rituals were often practiced when apartment compounds were remodeled or abandoned. Various types of objects and human bones were buried as part of these ceremonies; yet, we believe that setting fire to some parts of the apartment compound also may have formed part of the ritual actions used to terminate domestic occupations in Teotihuacan. At Teopancazco, for example, only rooms C17 and C14, as well as porticoes C18 and C15, show evidence of intense fire (Manzanilla 1998a). Along the northeastern fringe of the main courtyard of this compound, a termination ritual was enacted upon the rebuilding of this courtyard during Early Xolalpan times (dated to AD 350 by  $^{14}\text{C}$  and archaeomagnetism). Many types of pottery were buried, and some of them were apparently killed; notable among these killed vessels were two complete large stucco-painted tripods (Manzanilla 2000). Other items included in the termination ritual offering were mica, slate, lithics, bone, shell, and greenstone.

## Final Comment

Domestic ritual at Teotihuacan was an important means of promoting group cohesion and manifesting ethnic identity. As we have shown above, it can be identified in specific ritual courtyards of each household within the apartment compounds, in burial practices and funerary ceremonies, and in the termination rituals associated with rebuilding and abandonment.

Twenty years ago, Millon (1981:209) proposed that the apartment compounds were the result of state strategies devised to efficiently control Teotihuacan's enormous population by providing convenient units for administration, taxation, and labor recruitment. For Millon, the fact that the apartment compounds did not survive the collapse of the political system, suggested an "indivisible bond between the architectural unit, the social unit inhabiting it, and the character of the state that fostered it" (1981:210). An issue that needs to be more fully explored, is the nature of that "indivisible bond," the articulation between these social units and the political, economic, and ideological forces that produced them. As all of the authors in this volume have pointed out, ritual, whether it be domestic, popular, court, or state, is one of the most significant means of integrating social units. At Teotihuacan, pouring liquids, throwing seeds and fertility elements, burning gifts and incense, offering goods at courtyard altars and temples both within the apartment compounds as well as at other scales throughout the city, may have been one of the most important means of creating and maintaining social solidarity within a distinctly heterogeneous population.

# Domestic Ritual in Tlailotlacan, Teotihuacan

*Michael W. Spence*

**T**lailotlacan is a cluster of about fifteen structures, with a population of some six to seven hundred people, located near the west edge of Teotihuacan (figure 6.1; R. Millon 1973:41–42). It was originally settled in the Early Tlamimilolpa phase, about AD 200, by Zapotec immigrants from the Valley of Oaxaca (Spence 1998). This founding date corresponds to Late Monte Albán II in the Valley of Oaxaca chronology (Winter 1998:156).

Over their four or five centuries of occupation in Teotihuacan, until the abandonment of the area with the collapse of the city at about AD 650, the descendants of these immigrants maintained a distinctive ethnic identity, resisting assimilation by the demographically and politically dominant Teotihuacan society. This Tlailotlacan subculture was constructed rather than simply inherited (Spence 1989, 1992). They did not retain their Zapotec heritage intact, although enough elements of it survived to leave archaeologists in no doubt as to their origins (Rattray 1987). A number of accommodations were necessarily made to their rather precarious position in Teotihuacan. These included the adoption of some Teotihuacan beliefs, practices, and material goods. Their selection from the extensive Teotihuacan and Zapotec cultural repertoires available to them seems, however, to have been guided primarily by their determination to survive as a distinct ethnic group and to retain whatever political and economic advantages flowed from that status.

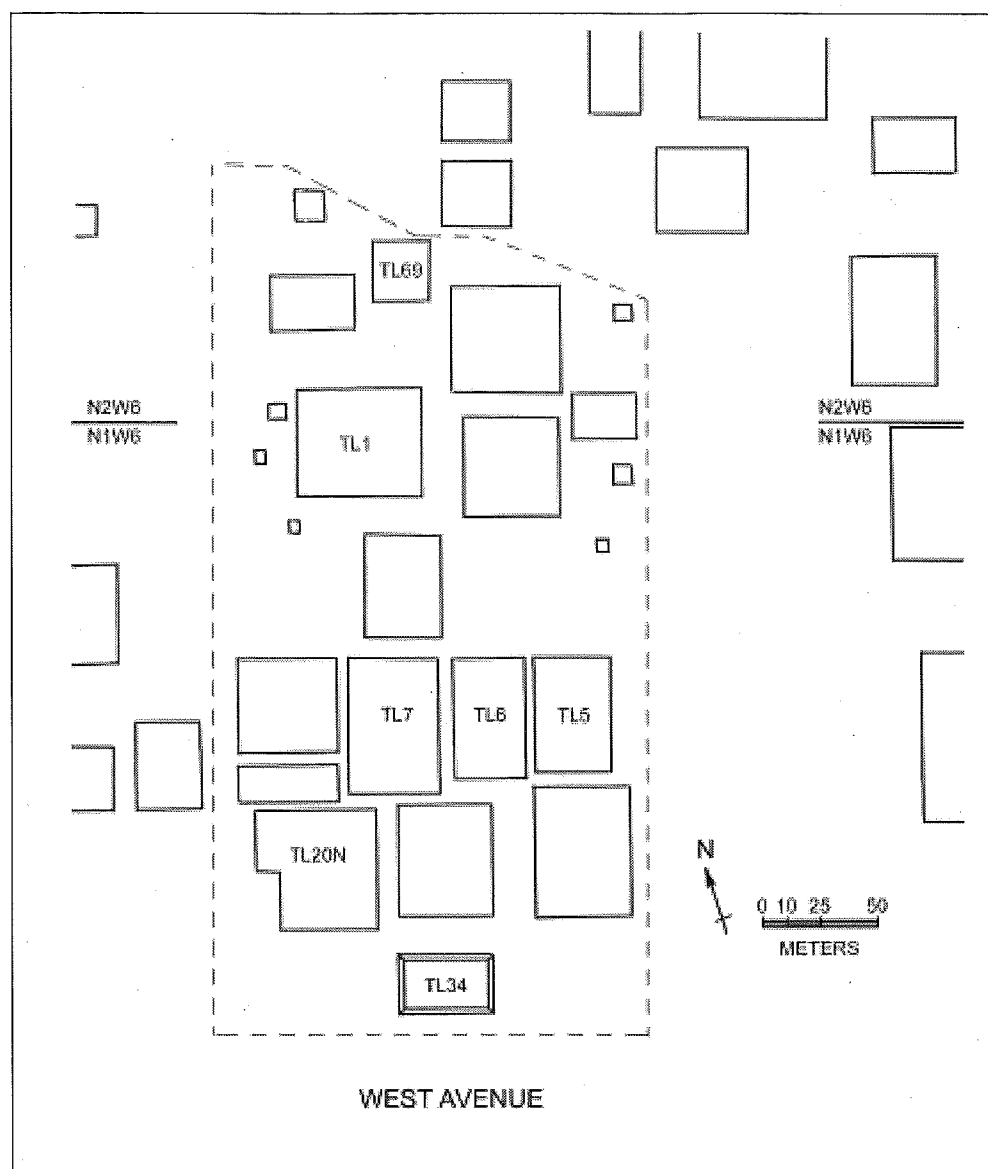
## The Apartment Compound and its Rituals

One important accommodation that they made to life in Teotihuacan was their adoption of the apartment compound, the distinctive Teotihuacan multifamily residence

(Millon 1976:215–226). In earlier periods in Mesoamerica multifamily residences were generally confined to the elite, who tended to have larger co-resident families (Hirth 1993:31–32; McAnany 1995:106–109). However, virtually all of the population of Teotihuacan lived in these structures, each of which housed several related families totaling some thirty to one hundred individuals. As Millon (1976) has pointed out, these buildings were uniquely adapted to life in a crowded city. With strong exterior walls and limited entry, they provided privacy and security for the occupants. The interiors were formed of a number of small open patios surrounded by rooms, each such cluster probably representing the living space of a nuclear or small extended family. All of the occupants would thus have had immediate access to light and air, while still enjoying some privacy within the building. There were also public areas in each structure, larger courtyards (usually with central altars) and platforms where rituals and other activities involving all the residents could take place (see also Manzanilla 1993b, 1996, chapter 5; Ortiz Díaz 1993). Each apartment compound apparently housed a well-defined corporate social group organized around a core of related men (Spence 1994).

It is possible that the Tlailotlacanos accepted this residential format because it was so well-designed for urban life and was otherwise harmonious with their own ideas of family organization. The clustering of one or a few closely related families around a central patio fits well with the standard residential structure of the Valley of Oaxaca (Winter 1986). Nevertheless, there is a still higher level of integration represented by the apartment compound, one that may not have been so acceptable to many Mesoamerican peoples. In most Mesoamerican

## 6.1 Map of Tlailotlacan structures



communities, including those of the Valley of Oaxaca, the nuclear and extended family compounds that formed the basic residential units were usually somewhat dispersed. They only loosely, if at all, clustered into larger groups that might have represented more inclusive social units. In Teotihuacan, the large social group that occupied the apartment compound seems to have been the most well-defined and integrated unit in the city's structure (Millon 1976). The failure of the apartment compound to survive Teotihuacan suggests that this degree of coherence may not have been widely appreciated in Mesoamerica.

The fact remains that the Tlailotlacanos seem to have accepted it readily enough. It is possible that they simply recognized its advantages for urban living, but I suspect something more. An analysis of mortuary practices sug-

gests that with the founding of the enclave, matters which had previously been the domain of the nuclear or extended family now became of concern to a wider segment of the community (Spence and Gamboa 1999). This change in social dynamics may have made the highly integrated structure of the apartment compound more attractive to the Tlailotlacanos.

This theme of the conflation of private and public will be discussed below in more detail, with a focus on the domestic rituals of Tlailotlacan. To date, five of the Tlailotlacan apartment compounds have been partially excavated: 1:N1W6, or TL1 (Gamboa 1993, 1995); 6:N1W6, or TL6 (Spence 1989, 1990, 1992, 1998); 7:N1W6, or TL7 (R. Millon 1967, 1973:41-42; Spence 1976, 1994; Rattray 1987, 1992, 1993); 20:N1W6, or TL20N (Gamboa 1995); and 69:N2W6, or TL69

(Quintanilla 1982, 1985, 1993). They appear architecturally to have been standard Teotihuacan apartment compounds, though with Zapotec tombs in them.

In analyzing the structure of domestic ritual it is important to distinguish public from private. I am here adapting the private/public dichotomy to events entirely within the context of the apartment compound to identify distinctions in the level of social inclusion of the rituals. Since I am dealing with tightly integrated and relatively small social groups (usually fewer than a hundred people) living within clearly delimited residential structures, it is appropriate to characterize all of the associated rituals as domestic, even though they include a range from personal to compound-wide events. All of these would fall within Smith's (chapter 9) "private popular" category. My use of the term "public" here is thus different from the application given it by most authors, who reserve it for events involving the broader community or the state as a whole. In other words, I am identifying a private to public continuum in a sector that most would characterize solely as private. The largest social unit that I am considering, the apartment compound, could perhaps be identified as a lineage, provided that one remains mindful of the qualifications and uncertainties attendant upon such a designation (chapter 5; Sanders 1966; Spence 1994:381–383, 400–401, 409–411). It may represent an elaboration of the patrilineages thought to have characterized Late Formative society in central Mexico (see chapters 3 and 4). Alternatively, the apartment compound might be viewed as a "house," a social group based more on co-residence than on descent, although the latter may remain an important metaphor for the group (Gillespie 2000a). In that case, though, the agnatic bias in apartment compound membership should not be overlooked (Spence 1994:396–401).

Private rituals, then, may be simply personal, or at most may involve only the members of a small extended family. The life-cycle rituals of birth, puberty, marriage, and death would generally fall in this category, as would ceremonies to ensure the well-being of the household members. Rituals at this level would probably be conducted in the residential space of the apartment compounds, either in the small family patios or in the habitation rooms opening onto them.

Public rituals, on the other hand, would have involved a wider range of people, at least as audience if not as active participants. The focus here is still on the domestic realm but now on its broader aspect, the social group occupying the apartment compound as a whole. These ritu-

als could include:

- ceremonies dealing with a change in leadership, for example, the death and burial of the senior person of the apartment compound;
- dedication and other rituals designed to ensure the survival and success of the apartment compound social unit;
- closure or termination rituals for the structure as a whole or for its central architectural elements (tombs, central altars, and so forth); or
- ceremonies to strengthen or redefine the ties between the apartment compound and similar neighboring groups or the enclave as a whole.

These rituals would usually have been held in more public venues, where a larger segment of the apartment compound population could witness or participate in them. Examples of such venues would be the principal entrance into the apartment compound, including the entry courtyard often associated with it, the passageways between one sector of the building and another, the structure's temple platform, and the larger and more accessible interior courtyards, which usually have altars in their centers.

In some cases the public rituals may actually have been held in what might seem to have been private residential space. It is possible, for example, that the apartment compound head might have conducted rituals on behalf of the compound in the privacy of his own residential quarters. Viewed in this light, the enclave tombs should be considered contexts of public ritual. The senior couples of the apartment compounds were buried in them (Spence and Gamboa 1999). Each tomb was open and in use for some time, as successive leaders and their spouses were buried in it and rituals were conducted over the remains of prior interments. Focused on the deceased leaders (now ancestors) of the apartment compound unit, these tomb rituals would presumably have been for the public good: appeals to the venerated ancestors to watch over the group, ensure its perpetuation, grant it economic success, and so forth. Also, the platforms in which the tombs were located should be treated as space dedicated to public functions, at least for the duration of the tomb's active use.

There is a further level of ritual in Tlailotlacan that will not be considered here. Site 5:N1W6, tested by one small pit that encountered evidence of a core of adobe blocks, may have been the barrio temple. If so, it would probably have been the site of integrative rituals at the



level of the enclave as a whole, and possibly of rituals focused on the articulation between the enclave and the Teotihuacan state. Although clearly important, this level is beyond what might be considered domestic ritual. In Smith's terms (chapter 9) it would fall in the "public popular" category.

### Dedication, Termination, and Closure Rituals

Dedication and termination rituals are widely known in Mesoamerica and certainly occurred in Teotihuacan (chapter 5; Mock 1998a; Sugiyama 1998). The construction and the abandonment, destruction, or even remodeling of an apartment compound would have been marked by public ceremonies. On a smaller scale, the closure or destruction of significant central facilities such as tombs and courtyard altars would also have been accompanied by public rituals; these "closure" rituals might be viewed as a more focused sort of termination ritual.

The Late Tlamimilolpa phase TL69 residence was largely destroyed during the Early Xolalpan phase expansion of the structure. The burial of a Teotihuacan theater censer in the foundation of the main temple platform of the Early Xolalpan building was probably part of the dedication ceremony for the new structure. The censer had a full, elaborate superstructure and was placed in a semicircle of stones (Quintanilla 1993:110–111, Pl. 52).

In TL7 a Zapotec urn made of Valley of Oaxaca clay was deliberately smashed over a fire and its fragments sealed in a small room (R. Millon 1967, 1973:41, Figs. 58–59; Rattray 1993:50–51). The room was then filled in and a floor laid over it. The main temple platform of the structure was then built above that, covering the location of the urn room. It may be, then, that the shattering of the urn was part of the dedication ritual for the temple and the remodeled apartment compound.

Still, some questions remain. The urn bore the iconography of the "God with Serpent Mouth Mask," a type represented also in fragments of a locally made urn found with a burial elsewhere in the same structure. The presence of two urns with the same iconography in TL7 suggests that the God with Serpent Mouth Mask may have been a patron deity or a deified ancestor of the lineage housed there. Also, the urn that had been deliberately smashed and covered had been brought from the Valley of Oaxaca and then safeguarded in Tlailotalcan for at least two centuries (R. Millon 1967:43). The destruction of such an image must have been a dramatic and important event, the sort of thing that one might expect with the dissolution or hostile termination of a lineage. Never-

theless, the finding of urn fragments bearing similar iconography in another TL7 feature points to a different interpretation of this enigmatic find. It may be that the destruction of urns with ancestral images was a repeated event, perhaps a termination or dedication ritual marking a major remodeling of the apartment compound and the attendant social readjustments among its occupants.

The tombs in each Tlailotalcan apartment compound were constructed and used consecutively, with each tomb being closed as a new one was prepared to replace it. In at least some cases the closure of an old tomb and opening of a new one were correlated with extensive remodeling of the apartment compound. When the East Tomb of TL6 went out of use, several modifications were made in the building. Two associated ceremonies occurred: the destruction of the courtyard altar and the closure of the East Tomb. In the tomb closure a marine shell ornament, mica, the mouth part of a Teotihuacan theater censer mask, a bowl, a set of miniature vessels and a tripod cylindrical vase, together with several disarticulated skeletal elements of an elderly male, were deposited on the entry steps of the tomb (Spence 1992:65–66; 1998:294). At least some of this material had originally been in the main chamber of the tomb.

The central altar in the associated courtyard had been built together with a subfloor stone walled cist that contained the extended burial of a young adult (Spence 1992:65–67). The altar was later demolished, probably at the same time that the East Tomb was closed, and the concrete courtyard floor was covered by a higher stone floor. The cist burial was exhumed when the altar was destroyed. The disturbed fill of the cist contained the broken parts of a Teotihuacan censer bowl, with no elements of the superstructure, and a candelero (see for example figure 5.4). Although the censer had been part of the original burial, the candelero was associated with the exhumation and closure.

The North Tomb of TL6 is the latest tomb in the structure, dating to the Metepec phase. Unlike the others, it was sealed after use by two large stones placed just inside the entrance to the main chamber. Also in contrast to the other tombs, the bones and offerings in the tomb were not removed. Although this could be viewed as simply another tomb closure, the differences from earlier closures and its occurrence at the end of the apartment compound's use suggest that it would more correctly be considered a termination ritual for the structure as a whole.

The earliest altar in the apartment compound, dating to the Early Tlamimilolpa phase, shows evidence of a clo-

sure ceremony. A subadult burial in the seated position had been incorporated within the altar. Later a hole was cut into the surface of the altar to expose the uppermost part of the burial, and obsidian prismatic blades and pieces of slate with red-painted designs were placed by the cranium. The whole altar was then covered by a somewhat larger rectangular structure of adobe blocks.

All of these rituals fall in the public part of the private-public continuum, as it is defined here. They either marked events that must have affected the apartment compound social group as a whole, like a major remodeling of the interior space or the destruction of an ancestral image, or they were associated with changes in architectural features central to the group's ritual life (the construction and destruction of altars, the closure and opening of tombs). Although it could be argued that tomb closure was an elite family ritual and so pertained more to the private realm, the focal role of the ancestors in apartment compound life points to a broader public concern with these events.

The distinction between closure/termination rituals and dedication rituals may be somewhat artificial. In particular, the termination ceremony associated with the closure or destruction of a structure may have been a necessary prelude to the dedication of its replacement, reflecting more a transference of its qualities than their cessation (chapter 2; Mock 1998a). The final termination rituals of the enclave (like the closure of the North Tomb) may have been exceptions to this process, as people abandoned their residences while perhaps holding no clear idea of their future course.

### Mortuary Practices

The mortuary program of Tlailotlacan has been discussed in some detail elsewhere (Spence and Gamboa 1999). It is clearly non-Teotihuacan in several respects, particularly in the emphasis on tombs. On the other hand, it is not simply a transplanted Valley of Oaxaca mortuary program. To evaluate it properly, it is first necessary to briefly review the main features of the contemporaneous Oaxacan and Teotihuacan mortuary programs.

Mortuary practices in the Valley of Oaxaca have been described and discussed by several authors (Séjourné 1960; Caso, Bernal, and Acosta 1967; Romano 1974; Romero 1983; Urcid 1983, 1987, 1996; Winter 1986; Winter et al. 1995; Martínez López, Winter, and Juárez 1995; chapter 7). Most residential areas include a tomb. If more than one tomb is present in a household, they had been used sequentially rather than contemporaneously. Those

interred in a tomb were, for the most part, the senior couple of the household (Urcid 1983, 1996). The tombs were used continuously over some generations, with earlier corpses and offerings being moved to the sides as each newly deceased person was placed in the tomb. The rest of the household members were buried singly, often in stone-walled cists under the floors of the residence rooms. Some, however, were buried in the patios or in open areas within the residential compound. Burials were usually extended, but some were flexed or secondary.

Men appear to have enjoyed somewhat higher status than women, though the difference was not great. People of both sexes were placed in tombs, and extended burials include both men and women. Flexed burials, however, were usually women and subadults; at Lambityeco women were less likely to be buried in public space or to have offerings placed with them (Urcid 1983).

At Lambityeco, subadults were usually buried under room floors but in some cases were placed in patios. Only about one third of them had offerings. At Monte Albán they were usually buried in peripheral locations. In the Monte Albán IIIA period, however, many were buried in the residence patios (Martínez López, Winter, and Juárez 1995:238–239). This reversal of the usual pattern suggests a change in social attitudes toward the death of subadults at that time, but the change may have been restricted to residences with a high level of Teotihuacan influence (chapter 7).

Teotihuacan mortuary practices have been described in a number of sources (Serrano and Lagunas 1975; González and Salas 1990; González, Salas, and Talavera 1991; Storey 1991, 1992, 1994; Rattray 1992; Manzanilla 1993c; Ortiz Díaz 1993; Serrano 1993; Sempowski 1994; Spence 1994; Manzanilla and Serrano 1999). Most burials in Teotihuacan were primary flexed burials in simple pits in the apartment compounds. There were no tombs or extended burials other than those of Tlailotlacan, and secondary burials were not very common. Many burials were in domestic space, under residential floors or in the smaller family patios, but those of higher status were placed in more public areas like the principal courtyards or temple platforms and had richer offerings (for example, Storey 1991).

Women generally had lower status than men, though again the distinction was not great. Sempowski (1994:249–250, 260–261) points out that comparisons between men and women have to be done in terms of each particular apartment compound, since there is no consistent city-wide ranking of the sexes (see also Sánchez

1991:174). Within each structure, however, men generally had higher status. In Tlajinga 33, for example, men were buried more often in the public areas of the compound and had richer offerings (Storey 1991:113).

Subadults were usually placed in domestic space, but many were buried in the larger courtyards or in passageways (for example, Manzanilla 1993b; Manzanilla, Millones and Civera 1999). They were often placed in or very near the courtyard altars. Offerings were less likely to be placed with subadults than with adults.

In Tlailotlacan data are available on thirty-five non-tomb burials and on seven tombs (Spence and Gamboa 1999). Most burials were primary but a number were secondary, and some had clearly been exhumed. The tombs were probably used for the burial of the senior couple of the apartment compound and perhaps for some of their closest kin. Other adults were buried, usually as single primary burials, in either domestic or public space. Many were in the extended position but several were flexed. Some were buried in public areas in stone-lined cists like those of the Valley of Oaxaca; such features do not appear elsewhere in Teotihuacan.

It is remarkable that, in terms of all the criteria that could be examined, men and women seem to have enjoyed equal status in Tlailotlacan. Both sexes are represented in the tombs, and in some cases it is clear that the women had been deposited in the tomb separately, with their own offerings, rather than entering it merely as adjuncts to the males. Also, women were somewhat more likely than men to be buried in public areas, to be placed in the extended position, and to be given offerings. Furthermore, these offerings included trade wealth such as greenstone items, Thin Orange ware and marine shells, goods suggesting ritual roles such as censers, and ceramics of Zapotec style to celebrate their social identity (Spence and Gamboa 1999).

Subadults too were given special treatment. Two were included in the TL7 tomb, though one was apparently the secondary burial of just a head while the other, an infant represented only by part of a temporal bone, may well have been an accidental inclusion (Spence 1994:358,362). Of thirteen nontomb subadult burials in Tlailotlacan (not including some fifteen neonates from TL20N), eleven were in public space, many of them near or in altars. Most received offerings, including marine shells, Thin Orange pottery, and Zapotec-style ceramics.

The unusually high status accorded women and subadults in Tlailotlacan was probably the result of the enclave's precarious position as a relatively small commu-

nity in the midst of the largest and most powerful city of Mesoamerica. The biological and social reproduction of the community would have been a matter of major concern to the occupants (Spence 1992). Not only did enough children have to be produced to sustain the enclave's numbers, but they had to be raised in the distinctive culture of the enclave. These responsibilities would have fallen primarily to the women, helping to account for their high status and for the apparent public concern with their deaths. By the same token, the death of a subadult would have had a profound impact on the community, reflected in the general pattern of burial in public space. The biological reproduction of such a small community over the long run is always a rather uncertain matter. In Tlailotlacan this uncertainty may have been compounded by a general rise in Teotihuacan subadult mortality (Storey 1992:249–259).

### Ritual Deposits

Ritual deposits are enigmatic features seen frequently in Tlailotlacan but rarely, if ever, in the rest of Teotihuacan. Each usually consists of two vessels, one placed upright in the ground as a receptacle and the other inverted over it as a cover (figure 6.2). The vessels include handled covers, polished dark brown or black bowls with tripod nubbin supports, and Thin Orange bowls, among others (Spence 1992: Figs. 2–3). Although the lower vessel is usually intact, the cover occasionally consists of just a few large sherds from one or two incomplete vessels and, in one case, of a flat stone slab.

Nineteen of these features were found in TL6, most of them in the courtyards (figure 6.3; Spence 1989, 1992). Quintanilla (1993:111, 113, Pl. 53) reports one from beside the altar of the main courtyard in TL69. The fact that none have been identified in the other structures may be owing in part to the nature of the excavations conducted in them. TL7, for example, was excavated largely by discontinuous test pits that often did not extend below the floor surfaces.

The TL6 ritual deposits date from Late Tlamimilolpa to the Metepec phase. They were located in public space, in both the entry and interior courtyards and in the passageway between them. In the courtyards the ritual deposits, like subadult burials, tended to either cluster around the central altar or to be near the courtyard edges (figure 6.3). In some cases the ritual deposits formed small clusters of two to four deposits each.

The vessels had no apparent contents, other than one complete and one broken prismatic blade of green obsid-

ian in one receptacle (F127). In two deposits adjacent to each other the soil filling the small pits in which they rested was color coded to match the uppermost vessel (Spence 1992:Fig. 1, Nos. 4–5). The more westerly of these two ritual deposits, F77, consisted of a dark three-handled cover over a Thin Orange bowl. Its pit fill was a dark gray-brown soil that closely matched the color of the cover. The F78 ritual deposit, a few centimeters to the east, had an inverted Thin Orange bowl as cover over a polished black bowl. The pit fill was a yellow-orange color that matched the Thin Orange vessel. The selection of fills was undoubtedly deliberate, but the symbolism of the colors is unknown.

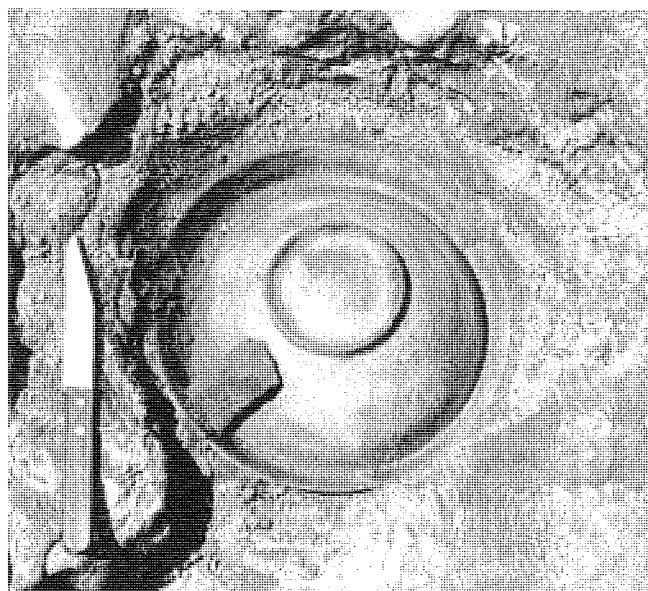
Elsie Clews Parsons has recorded the practice in several Oaxacan Zapotec communities, early in this century, of placing the "afterbirth" (probably the umbilical cord) in a ceramic jar and burying it in the patio of the family compound (1936:76). The jar was carefully covered because it was believed that if dirt were to come into contact with the afterbirth, the child could become blind. Although it cannot be proven that the ritual deposits of Tlailotlacan served the same function, the parallel is convincing. The similar patterns of location of the ritual deposits and subadult burials lends some further credence to the suggestion; both appear either around the altars or toward the edges of the courtyards. The obsidian blades in one of the vessels could have been used to cut the umbilical cord. Pushing a little further into the realm of conjecture, perhaps the fill colors of paired ritual deposits F77 and F78 indicate the gender of newborn twins. The clustering of some ritual deposits might represent family groupings.

The placing of the ritual deposits in public space, like the burial of subadults in the patios, indicates a strong communal concern with the reproduction of the group. As the deaths of subadults were communally mourned, so were the successful births communally celebrated.

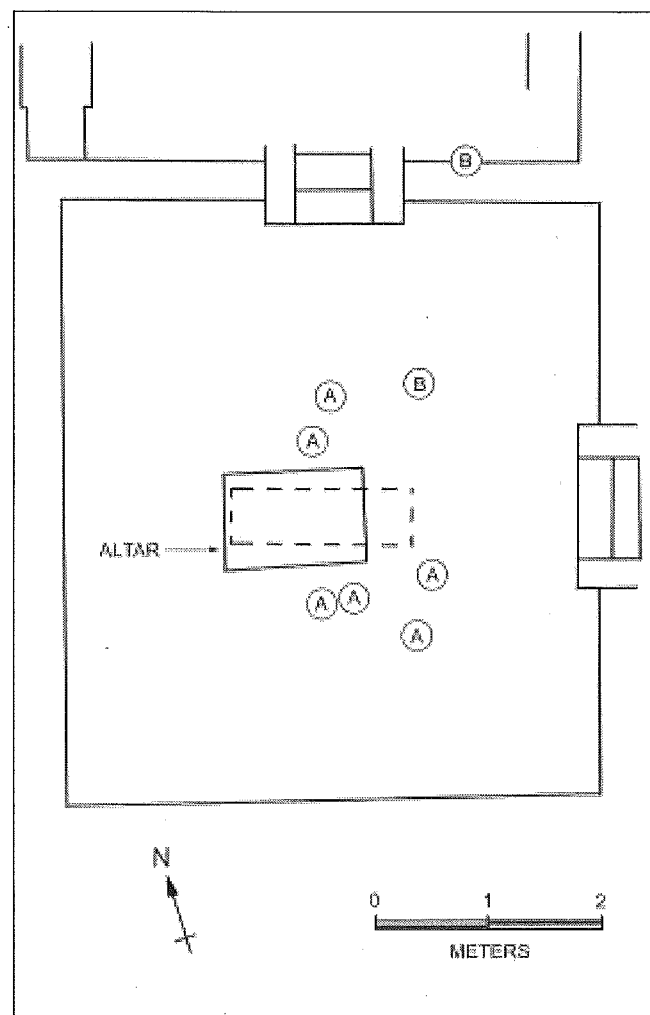
### Human Sacrifice

Urcid (1996) notes the sacrifice of birds and dogs in the Valley of Oaxaca as part of the tomb interment rituals. Although no bird sacrifices have been reported from Tlailotlacan, dog skeletons have frequently been found in the tombs. In one of the TL1 tombs there were also dog coprolites, indicating that the dog had been alive when it was brought into the tomb (Gamboa 1995).

Human sacrifice in the enclave is less likely. Aş Gómez (1990) has pointed out, archaeologists have tended to be somewhat too generous in their identification of ex-



6.2 Ritual deposit F92, site 6:N4W6. Photograph by author



6.3 Plan of interior courtyard, TL6: ritual deposits (A), subadult burials (B), dashed line indicates subadult burial

amples of sacrifice in Teotihuacan. There are certainly a number of undeniable cases, most of them associated with the major public structures in the center of the city (Cabrera, Sugiyama, and Cowgill 1991; Gómez 1990; Serrano 1993). Examples associated with apartment compounds, however, are dubious. In most complex societies the right to take a human life is a jealously guarded prerogative of the state. It is possible that lesser social groups in Teotihuacan may have sacrificed humans on special occasions, like the construction of a barrio temple or perhaps even the erection of an apartment compound. Given the political implications of such sacrifices, however, any claims of this sort must be examined critically. Most will probably not survive such an assessment (but see Torres and Cid 1997).

There are three different kinds of human sacrifice that have been suggested for the Tlailotlacan apartment compounds: dismemberment, decapitation, and infant sacrifice. Quintanilla (1993:75, 81) suggests that burial 159 of TL69, an adult female buried beneath the main platform staircase with a miniature olla as offering, had been dismembered as a sacrifice for the structure. It seems more likely that the body had simply been exhumed after some degree of decomposition, leaving some parts still in the grave. The elements of the right arm and hand, and the lower right leg and foot, were still articulated and in position, indicating that an extended burial had rested there originally (Quintanilla 1985). There was a similar situation in TL6, where the extended burial of a young adult beneath the interior courtyard altar had been largely exhumed, leaving several elements (including both perfectly articulated feet) still in place.

Quintanilla (1993) has also suggested that burials 137 and 158 of TL69, both consisting primarily of crania, were decapitation sacrifices. The mandibles and cervical vertebrae were not, however, present in either case; so, decapitation is unlikely. Another possible decapitation is burial 4 of TL1, a cranium and mandible placed with some jadeite bead fragments in a wall (Gamboa 1995). Again, there is no particular evidence to suggest it was a sacrifice, and without determining the presence of cervical vertebrae and cut marks on the bones, it cannot even be certain that it was a decapitation (Torres and Cid 1997). It probably represents elements retrieved and reburied from a primary burial disturbed in construction work, a common occurrence in Teotihuacan.

A number of investigators have suggested that the subadult burials found in courtyards, often associated with altars, indicate the presence of infant sacrifice or ritual

abortion in Teotihuacan apartment compounds (Serrano 1993:114; Jarquín and Martínez 1991—but see Storey 1992:154). One such find was made in TL20N, where some fifteen neonates were found buried in bowls beneath a courtyard floor, around the altar. However, this set of features was probably just the result of normal infant mortality accumulated over an extended period of time, as newborns that did not survive received the privilege of burial by the courtyard altar (Spence and Gamboa 1999). If Storey's (1992) crude birth rate of forty-nine per a thousand individuals per year for Tlajinga 33 is accepted also for Tlailotlacan, the entire enclave would only have produced about three births per month. A sacrifice of fifteen newborns at one time would have been beyond the capacity of the enclave and, in any case, would have destroyed it.

It is possible that human sacrifice was practiced occasionally at the level of the apartment compound (for example, Torres and Cid 1997). Any proposed examples, however, should be examined carefully and reported in detail. None of the cases suggested for Tlailotlacan are convincing. Indeed, given the community's concern with its survival, human sacrifice (at least of its own members) would have been considered unacceptable, even if it were allowed by the state.

### Ritual Paraphernalia

Another way to investigate the interpenetration of public and private in the domestic ritual of Tlailotlacan is to examine the contexts of ritual paraphernalia. Certainly anything used in a ceremony can be called ritual paraphernalia, but for the present it would be best to restrict the definition to items manufactured specifically for ritual use. Given the Tlailotlacan database, this effectively limits us to the study of a variety of receptacles for burning incense (and perhaps other materials). Probably some ceramic figurines were also used in rituals, but I suspect that many were primarily toys, as suggested by Winter (chapter 7) for the Valley of Oaxaca. The only ones found in a ritual context in TL6 were two identical Teotihuacan figurines, from the same mold, clutched in the left hand of a buried child. They were probably cherished playthings. The Zapotec-style figurines of Tlailotlacan represent both humans and animals. Some may have had ritual functions, in particular those representing bats, frogs, and some humans. Many, however, appear more playful than reverent (Spence 1989:Fig. 6; 1992:Fig. 11; Rattray 1993:Fig. 14).

Five artifact categories are available for analysis. Three are Zapotec in origin: urns, decorated braziers (chapter 7),

and handled censers. The other two categories are Teotihuacan: theater censers and candeleros. Although each of these artifact categories is represented in one or more ritual contexts in Tlailotlacan, these contexts are not always simple in their interpretation. Several apparently represent material displaced from an original location elsewhere. Their recovery from secondary contexts limits what we can say about them. Also, in some cases the iconographic elements had been removed from Teotihuacan theater censers, perhaps thereby altering their meaning and allowing their use in a wider variety of contexts.

### Urns

The elaborate effigy urns of Oaxaca are well-known and have no Teotihuacan counterpart (Caso and Bernal 1952). Although they were originally thought to represent deities, Marcus (1983a) argues that they may more properly be identified as depictions of ancestors or local rulers. They appear primarily in tombs in Oaxaca, though in Monte Albán IIIA their frequency diminished; they were apparently used in household and mortuary ritual (chapter 7).

In Tlailotlacan urns, or urn parts, have been found in three identifiable contexts, all in TL7. A number of fragments come from construction fill in TL6, but nothing can be said about their original proveniences (Spence 1992:75, Fig. 12). The only complete urn from TL7 has features associated with the God with Serpent Mouth Mask (R. Millon 1967). As noted earlier, the urn had been deliberately smashed and the pieces then sealed in a small room, perhaps as a termination or dedication ritual. The context suggests that it had functioned in public ritual at the level of the apartment compound.

Another urn, in this case represented only by the symbolically significant elements (headdress and facial mask) and by a fragment that includes part of the crossed legs and loincloth, was found with multiple primary burial A of TL7 (Rattray 1987:Fig. 1, 1992:Fig. 13, Pl. XIII, 1993:23, 49-50, Fig. 7, Pl. 2). The features are again those of the God with the Serpent Mouth Mask, though the clay is local Valley of Teotihuacan material. The style is Monte Albán Transition II-IIIa, but the context dates to the Late Xolalpan phase. However, this context does not necessarily mean that the urn is an heirloom. Most of the Zapotec-style pottery produced in the enclave was of early types, which apparently continued to be manufactured there with little change for some time after fashions had changed

in the Valley of Oaxaca (Spence 1992). The context of the find does not appear to have been public space.

Fragments of the headdress and loincloth of another locally made urn of Monte Albán Transition II-IIIa style were found with other goods in the Early Xolalpan phase redeposited burial B of TL7 (Rattray 1987:Fig. 2h, 1992:75, 1993:24-25, 49-50, Fig. 13h, l). The skeletal elements of burial B have not been examined; so, its age and sex are unknown. It is reported to have been a secondary burial (Rattray 1987:245). The context suggests private residential, rather than public, space.

### Zapotec decorated braziers

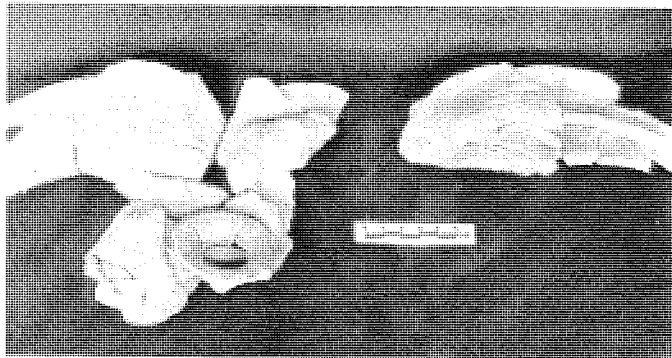
Winter (chapter 7) notes that in Monte Albán elaborately decorated braziers of hourglass shape became common in Monte Albán IIIa, but were not placed in tombs. They seem rather to have been used in household or possibly temple rituals. In Teotihuacan a complete one was found in excavations in the Great Compound (Cabrera 1998:65, Fig. 3).

Two largely complete Zapotec braziers were found deposited on the floor of a Late Xolalpan phase room on the south side of the TL69 main platform. The location and architectural qualities of the room suggest its use for official rather than residential functions (Quintanilla 1993:246, 248, Pls. 55-56). It is not known whether the braziers were imports or local products. The one illustrated in Plate 55 is of Monte Albán IIIa style, while the one in Plate 56 could also be IIIa but has some features in common with an early Monte Albán IIIB-IV (Xoo phase) piece (Winter 1999).

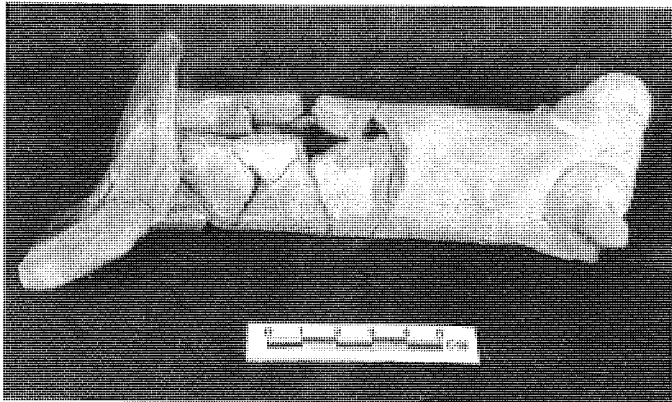
In TL6 several ceramic fragments depicting iconographic elements were found sealed beneath the floor in a corner of the entry courtyard. The iconographic elements include an ear ornament and, contiguous with it, feathers, lines of beads, and some striations that may represent clothing (figure 6.4). The feathers are superimposed on a flanged rim. The style and the association of the iconographic elements with the vessel rim indicate that these pieces are from a Zapotec decorated brazier, rather than a Teotihuacan-style theater censer.

### Handled censers

Handled censers (also called "pan" or "ladle" censers), with tubular or open handles and perforated bowls, have been found with a number of burials in Monte Albán (Martínez López, Winter, and Juárez 1995, Winter et al. 1995). Most were with adults buried in residential space, though one was in a Monte Albán II tomb and another was with an infant in a context that does not appear to have been public space. The simplicity of the censer and



6.4 Zapotec-style brazier flange with decorative elements, F406, site 6:N1W6. Photograph by Saburo Sugiyama



6.5 Zapotec-style handled censer, burial F261, site 6:N1W6. Photograph by Saburo Sugiyama

its contexts suggest that it was probably intended for individual ritual use.

Only two censers have been found in ritual contexts in Tlailotlacan, although fragments of others have been reported from fill in TL6 (Spence 1992:74) and TL7 (Rattray 1993:48–49, Fig. 13d–g). The two from well-defined contexts are both from burials in the residential sectors of TL6. One was part of the extensive offering with the burial of an elderly female, F261, placed beneath a residence floor in the Early Tlamimilolpa phase (Spence 1990, 1998:290–293). It has bat claws modeled on the end of the handle (figure 6.5).

The other ladle censer was with burial F135, a flexed adult male whose burial was later disturbed by, and incorporated within, the North Tomb of TL6. Although the tomb itself would be considered a public context, the earlier burial had probably been placed in residential space. Both contexts, then, are compatible with the data from Monte Albán and support the idea that the handled censers were also items of individual ritual in Tlailotlacan.

### Teotihuacan theater censers

Distributional evidence in Teotihuacan indicates that the elaborate theater censers were used in public ritual at the level of the apartment compound social unit (Cowgill, Altschul, and Sload 1984:176, 178; Pasztory 1997:58–59; Robertson 1999:148–150). They deal with universal themes such as death, fertility, nature, transformation, and the calendar (Manzanilla and Carreón 1991; Pasztory 1997:167). At least some of them were manufactured in a workshop in the North Quadrangle, associated with the Ciudadela, one of the principal architectural complexes of the Teotihuacan state (Cabrera 1998:71).

Nevertheless, the structure of the censers is flexible enough to allow a variety of arrangements, perhaps even to the level of individual expression (Pasztory 1997:59). Although they are not commonly found in individual burials, exceptions do occur (Manzanilla and Carreón 1991; Séjourné 1959:Fig. 47; Linné 1942:125–132). Pasztory (1997:58) suggests that these cases may represent the retirement of the apartment compound censer at the death of the compound head, the censer being disassembled and its components deposited in the grave. This seems to fit the case of burial 1 of the Tlamimilolpa site (Linné 1942:125–132, 171–172). At Oztotyahualco, however, the individual with the disassembled censer was a young man, 22 to 23 years of age, and the burial was in residential space (Manzanilla 1993b:137–142, Figure 16; Manzanilla and Carreón 1991). The theater censer, then, seems generally to have been an element of public ritual, functioning at the level of the apartment compound, but on occasion it may have crossed over into the private domain (chapter 5).

In Tlailotlacan there are seven cases of theater censers in ritual contexts. They appear in all structures except TL20N. In some cases a full, elaborately decorated censer is involved, but more often it is only the functional base or elements of the decoration. These distinctions may be important. Organized by apartment compound, the contexts are described below.

- (1) In TL7 a complete Early Xolalpan phase censer was recovered. It consists of a biconical base and a cover in the shape of a maize ear. It had been placed with the cranium and mandible of an adult female, head burial C, beneath what seems to have been a residence floor (Rattray 1992:39, Pl. XV; 1993:26–30, Pl. III). There were no cervical vertebrae or cut marks, so the “head” was probably the secondary burial of elements considered important

and thus retrieved from a primary context elsewhere. It is not known whether the censer and the bones were moved there together from some prior shared primary context or whether they only became united for this secondary burial.

- (2) In TL7 three censer bases (only one is complete) and one *adorno* (ornament) were with the Early Xolalpan phase redeposited burial B, in residential space (Rattray 1992:75, 202; 1993:24–26). As noted above, the age and sex of the individual in this secondary burial are unknown. The offering also included elements of a Monte Albán ur. The condition of the censer elements suggests that like the bones, they had been transferred from some primary context elsewhere, possibly the primary burial of individual B.
- (3) In TL1 a complete Xolalpan biconical censer base was found on the patio floor, near the altar. It is not stated if the censer superstructure was also represented. The altar had been disturbed; so, the censer had probably been part of an offering displaced from it (Gamboa 1995).
- (4) In TL1 a biconical censer base was with a Late Tlamimilolpa phase burial (it is not said whether the superstructure was present too). The burial, a young adult male, was in a pit that had probably been placed in residential space, but which had later been exposed during tomb construction and partially incorporated within the tomb. The censer was broken and dispersed about the seated skeleton (Gamboa 1993, 1995).
- (5) In TL69 a complete and fully decorated Early Xolalpan phase theater cense was buried in the foundation of the principal platform (Quintanilla 1993:110–111, Pl.52). It was probably interred in a dedication ceremony for the Early Xolalpan phase expansion and remodeling of the apartment compound.
- (6) In TL6 the mouth part of a censer mask had been deposited with a set of miniature ceramic vessels and a few other items as part of the closure ceremony for the East Tomb (Spence 1992:65–66). At least one ceramic piece from this offering had come from the main chamber of the tomb, but it is not

clear which (if any) of the other items and bones also came from there or whether some had been transferred from some primary context elsewhere or had even been created specifically for this event. The censer fragment and the bones of the elderly male, at least, must have been moved here from some other context, whether it was the tomb chamber or somewhere else. The ceramics on the steps are Early Xolalpan phase, but their deposition on the tomb steps may have occurred later.

- (7) In TL6 the broken base of a censer was found in the backfill of an exhumed burial beneath the altar of the interior courtyard (Spence 1992:65–67). There were no decorative elements. Both the altar and the cist had been constructed together in the Early Xolalpan phase. In the Metepec phase the altar was dismantled and the skeleton largely exhumed from the cist beneath it, after which a new floor was laid over the area, sealing the cavity. Probably the censer base had been placed with the burial when it was originally interred there and was later broken and discarded in the backfill during the exhumation. Although it is possible that the censer had included the decorated superstructure when first placed in the cist, the absence of any fragments of decorative elements in the disturbed fill makes this seem unlikely.

### Candeleros

Most investigators agree that the small one- and two-holed candeleros were items of individual ritual, probably for burning incense (Cowgill, Altschul, and Sload 1984:176, 178; Kolb 1988; R. Millon 1973:62; Pasztory 1997:230; Robertson 1999:148–150). They are not usually found in such public contexts as temples. Only one was from a secure context in Tlailotlacan. It was a crudely thumb-impressed Metepec phase specimen from the disturbed backfill of the exhumed burial under the TL6 courtyard altar. The phase identification of the candelero indicates that it had been placed in this context during the exhumation, perhaps after its use in a closure ritual.

Manzanilla (chapter 5) notes the use of candeleros in termination rituals in some apartment compounds, with an especially striking deposit of about 160 candeleros in the central courtyard of compound 1D of the Ciudadela (Jarquín and Martínez 1982:103). Perhaps the residents of a structure contributed their personal ritual equipment to the general termination offering. The large number of



candeleros in the structure 1D deposit implies something beyond this, but structure 1D was a very high status, perhaps royal, residence.

## Discussion

The distribution of ritual paraphernalia in Tlailotlacan suggests a certain degree of flexibility in the use, and perhaps the definition, of these items. The Zapotec urns, for example, appear in both public and private contexts, although they have not yet been found in tombs. There is a complicating factor here, however, one that must be considered when evaluating the distributions of the Zapotec urns and decorated braziers and the Teotihuacan theater censers. The iconographic elements appear to have been distinguished from the functional parts of the artifact and to have been treated differently when the artifacts were broken or disassembled. They were probably thought to retain some of their power even after breakage. The functional elements, such as the biconical base of the theatre censer, may have been discarded with less care or perhaps were still used but without the constraints that the iconographic elements would have imposed on them.

In the Valley of Oaxaca the urns were usually placed in the tombs. The one whole Tlailotlacan example was also in a public context, but one that suggested its use in a dedication or termination ritual rather than in tomb burial. The two partial urns were with burials that had been placed in residential space. Although only the iconographic elements were present in these latter cases, it would seem that whatever being or concept was represented by these elements could be invoked in both public and private domains. This suggests that the public/private dichotomy may not have been so strongly maintained in Tlailotlacan.

There are only two contexts for the Zapotec decorated braziers. The TL69 context is a room attached to the south side of the main platform, probably for the storage of materials used in public ceremonies conducted on the platform or in the adjoining major courtyard. The fragments of brazier decoration buried in the TL6 entry patio were also in public space, but in that case the motive may have been the safe disposal of damaged but still ritually potent items.

The Teotihuacan theater censers appear in a variety of contexts. Two were associated with the courtyard altars in TL1 and TL6, though in both cases later disturbances make it unclear whether they had originally been placed there as full theater censers or as just the bases, free of iconographic elements. The one definitely complete the-

ater censer from Tlailotlacan was encased in the foundation of the TL69 main platform as a dedication offering. In all of these cases, the censers were apparently functioning in public contexts, at the level of the apartment compound as a whole.

Other censers were with burials in various contexts. One of these was a complete censer with a burial in TL7 residential space, but it was a variant with a maize ear effigy cover rather than the usual elaborate superstructure. It seems likely that this difference was significant and that the burial C censer was not really in the same category as the theater censers. The other three contexts are variable: a primary burial in residential space, a secondary burial in residential space, and a secondary burial and offering that were part of the ceremonial sealing of a tomb. It thus seems that the Teotihuacan theater censers were used in both public and private contexts. We cannot be sure, however, that the Tlailotlacanos saw all of these censers as equivalents. It is possible that stripped of the elaborate and highly symbolic superstructure, a censer base could have been used rather pragmatically in a variety of contexts where the iconography of the superstructure would have otherwise precluded its use.

Both Zapotec urns and Teotihuacan theater censers were apparently used in termination/dedication rituals marking major remodeling episodes in apartment compounds. The co-occurrence of Teotihuacan theater censer parts and some iconographic elements of a Zapotec urn in a TL7 secondary burial might also suggest some overlap between these two types of paraphernalia, but the context is not very clear. The presence of parts of three bases and an *adorno* suggests the dismantling of one or more Teotihuacan theater censers at some point in a sequence of rituals. It is interesting that the iconographic elements of the urn were retained for the burial while those of the censer, with the exception of one *adorno*, were not. The two categories of paraphernalia, despite their presence together in this secondary burial and their use in termination/dedication ceremonies, were apparently not considered equivalents. If nothing else, the differences in their attached iconography distinguish them. The ceremonial disposal of iconographic elements from urns, braziers, and censers indicate that the Tlailotlacanos were well aware of, and respected, their significance and potency.

The two less elaborate categories, handled censers and candeleros, were both probably used in individual or, at most, family ritual in Oaxaca and Teotihuacan respectively. The two contexts for handled censers support this

assessment; both are with the burials of adults in residential space. The low overall counts for handled censer fragments (23 in TL7 and 26 in TL6) suggest, however, that their use could not have been universal among the enclave adults. The one candelero context indicates its use in a closure ritual focused on a central altar in TL6. Kolb notes the occasional association of candeleros with altars, but says that for the most part they do not occur in "sacred" contexts (1988:535). In this one Tlailotlacan case, however, the candelero was clearly functioning in a public, not individual, context.

## Conclusions

In the foregoing pages the domestic rituals of Tlailotlacan have been categorized on the basis of their contexts as either private (focused on the individual or immediate family) or public (involving the larger social unit of the apartment compound). This dichotomy seems to have some validity in the larger host society of Teotihuacan (for example, Storey 1991). In Tlailotlacan, however, the distinction appears somewhat blurred.

This is particularly true of birth rituals and of the death rites of subadults. The ritual deposits, believed to contain the umbilical cords of newborns, were placed in the public sectors of the structure, and only two of the subadult burials in Tlailotlacan were in residential space. The births and deaths of children, normally the domain of the family, had apparently become of concern to the larger community. This is understandable in view of the unique situation of Tlailotlacan. As a small enclave in the midst of a much larger, culturally distinct population, the survival of the community would have been a source of considerable concern. Small groups of this sort are not demographically stable over the long term. A high level of subadult mortality, or for that matter of young adult female mortality, would have seriously jeopardized the enclave's existence. Either its population would have dropped below the level necessary for the community's physical reproduction, or there would have been adoptions and marriages with members of the larger Teotihuacan community. The latter course may have sustained the enclave's numbers but would have eroded its distinctive cultural identity.

The permeability of the private/public barrier is also visible in at least one category of ritual paraphernalia. The urns may have undergone some reinterpretation from their Oaxacan origins; they do not appear in the tombs in Tlailotlacan. They are still involved in public functions but they, or at least their iconographic ele-

ments, now appear also in burials in private residential space. If urn iconography does represent social group ancestors (Marcus 1983a), it may be that ritual access to the ancestors was not as tightly constrained in Tlailotlacan as it had been in Oaxaca.

This evidence suggests a relatively cohesive social unit, one without a rigid hierarchical structure, and there is other evidence to support this assessment. Tomb burial implies higher status because the tombs required energy to build and allowed continued access to the bodies so that mortuary rituals could continue over years, even generations. Nevertheless, some of those buried outside the tombs had extensive offerings, including items of wealth, ritual paraphernalia, and Zapotec-style ceramics. Also, during their construction two tombs (in TL1 and TL6) had intruded upon, and incorporated, earlier nontomb burials, suggesting that the criteria for inclusion in a tomb were not absolutely rigid. Perhaps, after the lapse of a few generations, everybody became an ancestor. Furthermore, an analysis of dental enamel hypoplasia shows no difference between those inside and those outside the tombs. Whatever else high status in a Tlailotlacan apartment compound entailed, it did not offer any advantages in terms of childhood health (Spence and Gamboa 1999).

The Teotihuacan theater censers seem also to have moved between the public and private spheres. Interpretations of that category of paraphernalia are, however, complicated by several factors: uncertainty about the completeness of some examples, the presence of censer parts in secondary contexts, the question of the comparability of the TL7 maize ear effigy censer, and the possibility that stripped of their iconographic superstructures, the censer bases could have functioned in a wider variety of contexts. Archaeologists have tended to assume that Teotihuacan theater censers were a single, indivisible category. That assumption seems unlikely for Tlailotlacan and may not hold true even for Teotihuacan in general.

The Zapotec decorated braziers functioned in public, nontomb contexts in Tlailotlacan, much as they did in the Valley of Oaxaca. The handled censers may have been personal ritual gear, again as in Oaxaca. The one Teotihuacan candelero found in context in Tlailotlacan, however, had been used in public ritual, although candeleros are assumed to have been personal items in the larger Teotihuacan society. It is possible that this use of a candelero in an altar-closure ritual is somehow related to their use in structure-termination rituals, albeit on a smaller scale (chapter 5).

The circulation and use of ritual paraphernalia in

Tlailotlacan was clearly a rather complicated matter. It will take more examples, described in more detail, to resolve some of the questions raised here. At present it seems that some of the more elaborate ritual items went through rather complex histories, moving from primary to secondary contexts and between the public and private spheres within the apartment compounds. This complexity suggests a highly integrated and relatively egalitarian social group, a suggestion supported by the mortuary data and ritual deposits.

These features are not surprising. After all, the community leaders (those buried in the tombs) did not form a separate elite class (see Urcid 1983). They were simply senior kinsmen, bound to their followers by the same responsibilities and obligations that characterize kin ties everywhere. If they had exploited their position to give themselves a visibly superior lifestyle and health, their followers would have left the enclave. The city of Teotihuacan constantly presented a tempting and easily

accessible alternative. Attrition in the enclave was probably high enough without making that alternative seem even more palatable.

**Acknowledgments.** Marcus Winter has very kindly shared his data and ideas with me since I started my research in Tlailotlacan. I am also grateful to Luis Manuel Gamboa Cabezas, Michael Lind, Evelyn Rattray, and Javier Urcid for their help. My work in Tlailotlacan was supported by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

# Monte Albán

## Mortuary Practices as Domestic Ritual and Their Relation to Community Religion

*Marcus Winter*

**F**rom approximately 500 BC to AD 800, the pre-Hispanic city of Monte Albán in the Valley of Oaxaca was the capital of the Zapotec Indians and the largest settlement in the highlands of southern Mexico, with a population that reached an estimated twenty-five thousand inhabitants. The urban area covered some 6.5 km<sup>2</sup> centered on the 300 m-long Main Plaza delimited by monumental buildings on the highest part of the site and surrounded by terraced hill slopes with residences and outlying barrios (figure 1.1).

For nearly a thousand years prior to Monte Albán's founding, Valley Zapotecs lived in small agricultural villages with about five to twenty households (25-100 inhabitants). As the population grew during this period, the density of villages in the valley increased and social relations became more complex at San José Mogote, a uniquely large community of several hundred people in the center of the Etla branch of the Valley of Oaxaca. Both processes led to competition within and between valley subregions and eventually the founding of Monte Albán (figure 7.1).

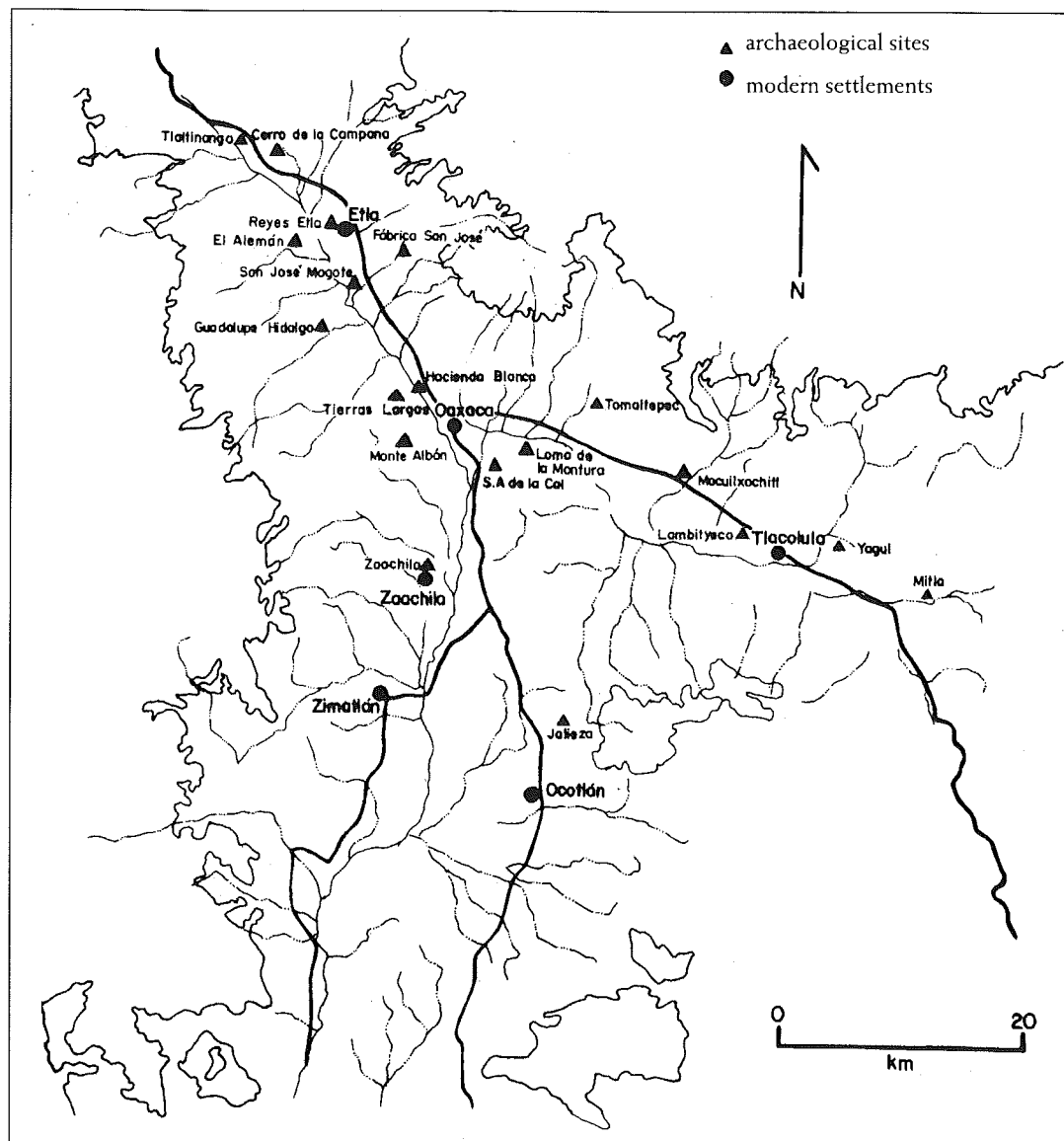
Situated on a previously uninhabited cluster of hills in the center of the valley, Monte Albán grew rapidly; within several generations it had several thousand inhabitants and was the largest settlement in the region and one of Mesoamerica's first cities. The nuclear family household or small extended family household, common in earlier villages, continued as a basic social unit at Monte Albán. Unlike earlier villages composed of kinsmen, however, Monte Albán housed many unrelated families, many of them immigrants from valley communities so widely dispersed in the city that they ordinarily would not have daily contact and interaction. Several

mechanisms counteracted this isolation and functioned to integrate the city: establishment of a market, probably located in the Main Plaza, facilitated exchange of goods; use of force and propaganda, manifested in carved stones at the city center depicting subjugation of individuals and communities (Joyce and Winter 1996), encouraged political unity; and public ceremonies promoted integration through religion. If public religion served to bring together community members, then domestic ritual worked to keep households going. Both were necessary for the city's continued existence.

Public religion at Monte Albán had many dimensions—buildings and spaces for communal celebrations, calendrics that determined timing of celebrations, and presence of deities in various guises. Public religion was essentially created at Monte Albán, and the chronological sequence allows us to see how it emerged and developed. Household religion and ritual began back in the village stage and may have provided antecedents for public religion. Archaeological data from Monte Albán offer material for examining how they were interrelated.

### Antecedents: Religion and Ritual during the Village Stage, 1500–500 BC

Religion, in general terms, refers to beliefs and practices related to the supernatural, the holy or the divine, powers and forces not understood or easily controlled, the sacred as opposed to the profane (Durkheim 1995). Ritual refers to the performance of ceremonies or acts, often religious in character and usually with established, formal order and repetition (Rappaport 1999:23–68). In the archaeological record, material evidence of ritual appears as objects used in ceremonies and as locales where rites



7.1 Valley of Oaxaca with archaeological sites mentioned in the text

were performed. Religious beliefs not directly observable may be implied in the ritual evidence or in symbols and symbolic objects.

Mortuary practices provide the best evidence for domestic ritual in ancient Oaxaca, and the pre-Hispanic Zapotecs have long been known for their elaborate tombs and funerary offerings. Before Monte Albán was founded, villagers at San José Mogote, Fábrica San José, Tierras Largas, and other communities established the formal structure of Zapotec mortuary treatment. The dead were buried in graves associated with residential structures (except at Tomaltepec where villagers were interred in a cemetery [Whalen 1981:34–63]). Families buried their own deceased members, who then remained in the domestic space to be cared for by their descendants. The deceased were sometimes buried with personal ornaments, such as necklaces

and earspools, and with offerings, most commonly ceramic containers with food and drink deposited during the mortuary ceremony. Human burials (interments of deceased individuals with their offerings and accompanying objects in a context such as a grave, pit, tomb, or other feature) reflect status differences based on age. For example, adults were usually buried in a prominent location and with offerings, while children received less attention and are less frequently found in excavations. Burials may also reflect status differences between individuals and households within the community.

Other rites of passage—birth, coming of age, marriage—also must have been commemorated during the village stage but lacked the key element, the need to dispose of a corpse, that lends permanence to mortuary rituals in the archaeological record. Kent Flannery (1976) has identi-

YEAR	STAGE	PERIOD	VALLEY OF OAXACA	MONTE ALBÁN
1521	Señorios	Postclassic	Chila	Defensive wall
1400				Tomb reuse
1200			Liobaa	Offerings
1000				Sparse occupation
800	Urban centers	Classic	Late Xoo	Collapse
600			Early Xoo	Resurgence and reorganization
400			IIIA (Dxu' Complex)	
200		Late Preclassic	Late II	Relations with Teotihuacan
AD/BC			Early II	
200			Late I	Growth and consolidation
400			Early I	
600		Middle Preclassic	Rosario	Foundation
800			Guadalupe	
1000	Villages	Early Preclassic	San José	Pre-Monte Albán communities
1200			Hacienda Blanca Complex	
1400			Tierras Largas	
1600			Espiridión	

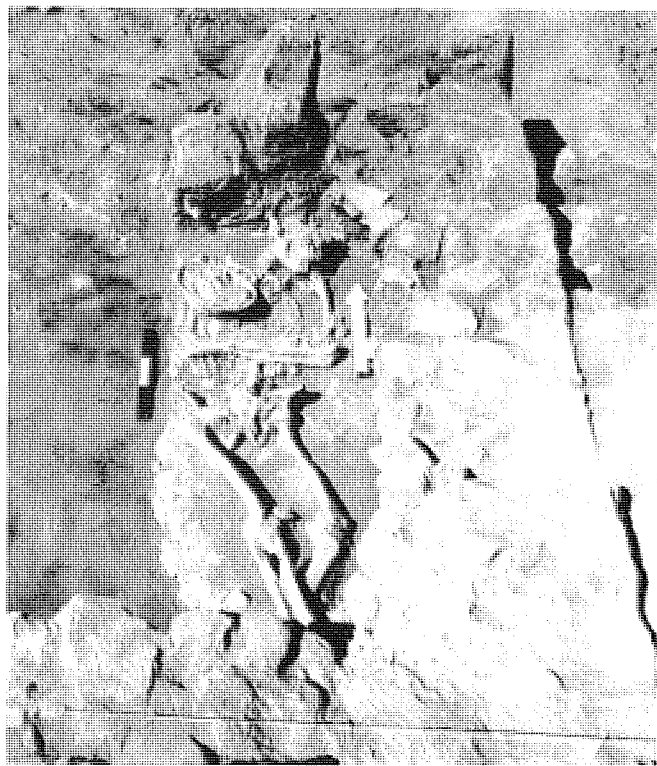
### 7.2 Valley of Oaxaca chronological sequence for village and urban stages

fied additional evidence of household ritual activity: stin-gray spines and fish spines may have been used in bloodletting rites; pottery masks and remains of macaws and crocodiles may imply use of costumes; and at San José Mogote two circular areas recessed into floors and painted, one red and one yellow, may have been San José-phase household shrines. Joyce Marcus (1996, 1998) has argued that ceramic figurines were used in household rituals. Figurines, usually found broken, discarded, and mixed with other domestic refuse, are common in early village sites as well as in urban sites in the Valley of Oaxaca. Attribution of ritual function, however, is not well-supported by the archaeological data. A more likely alternative is that figurines functioned as dolls and toys for girls, while ceramic whistles, which have a parallel distribution in the refuse, functioned as toys for boys. These artifacts may still reflect aspects of society—the figurines carry information about hair styles, clothing, and female concerns, for example—and they occasionally occur as burial offerings or intentionally deposited groups, as in the case of a well-publicized San José Mogote cluster of four figurines (illustrated, for example, in Drennan 1976: Fig. 11.9; Marcus 1998: Fig. 13.11), but that does not mean they were primarily ritual objects.

Evidence for community ritual and religion in pre-urban villages is ambiguous, partly because excavations have focused on households rather than nonresidential structures and spaces. One of several contiguous, well-made Tierras Largas phase structures at San José Mogote has been inter-

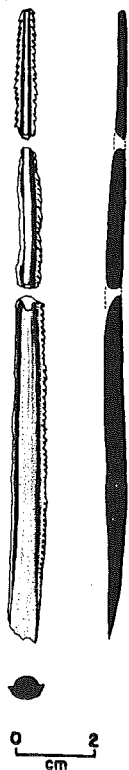
preted by Flannery (1976: Fig. 11.1) as a public building used as a men's house; an associated subfloor pit contained lime supposedly used as an additive in ritual tobacco consumption (Marcus and Flannery 1996: 87). I believe, however, that the structure was a high-status residence and the lime used for resurfacing walls and floors (Winter 1984). These structures are on the west edge of the community where one would expect to find houses, rather than in the center where one would expect communal buildings. Interestingly, the structures are oriented 8 degrees north of east, the Olmec orientation present later at La Venta (Peeler and Winter 1992, 1993). This shows attention to astronomy and calendrics during an early period in Oaxaca, though how it was combined with ritual and religion is not clear. Olmec-style symbols on San José phase pottery in the Valley of Oaxaca had communal and pan-regional religious significance, and, like the building orientations, imply shared beliefs and worldview, though they are expressed in household contexts.

In any case, as the largest pre-urban village in Oaxaca, San José Mogote is the most likely site to have had direct antecedents to Monte Albán. The site has a large central plaza, like Monte Albán, though it is still unclear whether the plaza is earlier than Monte Albán's or a later imitation. On top of mound 1, the highest structure at the site, a Rosario phase temple and several high-status residences were found (Marcus and Flannery 1996: 126–28, 131–34) and these could provide an antecedent to the Period I structures



7.3 Monte Albán burial 1972-7 (Late I/Early II) in extended position beneath a house floor, with one vessel as an offering. The mortuary treatment is also typical of many pre-urban burials

7.4 Stingray spine from the Period I tomb 176 at Monte Albán. Spines like this may have been used in early Oaxacan villages as ritual perforators (Flannery 1976). Illustration by Hugo Antonio Domínguez



built at Monte Albán soon after the city was founded. The published data from San José Mogote are not clear regarding the architectural layouts of these structures, their relative dating, and how their functions were determined. Thus much remains to learn about public ritual in pre-urban Oaxaca.

Monte Albán flourished for about thirteen hundred years and this span can be divided into three main segments: first, local consolidation of power and regional expansion during Periods I and II; second, appearance of Teotihuacan elements in Period IIIA; and third, a renewed Zapotec florescence during the Xoo phase or Period IIIB-IV (figure 7.2).

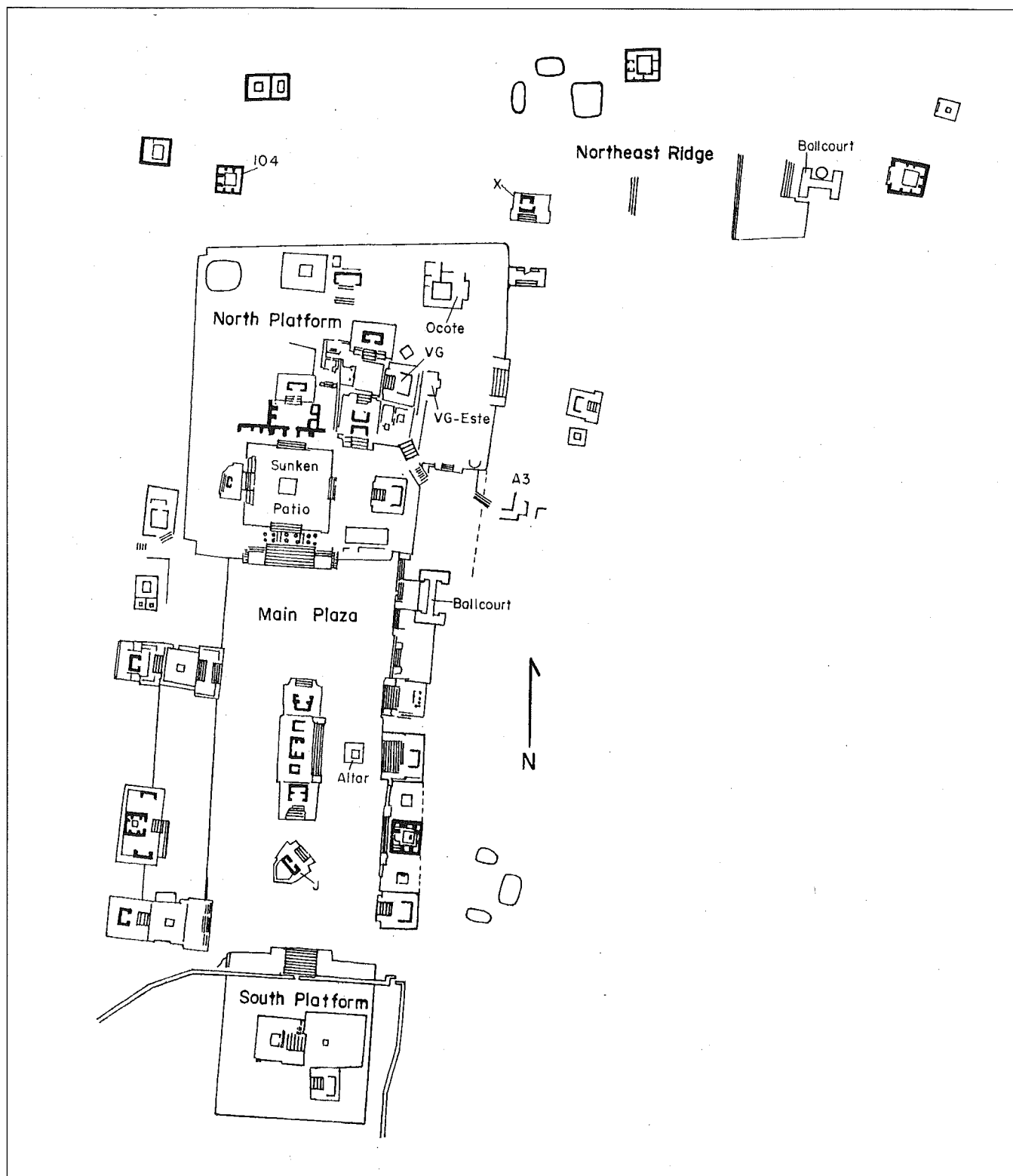
### Monte Albán and Early Urbanism in the Valley of Oaxaca, 500 BC-AD 350

Period I households at Monte Albán show continuity with village-stage households in size, associated features, and artifacts, which implies that Monte Albán was settled by people from the Valley of Oaxaca. Houses at Monte Albán have stone foundations and adobe walls and were more substantial than earlier wattle-and-daub structures but otherwise have similar bell-shaped pits, cooking ovens, utilitarian pottery, and stone and bone implements. Some Monte Albán houses are larger and have a closed format with a square central patio surrounded by roofed-over rooms.

Mortuary practices also show continuity, though they are more varied and complex than in earlier times. In Periods I and II, most adults at Monte Albán were buried in graves or pits beneath or near the house, often in extended position accompanied by personal adornments and simple offerings (figure 7.3). Children, infants, and the aged received less careful treatment and are often invisible in the archaeological record.

Tombs appear in Periods I and II, most commonly in association with large residences. They are rectangular chambers usually at least 1.8 m long, 90 cm wide, and 90 cm high, beneath a room and with access, sometimes a formal stairway, from the patio. Tombs may have an ante-chamber and rectangular niches in the walls of the main chamber. Tombs signal a change in mortuary practices because, unlike simple graves, they are permanent architectural features designed to be used on multiple occasions. In general, at Monte Albán tomb size correlates positively with house size, and larger tombs tend to have more numerous and elaborate offerings.

Some Period I tombs are little more than elaborate graves, a formal chamber with adobe and/or stone walls containing bones of a single individual and accompany-



7.5 Monte Albán's Main Plaza and surrounding buildings



ing objects. For example, tomb 174 in the 1972-1973 residential area about 1 km north of the North Platform, a rectangular structure dug into bedrock with one adobe wall, contained an adult female skeleton and four vessels. Tombs 175 and 176, a pair of Period I tombs in the same area, were rectangular chambers dug into bedrock (Winter et al. 1995). Reuse and modification is common among Zapotec tombs, and these two were no exceptions. Tomb 175 had either been completely emptied out or never used; tomb 176 had been largely emptied, but the earth fill yielded fragmentary bones of four individuals, fourteen broken ceramic vessels, pieces of five worked bone objects and forty shell ornaments, and a stingray spine (figure 7.4). The bones represented two adults, one male and one probable female, as well as an adolescent and an infant. This tomb illustrates the complexity of Zapotec tomb use, which can lead to interpretive errors about how many times a tomb had been opened, the sequence of interments of skeletons and whether or not they were complete, and what items corresponded to what individuals.

Architecture provides the clearest evidence for public ritual at Monte Albán (figure 7.5). Temples and ballcourts are two easily recognizable kinds of buildings associated with rituals. Temples are one-room or two-room structures, built on raised platforms, and often incorporated circular columns to support roof beams. Temple construction probably began in Period I (buildings L and K-sub are examples) and was especially common in Period II. The precise nature of temple ceremonies is not known. By Period II elaborate rituals were carried out at a temple on top of the South Platform where excavations during the Proyecto Especial Monte Albán 1992-1994 (PEMA) in the patio below the temple revealed pits aligned along a "sacred axis" (Gámez 1998) containing vessels and unfired, hollowed-out ceramic cylinders with tops (Herrera et al. 1999). Altars in front of later temples were probably used for making sacrifices.

From earliest times at Monte Albán (and probably earlier at San José Mogote if the Rosario phase example from mound 1 is valid) some residences and temples were spatially associated; this association implies that high-status individuals wielded both religious and political power. On the west side of the Main Plaza elevated temple platforms alternate with lower platforms that supported elite residences. Temples were also constructed on the North Platform where the highest-status family or families at Monte Albán apparently lived. During the PEMA excavations in the area of the Vértice Geodésico (VG) Complex and further south, we found early Period I materials just

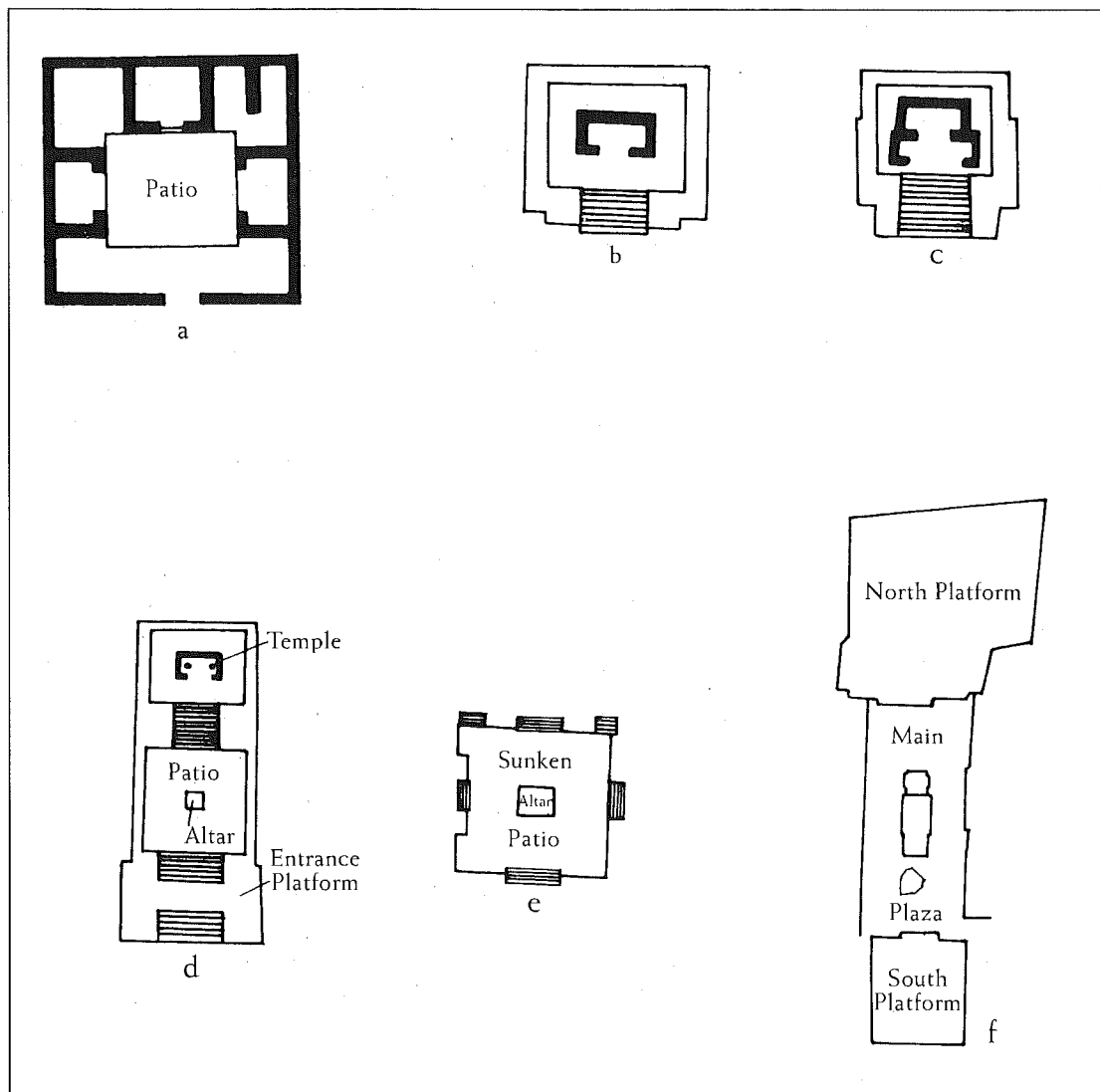
above bedrock. These materials—high and low stone platforms, domestic midden debris, and deposits of vessels—are indicative of a high-status residence and associated temple. Even further south on the edge of the North Platform is the stuccoed frieze known as the Viborón, possibly part of an administrative precinct at that time. By Period II several temples had been constructed on the North Platform and the Sunken Patio with a central altar that also served as a ceremonial area. At least one Period II elite residence was present on the north extreme of the North Platform below the Palacio del Ocote.

Not all temples at Monte Albán are clearly associated with residences. For example, the best-preserved Period II temple at Monte Albán is building X, which seems to be isolated just beyond the northeast corner of the North Platform. The nearest contemporaneous high-status residence is on the next terrace below and to the east, now under the museum. Whether they were associated is not known. Mound J in the Main Plaza also lacks clear association with a residence; its unique pentagonal shape is related to astronomical and calendrical reckoning (Peeler and Winter 1995), and it simply may have had a different function than the other temples. Granted these exceptions, most temples at Monte Albán seem to be associated spatially with residences of the people who presumably performed the rituals and thus suggest that religion was created and used by the elite to control the population.

Ballcourts represent another type of ritual activity. They were constructed in Period II at Monte Albán and are exemplified by the main ballcourt at the northeast corner of the Main Plaza and the small ballcourt on the ridge northeast of the North Platform. The latter was built over a late Period I stone column used as a marker for sighting and measuring distances. The Main Plaza ballcourt is just 70 m south of another columnar structure (half a column) on the North Platform; so, ballcourt locations may have been determined by earlier distance markers. In Period II no obvious links occur between ballcourts and household ritual.

The architectural layout of residences served as the general model for Monte Albán's site center and its religious-ritual spaces (figure 7.6). The typical Monte Albán house consists of rooms arranged around a square patio with the overall structure oriented to the cardinal directions. Some houses have in the center of the patio either an altar or a small sunken, slab-lined cist, which together with the patio sides may represent the five directions of traditional Mesoamerican cosmology (chapter 9).

Monte Albán's Main Plaza, a large rectangle sur-

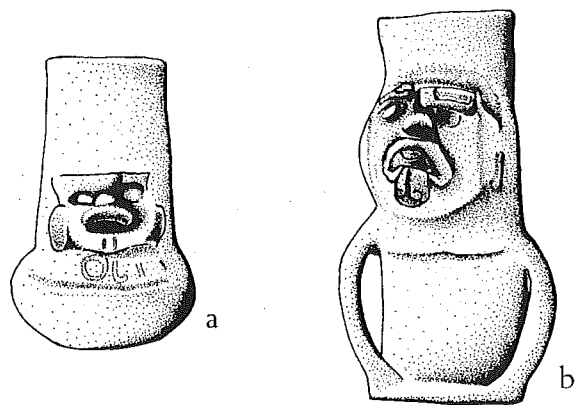


7.6 Residential format of rooms surrounding an unroofed patio (a) originated in pre-urban villages and provided the model for Monte Albán's ritual spaces at varying scales: single-room temple (b) and two-room temple (c) shown here on platforms; TPA compound (d); Sunken Patio (e); and Main Plaza (f)

rounded by buildings, mirrors this layout. Platforms at the north and south ends are built partly over bedrock outcrops that determined the overall plaza length. Temples in the middle of the plaza are analogous to household patio altars. The Sunken Patio atop the North Platform and the later temple-patio-altar (TPA) compounds, the architectural loci of Late Classic public ritual at Monte Albán and other Xoo phase communities, also exhibit the pattern of buildings arranged around a patio. Temple layouts also derive from household architecture and have the same rectangular shape as rooms on the sides of a house patio. Although no complete Period I temple plans have been recorded at Monte Albán, structure 28, the purported Rosario phase temple at San José Mogote (Marcus and Flannery 1996:Fig. 131) and the Period II temples at Monte Albán have rectangular floor plans; so, presumably Period I temples were similar. In

Period II some temples had two rectangular rooms, a vestibule and a main room, connected by a doorway.

Calendrically related building orientations, important in the Oaxaca Valley from the Tierras Largas phase on, as noted above, were emphasized at Monte Albán. The Main Plaza is oriented north-south facilitating viewing of the sun, stars, and planets to the east and west. Monte Albán's standard orientation, approximately 90 degrees to 270 degrees, differed slightly from the earlier 82 degrees to 262 degrees orientation of some Oaxaca Valley sites (Peeler and Winter 1992, 1993), and is reflected in residential structures at Monte Albán, thus linking households and public ritual spaces, regardless of whether or not the orientation originated in domestic ritual. Some dimensions within the Main Plaza are in calendrical proportions, as are some ballcourts in relation to one another, so



7.7 Period I and II deity representations: a, Cociyo bottle, height: 15 cm, b, serpent-tongued god, height: 15 cm. Drawn from a photograph in Caso and Bernal 1952: Figs. 22, 249

that time is expressed as space, lending a sacred character to the site center. Calendrical reckonings were likely used for timing of ritual events and celebrations throughout the yearly cycles.

Deities provide another link between domestic and public ritual. The major Zapotec deities—the Old God, Cociyo, the God of the Wide-billed Bird, and a god with serpent tongue—appeared for the first time in Periods I and II at Monte Albán and other sites as effigies on urns, braziers, bottles, and other vessels (figure 7.7). Deity representations gave form to religious beliefs, just as Olmec-style symbols had done centuries earlier, and their placement on portable ceramic vessels, again like the Olmec designs, facilitated their wide distribution. Ceramic figurines and whistles were common at Monte Albán and used in all households, judging by the contexts of approximately ten thousand catalogued examples. They rarely occur in mortuary context, and like their earlier forerunners may have been used as dolls or toys rather than ritual objects.

The earliest deity representations at Monte Albán are vessels and braziers, that is, household objects with effigy decorations. Bottles, bowls, and pitchers are sometimes decorated with incised or modeled effigies and are found in domestic refuse and as tomb offerings. Two general kinds of braziers exist—plain utilitarian braziers used as portable stoves and effigy braziers used in ritual contexts, for example, as tomb offerings in Period I. Effigies became increasingly important and by Period II Zapotec urns appeared, in which the effigy dominates and the recipient is simply a cylindrical support.

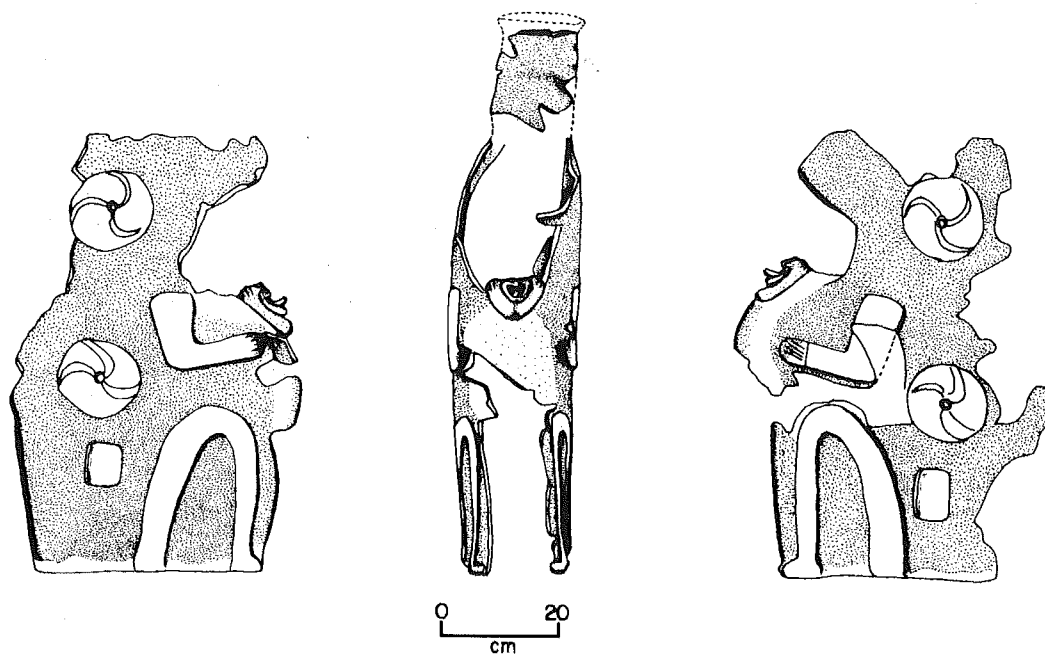
Most complete deity representations have been found in household context, usually in tombs indicating use in

domestic context. An unusual example comes from the fill to the south of the high-status residential platform, structure A3A. Object 1 from pit 21 may have been used as a brazier and resembles a huge ceramic bottle, open at the base and flattened on the sides, with a representation of the face of the Old God on one narrow edge and arms and legs in the style of the Danzantes along with a swirling tripartite movement glyph in low relief on the sides (figure 7.8). This object is made of *crema* pottery decorated with red slip and shallow incisions. It is probably unique, commissioned for or made by the household to be used in domestic context, perhaps as a patron deity, and is an example of a special object in a high-status household. Whether such objects were paraded around like saints in present-day Oaxaca celebrations or also made for use in temples is unknown. Elite individuals are sometimes portrayed wearing costumes with deity elements, as they probably appeared in public to lead ceremonies (figure 7.9).

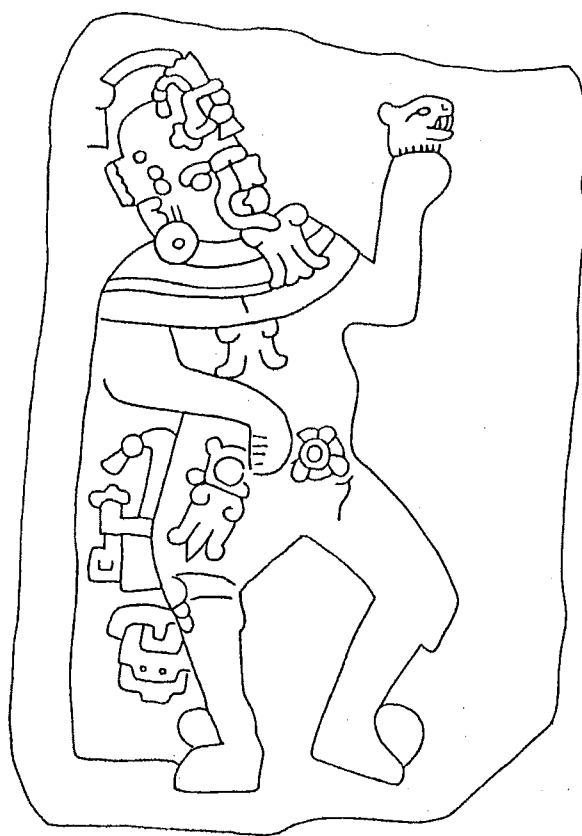
A unique Period II multiple interment not associated with a household, and thus outside the normal funeral ceremony context, provides information on community ritual. Burial XIV-10 was found in the cistern on the east side of the Main Plaza (figure 7.10). It contained five individuals in two groups, each including a male (bones were poorly preserved) with a stone mosaic pectoral on his chest (Acosta 1949). The pectorals (one is the famous Monte Albán jade bat-god mask) were presumably used in public ceremonies. The males were evidently high-status individuals buried in a public setting with their consorts and in one case a subadult, though lacking the numerous offering vessels characteristic of elite domestic interments. The cistern, flanked to the east and west by temples, was probably a ritual structure that served in the end as a grave. Near the cistern were circular ovens containing hundreds of small individual bowls, a large cooking jar and serving bowl, and extensive evidence of burning, all perhaps the remains of a ritual meal consumed during the ceremony. Household ritual provided the model for this interment of elite individuals in a public place.

### Changes in Ritual and Religion at Monte Albán in Period IIIA, AD 350–500

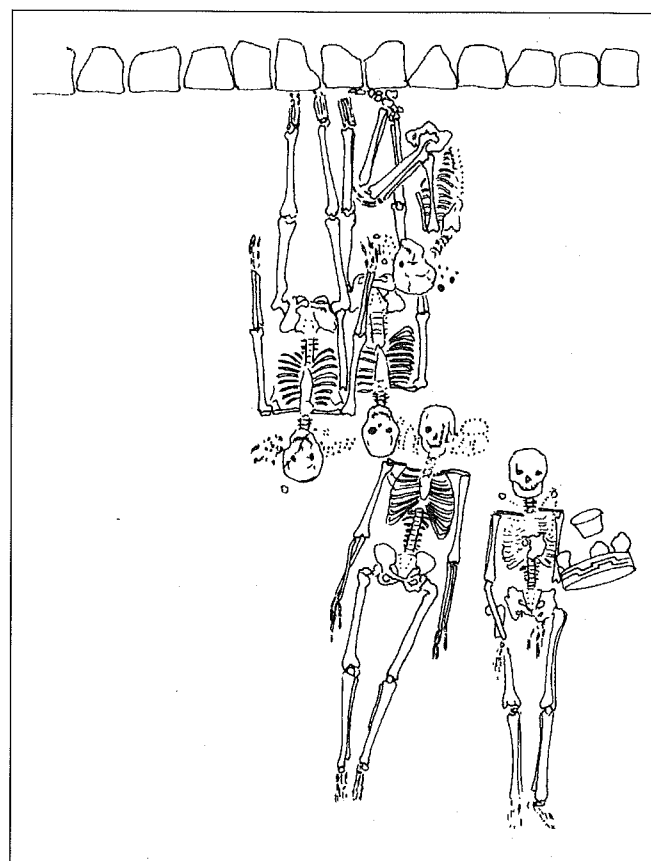
Monte Albán's early growth culminated with establishment in late Period II of the Zapotec barrio at Teotihuacan (Paddock 1983, chapter 6). This brought the Monte Albán Zapotecs into a broad Mesoamerican interaction sphere, but the political winds soon changed. Beginning around AD 350, as part of a wide-reaching



7.8 Object 4, pit 24, area A3. Ceramic representation of the Old God with arms and legs in Danzante-like style, found in association with a high-status residence

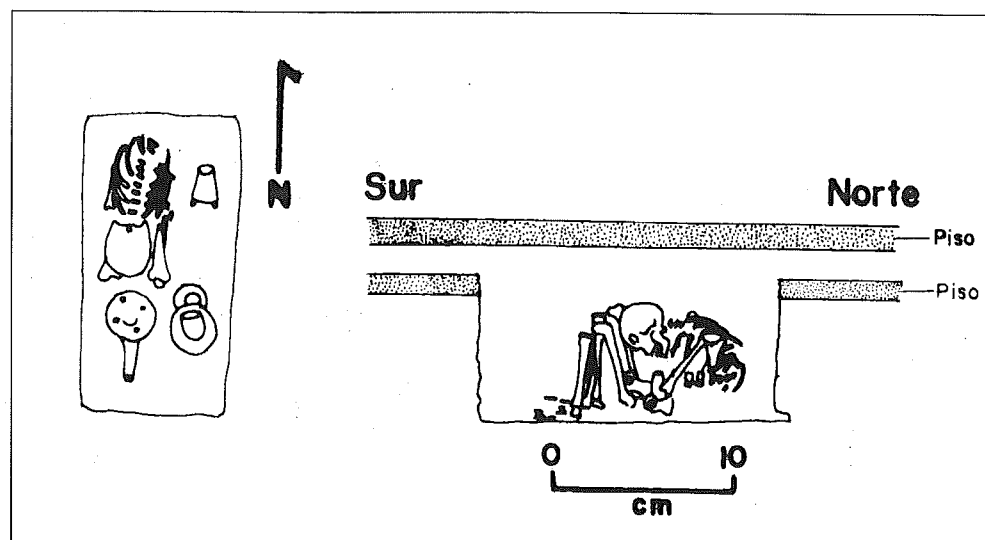


7.9 Danzante J41 (height: 1.32 m). Representation of a high-status Period II individual wearing a cape and beaddress like those used by priests in public ceremonies. Illustration based on Caso 1946



7.10 Burial XIV-10 from the cistern in the Main Plaza at Monte Albán. Redrawn from Acosta 1949: Fig. 2

7.11 A Teotihuacan burial (burial XI-5) from the North Platform at Monte Albán. Redrawn from Caso, Bernal, and Acosta 1967:Fig. 65



imperialist program, Teotihuacan influence appears clearly at Monte Albán and changes occurred in ritual and religion (Winter 1998).

Alfonso Caso and others recognized some Teotihuacan elements at Monte Albán, for example, similarities in ceramics and even presence of a few imported Teotihuacan vessels (Caso, Bernal, and Acosta 1967:311–362). They also found burial XI-5 on the North Platform in a simple pit south of building A with objects of Teotihuacan affiliation—a Thin Orange bowl, jade or greenstone Teotihuacan-style figurines, portions of a mosaic, and other items (Caso, Bernal, and Acosta 1967:102–103). The rectangular pit, flexed position of the skeleton, and the objects suggest this individual was a Teotihuacano (figure 7.11). More recently Clara Millon (1973) and Joyce Marcus (1983b) claimed that the carved stones at the corners of the South Platform depict Teotihuacan ambassadors to Monte Albán, though Javier Urcid (1994) has shown that the stones are not in their original positions and that the glyphs can be interpreted as Zapotec. The onyx slab known as the *Lápida de Bazán* and the technique of painted murals in tombs 103, 104, and 105 are sometimes considered to show Teotihuacan influence.

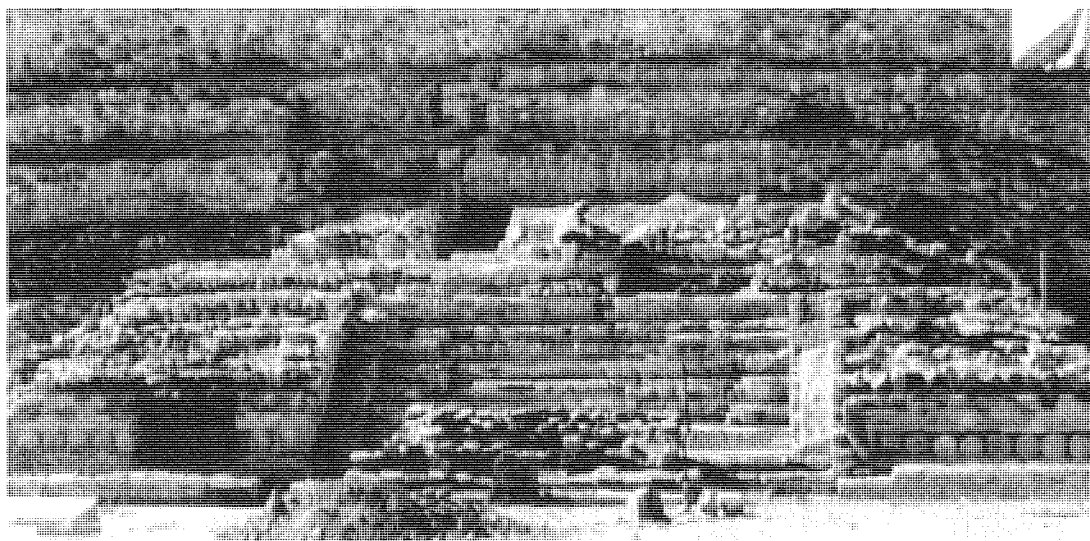
Nevertheless, Teotihuacan influence at Monte Albán was considered minimal until the 1990s when excavations yielded surprising new data on Monte Albán-Teotihuacan relations. First, excavations in a late Period II residential area on the northeast ridge of possible merchants with ties to Teotihuacan revealed many items such as obsidian, greenstone, and ceramics imported from Teotihuacan (Martínez 1998). Second, the PEMA excavations on the

North Platform revealed quantities of local IIIA pottery in a deposit with Teotihuacan-style pottery, both imported and locally made, as well as extensive evidence of production of mica plaques just like those found by Pedro Armillas (1944) in the Viking Group at Teotihuacan. In the same area at Monte Albán were found a platform of possible Teotihuacan affiliation with *tableros* adorned with red-painted stone disks and a broken Teotihuacan-style stone figurine (figures 7.13 and 7.14).

While Zapotec presence at Teotihuacan is widely accepted, Teotihuacan presence at Monte Albán has not been so easily received. Table 7.1 summarizes and compares the evidence from both sites for presence of people from the other city. In both cases the evidence supports an argument for presence of a foreign ethnic enclave. The Zapotec presence at Teotihuacan is more extensive and better documented since a relatively large area has been excavated. There is, however, a major difference between where the nonlocal groups lived in the two cities. While the Zapotec settlement was about 3 km west of the

Table 7.1 Comparison of archaeological evidence for foreign enclaves: Zapotecs at Teotihuacan and Teotihuacanos at Monte Albán

Feature	Zapotecs	Teotihuacanos
Localized residential area	+ Tlailotlacan	+ North Platform
Houses	+	? Palacio del Ocote
Burials in graves	+ Several	+ Burial XI-5
Burials in tombs	+	Not relevant
Domestic pottery locally made	+	+
Deity representation	+ Urns	+ Stone figurine
Non-residential structure	No or not excavated	+ VG-Este
Imported from home	+ Ceramics	+ Ceramics, obsidian, greenstone
Ceramic figurines	+	—
Specialized activity	Calendric knowledge	Mica processing



7.12 Structure VG-Este, a temple platform decorated with panels and disks

Teotihuacan site center, the Teotihuacanos at Monte Albán apparently lived on top of the North Platform, which in earlier periods had been the seat of the highest status or ruling family. Teotihuacan presence there in IIIA would suggest Teotihuacan control, even if local Zapotecs still managed lower level administration.

Several notable changes in religion and ritual in Period IIIA may have had something to do with the Teotihuacanos at Monte Albán. In a late Period II level of the Palacio del Ocote on the northeast portion of the North Platform, a seated interment, possibly a sacrifice or dedication, was found beneath an altar in the center of the patio (González Licón, Márquez, and Matadamas 1992:122). The patio altar itself is a possible Teotihuacan trait; at that city patio altars were foci of apartment compound rituals (chapter 5). Elsewhere on the North Platform a pit beneath the floor of a large residence contained 18 child skulls along with a ceramic vessel and fragments of a Teotihuacan-style mosaic object (figure 7.14). This interment is unlike other Zapotec ones but has a parallel at Teotihuacan where remains of eighteen children, possibly sacrificial victims, were found beneath an altar (Jarquín and Martínez 1991).

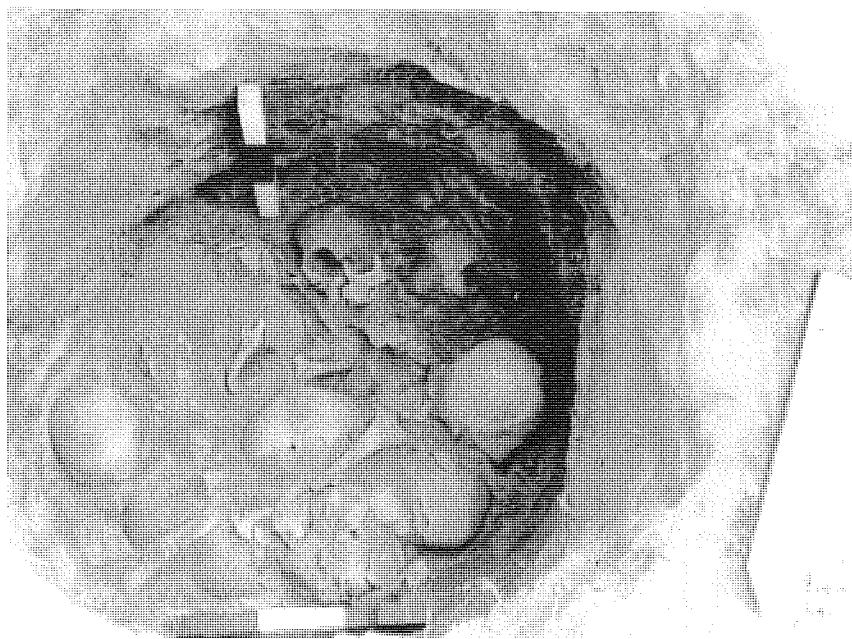
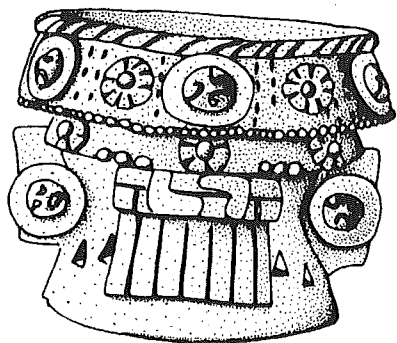
Period IIIA mortuary practices show changes in other sectors of Monte Albán. Excavations at two residences on the northeast ridge revealed evidence of mortuary rituals centered on the residential patio: infants and newborns were interred beneath the patio floors with ceramic vessels as offerings. One residence had eleven and another had nine of these examples (Martínez 1998:150, 191). Most adults were buried separately in tombs. These residences occur in the area mentioned above occupied in



7.13 Broken Teotihuacan stone statue (height: 17.5 cm) found at Monte Albán next to the south wall of structure VG-Este

Right, 7.14 Unusual interment of eighteen skulls in a pit, Monte Albán burial 1993-43 (Scale: 30 cm)

Below, 7.15 Period IIIA ceramic brazier (height: 20 cm) with typical braided decoration on the rim and appliqué elements on the body. Drawn from a photograph in van Schuler-Schömig 1970:129



late Period II by families involved in commerce with Teotihuacan (Martínez 1998:342), and perhaps the new burial practices simply reflect adoption of nonlocal customs. Examples of subpatio burials in the 1972-1973 excavation area (burials 1972-11 and 1972-12; see Winter et al. 1995:27-28) show this custom was also present in a low-status residential area at Monte Albán. The ritual focus on the patio in Period IIIA at Monte Albán was perhaps related to the Teotihuacan custom of using the patio as a center of compound rituals.

Another change during Period IIIA is a decline in the use of urns. Of twenty-nine recorded Period IIIA tombs at Monte Albán, only three contained urns, while in other periods 50% or more tombs contained urns or effigy vessels. However, in IIIA ceramic braziers became common, perhaps as substitutes for urns. They are distinctively Zapotec though fashioned with appliqué pieces like Teotihuacan theater brazier (figure 7.15). Some may represent symbolic faces of Zapotec deities. Braziers were apparently used in households but have not been reported from tombs at Monte Albán, though one was found in a late II tomb at the nearby site of Hacienda Blanca.

Changes in public ritual are also documented in Period IIIA at Monte Albán. Period II temples at Monte Albán exhibit stages of rebuilding or renovation, and if things had proceeded smoothly, we would expect these structures to also have Period IIIA construction stages. Recent work shows, however, that many (building X, mound III, mound I-roman, building W, and others) have minimal or no IIIA components. Not only were older structures not

renovated but few new ones were constructed during IIIA at Monte Albán. The decline in temple construction may mean that Teotihuacanos prohibited or limited Zapotec ritual in the city. An exception is structure VG-Este, mentioned above, the temple platform on the North Platform with tablero panels decorated with stone disks that may have been constructed under direction of Teotihuacanos.

Several possibilities might account for the Period IIIA changes in religion and ritual at Monte Albán. Perhaps Monte Albán elites and commoners simply adopted Teotihuacan customs; a Teotihuacan barrio existed at Monte Albán and the inhabitants influenced local practices; or perhaps Teotihuacanos took control of Monte Albán. I believe the latter can best account for the noted changes, though clearly additional IIIA residential data should be collected and studied to test this interpretation.

### Resurgence of Traditional Zapotec Ritual and Religion During the Xoo Phase, AD 500-800

The Late Classic Xoo phase saw a great florescence of Zapotec culture in the Valley of Oaxaca and some adjacent regions. Monte Albán's population grew to an estimated maximum of twenty-five thousand inhabitants. Teotihuacan presence at Monte Albán waned but had already eclipsed Monte Albán's position as the center of political power in the valley. Population increased throughout the valley and many centers became politically autonomous, foreshadowing the political organization of later Postclassic kingdoms. Local alliances may have created regional polities: Mitla, Yagul,





7.16 Representation of mythical figures commonly found in high-status Xoo phase interments. Right, Jaguar or Bat (height: 18.5 cm) and left, Maize (height: 19 cm). Provenience: South platform, west side, structure 3 south, feature 6, Monte Albán

Lambityeco, and Macuilxochitl to the east; Monte Albán, Loma de la Montura, San Antonio de la Cal, and others in the center; Cerro de la Campana, Tlaltinango, El Alemán, Reyes Etlá, perhaps Guadalupe Hidalgo, and others to the northwest; and Jalieza and others to the south (figure 7.1).

Most major Xoo phase sites are built around a standardized nucleus of monumental buildings and administrative areas consisting of a palace, a ballcourt, a TPA compound, and a probable marketplace. This common layout suggests that the elite directly controlled community ritual and religion, as well as economic and political matters. Architectural standardization of the TPA suggests institutionalized religion, as do the widespread appearance of Cociyo urns and representations of a mythical male-female pair, 1 Jaguar and 2 Maize (figure 7.16).

At Monte Albán itself, outlying barrios have similar architectural nuclei that suggests that they may have been semi-autonomous communities, though the political organization is still not well understood. (Some of these barrios existed in earlier times but the architectural layouts are not clear because structures are covered by later buildings.) However, the Monte Albán site center is more complex because there are several palaces, some with spatially associated TPAs.

Xoo phase residences at Monte Albán are highly standardized. All documented examples present a closed format, and they occur in three modal sizes with corresponding standardized mortuary features (adults were buried in slab-lined, slab-covered graves or in tombs;

children were buried in simple graves or in ollas):

- Type 1, the smallest, most common residence, is usually found with slab-lined grave interments, though a subvariety (type 1B) with a small tomb exists (figure 7.17).
- Type 2, medium-size houses, vary architecturally and usually have slab-lined graves as well as a medium-size tomb.
- Type 3, large residences or palaces, are the most elaborate houses and often have a large tomb, such as tomb 104 known to visitors to Monte Albán.

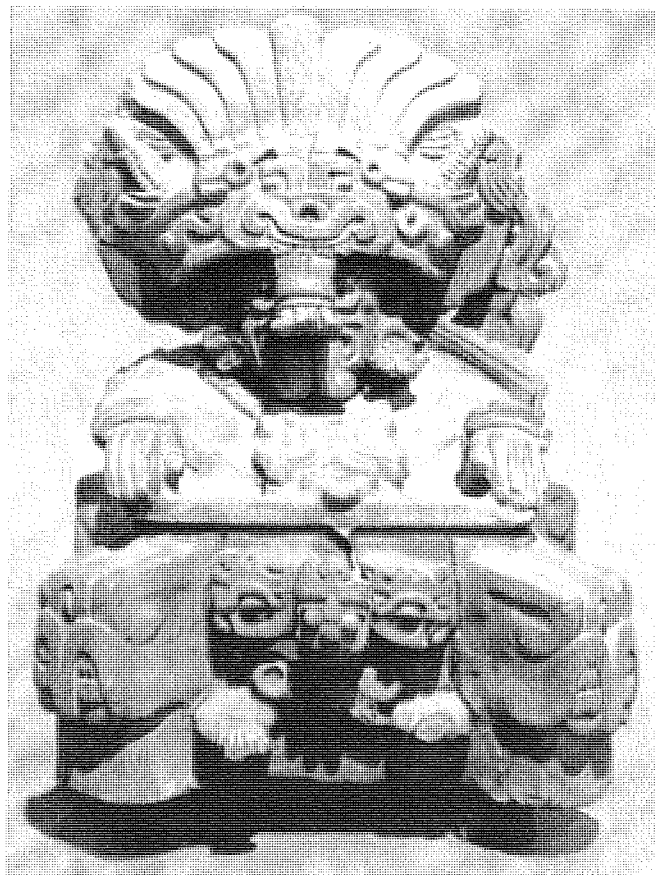
Some houses had both graves and tombs, reflecting distinct treatment of household heads versus secondary adults. Several sizes of tombs correlate with sizes of houses and represent status levels in the society.

Special vessels were made and used in mortuary ceremonies (figure 7.18): *sahumadores* for burning copal, *botellones* (bottle-shaped vessels) for holding liquids, and miniature vessels (which take up less space in tombs than normal-size vessels) commonly occur in medium-size tombs. Interments in slab-lined graves are often accompanied by a single conical bowl and sometimes one *sahumador*. Immature dogs, sacrificed and deposited at the time of burial, occur in some graves and tombs (Zárate 1992). Medium-size tombs tend to have many vessels but a limited variety. Large tombs have fancier offerings including unique ceramic objects commissioned for the interment: ceramic statues, ceramic boxes with re-



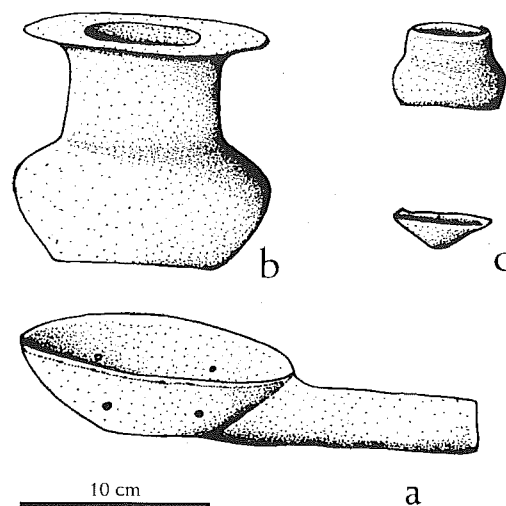


7.17 Monte Albán structure 1973-1: a low-status Xoo phase residence with four adult burials in slab-lined, slab-covered graves beneath a room floor



7.19 Example of a ceramic box with deity effigy top (total height: 52 cm), a standardized item found in some high-status Xoo phase tombs. Provenience: South Platform, west side, structure 2 south, feature 7, objects 2 and 6, possibly part of tomb 117 offering, Monte Albán

7.18 Examples of specialized Xoo phase ceramic vessels used in mortuary ceremonies: a, *sahumador*, b, *botellón*, c, two miniatures

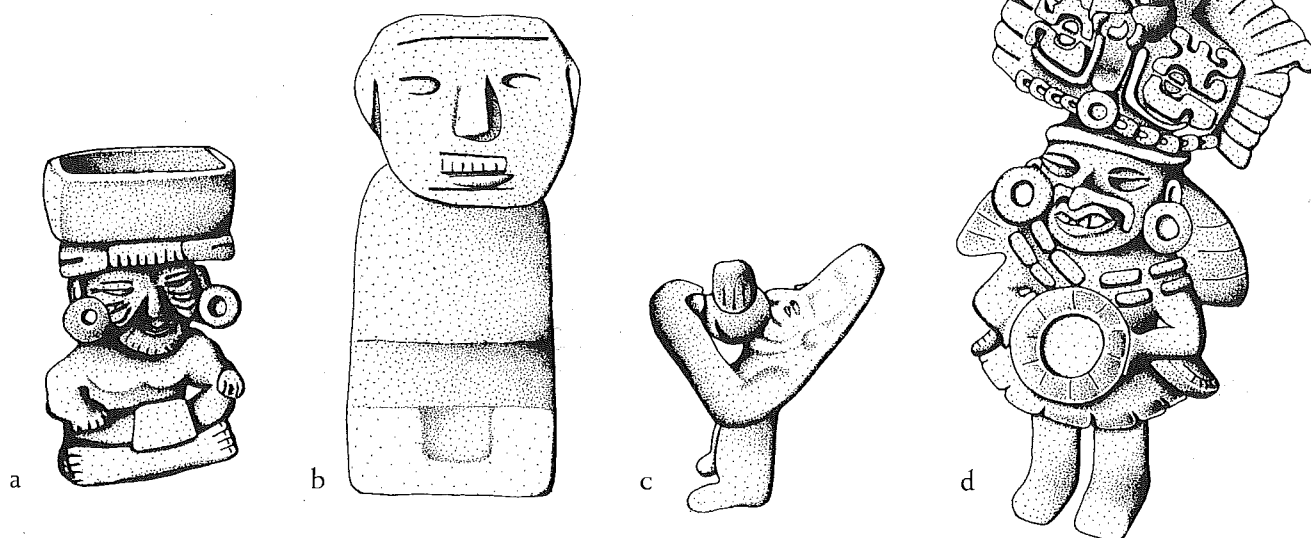


movable effigy tops, and especially urns including representations of a wide range of deities as well as *acompañantes* (figure 7.19). Several tombs have been recorded with five urns (either five similar urns or one principal urn and four companion urns), perhaps symbolizing the five directions. The dichotomy between principal and companion urns reflects social stratification. Multiple *sahumadores* in some tombs may indicate numerous participants in the burial ceremony.

Tomb reuse was common and involved not simply multiple events as in earlier periods but a concern, principally among the elite, with continuity from generation to generation manifested in curation and conservation of bones and performance of elaborate rituals involving the previously interred dead. For example, bones of earlier interments were sometimes moved aside and piled up to make room for a new cadaver, and red pigment was applied to the earlier interred skulls. Previous offerings were also moved, sometimes broken and discarded along with smaller bones, while the skulls and long bones were carefully saved. Some tombs continued in use while the associated house was rebuilt several times, as Lind and Urcid (1983) have demonstrated for Lambityeco's tomb 6.

The most elaborate, highest status Zapotec tombs at Monte Albán and other sites in the valley, such as Cerro de la Campana and Lambityeco, include carved stones (both free-standing slabs and door jambs) and painted murals portraying people in processions, probably part of

7.20 Examples of participants in mortuary ritual represented as ceramic figurines found above tomb 103 at Monte Albán: a, Old God brazier, b, mortuary bundle, c, musician playing a shell trumpet (?), and d, priest. Drawn from photographs in Easby and Scott (1970:201) and in González Licón and Márquez (1990:136–37). Not to scale



the mortuary ritual: priests holding copal bags, women chanting or crying, ballplayers with their gear, warriors with spears, and named, high-status men and women. The elaborate carved slab in tomb 5 at Cerro de la Campana depicts as the central figure a man as a mortuary bundle (Urcid 1992). A set of ceramic figures (figure 7.20) found in the patio above tomb 103 at Monte Albán depict five priests, nine musicians, and a deity representation along with a stone mortuary bundle (illustrated, for example, in Easby and Scott [1970:201] and in González Licón and Márquez [1990:136–37]). These scenes suggest that not only family members but relatives, dignitaries, allies, specialists, and perhaps others participated in the mortuary rituals of high-status individuals. At Monte Albán the ceremonies may have begun in a public place, in the Main Plaza or on the North Platform, but culminated with burial of the Zapotec leader, not beneath a temple as in the Maya area or perhaps at Teotihuacan, but in a tomb beneath the patio of his or her palace located on one of the terraces north of the North Platform. Thus the tomb and elite residence became the focal point of Zapotec leadership: the community was incorporated into the domestic context of the mortuary ritual.

To summarize, archaeological evidence from Monte Albán shows general changes in household ritual and public religion. In village times mortuary rituals expressed status within the household, and this pattern held initially at Monte Albán. In Periods I and II public religion, partly

derived from household ritual, developed as a means by which the elite controlled the populace. It became extremely elaborate and organized by specialists with representation of deities, ceremonies at temples, and calendrical scheduling of ritual events. Monte Albán was the center of a large, valley-wide paramount chiefdom or state and the religious activities reinforced its role and importance. During Period IIIA, Monte Albán's developmental trajectory was interrupted, in my opinion as a result of the Teotihuacan presence at Monte Albán. However, in the subsequent Xoo phase, earlier traditions were revived, Period II temples were renovated, and emphasis turned to elite families who controlled the economy, politics, and religion. Public religion was standardized with TPA compounds, ballcourts, and representations of some deities. Commoners practiced mortuary rites involving uniform grave types and locations, as well as rituals associated with the interment. Creativity and the highest artistic expressions were monopolized by the elite and incorporated in the elaborate tombs inside their palaces. In Periods I and II public religion and manifestations of deities were varied, in process of formation, and modeled on domestic ritual. By the Xoo phase, rituals, beliefs, and deities were standardized and the maximum display was no longer by elite persons in a public setting, but by elite families bringing the public, communal manifestations back into their own households by way of mortuary rituals. In-

stead of integrating the community through a public ritual, the community was integrated into the family through a domestic ritual.

### Epilogue: Ritual and Religion after the AD 800 Urban Collapse

Monte Albán and other Zapotec urban centers collapsed around AD 800; they lost most of their population to death or migration and ceased to function as the principal economic, political, and religious centers. The few mortuary data available for the Early Postclassic Liobaa phase (AD 800–1250) suggest that formalized Xoo phase mortuary practices changed. The PEMA excavations at Monte Albán uncovered two Liobaa phase slab-lined graves that show initial continuity with earlier Xoo phase examples. Other evidence demonstrated that Xoo phase tombs were opened to remove the contents and leave offerings of *penates* and miniature vessels, including small *sahumadores* indicative of rituals involving copal burning.

Similar miniature vessels and other items were deposited around the altar on the South Platform and at building B on the North Platform, both of which were used as shrines by occasional visitors (Herrera 1998). More data are available for the Late Postclassic Chila phase. Tombs were still built but often contain many unarticulated bones, as if they were used as family ossuaries without emphasis on distinctions of members' ages or rank. New palaces were constructed and older temples and ballcourts were simply renovated or remodeled. Elegant tombs and rich offerings found at Mitla, Yagul, Zaachila, and Monte Albán itself represented by tomb 7, suggest that, as in the Late Xoo phase, mortuary rituals had again become the most elaborate expression of Zapotec ritual and religion.

**Acknowledgments.** I thank Cira Martínez López for conversations and data related to Monte Albán burials and religion; Cira Martínez López and Robert Markens for their reconstruction of object 1 from pit 21, area A3; and Juan Cruz Pascual for preparation of the illustrations.

# Household Production of Extra-Household Ritual at the Cerén Site, El Salvador

Linda A. Brown, Scott E. Simmons, and Payson Sheets

**T**he Cerén site, located in the Zapotitán Valley of El Salvador (figure 8.1), was a thriving Classic period village when around AD 650 (Dull, Southon, and Sheets 2001) a volcanic vent opened up beneath the nearby Río Sucio and buried the community under 6 m of ash (Sheets 1992). The eruption precipitated a catastrophic abandonment of the community, leaving virtually complete artifact assemblages in their context of use, storage, or discard in addition to preserving fragile earthen architecture, giving archaeologists an unprecedented view of village life on the southeast Maya periphery in the seventh century.

Sheets (1992) has led archaeological investigations at the site since 1978. Excavated areas include domestic buildings, ceremonial structures, a civic building, a midden, and various agricultural zones. To date, a total of seventeen structures have been excavated including domestic domiciles, storerooms, a kitchen, a civic building (structure 3), a communal sweat bath (structure 9), and two ceremonial buildings on the east side of the site, structures 10 and 12.

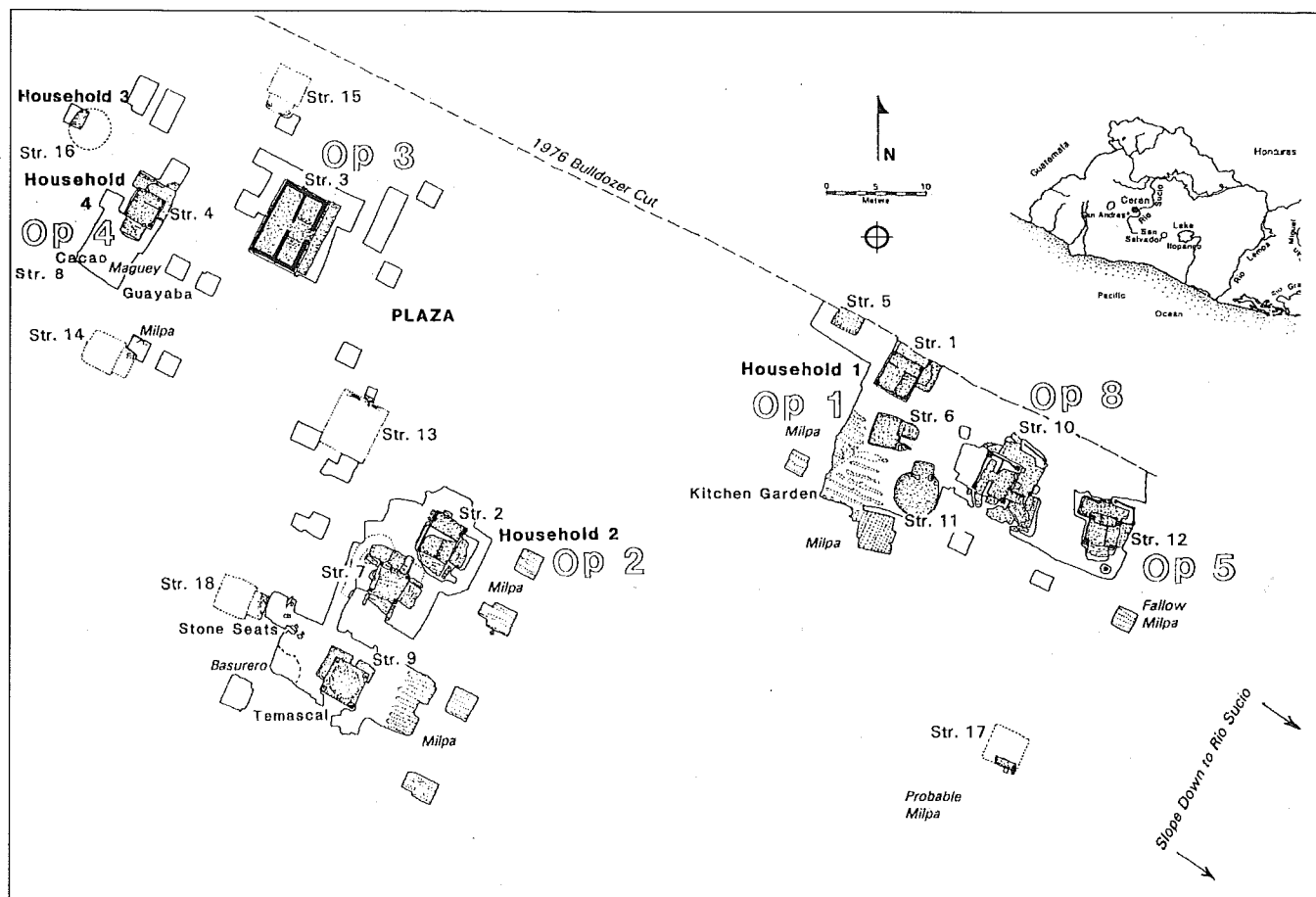
Archaeological evidence for household-sponsored ceremonial activity in the ancient village is our focus in this chapter. Unlike many other Mesoamerican sites, Cerén provides limited evidence of ritual activities occurring within the confines of domestic structures themselves. Instead, it appears that households focused more on the production of extra-household or community-based ceremonies. Artifacts recovered in one household context, known as household 1, appear to be related to the staging of community rituals at nearby ceremonial structures, reminding us that some items used for public rituals may be found in domestic contexts and reflect a blending be-

tween the conceptual dichotomy between domestic and public. Similarly, members of Cerén's households may have used structure 12 for divinations and other ritual consultations. The apparent emphasis placed on extra-household ceremonialism likely reflects a priority placed on the creation and replication of supra-household relations.

Below we begin with a brief review of the evidence for ceremonial behavior occurring within domestic structures. Then we turn to a summary discussion of the architecture and artifact assemblages in two permanent ceremonial buildings, structures 10 and 12. Structure 10 was used for the production of community festivals that included public feasting and the display of deer ceremonial objects (Brown and Gerstle 2002; Gerstle 1992, 1993). Meanwhile, structure 12 appears to have been used by a ritual practitioner who engaged in divinations (Sheets and Sheets 1990, Sheets and Simmons 1993, Simmons and Sheets 2002). After discussing these two ceremonial buildings, we present evidence suggesting that individuals living in household 1 may have engaged in part-time ritual specialization through involvement with festivals at structure 10 and perhaps ritual activities occurring in structure 12.

## Household Ritual Within Domestic Buildings

The strongest evidence of ritual activity occurring within the confines of domestic structures is inferred from the distribution of *incensarios* at the site. Each domestic building contained one ceramic vessel for burning incense offerings (Beaudry-Corbett 2002). In contrast, none of the ceremonial or civic buildings contained any incense burners. The presence of *incensarios* only in



8.1 Cerén Site, El Salvador

domestic structures strongly suggests that burning incense was a ritual activity associated with household ceremonialism. Moreover, each household had at least one ladle-handled incensario with a unique zoomorphic or anthropomorphic effigy figure on the handle. The unique effigy figure on ladle incensarios may represent deities associated with certain families or lineages.

But while the distribution of censers at Cerén suggests household ritual activity, other artifacts typically associated with domestic ritual in Mesoamerica are scarce at the site (see chapters 4, 6, and 9). For example, while figurines are often associated with household ceremonialism, only four fired clay figurine fragments and one carved bone figurine have been found at Cerén to date. Of these, two were from the ceremonial building structure 12, while only two were from a domestic context. A clay figure was recovered in household 1 and the bone figurine was found in household 4's bodega. One clay figurine was recovered from a midden behind the sweat bath.

Early Colonial sources reported that bloodletting was practiced by Maya commoners, as well as the elite, and

was associated with agricultural rituals, deer hunting, and fishing (Tozzer 1941:155–156, 160). Yet ritual bloodletting instruments, such as bone perforators and stingray spines, are not found at Cerén. And while one obsidian blade from the site tested positive to human antiserum in blood residue analysis (Newman 1993), it was not found in a domestic context but instead in structure 10. Similarly, musical instruments associated with ritual, such as turtle-shell drums (Tozzer 1941), have not been found in domestic contexts at Cerén, and fired clay whistles, ocarinas, and rattles are entirely absent.

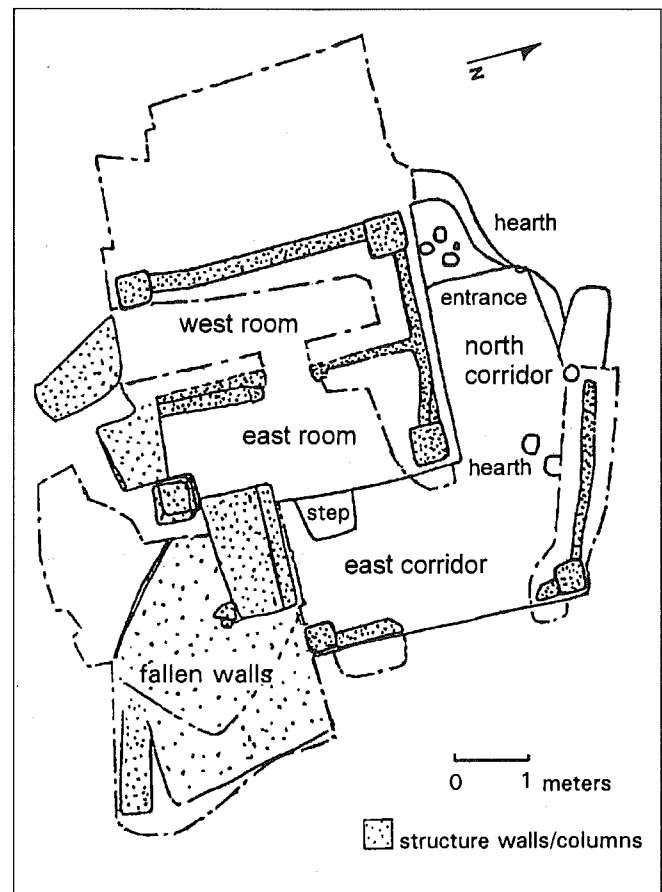
Scholars have argued that the Maya elite and commoners engaged in ancestor veneration with concomitant domestic rites (for example, Carlsen and Prechtel 1991, McNally 1995). Archaeological remains that might be used to infer domestic ancestor veneration, such as the processing and curation of skulls (or other skeletal elements) in family sacred huts or on family altars as reported by Landa (Tozzer 1941), have not been found at Cerén. Similarly, features associated with domestic ritual, such as altars within domestic structures or household plaza and domestic shrines, are not present at the site.

Some of the lack of evidence for domestic ritual at Cerén may be the by-product of the original mode of abandonment and much later archaeological building conservation practices at the site. Concerning the former, the rapid catastrophic abandonment of the site precluded engaging in the common household ceremonial activity—house termination rites. Ethnographers have noted that throughout Mesoamerica domestic structures are ritually terminated upon abandonment. Often termination rites involve dismantling various architectural elements, especially corner supporting posts or roofs, then offering incense, prayers, and smashing household goods as a mechanism for deactivating the spirit of the building (for example, Stross 1998).

Other potential sources of data on household ritual practices are precluded by conservation practices at Cerén. Because the preservation of such earthen architecture is atypical in the tropics, we do not excavate into the fragile structure floors. Any potential information that might be gleaned from subfloor burials and caches is therefore unavailable. Subfloor caches are generally thought to relate to dedication rituals. Among the contemporary Maya, house dedicatory rituals involve caching objects, such as chickens and food offerings, within the floors of new buildings during or immediately after construction. These household ceremonies are seen as the mechanism through which a new structure is activated or animated, thereby providing the necessary protection for the new inhabitants (Stross 1998).

While architectural conservation practices at Cerén do not allow us to dig into structure floors, recent research using ground-penetrating radar showed a subfloor anomaly in a civic building called structure 3 (Conyers 1996). The anomaly, measuring almost a meter in diameter and height, is located in the center of the building and under a doorway in an interior dividing wall. Situated on the building's primary central axis, this anomaly is almost certainly a dedicatory feature, suggesting that Cerén residents may have engaged in dedicatory rituals perhaps as a means to activate and animate structures, as seen among the contemporary Maya.

In spite of the disadvantage of not having access to subfloor caches and burials at Cerén, the ethnographic literature, early Colonial sources, and evidence of household ritual from other archaeological contexts would suggest that household ceremonial artifacts with associated ritual features should have been present in a systemic use context at Cerén if domestic ritual played an important role in the ancient commu-

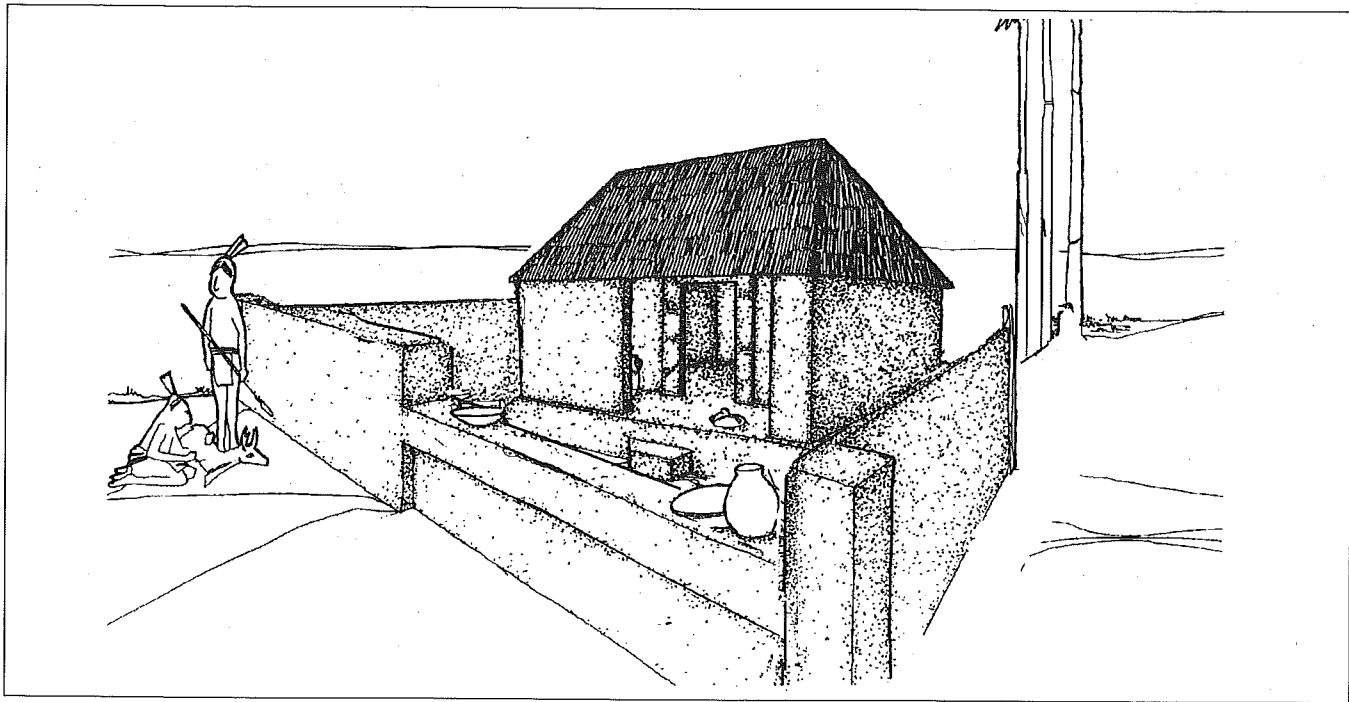


8.2 Plan view of structure 10

nity. Instead, it appears that the bulk of household labor and resources designated for ceremonial activities was allocated to the production of ritual activities that would have transcended the single household and involved groups of individuals from multiple households. As will become apparent, artifacts recovered in household 1 suggest that this household compound was the locus of work related to ceremonialism at nearby structure 10.

### Structure 10

Structure 10 is located 5 m west of household 1 and 5 m east of structure 12 (see figure 8.1). Both architectural components and the artifact assemblage suggest that structure 10 was a special-use building that served a nonresidential function. Specifically, structure 10 was utilized for production of community festivals and the storage of festival paraphernalia. Festivals at Cerén included feasting and the display of white-tailed deer stag ceremonial items. The following section is a condensed version of Brown and Gerstle (2002) and, except where otherwise noted, the



8.3 Reconstruction of structure 10 (with roof over walled corridors not depicted). Illustration by Karen Kievit

following descriptions and interpretations are derived from the latter.

Structure 10 is a thatch-roof wattle-and-daub building constructed on a square platform and oriented approximately 23 degrees east of magnetic north (figure 8.2). The superstructure has two rooms: an east (front) room and a west (back) room. A wall, constructed outside of this superstructure, encloses the east and north sides of the building, forming two exterior corridors. A half-height wall (69–70 cm) was constructed between the middle and north columns along the eastern corridor wall (figure 8.3).

The only access into structure 10 was through a pole door located at the western end of the north corridor. Artifacts and features indicate that the north corridor primarily was used for food preparation. Two hearths are associated with this area, one just outside the doorway while a second hearth was located inside the corridor. A large jar was found in situ directly on top of hearth 1, and several shelled corncobs had been discarded nearby. A metate mounted on forked wooden supports was positioned near the inside hearth, and a large open bowl placed on the floor under the lower end of the metate presumably was used to catch the ground food. A pole shelf extended over the north corridor and most of the fallen artifacts were probably dislodged from this shelf. Fallen items include smaller food preparation items, such as an antler

and bone tools probably used to husk corn, an obsidian prismatic blade, and six ceramic vessels.

The east corridor primarily was used for ceramic vessel storage as indicated by the 14 medium to large ceramic vessels stored here (Beaudry-Corbett 2002). As at least one-third of the corridor remains buried under fallen walls, it is likely that more artifacts remain buried here. In addition to the recovered vessels, a digging stick, consisting of perforated "donut" stone with a long stick through the center, was found leaning against the east wall of the superstructure. Two clusters of fallen artifacts were noted in the eastern corridor. The first consisted of carbonized ears of corn, a painted organic cylindrical object, two obsidian blades, a greenstone celt, five bone artifacts, a spindle whorl, four donut stones, and numerous cobbles. A second cluster, located in the northern end of the corridor area along the eastern exterior wall, included two obsidian blade fragments, two sherds, and numerous cobbles.

Moving up into the superstructure, the east room is the only painted room in the structure with the eastern face of the dividing wall, cornices, and door pilasters painted red while the lower section of the pilasters was covered with a layer of white paint. This room was used for the storage of special-use and unique items. A deer skull headdress apparently fell from storage when a high shelf collapsed during the eruption. The headdress consisted of a complete cranium (minus the mandible) of an adult white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) stag. The

skull had been painted red and was found with twine tied around the base of the antlers, presumably for tying the mask to a wearer during ceremonial activities. In addition to the deer skull headdress, other fallen items dislodged from the high shelf or nearby wall or column tops included two jars, three obsidian blades, an unidentified painted organic object with a flared rim, a long bone tool, a greenstone celt, and components to a possible dance costume that included two large tubular bone beads, a "tear drop" shaped flat bone ornament, and a shaped scapula from a juvenile white-tailed deer. Additionally, ears of corn scattered in the east corridor may have been dislodged from this shelf.

Three large jars and a painted gourd were found in situ on the east room floor. One of the vessels, a caiman effigy jar, was full of *achiote* seeds (*Bixa orellana*) while another jar contained squash seeds (*Cucurbita* sp.). An inverted ceramic ring base, fashioned from a recycled polychrome vessel base, was stored inside the gourd.

In contrast to the special-use artifacts stored in the east room, the west room primarily was used for storage of utilitarian items. Artifacts stored in elevated contexts included a bone tool fashioned from the scapula of a white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and a recurved bowl. Two large utilitarian jars, one of which contained impressions of seeds similar in appearance to beans, were stored on the floor.

Excavations focusing on the use of outdoor space around structure 10 revealed that the areas to the north and northeast of the building were relatively free of artifacts and vegetation, suggesting an area that was well swept and maintained (Simmons and Villalobos 1993). The lack of artifacts in this area was particularly notable when compared with the ground to the southeast of structure 10, which was littered with artifacts, had an undulating ground surface with loose soil, and was scattered with plants and bushes. Presumably, the cleared, hard-packed ground to the north and east of structure 10 was the area in which participants gathered for ceremonies.

#### Building modifications

With the exception of building alignment, the original building and architectural features of structure 10 follow the same plan as domiciles at the site: a two-room superstructure constructed on an elevated square platform and a centrally placed door in the interior wall that allowed access into the back room where the "sleeping" bench was located. At some point in its life history, structure 10 underwent a series of renovations. The low

clay floor was constructed and walls were erected restricting access into this area. The building addition was roofed and a food preparation and storage area created. A new doorway was built in the north wall of the corridor to be later moved to the west wall opening toward household 1. The sleeping bench was obliterated and buried during a renovation in which the entire floor level of the back room was raised.

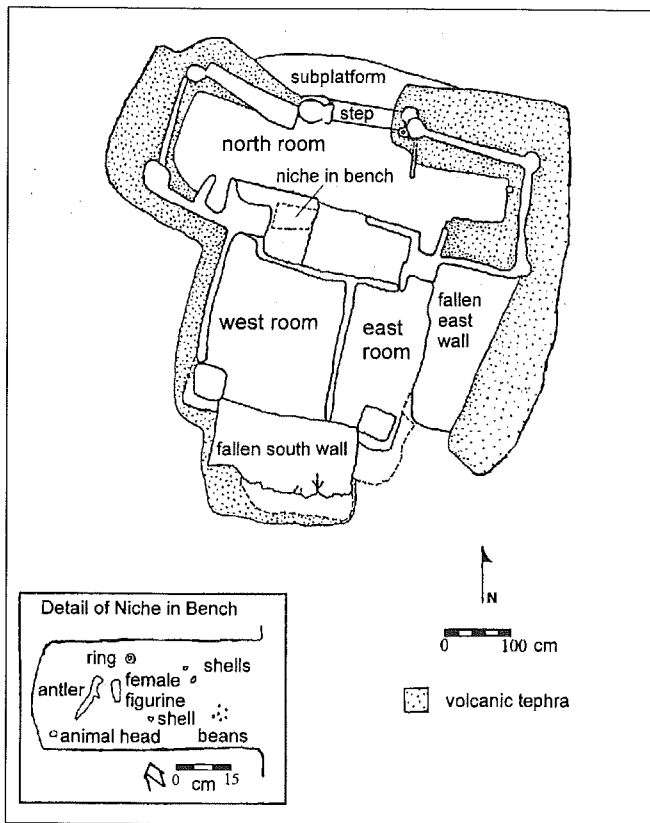
#### Summary

Structure 10 was a permanent nondomestic building that was utilized for the storage of food, ceramic vessels, and tools for the preparation of community feasts as well as ceremonial items made from white-tailed deer. Different kinds of items were stored in spatially discrete areas within the building. Almost half of all ceramic vessels in structure 10 were stored in the east corridor, and the low wall may have been used as a pass-through for serving food. The north corridor primarily was used for the storage of food preparation items and a few serving vessels, with cooking activities as a secondary focus. Meanwhile, rare or unique artifacts were stored in the east room while the west room contained common utilitarian items. This pattern may have been paralleled by vessel contents as well. For example, beans were stored in the west room while the east room contained a large quantity of *achiote* seeds.

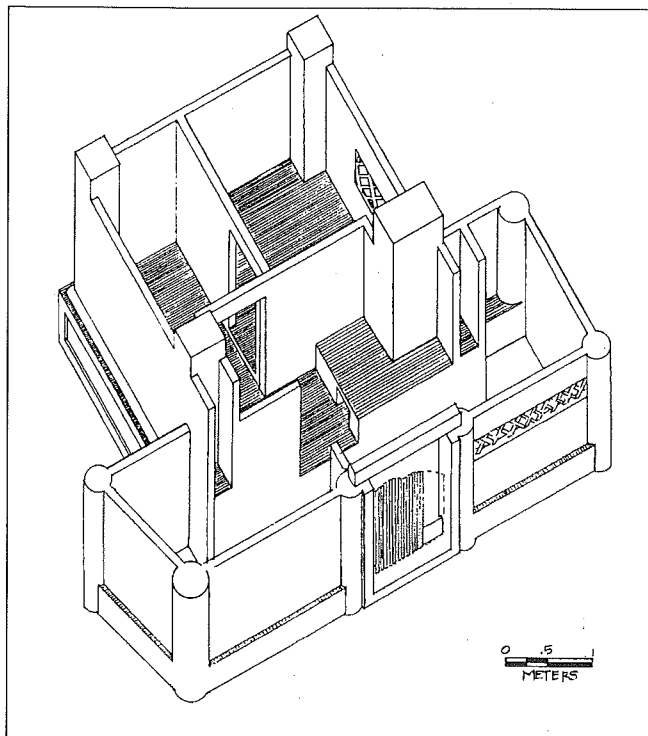
The ethnographic literature notes that contemporary Maya use *achiote* as a food coloring, an addition to stews, or mixed with squash, chili, honey, and maize to make special ceremonial breads (Coe 1994). Meanwhile, the Lacandon Maya use *achiote* to make red paint, symbolic of human blood and sacrifice, which is applied to beams in ceremonial structures, ritual clothing, incensarios, and the bodies of ritual participants to animate or ceremonially "awaken" them (McGee 1998). Cerén residents probably added *achiote* to festival food as is done by the contemporary Maya. However, the large quantities of *achiote* seeds stored in structure 10 also would suggest its use in making ceremonial paint.

In addition to the rare and unique items, several obsidian blades fell from an elevated storage context in the eastern room. Interestingly, one of these blades tested positive for human antiserum in blood residue analysis (Newman 1993). This blood may have been the result of a cut during manufacture or use. But the frequent mention of bloodletting in early Colonial documents (see Landa in Tozzer 1941) and by Classic-period Maya artists (for example, Schele and Miller 1986), in combination with the





8.4 Plan view of structure 12



8.5 Isomorphic drawing of structure 12. Illustration by Karen Kievit

context of this blade in a ceremonial building, would support the interpretation of use in deliberate bloodletting in conjunction with rituals.

The archaeological evidence from structure 10 suggests that village festivals involved the consumption of food, probably drink, and display of white-tailed deer ceremonial paraphernalia perhaps in the context of dancing with the deer skull headdress. More speculatively, Cerén festivals may have involved applying red paint to ceremonial participants and/or ritual items, and human bloodletting.

Festivals were frequent enough for hosts to continuously maintain a permanent building solely dedicated to the production of community festivals. Elsewhere it was argued that the building plan and architectural features of structure 10 suggest that it was originally a domestic structure that was converted into a ceremonial space, perhaps for use as a rural lineage house (Brown 2001). If this hypothesis is correct, then the deviation in the structure 10 building alignment and wider columns supporting the superstructure would suggest that original occupants of structure 10 held a distinctive status in the community. The transformation of certain domestic structures into ceremonial locales after the death of an important lineage member is a common pattern seen throughout the Maya Lowlands (for example, McAnany 1995:161) and the renovations to structure 10 may reflect this practice. Grove and Gillespie (chapter 2) suggest that during the Middle Formative two buildings at Chalcatzingo appear to have undergone similar transformations in function, suggesting this practice may have great time depth in Mesoamerica.

### Structure 12<sup>1</sup>

The objective here is to present an overview of architecture and artifacts, followed by interpretations of building use and relationships with members of Cerén's households. Based on those data, we believe that a ritual practitioner who engaged in divinations worked in this building.

Structure 12 was built upon the highest topographic elevation within the Cerén site, an observation that may reflect the common Mesoamerican belief that increasing height is one mechanism to facilitate supernatural access (for example, Miller and Taube 1993). During the first stage of construction, an earthen mound was built with edges that aligned with the drip line from the thatch roof for drainage purposes. Then, an approximately 3-m square platform was built with a square solid earthen col-

umn at each corner (figure 8.4). The top of the platform was some 70 cm above the original ground surface. Structure 12 is oriented approximately 15 degrees east of north (or south of east), setting it strikingly apart from the dominant orientation of 30 degrees followed by domestic and public architecture as well as agricultural features. The platform was decorated with rounded cornices running along all corners. Numerous inner walls and small wing walls were built, creating the most architecturally complex building found at the site (figure 8.5). The building has four internal principal walls and six small wing walls; the latter generally create vertical niches. The walls must have been built at about the same time that the floors were because each successive room had a higher floor, moving from the north room up past the bench into the vestibule, then up into the east room, and finally up into the largest room in the southwest corner of the building. Probably the farther one proceeds in the building, the farther one is from the secular domain and the closer to the supernatural. A bench with a horizontal niche was built onto the northern corner of the platform, with the span held up by a *laja* lintel. Vertical niches were constructed inside and outside the northern two columns. The vertical niches apparently were special places and used often, judging from the use-polish and organic staining of their bottom surfaces, particularly the ones north of the two front columns. The one south of the northeast column was surfaced with wood ash, and a small *mano* was placed on top of the wood ash.

The walls were of *bajareque* construction, with the poles extending above the mudded portions to support the roof. The thatch roof was close-cropped, with the drip line only a few centimeters beyond the edge of the platform, in striking contrast to most domestic and public buildings. Most domestic and public buildings have more area under the thatch roofs outside their walls than they have inside their walls, providing ample areas for storage, activities, crafts, and other functions. Perhaps the builders of structure 12 did not provide similar open protected space in its environs as a means of discouraging inappropriate secular activities adjacent to the building.

A broad enclosure was constructed to the north of the formal square platform to create the front room. The walls of the enclosure were built with the most fragile materials found at the site: a sandwich of Ilopango volcanic ash (called *Tierra Blanca Joven*, or "tbj") surfaced with a thin layer of clay inside and out. All walls and columns of the building were painted white; the pigment is a mixture of the tbj tephra and an organic binder. Portions of

the walls in the north room were decorated with hematite red paint, some of which may have been a floral or possibly a linear design, but preservation was insufficient to know for certain.

The north room had a floor lower than any room on the platform but considerably higher than the ground surface outside. Each corner and the doorway of that enclosure is anchored with a round column; the doorway columns were later squared in the door jam and sockets created to lock the front door in place. The two horizontal poles of the double-thickness front door would enter the sockets. That there is only 90 cm from the floor of the north room to the bottom of the lintel indicates the restriction on access to the interior. To enter, one would have to bend the door to free the horizontal poles from the sockets, crawl into the building, and then re-insert the door. A lattice window was constructed in the wall west of the door, and in the west wall of the main innermost room, presumably for communication. Close examination of the ground surface on all sides of the building indicated that most foot traffic approached the front door from the north, and almost as much foot traffic headed around the building west and then south to the other lattice window. Many artifacts were placed on top of the lintel over the doorway or on the column tops on either side of the doorway, perhaps as offerings or payments for services rendered and/or as individual objects ritually collected in antiquity.

A total of thirty-three artifacts were found in situ. Most of the artifacts could be used by either gender, but all the artifacts that are gender-specific are associated with women. No male-associated artifacts were found in or around the building. The diviner was therefore probably a woman (Sweely 1999). Artifacts include twelve whole vessels, all but one of which were Guazapa Mititlan utilitarian vessels (Beaudry-Corbett 2002). Their paste has the same recipe as the vessels in structure 10 and household 1 but not the other households or localities at the site (Beaudry-Corbett 2002). Two of the pots are "*chicha* jars." *Chicha* is a fermented maize drink still served in traditional communities in El Salvador. Both of these jars have modeled anthropomorphic faces on their necks. One of them was resting on large *Olivella* shell beads. The nonutilitarian vessel is a paint pot, a finely made miniature frog effigy pot containing a small amount of cinnabar (HgS). The other artifacts include three *manos*, one metate, a worked stone, and a greenstone disk. Obsidian artifacts included a macroblade and three old used and dulled prismatic blade fragments. Two

painted gourds, two fired clay figurines, a deer antler, some shells, a mineral collection, two piles of beans, and a fiber mat ring encircling a vessel neck were also found.

One might expect the niche in the bench to be a special storage place and the artifacts there may have been a supernatural tool kit of a diviner practicing in the building. The artifacts in the bench niche were a deer antler drilled with numerous tiny holes (possibly for feather insertion), a female human figurine, an animal head figurine, half of a ceramic double ring, shell fragments, and a small pile of beans. The beans may have been used for divination as documented among Maya diviners today (for example, Vogt 1969; Wagley 1949). The storage of beans in structure 12, directly on the floor or in the niche, is notable because beans were never stored in contact with a floor or other earthen surface in domestic contexts. The handful of beans in structure 12 were not therefore being stored as food items but were likely used for divination.

The widespread practice of ritual collecting among contemporary Maya ritual practitioners suggests a hypothesis for why prismatic blades with no remaining use life, the broken Preclassic double ring, or other artifacts with evidence suggesting postdepositional damage were stored in structure 12 (Brown 2000). Today rural ritual practitioners pick up items with supernatural significance, particularly during their initial recruitment, that act as media by which dream knowledge and curative or divinatory powers emanate. These collected items are used for accessing the supernatural domain and figure prominently in divinations, healing, spirit contact, or other ritual activities. It is conceivable that the collected items in structure 12 at Cerén served a similar function for the ritual practitioner.

### Summary

Structure 12 was most likely a special-use ceremonial building for divination or other ritual activities not as easily inferred from the archaeological record. While the following sequence of events is admittedly speculative, we propose that an individual and perhaps his or her family members in need of a divination or other consultation may have approached the building from the north and discussed the issue with the ritual practitioner through the lattice window to the right of the doorway. When an accord was reached, the individual may have stepped up on the front step of the building and left an offering or payment for services at the doorway. Two lines of evidence support this scenario: the comparatively

dense cluster of small, fallen items recovered under the door lintel and the extremely worn, abraded surface and edge of the step. Next, the individual receiving consultation may have proceeded around the building to the west-facing lattice window to receive the results of the divination. While they are speculative, these patterns of movement around the north and west sides of the building are strongly suggested by (1) the highly trampled, compacted ground surface, (2) the absence of plants or other vegetation in these areas, and (3) the extremely low numbers and small sizes of artifacts present on the ground surface in these areas. Analogy with contemporary Maya would suggest that the divination was done with the minerals and/or beans stored in structure 12, and thus it may have involved either casting and counting lots or scrying with larger minerals. Because all gender-specific artifacts are female associated, the ritual practitioner was probably a woman (Sweely 1999). How she used the vertical niches is unclear, but the unusual cluster of items carefully stored in the horizontal niche suggests that this is where she kept her personal sacra. If the successively higher floor elevations represented the multiple levels of the universe, then perhaps moving from one room to the next represented symbolically traversing those planes.

## Linkages Between Households and Ceremonial Buildings

### Household 1 and activities at structures 10 and 12

Of the household clusters excavated to date, household 1 is the best known (Beaudry-Corbett et al. 2002). It consists of three separate buildings—a kitchen (structure 11), a storeroom (structure 6), and a domicile (structure 1)—in addition to a covered open work area (structure 5) and cleared outdoor activity areas around the compound and agricultural zones. Both the architecture and artifact assemblage suggest that household 1 may have been involved in the production of festivals at structure 10 and, perhaps, ritual activities in structure 12. Artifacts found in the domestic context here reflect the household members' involvement in sponsoring community rituals.

Starting with the architecture, both the proximity and modification to building plan suggest a linkage between household 1 members and activities at structure 10. Concerning the former, structure 10 is located only 5 m east of household 1. Meanwhile, one of the renovations made to structure 10 consisted of changing the location of the only entranceway into the building. At some point prior to the eruption a north-facing entranceway was closed off

and a new doorway was built facing west, directly toward household 1. Similarly, access into the household 1 storeroom was through a door that opened east toward structure 10. This is notable as other domestic storerooms face north, opening toward the household domicile. These modifications may have facilitated the movement of people and goods between the household 1 storeroom and structure 10.

The artifact assemblage also suggests a linkage between household 1 and activities at structures 10. Household 1 had a total of five functional metates, four of which were mounted on forked sticks (*horquetas*) while one was resting on the ground next to two holes that may have held *horquetas*. This number of metates, in use or temporary storage contexts, suggests that women were grinding more maize than would be necessary for household consumption alone. While it is conceivable that a surplus of maize could have been produced for private domestic celebrations, evidence indicating that a large quantity of food was cooked at structure 10, only 5 m to the east, would suggest that the household 1 compound was periodically used for bulk food grinding associated with public feasts.

The interpretation of periodic large-scale food preparation at household 1 also is supported by use-wear on the metates, the distribution of bone and antler corn huskers (*tapiscadores*), and the ceramic assemblage. Concerning the former, of the five metates present only one, recovered in situ on the kitchen floor, showed evidence of heavy use-wear suggesting that it was the main metate used daily by this household. The remaining four metates displayed only slight use-wear suggesting that they were only used periodically, a material expectation that matches intermittent use for grinding food for occasional feasts.

Three bone and/or antler *tapiscadores* were recovered in structure 10, but none were found in household 1. Assuming that *tapiscadores*, like metates, were a basic tool used daily by all households in an agricultural community, the lack of corn huskers in household 1 suggests that some or all of the *tapiscadores* in structure 10 may have moved back and forth between these locations, depending on the amount of corn processing in either place.

Additional linkages can be inferred from the ceramic assemblage. Beaudry-Corbett (2002) has noted that household 1 had more utilitarian bowls with handles than did other households, suggesting a greater need for transferring and transporting goods. Additionally, they had more large jars without handles than did other Cerén households, a pattern consistent with more need for

long-term food storage. These observations lead Beaudry-Corbett (2002) to suggest that household 1 ceramic assemblage may reflect the household's role in feasting at structure 10.

Additionally, ceramic compositional analyses suggest further linkages between this household and both structures 10 and 12. These analyses showed that one local and two nonlocal red wares had a restricted distribution within the community and occurred exclusively in household 1 and structures 10 and 12 (Beaudry-Corbett 2002). The restricted distribution of imported red wares led Beaudry-Corbett (2002) to suggest that members of household 1 were participating in a geographically broader socioeconomic network than other households excavated to date, perhaps reflecting a religious-political role that extended beyond the immediate community.

### Ceremonial buildings

The archaeological evidence suggests a relationship between structures 10 and 12 whereby these buildings formed part of a village ceremonial system. This linkage is inferred from several lines of evidence including physical proximity, structure orientation, wall treatment, architectural details, and the ceramic assemblage. Concerning proximity, structures 10 and 12 are only 5 m apart and the low "serving" wall along the east corridor of structure 10 opens to directly face structure 12. Structures 10 and 12 are the only two buildings that do not follow the dominant 30 degrees east of north axis seen in all other buildings at the site. Moreover, only these two structures were painted. Special treatment was given to columns in both buildings as seen in the vertical niches in structure 12 or the size of the adobe columns supporting structure 10. Additionally, a large enclosure-corridor was added to the original square building of both structures 10 and 12. Finally, ceramic analyses showed restricted distribution of two nonlocal and one local red wares in the ancient community and these were found exclusively in household 1 and structures 10 and 12 (Beaudry-Corbett 2002).

### Divination and Festivals

Although the archaeological evidence suggests that structures 10 and 12 were linked and may have functioned as part of a rural ceremonial system, it is clear that these buildings served very different functions in the ancient community. The question arises as to whether divination at structure 12 was linked with activities occurring at structure 10.

While limited, there is some information in early Colo-

nial sources suggesting linkages between divination and Contact-period festivals. In the following passage, originally recorded by the chronicler Roman, then preserved by Ximénez and translated by Early (1983), the close relationship between divination and the timing of festivals is clear:

The Indians of Guatemala have two types of sacrifices. One is general in as much as the whole town together offers sacrifices during the festivals which they celebrate. The other type consists of the private sacrifices which each citizen and private person offers according to his own devotion and for whatever necessity he has. The community sacrifices are usually offered during the festivals which are held five or six times a year in some provinces or at any time if a particular necessity should demand it. (Las Casas specifically mentions lack of rain, sickness, war.) For each sacrifice a meeting is held by the leader of the province or town together with the town elders, the high priest and the other priests of the forthcoming festival. There they decide what sacrifices are to be made and what must be done. As for the time of the sacrifice, they do not decide this nor would they even think of it. Rather divinations must be performed and this alone dictates the time. They call a diviner and inform him of the festival or problem and the required sacrifices. They request him to perform divinations to know what day would be the best and most propitious to make the sacrifices. The diviner gives the results of his divination with such forcefulness that they dare not make any changes in his instructions. With the date of the festival determined, the priests of the festival begin their vigil. (Roman translated by Early [1983])

As is evident in this passage, a local diviner rather than those in charge of the festival determined the timing of community festivals with accompanying sacrifices.

Friar Diego de Landa also noted that divination was used to set festival dates (Tozzer 1941). He recorded one festival held during the month of Zip that linked diviners and "hunters" who performed a dance with a deer-skull headdress (Tozzer 1941:154–155). Specifically, Landa noted that on the first day of Zip the "physicians" and "sorcerers" gathered together in one of their houses with their ceremonial items. Each opened a bundle that contained their divination tools and figurines so that the presiding *chacs* could smear these implements with a blue pigment. After this "anointing," the ritual objects were danced and all became intoxicated. On the following day, Landa reported that the "hunters" gathered together. During this time they invoked Zip (the deer protector), who danced with a deer skull and an arrow, while others engaged in letting blood from their ears and tongues.

Returning to Cerén, architectural and spatial evidence suggests that structures 10 and 12 were linked and together were part of a rural village ceremonial system. Interestingly, although the main elite civic-ceremonial core in the Zapotitán Valley is only 5 km away from Cerén, apparently this short distance did not preclude residents

from accessing the supernatural locally. While we do not know how or to what degree activities in structure 10 and 12 were associated, it is conceivable that the ritual practitioner in structure 12 played a role in the timing of community festivals at nearby structure 10 as well as conducting individual consultations.

## Conclusion

In contrast to many of the chapters in this volume, there is limited material evidence of ritual activity occurring within the confines of domestic buildings at the Cerén site. Instead, the archaeological record suggests that household labor and resources allotted to ceremonial behavior was in service to the production of ritual activities that would have incorporated groups larger than the household unit, or even the entire community. We have argued that periodically the household 1 compound was the locus of food grinding likely for community feasts prepared at structure 10. Other lines of evidence also suggest that household 1 members may have had a closer association with ritual activities in structures 10 and 12 than did other households, and they may have interacted in a broader geographical social network as part of their role in ceremonialism (Beaudry-Corbett 2002). Whatever specific roles household 1 members may have played in sponsoring ritual, apparently they were not converted into visible economic gain in terms of architecture, as the buildings occupied by household members were less imposing and decorated, with less energy invested in their construction, when compared to other households excavated to date.

The interpretation that one household at Cerén appeared to have been associated with the production related to extra-household or community ceremonialism raises the question of whether some households engaged in part-time ceremonial specialization in the ancient village. It has been argued that extended social networks created by ceremonial practices, such as feasting or gift giving, and carrying potent social obligations are used for forming alliances beyond the immediate community (Mauss 1990). The extended social networks have been seen as risk-reducing strategies as during times of crisis these extended networks can be accessed to provide critical support to participants (Douglas and Isherwood 1996). Perhaps household 1 members used their apparent role in staging festivals at Cerén to engender similar social relations.

## Note

1. This section is a condensed and updated version of Simmons and Sheets (2002), with additional sources referenced.

# Domestic Ritual at Aztec Provincial Sites in Morelos

Michael E. Smith

**A**ztec commoners carried out a variety of ritual activities inside and around their homes. Some of these practices resembled the state-sponsored, public religion of the imperial capital Tenochtitlan in their paraphernalia and themes, suggesting continuities between domestic and public or state religion. People burned incense in their homes, for example, using long-handled censers identical to those used by professional priests in public ceremonies in Tenochtitlan and elsewhere. Other domestic rituals, however, appear to have been quite distinctive, with little relationship to Aztec public religion. These involved the use of ceramic figurines, a type of object rarely if ever employed in public ceremonies. Rituals using figurines remain very poorly understood, but available evidence suggests that they may have focused on fertility, curing, and divination at the family level, employing concepts and practices only distantly related to state or public religion. The ritual use of ceramic figurines in domestic settings was a manifestation of an ancient Mesoamerican tradition that flourished largely outside of the control of the state.

In this chapter these contrasting patterns of domestic ritual are examined through an investigation of artifacts and features from Aztec period houses at sites in Morelos, Mexico. These data suggest the complexity of Aztec religion as practiced at the household level and provide a glimpse of a shadowy cultural realm largely invisible in the written record of Aztec society.

## Approaches to Domestic Ritual in Agrarian States

Aztec society stands out among the other Mesoamerican societies dealt with in the book by its larger scale and its

greater level of social complexity. Although some distinction between domestic and public ritual can be made for all Mesoamerican societies from Early Formative times onward, during Aztec times this distinction took on additional ramifications. Domestic rituals must be contextualized both in relation to state rituals—at the local city-state level and imperial levels—and in relation to the ancient great tradition of Mesoamerican religion. Before examining the data at hand, some of these complexities are explored: the relationship between the great and little traditions and the relationship between domestic ritual and the state.

### The great and little traditions

The concepts of great and little traditions provide a useful starting point for the analysis of Aztec domestic ritual. Because of misunderstandings of these concepts by many modern scholars,<sup>1</sup> a brief historical review of their development may be useful. The terms *great* and *little traditions* were first used by anthropologists at the University of Chicago in the mid-1950s to examine the relationships between peasant village cultures and the dominant “high” culture of their encompassing civilizations (Marriott 1955; Redfield 1956; Singer 1959a, see Singer 1976:243–248). Robert Redfield contributed the most generalized account of this concept, and his name tends to be associated with it today. In his words,

In a civilization there is a great tradition of the reflective few, and there is a little tradition of the largely unreflective many. The great tradition is cultivated in schools or temples; the little tradition works itself out and keeps itself going in the lives of the unlettered in their village communities. (Redfield 1956:41–42)

The great/little tradition concept developed out of Redfield's earlier folk/urban continuum model (Redfield 1941; see Redfield 1953 for an intermediate formulation), and as such it is subject to many of the criticisms leveled at the earlier, now-discredited model (Lewis 1951:432–440; Lewis 1970; Sandstrom 1991:32–34). For example, few scholars today would agree with Redfield that all change originates in the literate great tradition (or in cities) and flows to the little tradition (or folk culture); that "folk societies" are homogeneous; or that among peasants the little tradition is "taken for granted and not submitted to much scrutiny or considered refinement and improvement" (Redfield 1956:42).

Redfield's colleagues did not share his simplistic dichotomy of dynamic, educated elites versus passive, ignorant peasants. Milton Singer, for example, stated,

The real structure of tradition, in any civilization or part thereof, is an immensely intricate system of relationships between the levels or components of tradition, which we enormously oversimplify by referring to as "high" and "low" or "great" and "little." (Singer 1959b:xi)

Singer and McKim Marriott used the great/little tradition concept in a more narrow sense than Redfield. For them, it served as a descriptive device to help organize ethnographic research and analysis on complex civilizations such as India (Marriott 1955; Singer 1959a). Its value lay in its focus on religious diversity and on the nature of interaction between different social levels of religious practice (Glazier 1997; Saler 1993:34–40). This usage has continued up to the present by anthropologists studying religion in complex societies from Sri Lanka to Mesoamerica (for example, Glazier 1997; Gossen and Leventhal 1993; Holland 1979; Leslie 1960; Obeyesekere 1963; O'Connor 1997; Southwold 1982).<sup>2</sup>

Marriott's (1955) description of Hindu rituals in the village of Kisha Garhi in Uttar Pradesh, India, provides a sense of the complexity of interactions between the religions of a great and little tradition, and his account has implications for our understanding of Aztec domestic ritual. Marriott compares the deities and festivals of the village with the great tradition, which he defines as "the literate religious tradition, embodied in or derived from Sanskrit works which have a universal spread in all parts of India" (1955:191). Approximately 90 deities are worshipped in the village. Of these, only thirty are known from the Sanskrit sources; the rest are limited to the village, to the region, or to one or more castes.

Of nineteen major annual festivals celebrated in the

village, eight are universal festivals celebrated throughout Hindu India, four are local festivals with no Sanskrit counterparts, and seven have only a very loose correspondence to Sanskrit festivals. The festival of lights is an example of the latter category. Although villagers set out lamps as specified in the great tradition festival, they also partake in a series of other rituals involving incense, deity images, and various activities that have no counterpart in the Sanskrit festival of lights. Marriott points out that the great tradition festivals celebrated in the village represent only a small fraction of the total number of known Sanskrit festivals. Although most village festivals do incorporate elements of great tradition rituals, these elements have been adapted and modified to suit local custom. Marriott concludes that "a part of village religion thus remains conceptually separable [from the great tradition], both for the people who live in Kisha Garhi and for the outside analyst" (1955:196).

This example suggests some of the complexities of the relationships and interactions between local village religions and the more formalized religions of the great traditions in agrarian states. We should expect to find in Aztec villages and provincial cities some combination of religious elements that duplicate the public religion of Tenochtitlan; distinctive local elements that have no counterparts in Aztec public religion; and elements that are modified or transformed versions of public religion. There is no *a priori* reason to assume that local religion was simply a watered-down version of Aztec public religion (as some writers have suggested), nor that public religion was simply a state-sponsored elaboration of local or domestic religion.

#### State ideology and domestic ritual

The great/little tradition model provides a framework for examining Aztec domestic ritual within the larger cultural context of Postclassic Mesoamerica, but it does not deal explicitly with the relationship between domestic ritual and state practices and ideology. The dominant ideology thesis, however, does address this relationship. According to this model, the rulers of states promote a legitimizing ideology that is widely accepted by their subjects, and the acceptance and internalization of this dominant ideology is a major form of social control in such societies (Abercrombie et al. 1980).

Elizabeth Brumfiel (1996) has used Aztec figurines from hinterland sites in the Basin of Mexico to examine issues related to the dominant ideology thesis, particularly those related to women's roles and statuses. She em-

loys measures such as the ratio of male to female figurines and the ratio of standing to kneeling poses (in female figurines and stone sculptures) to attempt to monitor the acceptance or rejection of elements of state ideology (such as a view of women as submissive) by commoner households. Although these are important issues, it seems unlikely to me that simple ratios of figurine types would reflect state ideology in any straightforward way. Blanton et al. make a similar claim for the role of figurines at Classic period Teotihuacan, suggesting that mold-made figurines were used by the state for "reinforcing [state] concepts of corporate and earthly renewal" (1996:13). Manzanilla (chapter 5) suggests—without any supporting evidence—that the Teotihuacan state somehow intervened in domestic ritual to control behavior.

The dominant ideology thesis is a model at a very high level of abstraction, difficult if not impossible to evaluate reliably with archaeological data on domestic ritual. At a somewhat lower level of abstraction, however, we can approach related issues such as the relationship between domestic ritual and state ritual. As in the case of the great and little traditions, the situation can be quite complex, with domestic and state rituals each influencing the other through systems of interpenetrating knowledge (for example, Beard et al. 1998:313–363; Kus and Raharijaona 2000). In an ethnographic example, Bloch (1987) shows how a key royal ritual in Madagascar was constructed as a deliberate elaboration of fundamental forms of domestic ritual behavior ("ordinary rituals of blessing"). He argues that "royal symbolism is, I believe, constructed out of non-royal symbolism, both logically and probably also historically" (1987:271) and that royal rituals are "transformations" of nonroyal rituals. However, once the royal ritual was developed, aspects of it were imposed upon the king's subjects, who were required to replicate specific ritual activities in their homes.

I suggest below that a similar situation held for the Aztec New Fire Ceremony: the Mexica kings of Tenochtitlan appropriated an ancient and widespread ritual, gave it imperial trappings and symbolism, and then turned around and tried to impose the imperial version of the ceremony on their subjects (Elson and Smith 2001). A fascinating example of the second half of this dialectic—the imposition of imperial ritual on subjects—is described by McMullen (1987) from the official ritual code of the Chinese T'ang dynasty: "In this division of the code there were also prescriptions for certain of the important rites to be conducted at the local level throughout the empire, in humbler versions of their grand imperial counterparts"

(McMullen 1987:194). Flannery (1999) also provides examples of the appropriation of popular symbols by emergent kings to construct new configurations of state ideology out of widespread practices. I now explore how some of this complexity in state-level ritual systems was manifest in Aztec period central Mexico.

## Social Variation in Aztec Ritual

### Classification of rituals

As suggested above, rituals and cults in agrarian civilizations such as the Aztec can be quite complex, both socially and conceptually. For purposes of presentation I use two dichotomies—public/private and state/popular—to categorize some of the social variation in Aztec ritual.<sup>3</sup> Public rituals are those that take place in open, public settings, whereas private rituals are those conducted out of public view, whether in homes, temples or other buildings, in the countryside, caves, or other isolated areas, or else secretly at night. State rituals are sponsored and promoted by the state, whatever their spatial scale or social context, whereas popular rituals either originate with the people or else enjoy widespread participation and support among nonelite sectors of society. In practice, popular rituals often have complex interactions with state-sponsored rituals, and it is not always easy to distinguish them empirically. It should be emphasized that these are analytical dichotomies for purposes of classification and analysis; they should not be reified or given undue significance as empirical realities. Nevertheless, the combination of the two dichotomies produces the following four-part classification of Aztec rituals (see Brundage 1985; Durán 1967, v.1; León-Portilla 1993; López Luján 1994; Nicholson 1971; Sahagún 1950-82):

- (1) *Public state rituals*. These were the most spectacular Aztec ceremonies, and they are the ones most thoroughly described in the works of the chroniclers and in the codices. They include political rites such as coronations, state funerals, and temple dedications; many components of the eighteen monthly festivals described by Sahagún, Durán, and others; and a variety of other celebrations conducted in capital towns and cities. Many public state rituals, including the monthly festivals, were complex and lengthy affairs that were celebrated by many social groups—from the Mexica emperor down to peasants and slaves—and in many places, from the Templo Mayor of



Tenochtitlan to peoples' homes (as, for example, when priests entered homes for rites of purification during some of the monthly ceremonies). Many rituals celebrated by Aztec priests at temples fall into this category. Public state rituals usually focused on themes of agricultural fertility, cosmic warfare, and debt payment to the gods. This category of ritual can be considered the Aztec great tradition.

- (2) *Private state rituals.* This category includes the penitential rites that kings underwent as part of their inauguration sequence and rituals that priests celebrated alone, often at night. Specific actions included autosacrifice, fasting, and prayer. Far less is known about this kind of ritual, which can also be included under the label of great tradition.
- (3) *Public popular rituals.* These rituals include public celebrations of agricultural success and other rituals of fertility and renewal such as the public components of the New Fire ceremony. Although this category is useful analytically, it must be kept in mind that it is difficult to separate state and popular rituals in public settings. Graulich (1999) argues, for example, that the elaborate celebrations of the eighteen monthly festivals in Tenochtitlan were ancient popular celebrations that the Mexica rulers adapted or transformed for imperial purposes (see also Graulich 1997, 2000). It is possible that public popular rituals outside of the imperial capital were more firmly separated from rituals sponsored by local kings. As in Marriott's study of the Indian village mentioned above, people adopted parts of state public ceremony for their own use, and the state incorporated elements of popular religion into its public celebrations. Public popular rituals are one of the two major categories making up the Aztec little tradition (or traditions).
- (4) *Private popular rituals.* This category includes a wide diversity of activities conducted in and around people's homes and in the countryside emphasizing curing, fertility, orderliness, divination, supplication, and other themes that concerned the individual and the family. These are the activities that I call "domestic ritual," and they are the second component of the little tradition of Aztec religion.

This simplified four-type classification does not exhaust the important social variation in Aztec ritual. The political and social hierarchy must be considered (How similar were state rituals in Tenochtitlan to state rituals in

subject city-state centers? How did popular rituals differ in rural and urban settings? Were domestic rituals the same in elite and commoner homes?). The historical context also is of great import (Graulich 1997, 1999, 2000). Furthermore, different types of ritual have varying social implications. For example, Bell's (1997) six categories—rites of passage; calendrical rites; rites of exchange and communion; rites of affliction; feasting, fasting and festivals; and political rites—have differing social contexts and significance. Documentary accounts of rituals conducted by commoner women at Tenochtitlan illustrate some of this complexity.

### Women and ritual in Tenochtitlan

Louise Burkhart suggests that to the Mexica, "the home, although shared by men and women, was symbolically constructed as female space" (1997:28). She cautions, however, against applying the Western notion of a strict domestic/public distinction and its automatic association with a female/male dichotomy (see Comaroff 1987; Joyce 1993). In terms of rituals, men and women both conducted various rites within the home, and men and women both participated in public rituals, popular as well as state-sponsored, and in the roles of lay participants as well as professional priests (Brundage 1985; Burkhart 1997; Nicholson 1971). Nevertheless, documentary sources from Tenochtitlan emphasize the role of women in conducting domestic rituals, and they suggest important parallels and linkages between those rituals and various wider domains in Aztec society.

Sweeping was one of the major elements of domestic ritual. Women swept their home and surrounding areas often, both to clean up and to restore order to the world. The act of sweeping linked women's ritual to larger religious domains; gods often swept, and it was a major component of priests' rituals at temples. Burkhart notes:

Just as the housewife had to be constantly vigilant to maintain cleanliness and order, so did the priests in their temples. Much Mexica temple ritual functioned as a kind of cosmic housekeeping: the priests guarded the temple fires, made offerings, prayed, and cleaned; female priests and attendants also spun and wove clothing for the deities and cooked their offerings of food. (1997:32)

Women also conducted a series of other rituals. Sahagún lists the following religious activities that were carried out by women, either at home or at the temples: offerings of food, capes, and other items; burning incense;

bloodletting, and sweeping (1997:69–75; see also Brown 1983). These rituals by lay women paralleled the actions of Aztec priests, and in some of the monthly ceremonies the same offerings were made in both home and temple. In Durán's description of the seventeenth monthly ceremony, Tititl, for example, he states, "All this food and drink was offered up in the temples, and each person offered the same in his domestic shrine" (Durán 1971:463; 1967, v.1:289). Some of the religious themes that characterized both public state rituals and private popular rituals were agricultural fertility, worship of fire, and the maintenance of cosmic order (Brumfiel 2001; Brundage 1985; Burkhart 1989, 1997).

These documentary accounts provide a glimpse of some of the ritual activities conducted in people's homes in Tenochtitlan. Unfortunately, they probably leave out many other rituals that were unknown to Sahagún and the other friars. Burkhart notes that the friars rarely entered an Aztec house, and as a result, "women's domestic life was a subject about which the early friars had little knowledge and much fear" (1997:27; see also Clendinnen 1991:54–55; Silverblatt 1988). The only documentary account that contains anything like direct observations of domestic rituals—Ruiz de Alarcón's *Treatise on Superstitions*—was compiled a century after the Spanish conquest.<sup>4</sup> Ruiz de Alarcón traveled around Guerrero and Morelos in the early 1600s stamping out idolatry. It is remarkable that a century after the Spanish conquest, he found people still conducting pagan ceremonial rites, invoking Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl with elaborate Nahuatl metaphors and making offerings of incense, tobacco, flowers, and human blood (Ruiz de Alarcón 1982). The Spanish conquerors and clergy were quick to put an end to Aztec public religion, with its sacrifices and offerings of blood, but their ignorance and avoidance of the domestic realm allowed traditional rituals to continue, at least in the rural areas of Guerrero and Morelos. Christianity was added to the religious repertoire of the Nahua peoples, and the existence of a vigorous tradition of "idolatry" in this area (and elsewhere) did not necessarily imply a rejection of or opposition to the new Spanish faith (Burkhart 1989, 1997).

### Excavations at Aztec Provincial Sites in Morelos

My excavations at the Aztec provincial sites of Yau-tepec, Cuexcomate, and Capilco (in the modern Mexican state of Morelos) yielded a variety of ritual objects from domestic middens and from a temple, and these materials shed light on the nature of Aztec domestic ritual. Capilco

and Cuexcomate, rural sites located close to the Epiclassic urban center of Xochicalco in western Morelos, were excavated together in 1986 by Cynthia Heath-Smith and myself. Capilco was a small village settlement with a few ground-level houses, and Cuexcomate was a larger town settlement with a public plaza surrounded by a small temple-pyramid, an elite residential compound, and another civic structure that may have been a priests' residence. These excavations are described in Smith (1992, 1993) and Smith and Heath-Smith (1994).

We were able to refine the Postclassic chronology to include three identifiable ceramic phases for the Middle and Late Postclassic periods (Smith and Doershuk 1991). The Temazcalli phase corresponds to the Middle Postclassic period, abbreviated here as MPC (circa AD 1150–1350), a time of city-state growth and demographic and economic expansion. The Early Cuauhnahuac phase (AD 1350–1440) covers the first half of the Late Postclassic period, abbreviated here as LPC-A, a time of continuing expansion and prosperity before the formation of the Mexica empire. The Late Cuauhnahuac phase (1440–1550), after western Morelos was incorporated into the empire, was a time of economic contraction in the area; this period is referred to here as LPC-B.

Yau-tepec was a major urban center in north-central Morelos whose king ruled over several smaller city-states in the Yau-tepec Valley. In 1993 we excavated Postclassic contexts at this site, which lies beneath the modern town of Yau-tepec. We uncovered architecture and associated middens at seven houses, including one large elite compound, five small commoner houses, and one intermediate structure. We also excavated a series of rich Postclassic middens whose associated houses were not located, owing to our limited testing or to their destruction (Smith et al. 1999). The chronology at Yau-tepec paralleled the chronology at the rural sites: the Pochtla phase dates to the MPC period, the Atlán phase to the LPC-A period, and the Molotla phase to the LPC-B period (Hare and Smith 1996).

These three sites present a cross-section of settlement types in Aztec period Morelos: a village of fewer than one hundred inhabitants (Capilco); a rural town of some eight hundred inhabitants with an elite group, a temple, and other civic architecture (Cuexcomate); and a city-state capital of fifteen thousand inhabitants with major craft industries and a large royal palace (Yau-tepec). One interesting finding of the excavations was a basic similarity in the domestic artifact assemblages of all three sites—a similarity that also extends to other Postclassic

sites in Morelos (Smith 2002) and that includes most of the ritual items described below. The types of deposits encountered were also similar among the sites: none of the houses had intact deposits of de facto or primary refuse (Schiffer 1987) on their floors; the structures had been abandoned gradually, and the people had removed most of the contents of the houses. A few burials were located at each of the sites, and a small number of caches of ceramic vessels were recovered at Cuexcomate and Capilco. As a result, almost all of the ritual artifacts described below come from middens associated with residential structures.

These sites, and most of the area of Morelos, were part of the Aztec culture of central Mexico. Morelos was inhabited by two Nahuatl ethnic groups, the Tlahuica and the Xochimilca (Maldonado 1990). These peoples shared many cultural traits with the Nahuatl speakers of the Basin of Mexico, for example, in the types of ceramics made and used throughout this area. Although each region produced its own ceramics, with local pastes and distinctive regional polychrome styles, the basic inventory of domestic vessel forms was fairly consistent throughout Aztec central Mexico (Smith 2002, ND). This cultural similarity throughout central Mexico originated in the common ethnic origin of the Aztec peoples as migrants from the north, and it was maintained for several centuries through intensive networks of communication, including the spread of ideas and concepts, the movements of peoples, and processes of commercial exchange (Smith 1996). Exchange processes were particularly active throughout Morelos, and every domestic artifact inventory documented in Postclassic Morelos (including these sites and numerous others described in Smith 2002) include a large number of imported items.

### Objects Used in Domestic Ritual

The primary archaeological methods for the analysis of ancient rituals focus on context (see chapter 1). Objects found in contexts such as temples, shrines, altars, burials, and special offerings often can be interpreted as having ritual functions (Flannery 1976; Marcus 1996; Renfrew 1994; Whitehouse 1996). Unfortunately, the remains of popular or private rituals—particularly those conducted within the confines of the house or houseyard—may not be deposited in special contexts. In some cases these objects may be thrown out with the trash to end up in domestic middens along with the remains of meals and other household activities. Such behavior makes the archaeological identification of ritual objects difficult, or

in some cases, impossible (witness the argument over whether figurines at Teotihuacan were ritual objects or toys in chapter 6).

For the objects used in Aztec domestic ritual, we are fortunate to have information from sixteenth-century painted codices and written records that aid in their identification. The Postclassic peoples of Morelos used a number of ceramic objects in domestic rituals. These items have been recovered in almost every excavated Postclassic domestic midden. They include long-handled censers, scored censers, figurines, and a variety of small objects such as whistles, bells, and pipes. Some of these items—long-handled censers and crude censers—were also used in public ceremonies, whereas others—figurines and small objects—appear to have been limited to household contexts. Most of the ritual items described below fall into Whitehouse's (1996) category of "objects used in rites," although some may have been used as "amulets" (see discussion in chapter 1). I begin my discussion of ritual items with censers.

### Censers

Each day women awoke early with a smiling heart and placed their offering to the gods on an altar in the courtyard of their house. On the altar was a round brazier (*brasero*) with burning coal and there the woman offered incense to the same fire kept in honor of the god, and/or in honor of the sun and the other gods. She also placed on the altar a clay vessel (*vaso*) with feet, filled it with clean water, and added flour of maize or *tlaulli* and also offered this to the gods. She then took some coals in a vessel like a frying pan but of clay, and holding this by the handle, threw incense onto the coals. And then she raised her hand with the brazier to the four directions. She also placed [on the altar] some vessels with food and later cleaned the vessels. To this offering they said, "Tlatlalchiphahuacihuatl," which means "the beautiful woman, the earth." It should be noted that with this offering to the sun, to fire, to the earth, and to the other gods, they believed that they would have a good day, and that the sun would follow its course well and illuminate the earth, and by this bear fruit and maintain life. (Motolinía 1996:433)

This passage from Motolinía, one of the most complete descriptions of an Aztec domestic rite, includes two types of censer. The "vessel like a frying pan" is a long-handled censer; its use by women in the home is illustrated by Sahagún (1950-82, Bk. 6; Fig. 1e), who includes a fragment of a speech to a young noblewoman, "especially do not neglect the offering of incense, for thus our lord is petitioned" (1950-82, Bk. 6:95). The round brazier in the above quotation is probably the basin-type censer within

Table 9.1 Frequencies of ritual objects in domestic deposits (% of total sherds)

Period/Site	CENSERS					Total sherds
	Long-hand	Scored	Crude	Figurines	Small objects	
Middle Postclassic						
Capilco	1.4	—	0.2	—	—	2,555
Yautepec	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.01	26,751
Late Postclassic, A						
Capilco	1.5	—	P	P	0.04	14,789
Cuexcomate	2.4	—	0.5	P	0.01	11,757
Yautepec	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.01	68,663
Late Postclassic, B						
Capilco	1.0	—	0.1	0.1	1.00	16,151
Cuexcomate	1.1	—	0.2	0.1	0.03	47,391
Yautepec	0.4	P	0.1	0.2	0.09	198,048
Early Colonial						
Yautepec	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.3	—	7,586

Note: Data are from Smith 2001; "P" indicates categories that are present at a level of less than 0.05%

the crude censers category described below.

#### LONG-HANDLED CENSERS

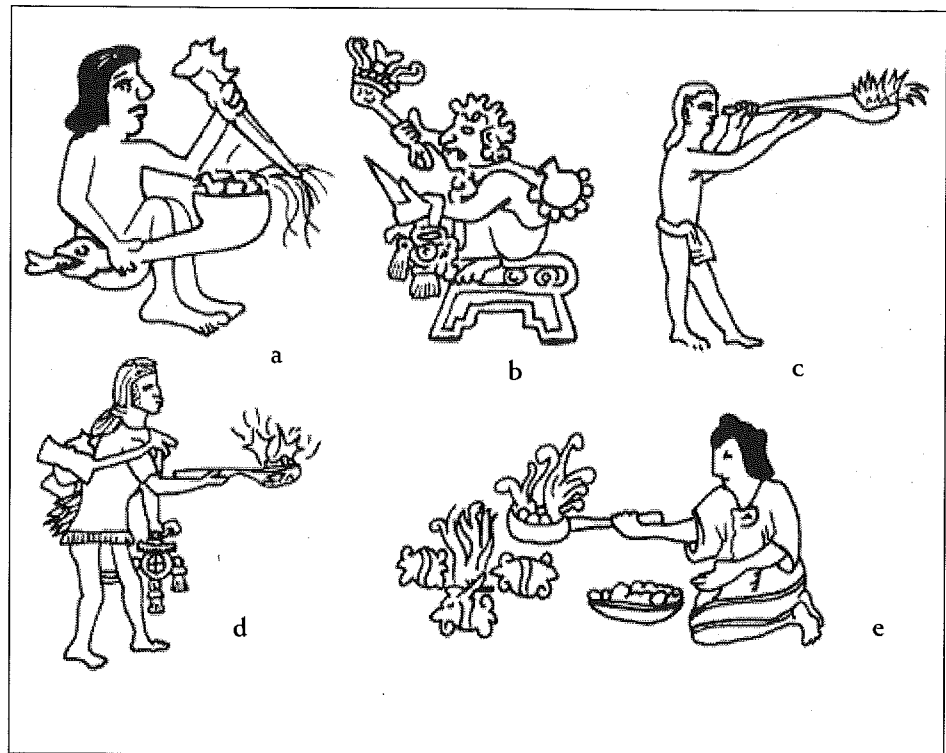
In the Aztec codices, priests are frequently depicted burning copal incense in long-handled censers (figure 9.1; these are only a few of the numerous images of the censers in the codices). This image is so common and standardized that in many cases it may have been an icon for magico-religious activity rather than a depiction of incense offerings in a specific setting. The Nahuatl term for these censers was *tlemaitl* (fire hand). They are mentioned frequently in the works of Sahagún and Durán when they describe activities of priests during various rituals. These objects were a common form of offering at temples and other public religious contexts. For example, numerous long-handled censers were recovered in excavations at the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan; these objects and their symbolism (focusing on fire and serpents) are discussed by Seler (1990–98); more recent findings at the Templo Mayor are described by López Luján (1994). An offering of these censers was excavated along with a series of mass burials and offerings in the ballcourt at Coatetelco in Morelos (Arana 1984); these objects are described and illustrated in Smith (2002; see figure 9.2a). It is clear that the long-handled censer, used by professional priests, was an important component of Aztec public religion. That this form was also used in rituals in caves is shown by an offering of several such censers recently discovered in a cave in the northern part of the Municipio of Tepoztlan, Morelos (Broda and Maldonado 1996; de Vega and Pelz 1996).

Long-handled censers are also found in domestic contexts in Morelos, where they are the most abundant cat-

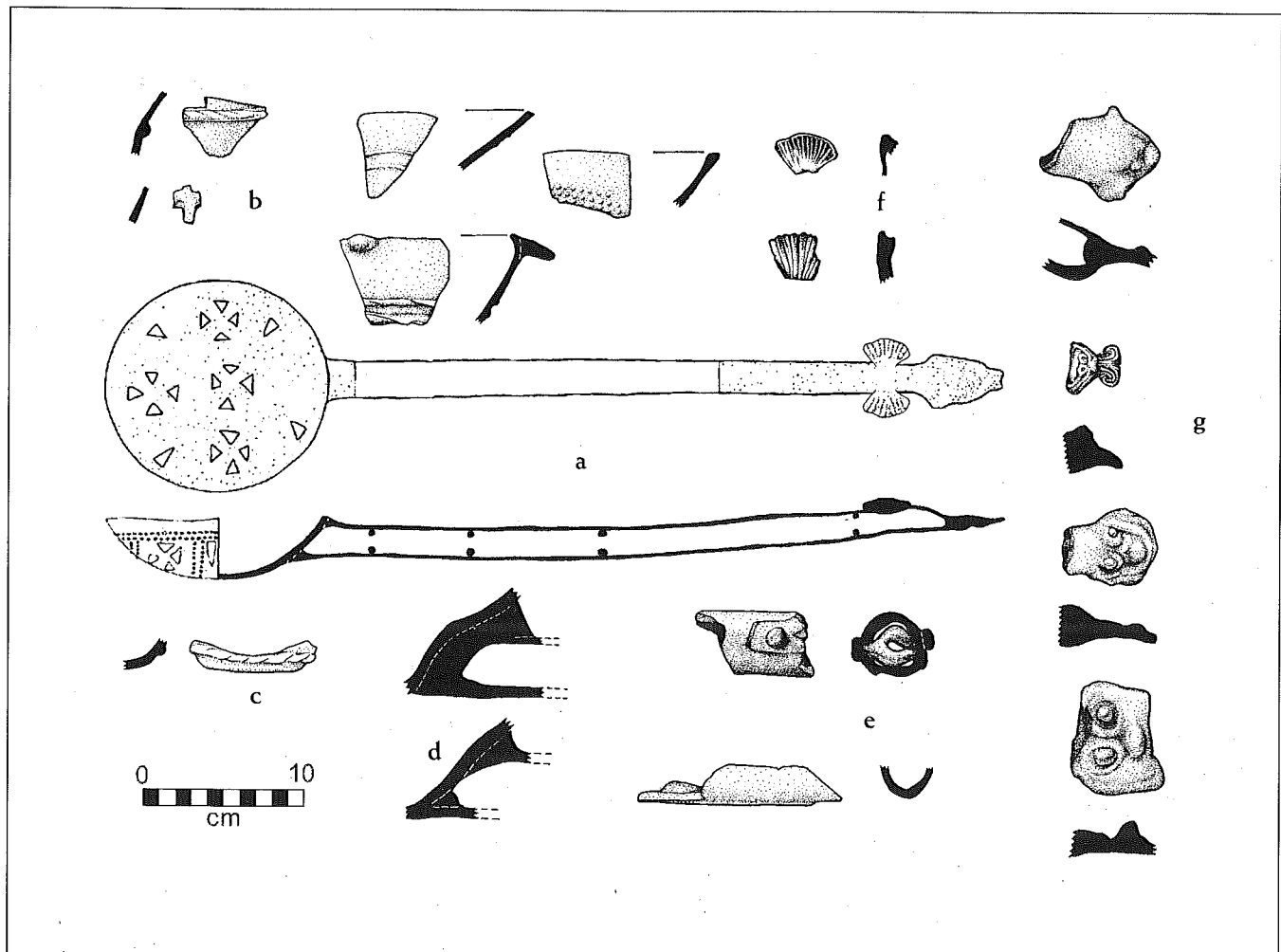
egory of ritual object in all time periods (table 9.1). They occur in highly fragmentary pieces in household middens along with other domestic ceramics. No offerings of censers have been found in domestic areas, and censer sherds, like other vessel sherds in middens, can never be refitted into whole objects. In other words, censers were used in domestic settings, where they broke and were tossed into the trash along with fractured cookpots, broken obsidian blades, and turkey bones. The use of these censers in the home is mentioned and depicted far less frequently than is their public use by priests (figure 9.1e; see quotation from Motolinía above).

Figure 9.2 shows censer sherds recovered from domestic middens at Yautepec. Long-handled censers consist of a shallow bowl connected to a long, hollow tube that was used as a handle. The hollow handles contained small ceramic balls to make a rattling sound; although none of the excavated examples were intact, these rattles are found on intact long-handled censers from offerings (figure 9.2a) and are described in Sahagún (1950–82, Bk. 2:151). A portion of the tube is sometimes painted red, and there is often a coat of white lime plaster on all or part of the vessel. The bowls often have triangular perforations or cut-outs in groups of four; these features are shown on many of the censers depicted in the codices (for example, figure 9.1b, d). The exterior of the bowl is also frequently decorated with multiple small circular and linear projections, leading to the common type name of "Texcoco molded/filleted" for these sherds. The ends of the handles are typically modeled into serpent heads, either hollow or solid (figure 9.2h); this trait is commonly depicted in the codices (figure 9.1a, b). There is often a fan element that resembles a bowtie (probably a replica

9.1 Depictions of long-handled censers from the Aztec codices: a, priest with censer and maguey thorn for autosacrifice (Codex Magliabechiano 1983, F.87); b, deity Cipactonal with priestly paraphernalia, including a censer (Codex Borbonicus 1974, 21); c, priest using censer in a Tlaloc ceremony (Sabagún 1950-82, Bk. 6, Fig. 10); d, novice priest with paraphernalia (Codex Mendoza 1992, F.63r); e, woman offering incense at home (Sabagún 1950-82, Bk. 7, Fig. 18). Tracings by Benjamin Karis



9.2 Long-handled censers from excavations in Morelos: a, complete censer excavated at Coatelco (Arana 1984, Smith 2001). b-g, sherds excavated at Yautepec. b, rims and bodies; c, base fragment; d, handle junctions; e, cylindrical handles (note ceramic spacer); f, "bow-tie" elements; g, serpent heads. The whole censer, a, is drawn at a smaller scale than the sherds; it is 84 cm in length. Illustration by Benjamin Karis



of the *amacuexpalli*, a pleated paper fan ornament found on many deities) toward the end of the handle (figure 9. 2g). None of the censers from Morelos have the highly complex modeling and painted decoration exhibited on some examples from excavations in Tenochtitlan (Seler 1990-98). The fire, serpents, and rattles of long-handled censers were symbols of rain, lightning, clouds, and heavenly fire.

Long-handled censers are abundant throughout the Basin of Mexico (Charlton et al. 1991; O'Neill 1962; Parsons 1966; Séjourné 1983; Tolstoy 1958) and Morelos (Smith 2002). Evidence for their manufacture—in the form of punctate concave molds for producing the circular elements—is common at Otumba (Charlton, Nichols, and Otis Charlton 1991), and we recovered several of these molds at Yautepec and Cuexcomate in Morelos. Although the pastes have not been subjected to characterization yet, it is likely that the majority of the long-handled censers in Morelos were produced locally. The similarity of censers in the Basin of Mexico and Morelos is part of the basic similarity in the Middle and Late Postclassic ceramic vessel forms of the two areas. Although censers of the type "Texcoco molded/filleted" have been assigned a Late Postclassic date (Sanders, Parsons, and Santley 1979), this type begins in the Middle Postclassic period in Morelos (Smith 2002), long before the formation of the Aztec empire; thus its occurrence in provincial areas cannot be attributed to imperial imposition or influence. The use of long-handled censers continued into the Colonial period, judging by their presence in a late sixteenth-century midden excavated at Yautepec (table 9.1).

#### SCORED CENSERS

Scored censers are an enigmatic vessel form found in small numbers at Yautepec but not Cuexcomate or Capilco (table 9.1). These are crude vessels covered with rough, deep incisions, typically in cross-hatched patterns. Many vessels have large horizontal flanges, and some have basket-type strap handles. None of the Yautepec sherds are large enough to get a sense of the shape of the entire vessel, but they correspond to scored censers reported from sites in the Basin of Mexico. Parsons (1966:250–252) calls this type "cross-hatched ware," and O'Neill (1962:152–154) calls it "rough and rough scored." Séjourné (1970:Fig. 39; 1983:Fig. 119) illustrates some sherds and partial vessels. I am unaware of any depictions or descriptions of these vessels in the codices or chronicles. They occur in domestic middens at Yautepec

and in a temple deposit at Teopanzolco (see below). My interpretation of these vessels as censers follows Séjourné's (1970) suggestion, but this hypothesis has little empirical support. If it does hold up, the distribution of these censers suggests regional differences in ritual items within Morelos.

#### CRUDE CENSERS

The ceramic category *crude censer*, as used at sites in Morelos, includes two, possibly three, different kinds of vessels, thus limiting its usefulness for functional interpretation. These are thick sherds with a very coarse buff-colored paste. Their surfaces are usually unfinished and rough, and the coarse paste erodes very easily. Some examples are covered with a thick coat of white lime plaster. Most sherds are too small to reconstruct vessel forms with any confidence, although some larger examples conform to one of two general forms known from whole vessels elsewhere: large braziers and basin-type censers.

*Large braziers.* Large braziers are tall composite vessels (often over 1 m in height) used for fires or for offerings of incense. Complete examples have been recovered at temple sites such as the Templo Mayor and Teopanzolco, and the common interpretation is that they were used to keep fires burning at temples, as described in the documentary sources (López Luján 1994; Seler 1990-1998). Sherds from these vessels are found in very small numbers in domestic middens in Morelos. They can be identified by the triangular flanges, the horizontal rows of circular appliqué elements, and the distinctive paste and surface finish. Although sherds in the crude censer category are consistently found in every house deposit, those that can be matched to large braziers are quite rare. Based on this rarity, my guess is that people did not have large braziers of this sort in their homes but may have gathered sherds from broken braziers from public contexts to bring home, perhaps as powerful amulets.

*Basin-type censers.* Basin-type censers are urns that were presumably used to burn incense. Apart from Motolinía's quotation (see above), there is little information in the codices or written records on the functions of these objects. Decorated urns were used as censers in many Mesoamerican cultures, however (Caso and Bernal 1952; Deal 1982). Only a small number of sherds from domestic contexts can be confidently matched to this form, recognizable examples of which are more common in temple deposits in Morelos (see below). Many examples from Morelos are undecorated, although a common variant has

a row of appliqué decoration on the exterior surface just below the rim (these are particularly common at the Tepozteco temple), and some examples have geometric stamped or modeled decoration.

*Possible cooking braziers.* Most sherds of the crude censer category recovered in domestic settings cannot be assigned to either of the two above categories because they are too small and eroded. Although their paste and surface finish matches these categories, it is possible that these sherds pertain to an entirely different kind of vessel—the cooking brazier. We uncovered no clear examples of hearths at the excavated sites, and the use of portable ceramic braziers would not be unexpected. I am uncomfortable in interpreting the crude censer sherds as cooking braziers, however, in the absence of whole vessels for comparative purposes. We have little information about what Aztec cooking braziers may have looked like, and until we do, I prefer to leave the functional interpretation of the crude censer category open. In temple deposits, there are larger sherds, many or most of which can be classified as large braziers or basin-type censers. But for now, the crude censers from domestic middens remain an enigmatic category, not particularly useful for studies of domestic ritual.

### Ceramic figurines

Some [people] have these little baskets inside boxes for greater safekeeping, especially when they keep some small idol to which they attribute an increase in their wealth. If they credit it with an increase in maize, wheat, and other grains, they keep it inside the granaries.... To each of these idols was attributed an effect, such as increasing the sown land, the estate, and so forth. (Ruiz de Alarcón 1982:71-72)

Figurines, called idols by Ruiz de Alarcón and other chroniclers, are small ceramic objects fashioned into images of people, gods, animals, plants, and temples. Although figurines are one of the most common types of ritual artifact at Mesoamerican sites from the Formative period onward, their uses, meanings, and significance remain poorly understood. The greatest recent advances in Mesoamerican figurine research have been for the Formative period, when figurines may have been used for domestic rituals that focused on fertility, curing, and perhaps ancestor veneration (Cyphers 1993; Joyce 2000:19–53; Lesure 1997; Marcus 1996, 1998). For the Aztec period, one might think that the availability of pictorial and text sources on religion and iconography would lead to a good understanding of the functions and significance of figurines, but that has not been the case. In fact, reliance upon these sources may have held back

our understanding of Aztec figurines. Scholars have been slow to acknowledge the distinctiveness of domestic ritual and as a result many have insisted on interpreting figurines in light of the specific gods of the great tradition as presented in the codices. When we free figurines from the interpretive constraints of the Aztec great tradition, it becomes clear that they functioned in the context of a distinctive domestic religion only distantly related to the public religion of Tenochtitlan.

### AZTEC FIGURINES FROM MORELOS HOUSES

The excavations at Cuexcomate, Capilco, and Yauatepec yielded more than two thousand figurines, mostly partial and fragmentary. Jan Olson, Elizabeth DiPippo, and I classified these artifacts with two cross-cutting typologies, forming what we called groups and types. We also recorded a series of attributes for each artifact, including elements such as skirt type, body part, position, hollow versus solid, and so forth (Olson, Smith, and DiPippo 1999). Analyses of these data are incomplete, but some preliminary results can be presented here.

*Groups.* Groups were defined using paste and overall form to determine the place of origin of figurines. The largest category by far are objects that resemble Aztec figurines from the Basin of Mexico (an example of the cultural similarity between these areas noted above) but were composed of one of several local pastes from Morelos. Several molds for producing these figurines were found at Yauatepec. At least one group was produced in western Morelos, probably near Cuexcomate and Capilco, but specific production sites for these and most other figurines have yet to be identified. Examples of the western Morelos group at Yauatepec were probably imported from sites in that area.

Two groups of distinctive figurine forms are found only at Yauatepec: tiny black human and animal figures and a group of distinctive flat anthropomorphic figures. Yet another group, consisting of objects made of Aztec orange paste, were probably traded to Morelos from the Basin of Mexico. A final group consists of figurines made with a very fine, nonlocal buff paste; these are probably from the western Basin of Mexico (this interpretation is based upon the predominance of this paste in the figurines from George Vaillant's excavations at Nonoalco; these collections are curated in the American Museum of Natural History in New York City). In sum, our classification by groups suggests three broad categories for the Morelos figurines: Aztec figurines imported from the Basin of Mexico, locally produced versions of standard Az-

Table 9.2 Frequencies of figurine types in domestic contexts (% of total phased figurines)

Period/Site	Female	Male	Human	Puppet	Animal	Crude	Temple	Rattle	Frag.	N
<b>Middle Postclassic</b>										
Capilco	17	17	17	33	-	17	-	-	-	6
Yautepec	25	4	33	4	11	6	-	9	9	85
<b>Late Postclassic, A</b>										
Capilco	20	16	20	8	8	4	-	6	18	50
Cuexcomate	20	17	17	7	10	0	-	8	22	60
Yautepec	29	8	28	1	9	2	-	11	13	291
<b>Late Postclassic, B</b>										
Capilco	21	13	27	6	9	1	-	10	12	77
Cuexcomate	13	17	19	11	10	1	-	8	21	226
Yautepec	28	11	24	2	12	1	1	10	10	1115
<b>Early Colonial</b>										
Yautepec	12	27	15	4	15	-	-	8	19	26

Note: These are aggregate data are from all well-phased domestic contexts.

tec figurine forms, and unique local forms.

*Types.* Our classification by type attempts to identify the nature of the image portrayed by each figurine. The major types are listed in table 9.2 with their frequencies by site and time period. Key examples are illustrated in figure 9.3. Gender was judged by clothing, hairstyles and headdresses, and the presence or absence of breasts. Many *females* have bare breasts, and others wear a *quechquemiltl* (triangular tunic) or another form of tunic. The two-pronged hairstyle of married Aztec women is another good indicator of gender. *Males* can be identified by their breechcloths, the absence of breasts, and several key headdresses and other attributes, some of which relate to warfare. We were conservative in attributing gender to the fragmentary figurines, resulting in a large number of examples of unclassified humans (the *human* type). *Puppets* were identified based upon an example published in González Ru1 (1988); most of these pieces are thin appendages.

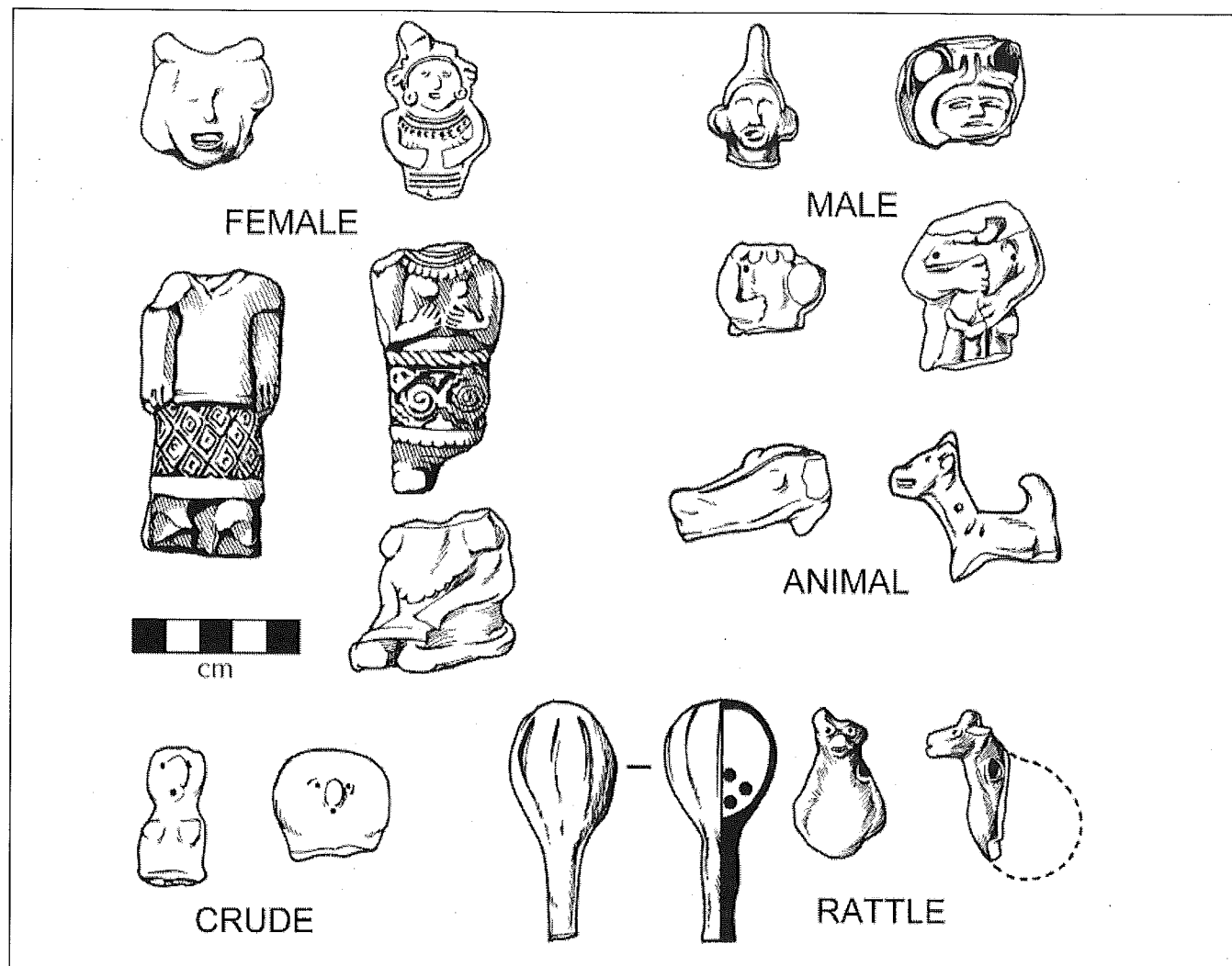
The *animal* category includes both plants and animals. Possums are the most common animal depicted; these were identified based upon research by Guilliem (1997). Dogs, monkeys, and birds are also common. The *crude* type describes crude, hand-modeled solid cylindrical forms with simple punctate facial features. Brumfiel and Hodge (1996:432-433) illustrate similar figurines from Xaltocan, calling them "mud men." The *temple* type are small models of pyramid-temples. Well-known from the Basin of Mexico (Wardle 1910), this form in Morelos is found only in LPC-B contexts at Yautepec. *Rattles* have a round hollow chamber that originally held several small ceramic balls, and one of several varieties of handles, in-

cluding twisted cylinders and stylized animal heads. The *fragment* category includes pieces too small to classify by type.

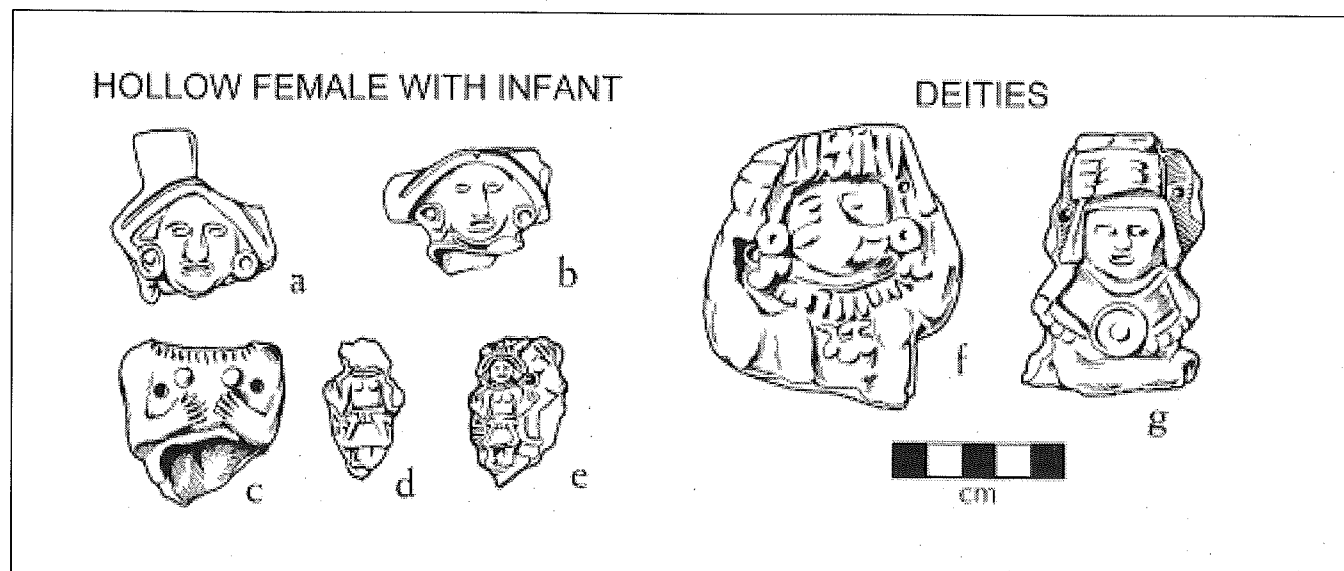
*Observations.* The vast majority of the ceramic figurines at these sites are anthropomorphic (table 9.2). Female figures outnumber males in all contexts except LPC-B at Cuexcomate. Similar to Brumfiel's (1996) figurine data from the Basin of Mexico, most female figurines are in a standing position, although kneeling and sitting positions are also present (figure 9.3e). The hollow, standing female form with rattles, one of the most commonly illustrated types in the Basin of Mexico, is rare but consistently present in Morelos, comprising between 5 and 10% of the female figurines (figure 9.4, a-e); these should not be confused with the rattle type (figure 9.3, l-m), which describes small rattles not in human form. Women holding tiny human figures are not uncommon. Most of the small figures are miniature adult women (for example, they have breasts, adult skirts, and the married hairstyle). Although these might represent female infants, the adult sexual features suggest that these tiny images were more likely intended to represent tiny adult women, or in other words, female figurines (figure 9.4, d-e). If this interpretation is valid, it points to the use of figurines (female ones, at least) by women.

Some of the male figurines hold a circular object that may be a shield or a drum (figure 9.3h). There are a few males with military themes at Yautepec; these include a jaguar knight (figure 9.3i), an eagle knight, and a miniature male captive, whose hands are bound behind the back. Most of the anthropomorphic figurines have two small perforations under the arms. These were probably





9.3 Ceramic figurines from Yautepec, showing some of the major types. Illustrations by Benjamin Karis



9.4 Ceramic figurines from Yautepec and Cuexcomate: a-e, fragments of hollow standing females holding infants or idols, f-g, likely deities. Illustrations by Benjamin Karis

used to suspend the figurines, either on necklaces or in trees, as described in documentary sources (see below).

### Interpretations of Aztec figurines

*Figurines and idols.* The Aztec ethnohistoric record is notable for the paucity of clear references to ceramic figurines. In their concern to eliminate idolatry, the Spanish friars made fairly frequent reference to "idols," but it appears that this term covered a variety of types of images (Brumfiel 1996; Brundage 1985:67–71; Heyden 1996; Millian 1981). When discussing temples, the authors of the *Relaciones Geográficas* of 1579–1581 often noted the presence of stone and wood idols (Acuña 1984–1987; Smith 1992:331), and in other contexts stone and wood idols are mentioned without information on their location or context. Anthropomorphic stone sculptures were a major art form in Tenochtitlan, and many examples have survived (Baquedano 1984; Solís 1982); not surprisingly, many fewer wood idols are known today (Nicholson and Berger 1968; Saville 1925). Idols made of amaranth dough are also mentioned in people's homes (for example, Sahagún 1950–82, Bk. 12:51–52; Ruiz de Alarcón 1982:75), and idols of copal resin have been recovered from public contexts in Tenochtitlan (Leonardo López Luján, personal communication).

In a few passages, Sahagún and Durán mention the presence of idols in homes (see Brumfiel 1996:147; Millian 1981:43–46). Because of their ignorance of the domestic setting and women's affairs (see above), the friars probably had little firsthand knowledge of ceramic figurines, and they may have confused these small objects with the large stone and wood statues that stood in temples and other public contexts. Sahagún's illustration of the discarding of household possessions for the New Fire ceremony (figure 9.5) shows a person tossing out a rather large idol with a sinister-looking facial expression, and the accompanying text suggests that people had "statues, hewn in either wood or stone" (Sahagún 1950–82, Bk.7:25) in their homes. Such statues have not been found by archaeologists in domestic contexts, in contrast to ceramic figurines, which are prominent in virtually all domestic middens.

A few sources specifically suggest that domestic idols were small objects, and these probably refer to ceramic figurines. Durán (1967, 1:248) mentions household altars upon which people put "*figuras de ídolo*" (which Horcasitas and Heyden translate as "figurine"—Durán 1971:420). Ruiz de Alarcón uses the term *ídol* for images kept in the house, usually without any indication of the size or nature of these images. In one case, however, he mentions



9.5 Sahagún's illustration of the discarding of household possessions for a New Fire ceremony. Sahagún 1950–82, Bk. 7:Fig.19. Reproduced courtesy of the University of Utah Press

that when idolators were caught with their idols, they would sometimes quickly put them in their mouth and swallow them, preferring to endure the discomfort rather than turning them over to the priest (Ruiz de Alarcón 1982:89–90).

*Deities, people, or something else?* Most published studies of Aztec figurines assume that all or most of the anthropomorphic examples were gods or goddesses of the great tradition as depicted in the codices and described by the chroniclers (Barlow 1990; Guilleim 1997; Heyden 1996; Parsons 1972; Pasztory 1983; Seler 1990–98). These scholars devote considerable effort to the identification of the deities, which is rarely straightforward. In contrast, Millian (1981) suggests that although some figurines did indeed represent identifiable deities, most human images were meant to be people, not gods or goddesses.

Because of their changing and multiple natures, Aztec deities are notoriously difficult to identify, even when many attributes are shown. For example, the leading modern scholars of Aztec iconography cannot even agree on the identity of the central image on the Aztec calendar stone, with Tlaltecuhli and Tonatiuh each having partisans (Graulich 1992a; Klein 1977; Navarrete and Heyden 1974; Nicholson 1993; Solís 2000; Townsend 1979). Returning to Aztec figurines, consider the standing, hollow rattle of a female, often holding a child (figure 9.4, a–e), a common form in the Basin of Mexico and

Morelos. Eduard Seler (1990-98) interpreted this image as the deity Cihuacoatl, but Robert Barlow (1990) disagreed and interpreted it as Xochiquetzal (an identification also favored by Michel Graulich—personal communication, 2000). If Seler and Barlow, perhaps the most influential Aztec specialists of the twentieth century, cannot agree on the deity classification of one of the most common forms of figurine, I am hesitant to join this effort of desperately searching for deities. In general, the conceptions of deity in Mesoamerica were complex not only among the Aztecs but also, as recent research shows, in Classic and Postclassic Maya religion (Gillespie and Joyce 1998; Tate 1999; Vail 2000).

These two interpretations of figurines—identifiable deities or mortal humans—are not the only two possibilities, however. It is entirely possible that many figurines were powerful images that did not correspond to readily identifiable gods as known from the great tradition sources. They could have been local or regional deities (as in the Hindu example described in the introduction); idiosyncratic deities of individual households or curers; or perhaps anthropomorphic images that were transformed into powerful objects through a ritual or through the application of clothing (much like the Mexica *ixiptla*, or deity impersonators). Another possibility is that anthropomorphic figurines depicted revered ancestors (as proposed by Marcus [1998] for Formative Zapotec figurines), but the lack of ancestor veneration at the household level in Aztec society (see discussion below) argues against this interpretation.

Some figurines do clearly portray known gods and goddesses. For example, figurine YF-666 from Yautepec (figure 9.4f) exhibits a buccal mask and cut conch-shell pectoral, two of the most common attributes of the god Ehecatl/Quetzalcoatl, and YF-1371 (figure 9.4g) is a common kneeling female deity with attributes of Xochiquetzal and Chalchiuhtlicue, associated by Millian (1981:66–70) with a general theme of fertility. These examples suggest that when figurine makers wanted to depict a deity, they could do so easily. If so, then why would they produce so many figurines without obvious deity attributes, unless these were not meant to be formal deities at all? Many of the unprovenienced whole figurines in museum and private collections, which are the examples most commonly illustrated in art books and general accounts, do have multiple attributes that allow the identification of particular gods and goddesses. The less elaborate figurines—probably not meant to represent specific gods—are less commonly illustrated in such ac-

counts, but they occur at a much higher frequency in archaeological figurine assemblages. For these reasons, I resist the temptation to try to classify all or most of the anthropomorphic figurines as individually known gods or goddesses. They were more likely spirits or minor supernatural beings that did not have codified names and descriptions in the ethnohistoric literature, similar to the spirits invoked using cut-paper figurines (called *'ejecatli'*) by modern Nahua peoples in Veracruz (see discussion below). It is also possible that some figurines may have been viewed as nondivine humans.

### Figurines and domestic ritual

Figurines were probably used in a variety of locations for a variety of purposes. Some of these were away from the home. Durán (1971:419), for example, mentions figurines hung from trees over agricultural fields, presumably to bring fertility. Ruiz de Alarcón describes idols placed at passes and crossroads in the countryside that people petitioned for a number of things: "that the deity whom they believe resides there be favorable to them, or that nothing bad happen to them on the voyage they are making, or to have a good harvest, or for similar things" (1982:70). Given the abundance of ceramic figurines in domestic middens, however, it is likely that the home was the major location for rituals that used these objects.

According to Ruiz de Alarcón (1982:72), idols (figurines) were typically stored in and around the house (see his quotation above). He also states that these idols were inherited and that individual idols had separate domains of action: "increasing the sown land, the estate, and so forth" (1982:72). Among these themes, health and fertility were particularly prominent. Several documentary descriptions of "idols" mention their use in curing ceremonies (for example, Sahagún 1950-82, Bk. 1:48), and Durán describes the wearing of necklaces hung with figurines ("*figuras de ídolo*") by children to protect them from illness and misfortune (1971:420). Many curing ceremonies were done in the home by curers,<sup>5</sup> who could be of either gender (Clendinnen 1991:175–205; Ortiz de Montellano 1990:165–188). Sandstrom (2001) provides ethnographic examples from modern Mesoamerica of curing ceremonies in domestic contexts, and DeBoer (1998) describes a parallel ethnographic case of the use of figurines for curing among the Chachi people of northwest Ecuador.

Of the various deities that can be identified in the corpus of Aztec figurines, most related in some way to fertility, that is, human health/fertility/reproduction or agricultural fertility. Millian lists the following deities as repre-



9.6 Four types of small ceramic objects recovered in household excavations at Cuexcomate and Capilco. Top left, pipes, top right, tiny models of vessels, bottom left, bells, bottom right, whistles. Smith 1996:90. Reproduced with permission

sented among ceramic figurines—Xochiquetzal, Chalchiuhtlicue, Quetzalcoatl, Xochipilli/Macuixochitl, and Xolotl—and concludes that this collection suggests “a strong orientation toward use in human reproduction” (1981:47). In her analysis of figurine iconography, Millian discusses the overlapping of diagnostic criteria among deities and the difficulties of making firm identifications. For many of the figurines traditionally classified as Xochiquetzal (for example, figure 9.4, a-e, g), she suggests that rather than simply assuming that these all represent Xochiquetzal, “it is probably prudent to recognize traits that associate these images with fertility and to generally classify it [them] as a ‘fertility group’ theme” (Millian 1981:70).

A number of attributes of the Morelos figurine assemblages are consistent with this hypothesized emphasis on fertility and curing. The predominance of female figures may suggest an association with reproduction, a realm in which midwives and other women played an important role. The likely portrayal of female figurines in the arms of women may point to a role for these hollow female figurines as surrogates for such midwives and curers. The presence of possums as the most abundant animal also fits with the fertility theme because of a strong association between possums and fertility/reproduction in Aztec thought (López Austin 1993).<sup>6</sup> Rattles (*chicahuaztli*) were employed in many Aztec rituals of agricultural fertility (for example, Durán 1971:174, 207; Sahagún 1950-82, Bk. 2:46-59), and these objects form a prominent part of the figurine assemblages in all periods. Furthermore, other

items used in domestic ritual, including hollow-rattle female figurines and long-handled censers, also had rattle balls to make a rattling sound.

#### Figurines in public contexts

There were few uses for figurines in Aztec public religion. The offerings at the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan contain no ceramic figurines (López Luján 1994), in contrast to the many other diverse ritual objects. Although offerings of ceramic vessels are common in association with burials and building dedications, such deposits almost never contain figurines. One of the few instances of ceramic figurines in a public state context is a series of buried offerings in front of the circular Temple R in Tlatelolco (Guillien 1997). Among the 2050 objects in these offerings were 57 figurines. The majority are female, in both standing and kneeling positions, and of both the solid and hollow-rattle types. Only a few are male and several are animals, including a painted, hollow possum with a baby possum riding on top. The themes of the figurines and other objects in this deposit center around fertility and renewal, in line with the likely dedication of this circular temple to Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl (Graulich 1992b).

#### Other small objects possibly used in rituals

A variety of small ceramic objects found in some domestic middens may have had ritual uses. These include pipes, bells, whistles, and tiny models of ceramic vessels (figure 9.6). The pipes were probably used for

smoking tobacco (Porter 1948), which was used in a number of Aztec rituals; in fact, tobacco was one of the major ritual items described (and decried) by Ruiz de Alarcón (1982) a century after the Spanish conquest. The tiny bells are similar in size and shape to West Mexican copper/bronze bells, whose use was expanding throughout the Aztec empire in the Late Postclassic period (Hosler 1994). The ceramic bells first occur in the MPC period, whereas copper/bronze items (including bells) do not occur at Yautepec until the LPC-A period. The evidence that Hosler (1994:235–240) assembles on the role of bells in Aztec ritual probably pertains to ceramic bells as well as copper/bronze objects. There has been less research on whistles, but it seems likely that they too were used in rituals (Martí 1969). The uses of the tiny ceramic vessels are unknown; I informally call them "toys." If ceramic figurines were used to enact specific scenes from people's lives (as parts of rituals), perhaps these little objects were props in such scenes. Stamps are another small ceramic object that may have had a use in rituals (these are not pictured in figure 9.5). Most stamps have geometric designs, with animals and plants also represented (Enciso 1953, 1971). They may have been used for decorating the body for ceremonies and/or for decorating textiles (Alcina Franch 1958, 1996).

The small ceramic objects described above occur in very low frequencies. Whereas every house had at least one long-handled censer and most had figurines and crude censers, the small objects occurred in lower frequencies in smaller numbers of excavated houses (the reason their frequencies are shown to an additional decimal place in table 9.1). Nevertheless, some or all of these items were probably used in rituals in the home.

## Burials

The burial of the dead is a ritual practice cross-culturally, and the practice of burials in domestic settings suggests that these features were expressions of household-level ritual. Six burials were excavated at Capilco and three at Cuexcomate (table 9.3). Preservation was not good, but it was possible to assign general age categories. Two striking characteristics of this set of burials stand out: the small number of burials, and the absence of adults. The burials were located either under the house floor or within 1 or 2 m of the house in an exterior midden area. Although we excavated or tested over sixty structures at the two sites, only nine burials were found. I believe that we excavated a large enough sample of houses to rule out adult burial as a common feature in domestic areas. In the

Yautepec excavations, we did recover several adult burials (Wilkinson 1998), but most were concentrated around a single structure. The data from that site fit with the general pattern of few adult burials in domestic areas at Aztec period sites in Morelos.

These sites are not unusual in their small number of burials; overall, very few burials have been recovered at Aztec archaeological sites. Documentary sources suggest that cremation and subsequent burial of the remains was a common form of treatment of the dead among the Mexica nobility of Tenochtitlan (for example, Nagao 1985:37–42; Sahagún 1950–1982, Bk.3:41–43). Most modern authors have generalized from these accounts to conclude that cremation was a regular practice among all sectors of society (for example, Evans 1988:35; Harvey 1981; Nagao 1985:38), although Brundage (1985:193–194) suggests that only rulers and nobles were cremated and most other people were buried without cremation (see also Ragot 2000). When we look beyond the Mexica-centered chroniclers, however, the only evidence of cremation outside of royal or noble contexts in Tenochtitlan is a series of elite burials in the Tehuacan Valley.

The account published by Gómez de Orozco (1945), a copy of text from the Codex Tudela, describes three categories of burials—nobles, merchants, and commoners—but does not mention cremation. According to this source, nobles were buried with sacrificed slaves and cooking utensils, and many other goods were also placed with the body in a chambered tomb located in the patio of the residence. Merchants were buried with valuable trade goods (precious stones, feathers, gold, jaguar pelts) and food (see also Codex Magliabechiano 1983:f.68r), whereas commoners were accompanied by mantas and food, including bowls of meat, tortillas, beans, *chia* (*Salvia hispanica*), and greens (Gómez de Orozco 1945:57–58). The *Relaciones Geográficas* from northeast Guerrero also mention differential burial practices for nobles and commoners and also omit any mention of cremation. Among the few published archaeological cases of Aztec burials, cremations are reported only from Coxcatlan Viejo in the Tehuacan Valley (Sisson 1974:31, 37) and the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan (Matos 1988; Román and López Luján 1999), whereas direct interments are known from Cihuateopan and site Xo-Az-46 in the Basin of Mexico (Evans 1988; Parsons et al. 1982) and from Coatetelco and Xochicalco in Morelos (Arana 1984; Hirth 2000; Smith 2002). These data suggest that the lack of burials at Aztec sites cannot be explained by invoking cremation as a regular practice. The remains of cremations are typically

Table 9.3 Burials at Cuexcomate and Capilco

No.	Individuals	Position	Goods	Location	Phase
<b>Capilco</b>					
1-1	1 infant	sitting	4 vessels	under housefloor	LPC-B
1-2	1 child	sitting	1 vessel	under housefloor	LPC-B
1-3	1 infant	flexed?	none	midden area	?
1-4	1 youth	sitting	none	midden area	?
1-5	1 child	sitting	none	midden area	?
1-6A	1 infant	sitting	2 vessels	midden area	?
1-6B	1 infant	flexed	4 vessels, 1 bell	midden area	?
1-6C	1 youth	sitting	4 vessels	midden area	?
<b>Cuexcomate</b>					
2-1	1 child	flexed	1 vessel	under patio	LPC-B
2-2	1 infant	flexed	1 vessel	under housefloor	LPC-B
2-3	1 infant	sitting	none	under ritual dump	LPC-B

Note: Data are from Smith (1992); Infant = under 2 years of age; child = 2–6 years of age; youth = 6–14 years of age

Table 9.4. Frequencies of ritual objects in temple deposits (% of total sherds)

Site and Period	CENSERS		Crude	Figurines	Small Objects	Total no. sherds
	Long-hand	Scored				
Middle Postclassic						
Teopanzolco	0.4	P	4.0	-	-	7,075
Tepozteco	1.0	-	12.4	-	-	890
Late Postclassic, A						
Cuexcomate	3.0	-	1.0	P	-	2,859
Late Postclassic, B						
Cuexcomate	2.8	-	0.8	P	-	1,199

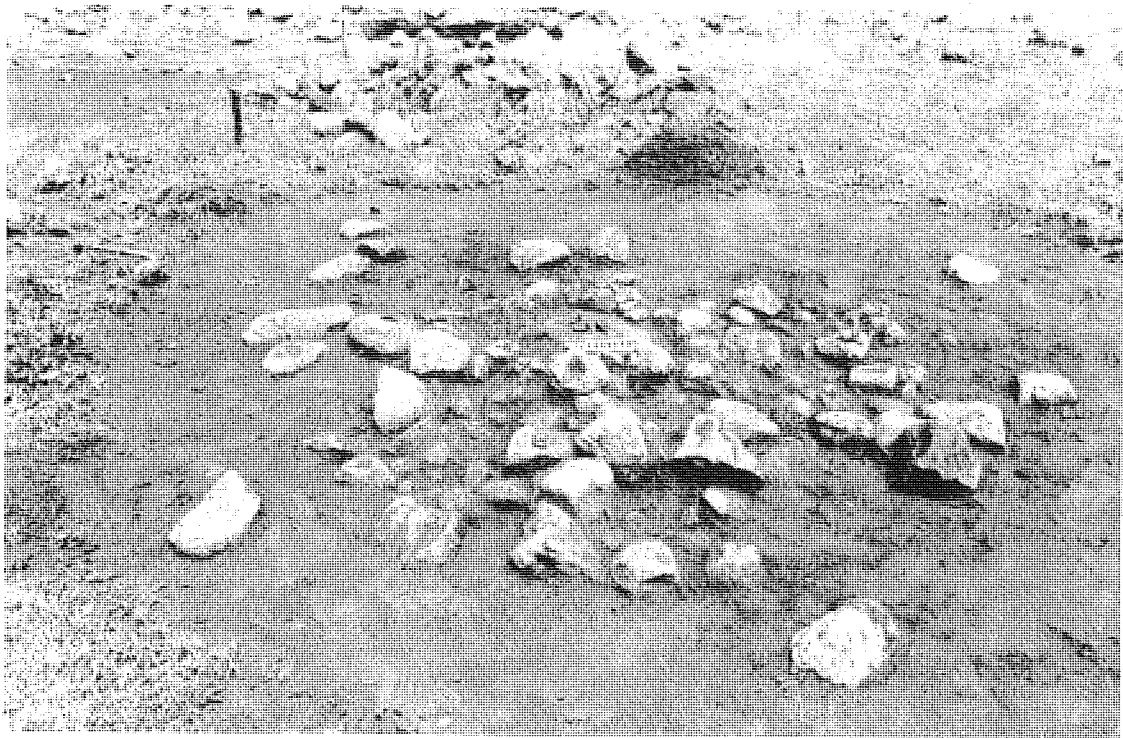
Note: Data from Smith (2001); "P" indicates categories that are present at a level of less than .05%.

buried in ceramic containers (for example, Lagunas 1997; Román and López Luján 1999), and these are quite rare at Aztec sites. A more likely explanation is that the Aztecs used cemeteries for most adult burials, with nobles sometimes buried in public structures (as at Tenochtitlan, Coatetelco, and Coxcatlan Viejo) and children sometimes buried in and around the house.

Two possible Aztec cemeteries have been found in test-pitting operations conducted with other objectives, but they were not excavated sufficiently to determine the number or extent of the burials. At the site of Xo-Az-46 in the *chinampa* area of the southern Basin of Mexico, Parsons et al. (1982:108-109) found three burials inside a raised platform, with a fourth burial at a lower level. At the Epiclassic site of Xochicalco in Morelos, Kenneth Hirth (2000) excavated a possible cemetery area in Terrace 85 dating to Middle and Late Postclassic times.

Three burials were found in an area without Postclassic architecture, all with multiple ceramic vessels (these vessels and the burials are described in Smith 2002). It is likely that people living in the small Postclassic settlements at the edges of the ancient ruins of Xochicalco (such as Temazcal, adjacent to terrace 85, and possibly Capilco, located several kilometers away) used a portion of the Epiclassic site for burials. This occurrence is not unique; the Epiclassic monumental centers of Teotenango and San Miguel Ixtapan in the western State of Mexico were both settings for multiple intrusive Postclassic burials (with extensive offerings) long after they were abandoned as urban centers (Piña Chán 1975; Rodríguez and García 1996; Tommasi 1978). The lack of adult burials in Aztec domestic settings differs from many Mesoamerican societies and does not support a model of ancestor veneration (see discussion below).

9.7 Rock pile at Cuexcomate before excavation (unit 245)



### The New Fire Ceremony at Cuexcomate

One of the more enigmatic kinds of feature excavated at Cuexcomate was the rock pile. These features, found only in patio groups, appear on the surface as piles or concentrations of large stones (figure 9.7). Five of the twenty-five patio groups at Cuexcomate had one or more rock piles, the small farmstead site 3 had one, and none were present at Capilco. These features consist of an extremely dense layer of broken artifacts deposited in a shallow pit and then covered by the layer of rocks visible at ground surface. Four of the seven rock piles that were tested also had caches or offerings of ceramic bowls under the broken artifact layer. The rock piles had the highest artifact densities of any deposits excavated at these sites and, compared to domestic middens, the ceramic vessel fragments were much larger and could often be reassembled into whole or partial vessels (ceramic vessels in domestic middens were highly fragmentary, and sherds could rarely be fit together within a given midden). The broken artifact layers never exhibited internal stratification, again in contrast to domestic middens, which were always stratified.

These attributes of rock piles indicate that they were special deposits. First, a shallow pit was excavated, followed in some cases by placement of a cache of ceramic bowls (and in one case a burial). Next, large numbers of still-usable ceramic and obsidian domestic objects were thrown into the pit. Finally, the deposit was covered with

a layer of rocks. These features, which I term *ritual dumps*, were clearly the result of some kind of ritual, probably celebrated by the members of patio groups in common. My initial hypothesis, that ritual dumps were created during the celebration of the Aztec New Fire Ceremony, finds support in the reanalysis of similar dumps excavated in the 1930s by George Vaillant at Chiconautla and Nonoalco (Elson and Smith 2001). The New Fire Ceremony, a ritual that took place upon completion of each calendar round of fifty-two years, had important symbolic connotations relating to a number of fundamental themes in Aztec state religion, including the creation and destruction of the world, the role of human sacrifice in maintaining the sun and the world, and the importance of fire in both public and domestic symbolism (see Brundage 1985:35–39).

The specific portion of the elaborate New Fire celebration that relates to ritual dumps is the destruction and discard of household possessions that accompanied the ceremony. According to Sahagún:

First they put out fires everywhere in the country around. And the statues, hewn in either wood or stone, kept in each man's home and regarded as gods, were all cast into the water. Also (were) these (cast away)—the pestles and the three hearth stones (upon which the cooking pots rested); and everywhere there was much sweeping—there was sweeping very clean. Rubbish was thrown out, none lay in any of the houses. [1950-82, Bk. 7:25]

This passage was depicted by Sahagún's artists in figure 9.5. A similar brief account in the *Codex Tudela* emphasized the destruction of cooking pots (Gómez de Orozco 1945:62).

The written sources do not mention what happened to the items after they were broken and tossed out. It does not seem unreasonable, however, to infer that those ritually broken domestic goods might have been deposited in a special place rather than simply tossed out with the regular trash.<sup>7</sup> If so, the contents of the excavated ritual dumps represent precisely the kind of deposit that would be produced from the behavior described by Sahagún. Once the new fire was lit, in the Basin of Mexico, the world was spared from destruction for another fifty-two years. In the words of Sahagún, "when this took place, everyone renewed his clothing and all the household goods" (Sahagún 1950-82, Bk.7:31; New Fire ceremonies must have been eagerly awaited by merchants and artisans).

Research described elsewhere (Elson and Smith 2001) shows that the New Fire Ceremony was an ancient and widespread ritual in northern Mesoamerica, long predating Aztec civilization. Upon the growth of the Triple Alliance, however, the Mexica kings appropriated the popular ceremony and gave it the trappings of cosmic renewal and imperial authority. When the central imperial new fire was drilled to start a new calendric cycle, the fire was distributed by runners—under the king's supervision and permission—from the Templo Mayor to all parts of the empire, where people used it to rekindle their hearths and begin life anew. This controlled distribution of the new fire was one component of Mexica imperial ideology that signaled cosmic favor and political domination.

### Rituals at Provincial Temples

A brief consideration of the ritual artifacts associated with temples in Morelos and other areas helps put the evidence for domestic ritual into perspective. Nicholson (1971:431–433) lists the following activities that took place at Aztec temples: offerings to the gods, human and animal sacrifice, autosacrifice by priests, incense burning, dance, song, and various processional activities. These were carried out by professional priests with some participation by rulers or other people. Brundage (1985:119–125) lists the following ritual objects used in these activities: flint knives, conch-shell trumpets, mirrors, rubber, paper, staves or scepters, and human skin. To these must be added ritual objects of the sort recovered archaeologically in Mesoamerica and likely to have been used in Aztec temples: ceramic censers; drums,

flutes, and other musical instruments; masks and other costume components; and the tools of autosacrifice—obsidian bloodletters, stingray spines, and other items (Flannery 1976; see also the other chapters in this volume). Temples also contained deity images of stone, wood, and ceramic, and sometimes mural paintings. The major offerings made at Aztec temples (apart from hearts and human blood) were food, drink (especially *pulque*), flowers, rubber-spattered paper, clothing, and incense (Nicholson 1971:431, 1990).

These are very generalized accounts that do not differentiate rituals at the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan from rituals at other political capitals or rituals at small provincial temples. There is only limited documentary information on provincial rituals. The *Relaciones Geográficas* from Morelos and adjacent areas, for example, suggest that most communities had a central temple tended by one or two professional priests who supervised the offerings. Artifactual remains from three excavated Aztec period temples in Morelos provide more specific information that can be compared with the household remains discussed above. Test trenches at the small temple-pyramid at Cuexcomate revealed the presence of middens along the north and south walls, covered by layers of construction collapse. These middens had high densities of artifacts and a high diversity of artifact types, quite unlike temple fill or deposits of construction collapse. Ceramic food preparation and serving vessels in the temple midden are probably the remains of offerings brought to the temple, and/or of the food prepared by or for priests. The use of domestic, utilitarian ceramic vessels during rituals is a common practice in modern Mesoamerican cultures (Deal 1998; McGee 1990, 1998), and the presence of such vessels in a temple midden is not surprising.

Most of the same ritual objects found in domestic middens also were found at Aztec temples in Morelos, but their relative frequencies were quite different. Table 9.4 presents the frequencies of these items at three temples. The artifacts from Teopanzolco are from the fill in structure 2, a platform located immediately behind (east of) the large twin-stair main pyramid at the site. The Tepozteco material is from fill in the platform of the famed Tepozteco pyramid on the cliffs above Tepoztlan. Both structures were excavated by Jorge Angulo (1976) in the 1970s, and the ceramics and sites are described in Smith (2002). Platform fill is obviously less than ideal for functional analysis, but it is likely that most of the material in the fill came from close to these structures (a test pit near the Tepozteco temple had a similar ceramic as-



semblages—see Smith 2002). The ceramics from the Cuexcomate temple are from the temple middens described above.

The temple deposits have much higher frequencies of censers than do the domestic deposits. At Cuexcomate the long-handled censers stand out (their frequencies are more than two standard deviations above the means for the site), whereas crude censers are far more common at Teopanzolco and Tepozteco. These were major MPC cult centers with monumental architecture, and the high numbers of large censers is not surprising. At Teopanzolco, large braziers predominate, whereas the basin-type censer is most common at Tepozteco (Smith 2002). A few small figurine fragments do occur in the Cuexcomate temple midden but at a much lower frequency than in the domestic deposits.

### Aztec Domestic Ritual in Perspective

What is the significance of Aztec domestic ritual within the historical context of Mesoamerican religions and cultures? To consider this question, I first turn to a modern ethnographic parallel—perhaps even a survival—of Aztec practices, and then look at the wider context of the information presented above using the great tradition/little tradition framework.

#### A modern parallel

Most discussion of continuities between modern Indian religion and pre-Hispanic religion focus on widely shared basic cosmological concepts (for example, Gossen 1996). Here I wish to take a different approach and point out some highly specific parallels between domestic rituals at Aztec sites and in modern Nahua villages in the Huasteca area of northern Veracruz. In the latter area Alan Sandstrom has encountered a series of domestic rituals strikingly similar to those described above (Sandstrom 1991; Sandstrom and Sandstrom 1986). As in most areas of modern Mesoamerica, people have altars in their homes upon which they place ritual items and offerings. A common object on these altars is a goblet-shaped ceramic censer (with cut-out holes) for burning copal incense. Censers are often accompanied by offerings of numerous anthropomorphic cut-paper figures that are also used by shamans in public ceremonies.

Sandstrom and Sandstrom (1986) divide the cut-paper figures into four categories: disease-causing spirits (called *'ejecatl*) used in curing; seed spirits devoted to crop fertility; witness and guardian spirits that intervene between humans and more powerful spirits; and altar adornments.

Although some of these paper spirit figures have names, they are not highly elaborated gods or goddesses with individual personalities or a basis in myth. Instead, they represent more generalized spirits that are invoked for specific purposes, such as curing a specific ailment, strengthening the seed corn before planting, feeding specific spirits of the dead, or protecting the water supply. The uses and meanings of these modern Nahua cut-paper figures resemble the inferred uses and meaning of Aztec ceramic figurines, and they may in fact represent some kind of historical continuity with the Aztec objects. Alan Sandstrom (1999) has also pointed out additional similarities between modern Nahua rituals and their Aztec antecedents as known from archaeology and ethnohistory. Ritual performances today sometimes include the use of whistles and bells, the burial of infants near the house and adults in a cemetery outside the village, the inclusion of possessions with burials, the replacement of domestic ceramic wares at a special ceremony each year, and the storage of domestic ritual objects in special boxes. Although additional documentary (and perhaps archaeological) research is needed to fully evaluate the extent of specific historical continuity between Aztec domestic ritual and the modern Nahua rituals of the Huasteca area, the similarities are striking.

#### The absence of ancestor veneration

A number of the authors of chapters in this volume join other scholars in arguing that ancestor veneration was an important component of domestic ritual in many ancient Mesoamerican societies. McAnany (1995) discusses a common Mesoamerican pattern in which adults were buried under the house floor or in the patio. She shows that in the Maya lowlands at least, this practice of "living with the ancestors" was part of a complex of beliefs and practices associated with the veneration of ancestors (see also Middleton et al. 1998; Miller 1996) and argues that this complex was related to systems of land tenure and property rights. In another example, Marcus (1998) links figurines to ancestor veneration in Formative Oaxaca partly on the basis of their occurrence in burials and in an arranged scene in a domestic cache. The data presented above suggest that the Aztecs did not practice ancestor veneration in the way McAnany, Marcus, and others have shown for other Mesoamerican societies. Burials are rarely found in domestic contexts, they never have figurines as offerings, and arranged figurine scenes are not present.

The lack of support for a model of active ancestor ven-

eration in the domestic rituals of Aztec period Morelos is not surprising, however, given our knowledge of Aztec kinship, social stratification, and land tenure. Nahuatl-language documents from early colonial Morelos reveal that nobles controlled most of the land and that commoners gained access to land, not through inheritance and family channels, but through their personal ties to nobles and their membership in *calpolli* organizations (Carrasco 1976; Hare 2001; Lockhart 1992). The Aztec kinship system was an ego-centered, bilateral system quite different from kinship systems based upon lineage and ancestors (Kellogg 1986:105; McCaa 1999). In spite of statements in Sahagún and other chroniclers that elders were treated with great respect, McCaa (1999) points out that in the Morelos census documents (for example, Cline 1993)—actual descriptions of behavior rather than normative accounts of ideal values—elders were not treated with much respect. For example, a common census entry for an elderly woman is “here is just a little old woman,” hardly the attitude one would expect if descent and ancestors were of great importance in the domestic realm. Genealogy and descent were of great importance for the legitimization of Aztec kings, but royal concern with ancestors was quite a different phenomenon from domestic ancestor veneration of the type described for certain other Mesoamerican societies.

#### The great and little traditions of Mesoamerica

Our understanding of Aztec domestic ritual remains sketchy and very incomplete. Documentary sources contain clues, but their usefulness is limited by the friars’ ignorance of the domestic setting. Most of the archaeological data presented here pertain to artifacts from midden deposits that provide little direct information on the specific setting or nature of their uses. Nevertheless, some patterns can be discerned in the data at hand. Censers and figurines, the two most common types of ritual object in domestic settings, may represent distinct aspects or realms of domestic ritual, one with close ties to public religion and one limited to the domestic sphere.

Professional priests at the Templo Mayor burned incense in the same types of censer that the poorest provincial peasants used in their homes. Although the shared use of the objects does not necessarily imply shared beliefs and meanings, the ubiquity of the long-handled censer suggests some degree of unity among Aztec ritual practices at all levels. The burning of copal incense served to sanctify places and actions, whether these were

sacrifices on a tall pyramid, secret ceremonies in caves or domestic rituals of divination and curing. Because the manufacture and use of long-handled censers began long before the rise of the Aztec empire, there is little reason to associate these objects with official state policies or actions. A similar interpretation can be given to the New Fire ceremony. In spite of the appropriation of this ritual by the Mexica king to use as part of an imperial ideology of domination, its occurrence in provincial areas most likely signals performance of an ancient popular ritual not under the control of the state.

Figurines, on the other hand, pertained almost exclusively to the domestic realm. The plethora of great tradition deities worshiped in Aztec public religion is poorly represented in the corpus of figurines, and those that are present relate to themes of reproductive fertility, illness, and curing. Figurines were probably used by women and men within the home for a variety of rituals concerning childbirth and illness, agricultural fertility, divination, and other matters of significance to family members. Although health and fertility were themes of great interest to the state, with consequent public expression (Klein 2000; López Austin 1988), their manifestation through the medium of ceramic figurines was strictly a domestic phenomenon. It is very likely that domestic rites using figurines also involved the burning of incense, and the two artifact categories—figurines and long-handled censers—may have formed part of a single complex of domestic ritual objects. Similarly, Aztec burials in domestic settings—rare as they are—are another example of continuity with an ancient Mesoamerican tradition. The little tradition of domestic ritual—incorporating elements of both popular and great tradition practices and beliefs—was deep and widespread in Aztec culture. Figurines are ubiquitous at Aztec residential sites, and this kind of ritual continued for over a century after the Spanish conquest in the areas visited by Ruiz de Alarcón (1982).

The Aztec peoples participated in a Mesoamerican tradition of domestic ritual—involving figurines, censers, and burials—that dates back to the Early Formative period at least (Borhegyi 1956; Cyphers 1993; Marcus 1998), and these practices seem to have flourished outside of the control of the state (contra chapter 5). The continuity of these rituals of the little tradition, from Early Formative times through the Aztecs and up to the ethnographic present in areas of Mexico, is remarkable. The very nature of the available documentary accounts—descriptions by Christian priests—has kept this religious realm largely invisible, but now archaeological excavation is starting to

provide some clues to its nature. Censers and figurines were important components of domestic rituals, but these need to be interpreted in light of their context, use, and significance in the domestic realm and not solely in terms of the categories of the Aztec great tradition. Although Aztec public religion—with its dramatic sacrificial rituals atop pyramids and colorful processions through the streets—captured the attention of early Spanish observers at the expense of domestic religion, we should not let it dominate our modern views of Aztec religious experience. For the bulk of the population, the rituals and beliefs of the little tradition, guarded within the home and the patio, were probably of greater import in their daily lives than the distant state-sponsored ceremonies.

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## Notes

1. Conversations with colleagues suggest to me that many people confuse Redfield's great/little tradition model (Redfield 1956) with his earlier folk/urban continuum model (Redfield 1941), although they deal with different phenomena. Also, several recent discussions of the great and little tradition concepts (for example, Glazier 1997:9, Gossen and Leventhal 1993:186) cite the wrong books by Robert Redfield.
2. Other scholars have introduced concepts to deal with phenomena related to the great and little traditions of religious expression in complex societies. Leach (1968), for example, discusses the distinction between philosophical religion—religion as described in sacred texts and promulgated by philosophers and experts—and practical religion—religious principles that guide the behavior of ordinary people. Leach notes that the former "is often greatly preoccupied with the life hereafter; practical religion is concerned with the life here and now" (1968:1). Within the discipline of European religious history, the notion of "popular religion" has received considerable attention (for example, Christian 1981; Davis 1974; Le Roy Ladurie 1978; Thomas 1971). These and other authors examine the similarities and differences between regionally distinctive folk or popular religious traditions and the official religion of the Catholic church, and they explore the interactions between the two realms. The domestic rituals described in this chapter can be classified as examples of practical religion (Leach) and popular religion (European history) that formed part of an Aztec religious little tradition.
3. I thank Leonardo López Luján for suggesting this approach.
4. The account of Ruiz de Alarcón, one of the few Spanish descriptions of Aztec domestic religion, is a particularly rich source of information. Although some of his testimonies were elicited through force (he would storm into a peasant house and demand that its owner hand over the pagan idol that neighbors said was hidden in a jar under the bed), many people apparently opened up and allowed him to record lengthy chants and invocations. It seems clear, however, that Ruiz de Alarcón was only able to uncover certain kinds of sacred objects and pagan rituals, leaving much of the content of domestic religion undescribed.
5. The themes of curing, health, and human fertility were not by any means limited to the domestic sphere in Aztec society. Klein (2000) has identified a number of architectural platforms in public locations at Aztec sites that were associated with rituals or activities concerning female health and fertility, and Graulich (1992b) explores this theme in relation to temples dedicated to Quetzalcoatl/Ehecatl.
6. Sahagún (1950-82, Bk. 3:156), for example, notes that a possum's tail was one ingredient of a drink used to induce labor in women (see also Ruiz de Alarcón 1982:221, 283). A number of the possum figurines have baby animals on their backs, a further reinforcement of the fertility/reproduction theme (Graulich 1992b).
7. Broken domestic implements are viewed as having supernatural power in some Maya societies (Gary Gossen 1999). For example, at the modern Chamula festival of games, potsherds were viewed as symbolic tribute and used as tokens of admission to a mountaintop shrine for a public ritual (Gossen 1986b:246).

# Rethinking the Great and Little Tradition Paradigm from the Perspective of Domestic Ritual

Patricia A. McAnany

**T**oward late afternoon, the Music Room of Dumbarton Oaks<sup>1</sup> gets a bit stuffy and discussion of the symposium papers can take on a contentious air. A few years ago, I sat in the back of the room listening to a debate over Nahua domestic ritual. One senior scholar suddenly leaped up and shouted out that [the ritual under discussion] was a textbook example of the little tradition. I squirmed uncomfortably in my seat at the vocalization of what I perceived to be an archaic and pejorative term. Little tradition...as if ritual practice undertaken at the domicile or within a local community was somehow small and insignificant when compared to the pomp and splendor of state ritual. The term, moreover, seemed contradictory because, quantitatively speaking, far more people were actively engaged in local ritual or popular religion than in state ritual. The strength of my knee-jerk reaction led me back to its originator: Robert Redfield and the 1956 publication of *Peasant Society and Culture*. When Patricia Plunket asked me to contribute a critical essay on domestic ritual, Redfield's work seemed a logical place to begin. Below, I discuss Redfield's formulation and some of those that followed as his approach was applied, particularly to the subcontinent of India. I then evaluate the equality of such terms as *little tradition*, *popular religion*, *practical religion*, *folk religion*, and *domestic ritual*. This exercise provides a segue to the papers in this volume that address, for the most part, the archaeological remains of domestic rituals. In the final section of this essay, I turn to some of the issues raised by the chapters and suggest directions for future research. In a broad sense, this chapter provides a general historical overview of anthropological frame-

works for studying religion and ritual practice in the home and local community.

## Birth of the Great Tradition/Little Tradition Paradigm

To Redfield (1956:15), the great tradition/little tradition (GT/LT) framework was a necessary antidote to the concept of the "primitive isolate" in vogue in 1950s anthropology. From the writings of Paul Kirchhoff (1952) and Pedro Armillas (1951), Redfield (1956:14) realized that Native American societies of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica were neither primitive nor isolated but rather had been organized into states along a rural-urban continuum. One of the architects of a newly emergent anthropology of peasantry, Redfield sought to contextualize peasant communities within a larger whole. He was influenced by the views of Alfred Kroeber, who had characterized peasantry as a society that existed in relation to market towns and urban centers; Kroeber had used the unfortunate label "part-societies with part-cultures" (1948:284). Redfield (1952) proposed the terms *great tradition* and *little tradition* in a short essay entitled "The Natural History of Folk Society." Von Grunebaum adopted this terminology in his analysis of Islamic high culture and local culture, which he characterized as "maintained in the relation of the great to the little tradition" (1955:27–28).

From this intellectual seedbed, Redfield waxed eloquent regarding, "little societies" which he described as unreflective, illiterate, unrefined, and unchanging (1956:31, 70; see chapter 9 for full quotations). Distinguishing characteristics of the great tradition were de-

defined as greater reflexivity, a prominent role for the literati, and a formal educational apparatus that served to perpetuate the great tradition. Thinking, reading, and learning were thought to be emphasized within the great tradition while the little tradition was characterized primarily by the doing of ritual and, as such, formed a pale shadow.

Anthropologists of the 1950s and 1960s, particularly those at the University of Chicago, utilized the general approach of the GT/LT for studying complex civilizations that were composed of peasant and elite components. The skeletal framework of the approach (devoid of its pejorative overtones) proved especially useful for describing eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism in which religious observance was stratified along the lines of social cleavages. Thus, Milton Singer (1960) wrote of "The Great Tradition of Hinduism in the City of Madras" and McKim Marriott (1955) on "Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization" of Kishan Garhi. In truth, the disparity between the full-scale ideology of a world religion such as Buddhism and popular local expressions of religious practice does result in a dualism that often encodes oppositional states. In a recent historical treatment of Sherpa popular religion and the founding of Buddhist monasteries in the Solu-Khumbu region of Nepal, Ortner vividly describes the distinctiveness of each and the considerable conflict that surrounds their coexistence (1999:90–123).

Dissenters from the GT/LT paradigm were quick to voice objections. Dumont and Pocock (1957, 1959) charged that the dualism of the GT/LT model falsely polarized such internally heterogeneous religions as Hinduism. Obeyesekere (1963:153) defended Sinhalese peasant communities as whole entities unto themselves and not part-societies as Kroeber and Redfield had suggested and further alleged that the GT/LT paradigm created a spurious layering of religious beliefs with animism occupying the bottom rung (Obeyesekere 1963:141). Such a simplistic scheme, Obeyesekere further charged, had hampered attempts "to understand precisely the nature of this 'animism,' its place in the peasant religious tradition, or its links with beliefs derived from the great traditions" (1963:141). These critiques are equally relevant to Mesoamerican ritual studies. In reference to the study of Buddhism, Tambiah proposed an alternative conceptual framework of "ritual complexes" that together comprised a "single total field" of religious activity and beliefs (1970:370). By dimensionalizing religious traditions, these scholars sought to explore the diversity of ritual outside

of the bipolar straitjacket of the GT/LT framework.

Compared to the cadre of sociocultural anthropologists studying South Asia who employed the GT/LT paradigm, only a limited number of Mesoamerican ethnographers followed the lead of Redfield. In Mesoamerica, the GT/LT framework appears more frequently in the papers and publications of archaeologists (see Smith [chapter 9], who finds the polar extremes to be analytically useful).<sup>2</sup> Partial explanation for its under-utilization by Mesoamerican sociocultural anthropologists can be found in the great popularity of the closed corporate community model (Wolf 1957), which emphasized isolation, rather than articulation, of community to state. Ethnographers also have noted the dissonance between the official religion of Mesoamerican nation-states—Catholicism—and religious practices of local communities, which often are founded on pre-Hispanic cosmological precepts. The interplay between these two—otherwise known as religious syncretism—received considerable attention in the ethnographies of the 1960s and 1970s.

Given the strong message of stratified dualism encoded within the GT/LT paradigm, anthropologists and social historians continued to offer alternative concepts for studying religious diversity and variation in religious practices. Leach suggested that the pertinent contrast could be found in the difference between theological philosophy and practical religion; the former was concerned with "life hereafter" and the latter with "life here and now" (1968:1). This contrast between thinking about religious matters and conducting rituals pervades much of the anthropological literature on religion. Theological philosophy, religious orthodoxy, and sacred texts form the conceptual basis for religion but often do not provide guides for day-to-day living. The more practical side of religion includes rituals, offerings, prayers, and blessings that facilitate the passage of humans through dangerous, conflictive, or challenging periods. Such trials can be internal, between individuals or groups, or between humans and nature, such as agricultural risk from meteorological extremes.

A distinction between the thinking and doing of religion need not be expressed as an idiom of class structure. As Saler has noted, the term *popular religion* although sometimes used to refer to the "religion of the folk or lower class in distinction to the elite, in some usages . . . became transformed into an analytical construct for transcending various elite/folk distinctions" (1993:39–40). Davis, for example, defines popular religion as "practiced and experienced and not merely as defined and prescribed" (1982:322).

Circumventing all previously established categories, Geertz suggested that religion, pure and simple, could be defined as "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men [sic] by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (1966:4). While such a definition fits well with worldview of a liberal, Western anthropologist, its emphasis on psychological factors at the expense of ritualized behavior makes it an uneasy descriptor of Mesoamerican religions in which ritual practice takes pride of place.

Much recent analytical handling of religion sidesteps the GT/LT framework on the grounds that it presents an overly dualistic framework that conflates class structure and religious practice. At the same time, scholars do distinguish between religious or ritual practice and philosophical reflections regarding supernaturals, the hereafter, and the prescribed role of humans in the cosmos. As several contributors to this volume suggest (for example, chapters 5, 7, and 9), studies of the interplay between royal or imperial ritual and domestic or community ritual have the potential to illuminate state strategies of domination and legitimation or community strategies of resistance.

The practicing of popular religion as defined by Davis (1982) is the realm in which the intangibility of cosmological precepts meets the tangibility of ritual accoutrements and ritual locales. This intersection provides archaeologists with a point of entry to ritual practice and a unique opportunity to approach cognition and cosmology (in the sense of Renfrew and Zubrow 1994). This fertile area of research hones in on the linkages among practice, place, and artifact without the polarization of the GT/LT paradigm. Such ritual practice can take place in the home—the topic of this volume—in caves or selected spots within a sacred landscape. Study of the multiple venues of ritual performance outside of institutionalized locales—that is, churches, mosques, or temples—contextualizes and expands the study of ritual in an extremely powerful and inclusive manner.

## Domestic Ritual

Because the cultural legacy of Mesoamerica included substantial construction of monumental architecture, the study of ritual historically has been biased toward that associated with massive architecture. Archaeologists have concerned themselves greatly with the panoply of the

regal court, the spectacular sacrifice of human lives, and, particularly in the Maya region, the entombing of divine rulers. Employment of polarizing concepts such as great tradition and little tradition engendered the notion that residence-based ritual was somehow a diminutive replica of the great dramas that unfolded on the pyramids. Studies contained within this volume show that domestic ritual is considerably more complex and nuanced than it is a scalar replication. This approach defines domestic ritual on its own terms (not as lesser than something else), acknowledges the definitive role of human agency in ritual performance, and utilizes the full range of increasingly sophisticated methods available to archaeologists to identify and interpret loci and artifacts of ritual performance. Perhaps most important, study of domestic ritual enriches immeasurably the topic of household archaeology.

Born of a concern to document residential units of all social strata, household archaeology, in published form, can be a very pedestrian affair—overdescribed and undertheorized. Studies that promote an understanding of the heart and soul of ancient Mesoamerican domiciles have been few and far between (see Mock 1998b for a notable exception). The ritual practices of a household represent an ongoing dialogue with the deities to secure good fortune—including the social and biological reproduction of its dwellers—to facilitate a successful harvest and to promote the cooperation of deities controlling meteorological forces. The dialogic quality of traditional Mesoamerican ritual comes through clearly in the socio-cultural research of Monaghan (1995). Characterized as a "covenant with the earth," this dialogue and the rituals that sustain it are considered to be part of "an agreement made between Nuyooteco ancestors and Earth in the distant past" (Monaghan 1995:204). Clearly not pedestrian, these are vital concerns of ancient householders. Fleshing out domestic ritual not only enlivens household archaeology but also instates cosmology as a key topic in household studies. The chapters in this book suggest that domestic ritual practice—be it mortuary, healing, divination, or dedication—played a pivotal role in structuring the archaeological record of households.

Catherine Bell (1992:74) defines ritual practice as repetitive performance that is set apart from daily quotidian activities. The performative aspect of ritual, while of great anthropological interest, provides a bit of a stumbling block for archaeology since it is impossible to excavate a performance. The extent to which performance is highly stylized and repetitive, as well as the fact that a

built environment often is created and altered to accommodate ritual, render it visible to archaeologists in the form of a strong material signature (see Mock 1998b). This material signature—its detection and interpretation—forms the substance of this volume. Encompassing a broad geographical sweep, contributed chapters include studies of domestic ritual ranging from Teotihuacan, Mexico, to Cerén, El Salvador, and embrace Mesoamerica's deep cultural legacy from the Formative through the Postclassic periods. Many of the chapters focus on the built environment of house, courtyard, and shrine as a place of ritual activity. In Mesoamerica, the dedication and termination of this constructed space may be ritually marked, and several authors grapple with the scale of domestic ritual events and the number of participants (that is, house residents, compound residents, or community residents). Here, the meaning and application of traditional polar terms such as public versus private become problematic. The validity of this distinction is discussed in chapters by Grove and Gillespie, Winter, and Spence. Contrary to Smith's (chapter 9) construct of domestic ritual as private, my sense is that most domestic ritual (especially that materialized by an enduring archaeological signature) was all-inclusive and public in the sense that a large gathering to ritually mark a domestic transition indicated a healthy and expanding residential unit. Spence (chapter 6) makes a similar point about domestic ritual at Tlailotlacan and Brown and others (chapter 8) propose an even larger sphere of extra-community interaction for Cerén in the form of divination services. Such contrasting interpretations of the scale and inclusiveness of participants reminds us that ritual seated within the domicile need not be restricted to a co-residential group. In contrast, access to ritual conducted within so-called public architecture probably was severely restricted. Ironically, the term "public architecture" may refer more accurately to those who built the structures than to the select few whose footsteps tread the sacred precincts of monumental structures.

On the scale of domestic units, central courtyard shrines were key facilities for ritual at Teotihuacan, Tetimpa, and Monte Albán (as documented in chapters 4, 5, and 7). The fine-grained data that Plunket and Uruñuela (chapter 4) present from Tetimpa clarify the role of censers in courtyard ritual. It is refreshing to see these objects so clearly contextualized. The image of clouds of smoke billowing from these volcano shrines provide Plunket and Uruñuela with the suggestion that these shrines acted as portals to the ancestors and earth

deities, as a central conduit of ritual propitiation. At Teotihuacan, Manzanilla (chapter 5) suggests that courtyard ritual promoted articulation with the state, an idea echoed by Winter (chapter 7) in reference to Monte Albán. This issue is worthy of additional study and theorizing since courtyard ritual could also express resistance to the state.

Grove and Gillespie, Manzanilla, and Spence (chapters 2, 5, and 6) characterize domestic ritual as driven by concerns with generational continuity and renewal. In fact, patterns of architectural change coupled with evidence of ritual indicate that ritual performance served to punctuate key transitions in the histories of domestic structures. For Chalcatzingo, Grove and Gillespie (chapter 2) suggest that such transitions can involve a wholesale change in structure function from residence to shrine, a pattern also noted at the lowland Maya site of K'axob (McAnany and López 1999) and elsewhere in Polynesia (Kirch 2000). In chapter 8, Brown and others bring attention to what may be called "ritual economy" by their focus on structures arguably used to provide divination services and for the storage of ritual gear. Variation in the manner in which domestic ritual is folded into, wrapped around, or provided the basic framework of a domicile is one of the most engaging and productive aspects of household studies.

Nowhere is this variation more pronounced than in the realm of mortuary ritual. Within many parts of Mesoamerica, ancestor-making is a key part of place-making activities that give a domicile a history and a moral authority. In this manner, Uruñuela and Plunket (chapter 3) suggest that the burial pattern of Tetimpa—adult males in a focal platform and children and infants under the courtyard—indicates a differential treatment by age and sex that is concordant with the practice of ancestor veneration. The association of bark beaters with Tetimpa adult males further suggests that making and painting bark paper—possibly used in the propitiation of ancestors—was a male activity. Mortuary practices also play a prominent role in domestic ritual at Chalcatzingo (chapter 2), Monte Albán (chapter 7), and Teotihuacan (chapter 6). The suggestion by Spence that the lineup of lidded cache jars at the Oaxacan barrio of Tlailotlacan, Teotihuacan, once contained afterbirths (as ethnographically documented among Zapotecs) is as intriguing as it is difficult to verify without a dramatic advance in techniques of residue analysis. On the other hand, Smith's (chapter 9) sample of burials from Postclassic Morelos residences bears no congruence (in terms of age, sex, and

burial accoutrements) with that expected if ancestor veneration was practiced. The lack of ethnohistorical evidence of inheritance as the prime vehicle for the transmission of land and wealth in Postclassic Morelos provides corroborative evidence that the making of ancestors concerns much more than revering the dead (see McAnany 1995 for extended discussion). Regardless, the central message of domestic mortuary ritual seems to be one of generational continuity and renewal. In a very real sense, ancestral interments chronicle the life history of the residence and, at the same time, provide a charter for the generations to come. The historicity and transformation of domestic ritual is discussed by Winter (chapter 7), who chronicles changes in mortuary and courtyard ritual at Monte Albán from 1500 BC through AD 800.

Gendered attributes of domestic ritual, relatively underdeveloped in this volume, are a rich realm of inquiry that knits together human agency, hierarchy, and the house. As Burkhart (1997) has noted, the domicile in traditional Mexican perspective is female-gendered space and such is the case in many Mesoamerican societies. Theoretically then, domestic ritual could privilege female-gendered actors or could be constituted upon spatially delineated spaces for male and female rituals (as per Marcus 1999). More cross-fertilization between studies of gender and ritual should result in sharper conceptualization of this topic and deeper understanding of the folded layers of ritual action and human agency encapsulated within the household.

The life histories of the artifacts themselves—the ritual life of things, if you will—are extremely well contextualized in the papers in this volume. In the opening chapter, Plunket considers Whitehouse's (1996) typology of ritual artifacts, with some customization for Mesoamerican ritual practice, this type of conceptualization may help to ameliorate conflicting interpretations of artifact types such as figurines. In this volume alone, figurines are interpreted in a variety of ways from props in female life-cycle rituals to ancestor representations to toys (compare chapter 2 with chapter 7), indicating the multivalence of this artifact class and the need for additional clarification. The consideration of ritual objects comes full circle with the innovative analysis of the artifact assemblage from enigmatic structure 12 at Cerén (chapter 8). The notion that the assemblage was

formed by the ritual collection of old or heirloom artifacts accounts for the diverse assortment of broken, weathered, and anachronistic objects recovered from this structure. This linkage is strengthened by ethnographic analogy with contemporary highland Guatemalan shamans who maintain similar sacra, critical to ritual practice, in their domestic shrines. The fact that these objects are perceived as gifts from the ancestors illustrates a key tenet of many Mesoamerican cosmologies—that maintaining an open portal of communication with ancestors is key to wellbeing.

## Closing Thoughts

By focusing on the domestic locus as the site of ritual performance, the study of ritual moves away from top-down approach of the great tradition and toward an examination of issues of direct concern to households. Notwithstanding this re-orientation, it is wise to keep in mind that the so-called popular religion of domestic ritual often co-exists, either in cooperation or conflict, with institutionalized religions that serve the interests of the state, resulting in multiple ideologies. Quite often, ritual is seated at the crux of power negotiations between the household and the state; thus, as we enhance our understanding of domestic ritual, we also learn something of the reach of the power of the state. As the chapters in this book demonstrate, domestic rituals are highly reflective, cosmologically informed, and far more prevalent than state-sponsored rituals. In a very real sense, this volume plants the seed of a social-historical approach to domestic rituals of ancient Mesoamerica—a realm of inquiry that can only be approached through archaeological data. In the years to come, I believe that this approach will come to form a vital part of the archaeological study of households and will provide the basis for a richly contextualized understanding of domestic ritual performance in ancient Mesoamerica.

## Notes

1. Located in the Georgetown district of Washington, D. C., Dumbarton Oaks hosts an annual two-day symposium on selected topics in pre-Columbian studies.
2. As recently as 1999, the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association featured a symposium organized by Kathryn Reese-Taylor on the topic of great traditions in Mesoamerica.





# Glossary

<i>achiote</i>	seeds used for cooking and red pigment ( <i>Bixa orellana</i> )	<i>Gramineae</i>	ceramic inventory
<i>acompañante</i>	small anthropomorphic urn		wild and cultivated grasses that include species of millet and corn
<i>adorno</i>	ornament	<i>bacha</i>	carved stone axe-shaped heads that formed part of Classic period ballgame paraphernalia in Veracruz and along the Pacific slope of Guatemala
<i>amacuexpalli</i>	a pleated paper fan ornament found on many deities		forked post or stick
<i>anís</i>	anise-flavored liquor	<i>borqueta</i>	thorny tree ( <i>Acacia</i> )
<i>antiguas</i>	dolls or pre-Hispanic figurines collected and used by modern Otomí shamans	<i>huizache</i>	censer
<i>bajareque</i>	wattle and daub	<i>incensario</i>	Nahuatl term for deity impersonators
<i>barrio</i>	neighborhood or ward	<i>ixiptla</i>	naturally flat-fracturing andesite
<i>brasero</i>	brazier	<i>laja</i>	pestle
<i>calpolli</i>	an organizational unit of Aztec society consisting of a number of related families that held land in common, paid tribute to a noble lord, and sometimes specialized in the same occupation	<i>mano</i>	sponsor of a religious festival in the Indocolonial ritual system
<i>candelero</i>	small ceramic vessel used by Teotihuacanos that has one or two openings, perhaps for burning incense; see figure 5.4	<i>mayordomo</i>	term used by Mesoamerican archaeologists to designate decorative vertical panels used on flat-roofed buildings of central Mexico during the Classic and Postclassic periods (Spanish <i>almena</i> )
<i>cazuela</i>	large bowl for cooking or serving	<i>merlon</i>	grinding stone
<i>cerros</i>	hills	<i>metate</i>	cultivated field that usually refers to a cornfield where beans and squash are also planted
<i>chac</i>	ritual practitioner or specialist	<i>milpa</i>	Mixtec term for "earth spirit"
<i>chia</i>	edible plant often used to make a refreshing drink ( <i>Salvia hispanica</i> )		pitch pine
<i>chicabuaztli</i>	rattle	<i>ñubu</i>	jar for cooking or storage
<i>chicha</i>	fermented maize drink	<i>ocote</i>	small carved greenstone figure
<i>chinampa</i>	raised fields usually located in shallow lakes	<i>olla</i>	tree resin used as incense
<i>copal</i>	tree resin used as incense	<i>penate</i>	polishing stone
<i>crema</i>	cream paste ceramic group of Monte Albán	<i>pom</i>	fermented maguey juice
<i>cuexcomate</i>	wattle-and-daub storage bin	<i>pulidor</i>	
<i>ejecatl</i>	disease-causing spirits	<i>pulque</i>	
<i>figuras de idolo</i>	Colonial term for figurines	<i>sabumador</i>	frying-pan censer
<i>florero</i>	shaped like a bud vase, this kind of vessel forms part of the Teotihuacán	<i>sacra</i>	objects considered to be divine or represent the divine
		<i>tablero</i>	horizontal panel often used in conjunction with the <i>talud</i>

<i>talud</i>	sloping wall	<i>tlaulli</i>	maize flour
<i>tapiscadores</i>	corn huskers	<i>tlemaitl</i>	long-handles censer
<i>tlacuilo</i>	scribe	<i>vaso</i>	ceramic vessel shaped like a drinking glass
<i>tlalocoid</i>	showing affinity to Tlaloc, the central Mexican god of rain, lightning, and storms	<i>xaltete</i>	fragmented pumitic rock or lapilli
		<i>xuaana</i>	among the Isthmus Zapotec, a ward headman

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