
one

People, Culture, and History

In early 1522, a few months after conquering the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán, Hernán Cortés dispatched an army led by Pedro de Alvarado to the Mixtec city of Tututepec on the Pacific coast of the present-day southern Mexican state of Oaxaca (figure 1.1). Since the city's founding in

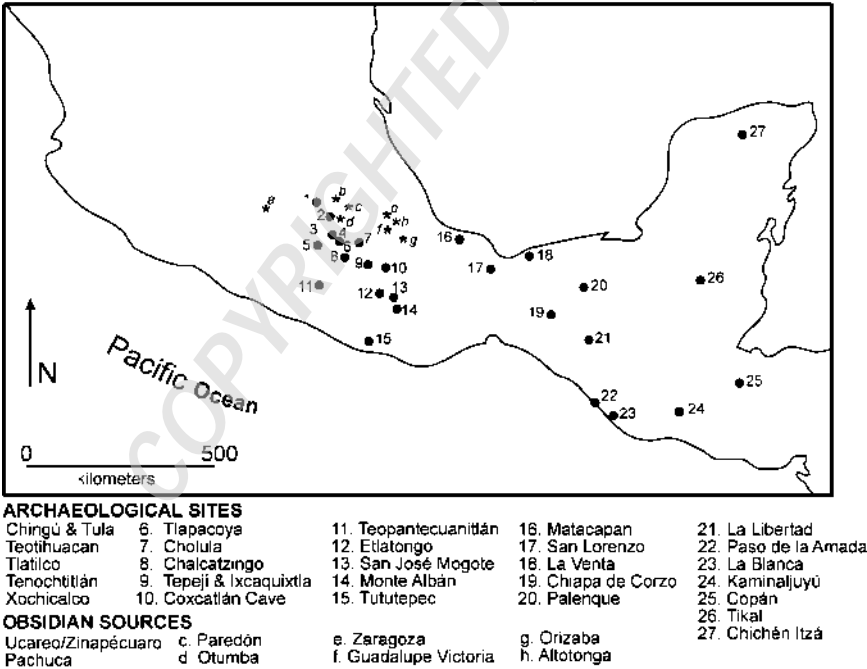


Figure 1.1 Map of Mesoamerica showing sites and obsidian sources mentioned in the text (drawing by Eric Berkemeyer)

the late eleventh century by the legendary ruler, Lord 8 Deer “Jaguar Claw,” Tututepec had been the political capital of one of the most powerful polities in Mexico (Joyce et al. 2004). By the time of the arrival of the Spanish, Tututepec dominated an empire covering 20,000 km² along the southern Pacific coast. The city was located in the foothills of the Sierra Madre del Sur mountain range only 15 km north of the Pacific Ocean (figure 1.2). From the city center, people looked down onto the lush agricultural fields of the coastal plain, to the estuaries and out onto the vast blue of the Pacific. The ruler or cacique of Tututepec controlled much of the wealth of this land, which early colonial-period Spanish documents tell us included minerals such as gold and copper; agricultural fields for the production of cotton and cacao; and coastal resources like pearls, salt, and fish. Cortés had heard of this rich and powerful Mixtec city from Lord Lachi, the Zapotec ruler of Tehuantepec, a traditional enemy of Tututepec, and offered an alliance with the Spanish to defeat the Mixtec Empire.

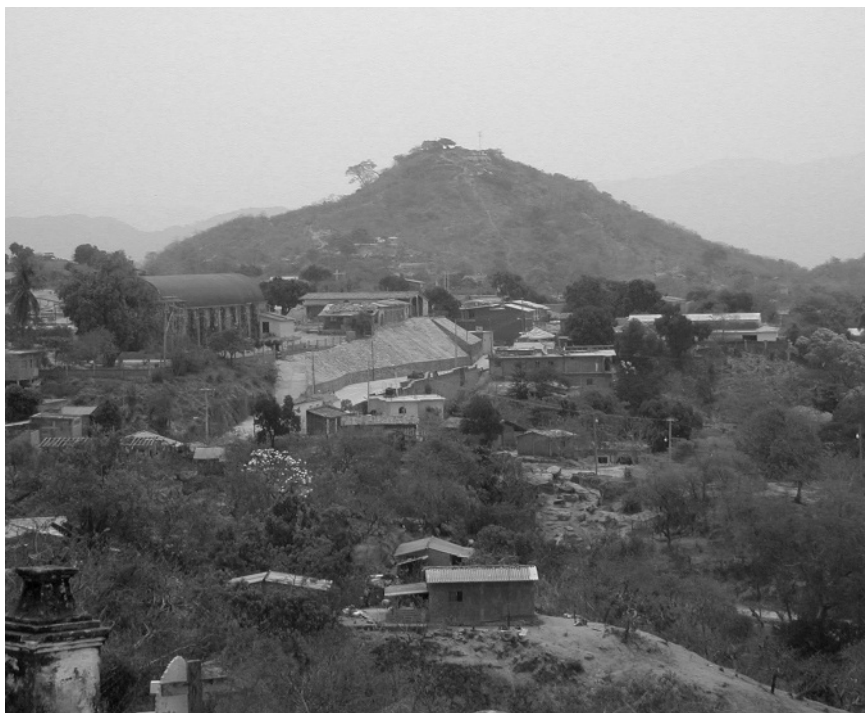


Figure 1.2 Photo of Tututepec showing the colonial church and the sacred hill of Yucu Dzaa (photograph by Arthur A. Joyce)

In February of 1522, Alvarado arrived in Tututepec with 200 Spanish soldiers and an army of thousands of Zapotecs from Tehuantepec. In describing Alvarado's arrival in the coastal city, Díaz del Castillo (1955:101–2) stated that “they were taken to reside in the most populated part of the town, where the ruler had his altars and his largest houses, and where the houses were very close together, and made of thatch . . .” [translation by the author]. Alvarado conquered Tututepec in early March and imprisoned the ruler, Lord Coaxintecuhli, who was forced to turn over thousands of *castellanos* of gold until his death in prison. After the conquest of the south coast, Cortés ordered Alvarado to establish a town near Tututepec, which became Villa Segura de la Frontera, the second municipality in New Spain. The settlement lasted less than one year. Unhappy with the hot climate and the ravages of disease, the Spanish settlers left for Antequera in the highlands, which later became Oaxaca City.

Oppression and epidemics rapidly decimated the coastal population. A major smallpox epidemic swept through the region in 1534, followed by measles in 1544. The population of the Tututepec Empire at the time of the conquest has been estimated at more than 250,000, yet only an estimated 4,500 people were recorded at Tututepec in the census of 1544 (Dahlgren 1990:42). Spanish friars and administrators began the suppression of indigenous religion and the conversion of people to Catholicism.

The Spanish Conquest of Mesoamerica is often portrayed as a profound historical rupture disconnecting indigenous peoples from their prehispanic history and culture. The colonial history of Mesoamerica is viewed as driven by forces beyond the control of indigenous people, such as disease and the religious, social, and economic changes imposed by the Spanish colonial authorities. Yet recent studies (e.g., Gruzinski 1989; Terraciano 2001) increasingly recognize indigenous people as active players in colonial history and show that important continuities exist from the prehispanic past up to the present day. Although Native Americans were at a disadvantage, especially due to the devastation suffered because of epidemics, indigenous people creatively incorporated elements of European culture into daily practice and at times actively resisted Spanish authorities.

In the region of Tututepec, for example, Mixtecs rose up in revolt against the Spaniards in 1523 and later in 1694. While these rebellions were unsuccessful, colonial authorities had only limited success in acculturating native peoples. The prehispanic past remained in the social memory of the people of Tututepec. In 1717, the native ruler presented the *Codex Colombino*, a late prehispanic historical manuscript, as evidence in a court case to establish the boundaries of the region under Tututepec's control. In the 1990s and 2000s, the people of Tututepec worked together to build

a community museum as a place to preserve and celebrate the history of the town with a focus on the prehispanic past. Despite difficulties in raising funds, and a major earthquake that destroyed parts of the town, the community worked with federal and state authorities to build and organize the museum, which was dedicated in 2004. I have come to know several of the community leaders involved in the museum project and have seen how their dedication, hard work, and desire to celebrate their rich history has resulted in the construction of the museum, which draws their past into the present and future, becoming an anchor for social memory and community identity. Rather than being solely at the mercy of distant forces, the native peoples of Oaxaca – Mixtecs, Zapotecs, Chatinos, and others – have been active participants in their histories both before and after the conquest.

This book examines the archaeology and history of the Central Valleys and the Mixtec highlands and coast of Oaxaca, which were inhabited by Mixtec, Zapotec, Chatino, and related peoples through the prehispanic period. I focus on these regions of Oaxaca because the indigenous groups that inhabited them were members of the Otomanguean language family and because these regions are the best understood archaeologically in Oaxaca. Archaeological research in these areas provides a rich picture of the impressive history and cultural achievements of ancient Oaxacan peoples. They were some of the first people in the Americas to domesticate plants and settle in permanent villages. Beginning at c.500 BC, some of Mesoamerica's earliest urban centers were founded in Oaxaca, including the spectacular mountaintop city of Monte Albán in the Oaxaca Valley and the coastal city of Río Viejo with its massive acropolis and carved-stone portraits of rulers. The history of Oaxaca's prehispanic ruling dynasties was recorded in the rich iconography of carved-stone monuments and painted murals. Oaxaca was where some of the earliest hieroglyphic writing in Mesoamerica has been discovered. The late prehispanic codices – painted screenfold manuscripts – record historical and religious narratives of the exploits of rulers and deities. Oaxaca's archaeological record also provides some of the richest evidence of the lives of common people through the prehispanic era. Archaeologists have excavated the houses of farmers and craftspeople, discovered the stone tools they used to work their fields, prepare food, and hunt; the pottery used to cook, serve, and store food; and the incense burners and figurines used to contact ancestors and deities as well as evidence for mortuary rituals preserved in burials and cemeteries.

To understand the prehispanic past, I draw on archaeological evidence along with studies of indigenous texts, early colonial Spanish documents, and iconographic analyses of prehispanic imagery. Each of these sources

of data show that the prehispanic Mixtec, Zapotec, and Chatino peoples shared a history of interaction including cultural interchange, trade, warfare, alliance, intermarriage, and migration. By the time of the Spanish Conquest, for example, the degree of interaction and intermarriage created a shared noble identity that cut across ethnolinguistic differences. Common people also interacted across regions through participation in markets that brought together people from great distances as well as through warfare and migration. The history of the Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and Chatinos is therefore a shared history, although as discussed throughout the book the nature of these interactions changed through time and archaeologists have debated their significance in understanding culture change.

Sources of Evidence

Scholars are fortunate to have available a variety of complementary sources of information on prehispanic Oaxaca, including research in archaeology, ethnohistory, ethnography, and linguistics. The most important source of data for most of the prehispanic period comes from the archaeological record. Oaxaca has been a focus of archaeological research since the late nineteenth century and over the last half-century has been the locus of some of the most influential projects addressing problems such as the origins and development of agriculture, early village life, urbanism, and social complexity (figure 1.3).

Archaeological research involves the reconstruction of the past through the study of material culture recovered through systematic survey, excavation, and laboratory studies. Of course, archaeological evidence cannot tell us directly about the lives, activities, and accomplishments of past peoples. Archaeologists use analogies drawn from the present as well as indigenous and Spanish written accounts of life during the prehispanic and early colonial periods to interpret the archaeological evidence in terms of past practices, beliefs, and social institutions (see Stahl 1993; Wylie 1985).

The research of ethnographers and linguists who study the indigenous peoples of present-day Oaxaca shows that, despite the profound disruptions of the Spanish Conquest, prehispanic traditions and social memories continue to shape the lives and understandings of indigenous communities. Research on living peoples is important for gaining insights into indigenous practices and systems of meaning, involving religion, cosmology, and agriculture. Archaeologists must be cautious in uncritically using ethnographic evidence for interpreting the archaeological record, however, due to the dramatic changes that occurred in indigenous culture over the last 500 years.

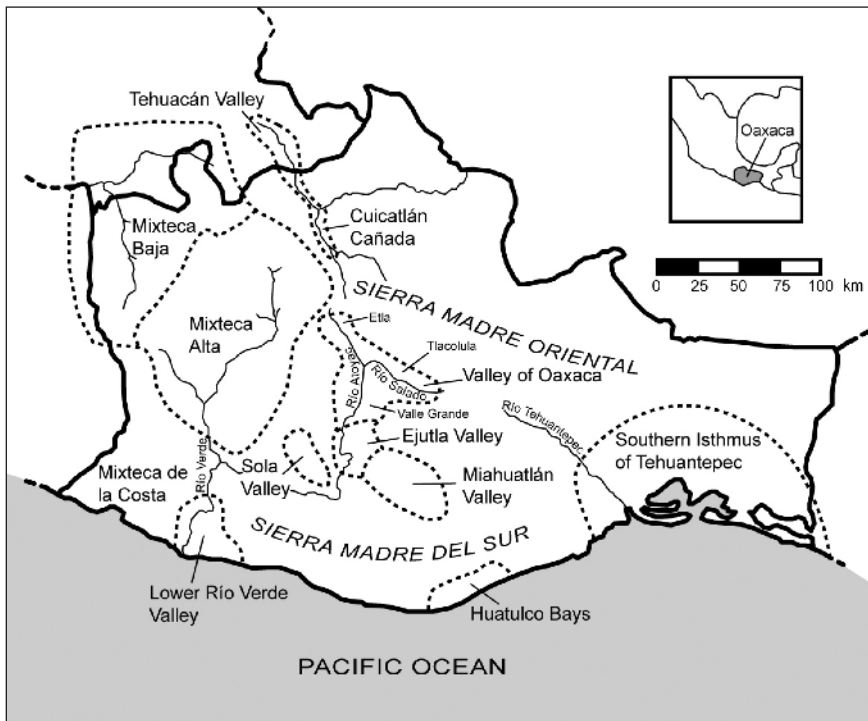


Figure 1.3 The Mexican state of Oaxaca showing geographical regions, rivers, and mountain ranges (drawing by Eric Berkemeyer)

The use of ethnographic information can be justified if there are historical sources that allow scholars to trace meanings and practices back to the time of initial encounters between Native Americans and Europeans and further back into the prehispanic period. Fortunately, Oaxaca has a rich ethnohistoric record that can strengthen analogies used in interpreting the archaeological record and, in the case of prehispanic writing systems, provide direct accounts of prehispanic life.

Ethnohistoric sources include Spanish and indigenous documents that provide information on native peoples and culture from the time of the Spanish Conquest up to the present. It is important to recognize, however, that colonial-period Spanish descriptions of indigenous society must be viewed critically with the goals and perspectives of European writers taken into account. A more significant source of observations on colonial-period culture comes from the writings of indigenous scholars recorded in both indigenous alphabetic and pictorial writing. These documents include a number

of maps (*mapas*), some painted on cloth (*lienzos*), that record community boundaries as well as genealogical records of ruling families, some of which extend back centuries into the prehispanic period. The *lienzos* and *mapas* make direct historical connections between the colonial period and a series of late prehispanic screenfold books, or codices, written on deer hide in the prehispanic Mixtec pictographic writing system.

The codices are immensely important documents because they record Mixtec religious and historical texts from before the Spanish Conquest. Though only portions of eight codices in prehispanic style survived destruction, this corpus represents the largest number of preconquest documents from anywhere in Mesoamerica. The histories recorded in the codices date back to the tenth century so that, in combination with early colonial documents like the *lienzos* and contemporary ethnography, scholars have a continuous written and oral record of indigenous culture dating back more than a millennium. Still earlier written inscriptions on stone, painted murals, and a variety of portable artifacts extend indigenous texts back more than two millennia, although the prehispanic writing systems that predate the codices are only beginning to be deciphered (Urcid 2001). One bias present in all of these ethnohistoric sources – early colonial Spanish and indigenous documents as well as prehispanic writing – is that they were all authored almost exclusively by social elites, primarily male, with little mention of the lives of common people.

The combination of ethnohistory, archaeology, ethnography, and linguistics provides scholars of prehispanic Oaxaca with multiple, complementary datasets that can be used to examine the history of ancient Oaxacan peoples. In the remainder of this chapter I review the history of research dealing with each of these sources of evidence.

Ethnohistory

The earliest interest in Mixtec, Zapotec, and Chatino culture by Europeans dates to the early colonial period and includes a diverse range of documents that were part of the Spanish program of conquest and colonization (Terraciano 2001:21–31, 67–71). Information collected by Spanish religious and political authorities in the sixteenth century includes the *Relaciones Geográficas*, legal documents, and several dictionaries and grammars of native languages recorded by Dominican friars. The *Relaciones Geográficas* were compiled toward the end of the sixteenth century by order of King Phillip II of Spain and consisted of a long series of questions put to indigenous nobles, including some that pertained to people's memories of the preconquest era. Dictionaries and grammars were compiled to aid in the conversion of natives

to Catholicism and have proven to be valuable sources of information on indigenous worldview and language at the time of the conquest. The most important linguistic sources of the sixteenth century included the works of Fray Francisco de Alvarado ([1593] 1962) and Fray Antonio de los Reyes ([1593] 1976) for Mixtec and Fray Juan de Córdova for Zapotec ([1570] 1989). Legal documents record a wide array of information including translations of native-language documents and trial records. One of the most important sources of evidence on contact-period Mixtec religious belief and practice comes from the records of the famous Inquisitorial investigations at the town of Yanhuitlán in the Mixteca Alta region (Hamann 2008a).

Writings on indigenous culture by Spanish scholars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are not as useful as those of the early colonial period. The works of chroniclers and official historians, particularly the two-volume history of Fray Francisco de Burgoa ([1674] 1989), often do not distinguish sources of data and intersperse stories and legends of prehispanic Oaxaca with Biblical references. Other colonial-period chroniclers, including Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, and Fray Diego Dúran, mention Oaxaca, but are more important as sources of data on life in other parts of Mexico.

Although colonial-period Spanish accounts of indigenous culture and history have proven to be useful, Oaxaca also has a rich record of indigenous documents from late prehispanic times into the colonial period. The most significant documents dealing with prehispanic religion and history are the Mixtec codices. While there were probably hundreds if not thousands of codices, only a handful survived the Spanish Conquest and most are now housed in European museums. Several of the Mixtec codices were painted prior to the Spanish Conquest (e.g., the codices *Vienna*, *Zouche-Nuttall*, *Selden*, and *Colombino-Becker*). Other codices were painted in the first few decades after Spanish contact, but are rendered in prehispanic pictographic conventions with little evidence of European influences, and were probably copies of earlier ones. The extant codices are visually stunning manuscripts painted in polychrome and consist of texts that are largely religious in nature, including versions of the Mixtec creation story (Monaghan 1990), as well as indigenous historical narratives that deal with events from the tenth century up to the Spanish Conquest (Byland & Pohl 1994; Jansen & Pérez 2005, 2007; Troike 1974).

A variety of early colonial pictographic and alphabetic documents in native languages exhibit the influence of Spanish colonization and in some instances may have involved collaborations of Spanish administrators and indigenous scribes. Although these documents reflect indigenous people's

encounters with the Spanish, they are still authored from a native perspective and, particularly in the case of sixteenth-century examples, demonstrate strong continuities with prehispanic writing and modes of representation, including the use of the prehispanic calendrical system (Terraciano 2001:15–65). These documents include the *lienzos* and *mapas* as well as a number of early colonial “codices.” Colonial-period codices differ from those in prehispanic style in that they show a juxtaposition of native and European conventions and are executed in ink on Spanish paper. Many of the earliest colonial documents were largely pictographic with alphabetic glosses, although the transition from pictographic to alphabetic writing was well under way by the latter half of the sixteenth century (Terraciano 2001: 48–65). By this time native scribes were taking over the role of recording legal documents often in indigenous languages and, increasingly through the colonial period, in Spanish.

The modern study of Mixtec, Zapotec, and Chatino ethnohistory began in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Castellanos 1989; Gay 1881; Seler 1904, 1908; Martínez Gracida 1888). These works included general histories of Oaxaca that were often inconsistent in identifying sources of data and combined contemporary oral histories with the use of colonial-period documents, particularly Spanish-language ones. Several researchers, however, began the study of indigenous documents, including *lienzos* and codices (J. C. Clark 1912; Starr 1908).

The first major breakthroughs in the study of Oaxaca’s ethnohistory was the research of the famous Mexican archaeologist Alfonso Caso, who was a pioneer in both Oaxaca’s archaeology and studies of the Mixtec codices. Caso used the glosses and genealogies on several early colonial pictorial manuscripts, especially the *Mapa de Teozacualco*, as “Rosetta stones” to establish links to the prehispanic codices. His work demonstrated that the codices were from the Mixteca and showed that the histories represented in the codices continued for many centuries from the prehispanic era into the early colonial period (Caso 1949). Caso (1956, 1964, 1977, 1979) made important advances in decipherment of the codices and in understanding the prehispanic calendar along with his monumentally important archaeological research discussed below.

Beginning in the 1950s, Caso’s research drew a large number of ethnohistorians and archaeologists to Oaxaca. Important ethnohistoric studies since the mid-twentieth century include work on early colonial Mixtec (Dahlgren 1990; Cook & Borah 1968; Spores 1984; Terraciano 2001) and Zapotec (Chance 1978; Whitecotton 1977, 1990; J. Zeitlin 2005) culture and society. Relatively little work has been done on Chatino ethnohistory (Greenberg 1981:47–80) perhaps due to the remoteness of contemporary

Chatino communities and a relative scarcity of colonial-period archival records. Scholars have increasingly moved away from a reliance on the official histories of the Spanish colonial authorities and toward archival sources and indigenous documents. Another important development has been the increasing number of indigenous scholars working on Oaxacan ethnohistory (e.g., de la Cruz 2002; Jansen & Pérez 2005, 2007). Indigenous scholars address early colonial and contemporary culture with an intimate knowledge of their culture and a concern for correcting biases in Western scholarship. Major advances in the study of indigenous pictographic writing have built on Caso's work and include Mary Elizabeth Smith (1973), Troike (1974), Byland and Pohl (1994), Pohl (1994), Jansen and Pérez (2007), and Monaghan (1990).

The recent advances in the study of Oaxacan ethnohistory provide a rich understanding of indigenous culture and social practices at the time of the Spanish Conquest. Ethnohistory gives us a crucial interpretive basis for understanding prehispanic culture, but it is ultimately the archaeological record that provides the bulk of the evidence on the prehispanic past.

Archaeology

The inspiring ruins of prehispanic communities like Monte Albán and Mitla have drawn scholars to Oaxaca for well over a century. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries scholars interested in the prehispanic past such as Guillermo Dupaix, Eduard Muhlenpfordt, Désirée Charnay, William Henry Holmes, and Eduard Seler visited the ruins of Monte Albán and Mitla, writing about the sites and speculating on their age and origins. The first archaeological work in Oaxaca was carried out in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by Leopoldo Batres at Mitla and Monte Albán and by Marshall Saville at Mitla, Monte Albán, Xoxocotlán, and Cuilapan.

The first large-scale, scientific archaeology began in the 1930s with the research of Alfonso Caso at the ancient Zapotec city of Monte Albán. During this period, the Mexican government began sponsoring archaeological projects to explore the prehispanic past and develop sites for tourism. In the 1920s, Caso began research on carved-stone monuments and in late 1931 began major excavations at Monte Albán. With the discovery in early 1932 of Tomb 7, one of the richest burials ever found in the Americas, Monte Albán burst onto the world stage. Caso continued fieldwork at Monte Albán with his colleagues Ignacio Bernal and Jorge Acosta until 1958 (Caso 1942, 1969; Caso & Bernal 1952; Caso et al. 1967). The Monte Albán project focused on excavating and reconstructing the civic-ceremonial center in

and around the Main Plaza, approximately 170 tombs were discovered, and stratigraphic excavations allowed for the development of a ceramic sequence for the Oaxaca Valley. Beginning in the late 1930s, Caso and his colleagues (e.g., Acosta & Romero 1992; Bernal 1948–9; Caso 1938) expanded their investigations into the Mixteca Alta north of the Valley of Oaxaca with excavations at prehispanic centers such as Yucuñudahui, Coixtlahuaca, Huamelulpan, and Monte Negro. Caso and Rubín de la Borbolla (1936) excavated the late prehispanic ceremonial center of Mitla in the eastern Oaxaca Valley. Caso and his collaborators established that the region's archaeological remains were the creations of the ancestors of Oaxaca's living indigenous peoples. Their research outlined the culture history of the Oaxaca Valley and the Mixteca Alta from the founding of Monte Albán around 500 bc to the time of the Spanish Conquest and demonstrated that highland Oaxaca gave rise to some of the most impressive cities in prehispanic Mesoamerica.

By the 1950s and 1960s, Oaxaca began to attract an international group of archaeologists. Excavations were carried out in the ceremonial and elite precincts of sites like Dainzú, Mitla, Yagul, and Zaachila in the Oaxaca Valley (e.g., Bernal & Oliveros 1988; Bernal & Gamio 1974; Paddock 1966a). Bernal (1965) began a surface survey of sites in the Oaxaca Valley, while initial reconnaissance, survey, and testing projects were begun in the Mixteca Alta (Spores 1969, 1972), Mixteca Baja (Paddock 1968), Miahuatlán Valley (Brockington 1973), and along the Pacific coast of Oaxaca (Brockington et al. 1974; Wallrath 1967). Most of the studies mentioned above also began the development of regional ceramic sequences.

An important trend of the 1960s and 1970s was the application of the methods and theories of processual archaeology to the study of ancient Oaxaca. The focus of research shifted from elite centers and culture history to a regional perspective that stressed cultural evolution and human adaptation. Two major projects in the Valley of Oaxaca exemplified the theoretical shift: the Oaxaca Human Ecology Project, directed by Kent Flannery, and the Valley of Oaxaca Settlement Pattern Project, directed by Richard Blanton and Stephen Kowalewski. The Oaxaca Human Ecology Project focused on understanding Archaic- and Formative-period ecology and cultural change, including changes in household and community form, sociocultural complexity, and subsistence patterns, extending the archaeological record of Oaxaca back to the Early Holocene (Flannery 1976a, 1986). Flannery and his collaborators developed a number of influential models dealing with the origins of agriculture, early village life, and the emergence of social complexity. The Settlement Pattern Project included surface collections and mapping of visible architectural features over an impressive

2,150 km², or 95 percent of the Valley of Oaxaca (Blanton 1978; Kowalewski et al. 1989), and provided interpretations of changing settlement patterns, economic systems, and political organization.

Since the 1970s, systematic regional survey coverage has been extended to the Mixteca Alta (Balkansky et al. 2000; Byland & Pohl 1994; Kowalewski et al. 2009; Plunket 1983), Mixteca Baja (Rivera 1999), lower Río Verde Valley (Joyce et al. 2001), southern Isthmus of Tehuantepec (J. Zeitlin 1978), Ejutla Valley (Feinman & Nicholas 1990), Cuicatlán Cañada (Redmond 1983), Miahuatlán Valley (Markman 1981), Sola Valley (Balkansky 2002), and into the mountains between the Oaxaca and Nochixtlán Valleys (Drennan 1989; Finsten 1996). These studies make Oaxaca perhaps the most intensively surveyed area in the world.

Other major projects since the 1970s focused on the cultural evolution of Monte Albán both from the perspective of the site itself and from a regional and interregional perspective. Marcus Winter (1974) of the Oaxaca Regional Center of the Mexican Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) examined changes in household form and organization through excavation of residences. Since the 1980s periodic excavation and salvage projects by INAH archaeologists have continued at Monte Albán (González Licón 2003; Martínez López 1998). In the eastern arm of the Oaxaca Valley, the Institute of Oaxacan Studies surveyed and excavated several high-status residences at Lambityeco to explore social developments during the collapse of Monte Albán at the end of the Classic period (Lind 2008; Lind & Urcid 1983; Paddock 1983). Spencer and Redmond (2001, 2004) examined the impact of Monte Albán on sites in the area of San Martín Tilcajete, finding evidence for conquest by Monte Albán at the end of the Formative period.

Interaction with Monte Albán, including the possibility of conquest, has been a major research question outside the Valley of Oaxaca. Research throughout the Oaxacan interior (e.g., Balkansky 2002; Feinman & Nicholas 1990; Spencer 1982) and along the Pacific coast (A. Joyce 1991a; Workinger 2002; R. Zeitlin 1990) has led to a major debate with some scholars arguing that Monte Albán dominated an empire extending over 20,000 km² (Marcus & Flannery 1996), while others maintain that evidence supports a more limited area of political domination (A. Joyce 2003; Workinger & Joyce n.d.; Zeitlin & Joyce 1999).

Beginning in the 1970s, the INAH sponsored a series of large-scale projects directed by Marcus Winter that focused on major Formative- and Classic-period urban centers in highland Oaxaca, including Yucuita and Huamelulpan in the Mixteca Alta and Cerro de las Minas in the Mixteca Baja. Like the earlier Monte Albán project, these investigations focused on

understanding sociopolitical developments, refining ceramic chronologies, and developing sites for tourism (Gaxiola 1984; Robles 1988; Winter 1989a). Other recent projects in the Mixteca Alta include Blomster's (2004) research on Formative-period Etlatongo, Pérez's (2006) excavations of Late Postclassic houses near Teposcolula, Balkansky's research on the Formative center of Tayata (Balkansky et al. 2008), and excavations by Spores and Robles (Spores 2005; Spores & Robles 2007) at the contact-period site of Yucundaa.

By far the largest and most important of the INAH projects was the Proyecto Especial Monte Albán 1992–4 (PEMA). In 1992, Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari created the Fondo Nacional Arqueológico (National Archaeological Fund) for the support of 12 projects designed to explore and protect major archaeological sites in Mexico, including Monte Albán (figure 1.4). The PEMA, under the direction of Marcus Winter, excavated dozens of residences and public buildings in and around the Main Plaza, recorded 21 tombs, conducted deep stratigraphic excavations, and produced a detailed map of the site (Martínez López et al. 2000; Winter 1994a, 1995). The results of the PEMA have led to a reappraisal of Monte Albán's history, particularly the early architecture of the Main Plaza and the site's collapse at c.AD 800 (e.g., Winter 2001, 2003).

Another major contribution of the PEMA was the work of the project's epigrapher, Javier Urcid, who recorded and analyzed several new carved-stone

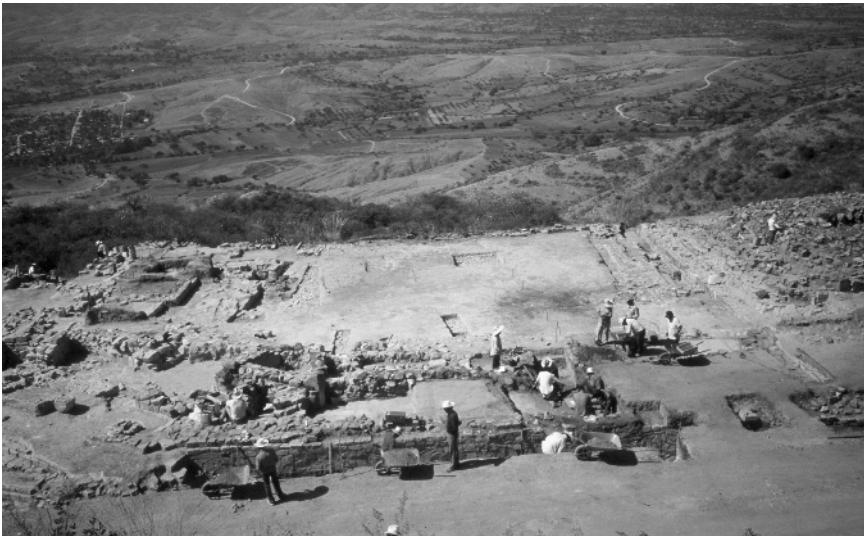


Figure 1.4 PEMA excavations at Monte Albán (photograph by Arthur A. Joyce)

monuments (Urcid 1994a). Since the 1980s, Urcid has worked on recording, comparing, and analyzing hieroglyphic inscriptions and iconography throughout Oaxaca. Building on the research of Caso (1965), Whittaker (1980), and Marcus (1992), Urcid (2001, 2005) uses comparative and contextual analyses to infer meanings from inscriptions and images. He has identified at least six separate though related writing systems for prehispanic Oaxaca. Other scholars making significant contributions to the study of writing and imagery include Orr (1997), Rivera (2000), and L. Rodríguez (1999).

The last two decades also witnessed an expansion of research in the Pacific coastal region of Oaxaca. Archaeological and paleoenvironmental research directed by Arthur Joyce and his collaborators (Barber 2005; A. Joyce 1991b, 2005; Joyce et al. 1998; King 2003; Levine 2007; Workinger 2002) has focused on the lower Río Verde Valley on the western coast. The lower Río Verde was probably occupied by Chatinos prior to the Late Postclassic, but they were largely displaced by Mixtecs at c.AD 1100. Research includes excavations at 18 sites, including the political centers of Río Viejo and Tututepec, and a full-coverage regional survey (figure 1.5).



Figure 1.5 Excavations at the site of Cerro de la Cruz in the lower Río Verde Valley (photograph by Arthur A. Joyce)

Paleoenvironmental studies examine the effects of highland land use on the human ecology of lowland peoples (Goman et al. 2005; Joyce & Mueller 1997). The research in the lower Verde is innovative in that it introduced poststructural theory to Oaxacan archaeology, including a concern with the social negotiation of political power, social identity, and how constructed landscapes embody power relations (e.g., Barber 2005; Barber & Joyce 2007; Forde 2006; A. Joyce 2006; Joyce et al. 2001; King 2003; Levine 2007; also see A. Joyce 2000, 2004 for poststructural studies of Monte Albán). Archaeological work in other parts of coastal Oaxaca includes INAH survey and excavation projects near Huatulco (Fernández & Gómez 1988) and Tehuantepec (Winter 2004a). The Zeitlins (J. Zeitlin 1978, 2005; R. Zeitlin 1990, 1993) have surveyed and excavated several sites in the southern Isthmus of Tehuantepec – a region that Zapotecs migrated into during the Late Postclassic period.

Building on the foundation provided by the work of Alfonso Caso, Oaxaca is now one of the most comprehensively studied regions of Mesoamerica, particularly the Valley of Oaxaca, the lower Río Verde Valley, and the Mixteca Alta (Figure 1.6).¹ In addition to the evidence provided by ethnohistory and archaeology, ethnographic and linguistic studies also provide important data on indigenous communities, beliefs, and practices that contribute to the interpretation of the archaeological record.

Ethnographic and linguistic sources

Although scholars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries collected myths and made observations on indigenous communities, the first intensive, systematic ethnographic work on the Mixtec and Zapotec was associated with the community-studies approach begun by Tax (1937) and refined by Redfield (1941) based on research among the Maya. The first long-term community-based ethnography in Oaxaca was Elsie Clews Parsons' (1936) comprehensive study of acculturation at Mitla. Her work is especially important for archaeologists because she sought to identify continuities and breaks with the prehispanic past by tracing community practices and traditions back through the ethnohistorical record. Another important early community study was de la Fuente's (1949) ethnography of the Zapotec village of Yalálag.

By the 1960s and 1970s, ethnographic studies of indigenous communities in Mesoamerica were increasingly influenced by Eric Wolf's concept of the "closed corporate community." In Oaxaca, ethnographic work increased as researchers considered and critiqued Wolf's ideas, focusing on issues of religion, economy, gender, and local government in Mixtec

Period	Valley of Oaxaca	Mixteca Alta	Mixteca Baja	Lower Rio Verde Valley	AD/BC
Late Postclassic	Chila	Natividad	Nuyoo	Yucudzaa	1500
Early Postclassic	Liobaa			Yugüe	1000
Late Classic	Xoo	Las Flores	Ñuiñe	Yuta Tiyoo	500
Early Classic	Peche			Coyuche	500
	Pitao	Ramos	Ñudée	Chacahua	AD/BC
Terminal Formative	Tani			Miniyua	Calibrated
Late Formative	Nisa			Minizundo	
	Pe				
Middle Formative	Danibaán	Yucuita	Yatilyuta/ Yododea	Charco	500
	Rosario	Cruz D	Yutañuusavi		
	Guadalupe	Cruz C			
Early Formative	San José	Cruz B			1000
	Tierras Largas	Cruz A			1500
	Espiridión				2000
Archaic					2000

Figure 1.6 Ceramic phases in Oaxaca

(Butterworth 1975), Zapotec (e.g., Chiñas 1973; Kearney 1972; Nader 1969), and Chatino (Bartolomé & Barabas 1996; De Cicco 1969; Greenberg 1981) communities. Studies of the economics of indigenous peoples included research on market systems (Cook & Diskin 1974), agriculture (Lees 1973), and on the production of crafts, especially pottery (Hendry 1992; Thieme 2001).

Several recent ethnographic studies have explicitly linked contemporary beliefs and practices to the colonial and prehispanic past (e.g., de la Cruz 2002). The most influential ethnographic work for archaeologists has been John Monaghan's (1995) research at Santiago Nuyoo in the Mixteca Alta. Monaghan's historical ethnographic approach combines ethnohistory with research on contemporary indigenous conceptions and practices related to community and the sacred. He traces continuities and transformations in

idioms like sacrifice, feasting, and community authority from the ethnographic present back to the early colonial period and even into late prehispanic times (Monaghan 1990). Research in historical linguistics has also been used by archaeologists to develop models on the divergence of ethnolinguistic groups (Josserand et al. 1984).

Oaxaca's ethnographic and linguistic record provides a means for understanding indigenous cultural principles and practices. In subsequent chapters, this view of indigenous belief and practice will provide a basis for developing relational analogies (Stahl 1993; Wylie 1985) that in conjunction with archaeological data can be used to make inferences about prehispanic society and culture. In the final section of this chapter, I discuss the theoretical approach I use to understanding the history of the prehispanic Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and Chatinos.

Theorizing Oaxaca's Ancient Past

Archaeology, ethnohistory, ethnography, and linguistics provide Oaxacan archaeologists with a variety of complementary sources of evidence to examine prehispanic history. Yet, as Wylie (1985, 1992) and others (e.g., Hodder 1999; Hodder & Hutson 2003:239–42) have pointed out, evidence is theory-laden so that an archaeologist's theoretical perspective as well as one's social and cultural settings inform interpretations of the past. Theory consists of the conceptual tools through which we define and categorize archaeological evidence, translate that evidence into understandings about past social and material worlds, and evaluate the utility of those understandings. It is therefore crucial to be explicit about theory. In this section, I discuss my theoretical perspective in relation to some of the other approaches used in contemporary Oaxacan archaeology. The complexities of archaeological interpretation mean that researchers often develop alternative interpretations of evidence depending on the analogies they use and on the theoretical approaches that inform their work. If carried out openly and respectfully, these debates can help to drive research and theoretical developments that lead to better understandings of the past. Not surprisingly, in Oaxaca, archaeologists disagree on many aspects of the archaeological record ranging from the timing and nature of early complex societies to the significance and intensity of warfare, and many of these debates are discussed in this book.

I examine the prehispanic past of the Mixtec, Zapotec, Chatino, and related peoples of Oaxaca from a perspective that considers history as the interplay between the lives of people and broader patterns of social relations,

material conditions, cultural meanings, and traditions. The approach I take to understanding the past is an outgrowth of developments in social theory over the past 30 years, particularly as informed by poststructural and feminist thinkers (e.g., Bourdieu 1977; Butler 1993; Foucault 1977; Giddens 1979; Latour 2005; Sewell 1992). Archaeologists influenced by these theories have moved away from the grand metanarratives of cultural evolution and systems theory and toward a more contingent, fractured, and contested view of society and history (e.g., Hodder & Hutson 2003; Janusek 2004; Joyce et al. 2001; Pauketat 2001, 2007).

Though it would seem logical to view history in a general sense as created by the actions of people, ironically, until recently, archaeologists have largely excluded the lives of people from historical understandings. Most archaeological theory of the first half of the twentieth century was both understated and focused on issues involving chronology and the spatial definition of past archaeological “cultures” viewed as a collection of normative ideas (Spaulding 1985). Norms were seen as reflected in the distribution of different suites of artifacts across space, such that the lives and actions of people were often minimized in archaeological explanations of the past.

With the emergence of processual archaeology in the 1960s, archaeologists rejected the normative approach and developed a theoretical perspective that united ecological functionalism with cultural evolutionary theory (Willey & Sabloff 1993:214–97). Processual archaeologists sought to remodel archaeology as a science based on positivist philosophy with the goal of developing general, even universal, theories of the past (Binford 1962; Watson et al. 1971). The lives, actions, and identities of people in this framework again were minimized, as were intrasocietal tensions and conflicts. People as well as social institutions were seen as little more than functional components that contributed to the maintenance of an equilibrium state for the overall social or ecological system (Binford 1968; Butzer 1982; Flannery 1968). Only elites had power to effect social change in their role as decision-makers who monitor the system and initiate changes when needed. Material conditions (e.g., population-resource balances, energy storage for dampening resource fluctuations, and so on) were viewed as distinct from, privileged over, and largely determinant of, cultural meanings. Cultures changed as a result of systemic responses to external factors like warfare or environmental stress, or internal ones, such as the system becoming too integrated and centrally controlled, thereby destroying the natural buffering effects of hierarchy (Flannery 1972). When inherent thresholds were reached in the functioning of a cultural or ecological system, the system could evolve or devolve (Flannery 1972; Spencer 1982). Cultural evolution (or devolution) progressed (or regressed) through a series of set “levels”

or “stages” of cultural complexity, the most popular formulation being Elman Service’s (1962) scheme of bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states. While archaeologists acknowledged a degree of historical variation, it was assumed that all cultures at any one level of cultural evolution shared fundamental structural and functional features. Analogies with ethnographically known cultures from the same evolutionary stage could therefore be used to fill in the explanatory gaps left by the archaeological record.

Over the past 20 years archaeologists have moved away from ecological systems theory, struggling to incorporate models of intrasocietal difference and conflict into archaeological theory and broadening or rejecting cultural evolutionist categories (e.g., Dobres & Robb 2000; Hodder & Hutson 2003; Janusek 2004; Johnson 1999; Pauketat 2001, 2007; Yoffee 2005). For example, concepts like heterarchy that focus attention on social distinctions that are unranked or that have the potential to be ranked in multiple ways have broadened views of social complexity beyond a focus on hierarchy (Ehrenreich et al. 1995). Archaeologists have worked to incorporate cognition, ideas, and meaning into theories of social change in ways that move theory beyond the earlier focus on ecology, economy, and a narrow materialism (e.g., Hodder 1982; Hodder & Hutson 2003; Renfrew & Zubrow 1994; Robb 1999). Approaches to cultural evolution have recognized a greater diversity of societal types and pathways to complexity (e.g., Blanton et al. 1996; Earle 1997). The utility of developing general theories of society and history as exemplified by systems theory and cultural evolutionism has been increasingly questioned. Archaeologists are recognizing that historical processes involve an interplay of social and ecological relations at a variety of temporal and spatial scales (Pauketat 2001). Archaeologists have also moved away from positivism and embraced a diversity of scientific methodologies (e.g., Hodder 1999; Watson et al. 1984; Wylie 2000).

Despite these trends, archaeological theory today involves a range of positions with regard to social theory, epistemology, and philosophies of science (e.g., Dobres & Robb 2000; Hegmon 2003; Hodder 2001; Hodder & Hutson 2003; Johnson 1999; A. Joyce 2008a; Leonard 2001; Pauketat 2001; Schiffer 2000; Spencer 1990; VanPool & VanPool 1999) that create productive tensions, which drive research and theoretical development. Many of the recent trends and debates in archaeological theory have been inspired by considerations of poststructural theories of practice (Bourdieu 1977; de Certeau 1984; Giddens 1979; Latour 2005; Ortner 1984, 1996; Sewell 1992) and power (Foucault 1977; Giddens 1979; Gramsci 1971), feminist theory (Butler 1990, 1993; Geller and Stockett 2006; Moore 1994), subaltern studies of the role of non-elites in political processes (J. C. Scott 1990), materiality or the study of the interconnectedness of materials and

ideas (D. Miller 2005; Tilley et al. 2006), and the methodologies of hermeneutics or the science of interpretation (Collingwood 1946; Gadamer 1975; Hodder 1999; Shanks & Tilley 1992). These theoretical programs view social differences and the affiliations, tensions, and conflicts that arise from differently positioned actors as fundamental for understanding historical processes. They represent a more humanistic perspective than many previous approaches to the past in that the complex, varied lives of people take on greater significance in historical understandings. The theoretical perspective that I use to examine the prehispanic history of Oaxaca draws on these theoretical developments in the social sciences, which I discuss in more detail in the remainder of this section.

Poststructural social theory endeavors to bring people and cultural meanings into understandings of society and history (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1979; Latour 2005; Ortner 1984, 1996; Sewell 1992). Rather than focusing on the functioning and evolution of social groups, poststructural theories view the recursive relationship between people and the broader social and historical setting as fundamental. The argument that there is a single superior methodology in science such as logical positivism is also rejected because of the complexity and diversity of phenomena that must be examined by archaeologists. Given the importance of interpreting cultural meanings, hermeneutic methodologies have increasingly been embraced (Hodder 1999; Shanks & Tilley 1992:105–9). Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation, which is a more appropriate methodology for examining the multiple and often contested meanings of materials and practices in the past. Scientific methodologies more closely aligned with positivism are still useful in addressing material processes where explanations are more tightly constrained by observation (e.g., the presence of stone-tool cut marks on bones), but once meanings need to be inferred (e.g., the meanings associated with the cutting of bone), hermeneutic methodologies are more appropriate. Archaeologists have increasingly recognized that observation is theory-laden and reject views that data are objective and can be separated from theory (Wylie 1992). Thus, rather than a single rigid methodology to evaluate our ideas about the past, many archaeologists now embrace a variety of methodologies whose application is dependent on the nature of the phenomena under study (e.g., physical versus cultural processes; past versus present; historically contingent versus universal processes).

Practice, structure, agency, and subjectivity

In understanding the dynamics of social life, the practice theory of Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens (1979,

1984) have been particularly influential in archaeology. These theories view the dynamics of social life as emanating from the recursive relationship between the practices of people and the broader social relations, structural schema, and material conditions that constitute society and culture. Practices refer to what people do and what they do is socially embedded, such that practice cannot be considered apart from the structural setting of cultural ideas, rules, and material relations. This is what Giddens (1979:5) refers to as the duality of structure. Structure is both the medium and the outcome of the reproduction of practices. What people do creates patterns of social relations and these patterns in turn imply cultural rules about how the social and material world is defined and understood. For example, as modern Zapotecs contact their ancestors through cave ceremonies, they contribute to broader cultural schemas concerning people's relationships with ancestors and the divine. These schemas include both the nature of ancestors and the divine, along with understandings about the power and drama of the material setting involving things like sacred caves, incense, and ritual performance. These understandings in turn are learned by people and become part of their social persona.

The focus on social embeddedness differentiates practice from the way that processual archaeologists conceptualized behavior. In processual approaches, behavior was seen as the actions of individuals or groups responding in rational and usually adaptive ways to external social and/or ecological conditions. Practice theory considers how human subjects and the broader social, cultural, and material settings are mutually constitutive. Cultural principles along with material and non-material resources construct who people are as cultural subjects – their beliefs, knowledge, dispositions, identities, and personhood – that is, their subjectivities, while people's actions in turn reproduce or change structure.

Structure therefore consists of cultural principles and resources (Sewell 1992). Cultural principles are the rules of social life – generalizable procedures that guide our actions in daily life. For ancient Mixtecs, Zapotecs, and Chatinos these principles included rules of etiquette, farming procedures, ritual proscriptions, and the complex symbolism associated with rulership, deities, ancestors, and the landscape, for example. These principles are generalizable in that they can be applied to a variety of contexts beyond the specific conditions in which they were first learned or are typically applied. Cultural principles may be formal prescriptions such as written laws, but more often are informal and not always discursively or even consciously understood. These principles are virtual in the sense that they are implied in regularized practices, in the patterns of social activity within groups that constitute social systems. Principles like etiquette, grammar, and bodily

comportment, for example, are learned primarily through observation rather than formal instruction.

Resources are both human and non-human. Human resources include materials (e.g., physical strength, an army) and ideas (e.g., the special knowledge of a ritual specialist). Non-human resources include naturally occurring and manufactured materials such as a sacred cave, a maize plant, or a king's scepter.

It is important to recognize that cultural principles and resources are mutually intertwined, which is what we refer to as materiality (D. Miller 2005; Tilley et al. 2006). For example, ritual knowledge is both a resource that ritual specialists draw on in ceremonial performances, and a set of cultural principles that define things like the relationship between people and the divine, and the proper way to petition deities and ancestors. Material resources are the products of cultural schemes in that the activation of material things as resources and the determination of their value and social power are dependent on the cultural principles that inform their use (Sewell 1992:12). Thus, the value of ornamental shell or jade in ancient Oaxaca was a combination of their material properties and the culturally constructed meanings that were given to these properties. A cave is considered sacred because of a combination of material features like how it projects beneath the surface of the earth and its darkness, along with the meanings that have been given to these properties as passageways to the divine world of deities and ancestors. Resources in turn affect cultural schemas in the sense that, to be sustained over time, principles are reinforced and validated by the accumulation of resources resulting from their enactment. Poststructural theory therefore rejects the dualism between materialism and idealism; instead, material resources and cultural principles are seen as mutually constituting, which is what we refer to as materiality. Poststructuralism contrasts with the theories of processual archaeology, which view material conditions as distinct from and causally privileged relative to the ideational realm.

Structure, or mutually reinforcing rule-resource sets that are durable to some extent in time and space, are internalized in people, constituting them as human subjects with particular knowledge and dispositions. Bourdieu (1977) termed these interiorized dispositions "habitus," which he saw as systems of durable, transposable principles. Habitus includes interests, worldviews, recipes for action, and schemes for evaluating and perceiving the world. These interiorized principles and resources are mobilized in practice as they guide and empower human activity, which in turn reproduces social systems and structure. People living under similar conditions share a similar habitus so that members of particular status groups, genders, ethnic groups, or communities share similar dispositions. At the time of

the Spanish Conquest, for example, nobles in Oaxaca shared a habitus that crosscut gender, community, and ethnic affiliations. Bourdieu has been criticized, however, for viewing habitus as largely unconscious, leaving little room for creative action that might transform society (Ortner 1996:11; Sewell 1992).

Giddens' (1979, 1984) theory of structuration provides more room for intention and creative human action with the potential to be socially transformative. He locates internalized structures not just in the unconscious, but in what he terms practical and discursive forms of consciousness. Practical consciousness, which overlaps with Bourdieu's concept of habitus, consists of the common-sense knowledge drawn on in the habitual activities of everyday life that reproduce many aspects of the social world. For example, ancient Oaxacan peoples would have drawn on these tacit stocks of knowledge in carrying out many daily farming and food-preparation activities – activities that were certainly conscious, but were not discursive in that they were not overtly analyzed or discussed as part of a broader understanding of society.

Yet, as people live, they reflect on their actions and build understandings of the conditions of their worlds that are discursive. It is this discursive penetration of the conditions of existence that allows people to creatively interact with their social world. The boundary between practical and discursive consciousness is fluid, and experience with the world can open up realms of social life to discursive penetration just as things that were once questioned can become taken for granted. In a stark example from the early colonial-period idolatry trials at Yanhuítlán, the sacrifice of slaves by Mixtec nobles led slaves to question the sacred qualities of human sacrifice (Terraciano 2001:272). Both practical and discursive knowledge is always situated knowledge that is limited and incomplete; it is a product of the particular social position and experiences of a subject. Empowered with knowledge and the resources that it mobilizes, people can transform their worlds.

As discussed by Sahlins (1981), however, the entirety of structure is never present or knowable in the conjuncture of the particular conditions of everyday actions and interactions. For example, in the cave ceremony discussed above, things such as the ritual powers of the priest, the presence of deities and ancestors, and the sense of being inside the sacred earth would be foregrounded, while other aspects of structure, like knowledge of how to make pottery or the layout of one's house, would not. Sahlins terms the conditions, principles, and resources that are activated in any setting of interaction the "structure of the conjuncture." Because of the particular structures of the conjuncture, the outcome of action is often unintended due to the incompleteness of knowledge, unacknowledged conditions, and

the unpredictable outcomes of social action. For example, early colonial Spanish attempts to convert Mixtecs to Christianity resulted in only partial, incomplete, and ambiguous conversions (Terraciano 2001:361). Mixtecs understood Christian concepts and practices in their own terms so, for example, Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, came to resemble a female creator deity.

Poststructural theory therefore differs from archaeological theory of the 1960s and 1970s in that it involves the development of a theory of the subject (Hodder & Hutson 2003:90–124; Meskell & Joyce 2003; Moore 1994; Shanks & Tilly 1992; Stockett & Geller 2006). An important concept used to explore subjectivity is identity, which describes people's affiliations with various complex, nested, overlapping, and partially contradictory collectivities (Janusek 2004; Meskell 2001). Identity is defined in relation to collectivities based on shared memory, place, ancestry, gender, age, occupation, religion, or other cultural practices. Since a collectivity "occupies a unique place within an encompassing sociopolitical order, affiliation with it embodies a distinct network of power relations" (Janusek 2004:17). People are able both practically and strategically to foreground or, conversely, to conceal different elements of identity depending on social circumstances. For example, in ancient Oaxaca, rulers used language, dress, and ritual practices to at times foreground a distinct "international" identity that connected them to likeminded nobles throughout Mesoamerica, whereas in other contexts they acted as the "father or mother" of the community, foregrounding affiliations with their subjects. At times the intersection of these local and "international" identities embodied unresolved conflicts and social tensions (Barber 2005; A. Joyce 2006). People therefore embody an intersection of identities that never represent a unified, consistent, fixed, and integrated whole.

Identity and other elements of subjectivity are never fixed within an atomized individual but are continuously produced through dwelling in and experiencing the world. As shown by Judith Butler (1990, 1993), even sex and other material aspects of the body are culturally constructed, although those constructions are constrained by the materiality of the body. In other words, rather than sex as a male–female duality that is natural, fixed, and pre-discursive, Butler (1990:7) argues that this dualistic view of sex is a product of western gender constructs. In contrast, amongst the Late Postclassic Aztec, Rosemary Joyce (2000) has shown that adult male and female heterosexual genders were crafted from the undifferentiated gender potential of infancy through the labor of adults. Another adult gender category consisted of the sexually abstinent ritual specialists of the temple, both young men and women. This example also shows how identity categories

never stand alone; here gender, age, and the disciplining of labor intersect in the development of Aztec personhood. Subjectivity therefore is embodied in bodily practices, comportment, expressions, and ornamentation (R. Joyce 2000, 2004a; Meskell & Joyce 2003). As Rosemary Joyce (2004a:84) defines it, embodiment is the “shaping of the physical person as the site of the experience of subjectivity, a shaping that is simultaneously the product of material and discursive actions.”

Butler (1993) argues that embodied identities are enacted via practices that cite preexisting cultural principles. These performances are the fluid media through which identities are “reflexively shaped within specific social settings” (R. Joyce 2000:7). Yet such performances of identity are never entirely closed, leaving room for agency and both the transformation and the reproduction of those principles. Within bodily practices, Connerton (1989) contrasts incorporating practices, which are similar to Butler’s citational performances, with inscribed practices, depending on the media through which they are enacted and transcribed (see R. Joyce 2000, 2004a). Incorporating practices are enacted on and through the materiality of the body such as gestures, expressions, and comportment. Inscribed practices transcribe meanings and memory into more permanent material media such as carved-stone monuments, figurines, and the architectural layout and symbolism of ceremonial centers in ancient Mesoamerica (Ashmore & Sabloff 2002; A. Joyce 2004; R. Joyce 2000). Connerton suggests that inscribed practices can involve attempts to foreclose alternative meanings, while incorporating practices tend to be more open and potentially generative of new meanings. Connerton (1989) also stresses commemorative ceremonies in the production of social identities and communal memory. Commemorative ceremonies re-enact prototypical persons and events, which can be understood as either historical or mythical and which represent enactments of a master narrative that becomes a focus of communal identity. For example, sacrificial rituals in Oaxaca reenacted the cosmic creation and defined the relationship between people and the divine world of deities and ancestors (Monaghan 1990).

Who people are as cultural subjects (subjectivity) and what they do (practice) is therefore both enabled and constrained, but not entirely determined by the structural setting. I use the concept of agency to consider the relationship between peoples’ subjectivities and practices, and the broader social, cultural, and material setting. Of all the concepts that have been adopted by archaeologists from social theory, agency has been the most widely defined and debated (Dobres & Robb 2000). Perhaps as a reaction to the holism of systems theory, archaeologists have tended to equate agency with western notions of individualism and economic rationality (Johnson

1989). Archaeologists from a variety of theoretical persuasions have used agency to mean the strategic actions of rational actors, as in agent-based models or optimal foraging theory (Kohler & Gummerman 2000). Agency has also been used for the aggrandizing actions of ruling elites (Clark & Blake 1994; Flannery 1999) and conversely for resistance to rulers and dominant ideologies (Shackel 2000). Finally, agency has often been equated with power, as in the ability to effect change in society. Another debate surrounding the use of agency in archaeology is whether agency exists at the level of individuals (Flannery 1999) or groups (Gillespie 2001).

I believe that much of the debate over agency in archaeology misses the point at the heart of practice theory – the recursivity of social life and the inseparability (duality) of the subject and society, including both their ideational and material dimensions. As Sherry Ortner (1996:10–11) describes broader debates over agency among social theorists:

The debates tend to be posed in such a way that one appears to have to choose between total constructionism and total voluntarism, between the Foucauldian discursively constructed (and subjected) subject, or the free agent of Western fantasy. It is the argument of a practice theory framework, however, that this choice is both unnecessary and wrong, which brings us back, finally, to the point of departure: the construction of agency within practice theory, and its potential for resolving this problem.

I view agency as involving people's actions – a continuous flow of conduct in the world – and how their actions are enabled and constrained by the structural setting (see Giddens 1979:55–6). Agency therefore looks back and forth between the subject and structure, focusing on the ways in which cultural principles and resources constrain and enable people's conduct in the world both externally and as internalized dispositions that constitute the subjectivity of the actor. Latour (2005) extends this relational view of agency to include networks of people, ideas, objects, animals, and divine beings, amongst others. For example, in the cave ceremony described above agency involves the network of ritual specialists, audience, ancestors, deities, the sacred cave, ritual knowledge and belief, and ritual paraphernalia such as incense burners that are activated in the ceremony. Again quoting Ortner (1996:12):

The challenge is to picture indissoluble formations of structurally embedded agency and intention-filled structures, to recognize the ways in which the subject is part of larger social and cultural webs, and in which social and cultural "systems" are predicated upon human desires and projects . . . [S]ocial

life is precisely social, consisting of webs of relationship and interaction between multiple, shifting interrelated subject positions, none of which can be extracted as autonomous “agents”; and yet at the same time there is “agency” . . .

Ortner (1996) views agency as the skill, intention, knowledge, and intelligence through which actors play the “serious games” of social life. The games of life are multiple, and their rules and goals, as well as relevant categories of actors and the significance assigned to certain acts and outcomes, are culturally organized and constructed as what Holland and her colleagues (1998:522) have called “figured worlds.” The game transcends structure with structure framing and producing the rules of the game, but with people who can reflect on their circumstances and “imagine or fantasize escapes and alternatives” (Ortner 1996:14). Agency therefore cannot be universalized as economic rationality or the desire for power and prestige, but must be contextualized in history, culture, and ultimately the specific setting of social activity.

Structural properties are neither rigid nor inflexible such that Ortner’s “serious games” involve constant negotiation and struggle over cultural principles and resources. Practices are always negotiations among the variably positioned actors who embody different subjectivities characterized by varying identities, interests, emotions, knowledge, outlooks, and dispositions. As discussed by Pauketat (2001:80), “practices are always ‘negotiations’ to the extent that power, the ability to constrain an outcome, pervades fields of action and representation . . . Any form of this practical, negotiative process of becoming is a historical process, and its explanation can only be made with reference to the genealogy of practices or the tradition of negotiations.” Likewise, Hodder (1987:6) argues that “societies might best be seen as non-static negotiations between a variety of changing and uncertain perspectives.” Culture and society therefore are never integrated wholes as in systems perspectives, but always contain polyvalent and potentially contestable symbols, meanings, and actions.

Power, knowledge, and negotiation

Fundamental to the outcome of social negotiations is power. Although early poststructuralist thought (esp. Bourdieu 1977) continued the tendency of social theorists to focus on power as domination, recent considerations of feminist and subaltern scholarship have focused greater attention on the ways in which structure and power are negotiated, contested, and at times resisted (Joyce et al. 2001; Ortner 1996; J. C. Scott 1985, 1990). Power is

now recognized as encompassing relationships that are broader than domination and social control. This view is reflected in the distinction between *power to* and *power over* (Miller & Tilley 1984). *Power over* refers to domination, while *power to* refers to the complex ways in which cultural knowledge constructs people as cultural subjects. *Power to* encompasses power as domination, but it also includes the positive, productive, and creative aspects of cultural knowledge that create social identities and that people draw on in practice.

Foucault (1970, 1972, 1980, 1986) explores the relationship between knowledge and power, particularly the ways in which cultural knowledge, what he calls discourse, constructs human subjects. Foucault urges us not to view discourse as entirely descending from the application of the strategic power of a dominant group, as has been assumed by earlier views. For Foucault, power and knowledge are inseparable. All societies are permeated and constituted by relations of power, which cannot be established or implemented without the production and circulation of knowledge. Discourses validate certain kinds of knowledge, social relations, and subjects as legitimate or true, while excluding others. Historical periods are marked by dominant discourses that construct particular historically contingent subject positions and power relations. Thus, in ancient Oaxaca, notions of sacrifice defined the relations between people, deities, and ancestors, and distinctions based on gender, status, and occupation were in part defined by one's relations with the divine as expressed and enacted through sacrificial rituals (A. Joyce 2000, 2008b). As Foucault (1980:98) states, "it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified as individuals." The person is therefore an effect of power and at the same time is the element of its articulation.

Power in this sense is intrinsic to society and is manifest in cultural institutions, discourses, and social relations (Janusek 2004:13). No one is outside the reach of power but, as discussed by Giddens (1979), Ortner (1984, 1996), and others (Janusek 2004; Joyce et al. 2001; J. C. Scott 1976) to varying degrees, consciously or not, people can transform their social worlds. In this sense, power can be defined as the transformative capacity of an agent to achieve an outcome in the world which can either reproduce or change the social and structural setting (Giddens 1979:88–94). The transformative capacity of agents is determined by the compromise struck between their creativity, skill, and discursive penetration of the world along with structural principles and the properties of resources that create asymmetries in access to both material and non-material resources. All people, therefore, have some power in the sense that their practices serve to

produce or reproduce social relations, cultural principles, and resource distributions. Power therefore involves what Giddens (1979:149) terms the dialectics of control, meaning that all participants in any interaction manifest some degree of power.

Foucault's prescriptions for the study of power are important in broadening our views of social relations beyond domination, but he goes too far in underplaying the ideas, institutions, and practices that actively produce and legitimate the social position of dominant groups as well as the ways in which subordinates can penetrate and resist domination. Scholars influenced by Marxist thought have explored aspects of structure and material practices that reproduce domination as the interface between hegemony and ideology (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992:27–30; Gramsci 1971:328; Janusek 2004:12–16). Gramsci (1971) defined hegemony as the unquestioned, naturalized, and universal taken-for-granted elements of a cultural field that reproduce domination. Yet domination is never total, and as knowledgeable actors, people always have some degree of discursive penetration of their social conditions. Where people penetrate structures of domination, hegemony is threatened and there is an opening for the contestation and negotiation of domination.

When aspects of a dominant discourse are opened to discursive penetration, ideologies develop to legitimate the social order that reproduces domination. Ideologies are cultural principles that create, maintain, and justify the interests of groups (Giddens 1979:184–90). As discussed by Giddens (1979:193–5), ideology operates to conceal sectional interests in three ways: (1) Ideology can represent sectional interests as universal. For example, the ancient Mesoamerican belief that nobles are the people's conduit to the gods means that it is in everyone's interest to support the nobility. (2) Ideology can deny or transmute structural contradictions. The Mesoamerican idea of reciprocal obligations between nobles and commoners denied unequal material transactions between them. (3) Ideology can naturalize or reify the present, meaning that current conditions are an unchangeable aspect of the cosmos. For example, Mesoamericans believed that the first ancestors of the nobility originated from sacred births, which fundamentally differentiated nobles from common people. Like the boundary between practical and discursive consciousness, the boundary between hegemony and ideology is fluid and can vary as people confront social conditions and become more or less aware of domination as domination. While people embody domination in bodily practices such as being deferential to those in authority, dominant ideologies are often inscribed in more permanent media as a way to foreclose alternative ideologies that contest domination (Connerton 1989). As argued by Rosemary Joyce (2000),

practices of inscription therefore draw attention to sites of social tension and contestation and may involve practices that are highly charged. Throughout this book, I will describe ways in which architecture, space, imagery, and ritual were used to communicate ideologies in response to social tensions and differences that potentially threatened domination.

Recognizing that power is socially negotiated means that dominant ideologies are historically constituted through the ongoing interaction of people of different social positions such as elites and commoners, women and men, urban and rural dwellers, and people of the core and periphery. Dominant ideologies are not simple reflections of elite interests imposed on subordinates. The outcome of the negotiation of power may bolster the social position of elites, but it usually does so in ways that reflect some degree of compromise resulting from the interactions of varied social actors. For example, during the early colonial period, Spanish authorities tried to use indigenous idioms to teach Catholic doctrine so as to make it more accessible and palatable, which in turn contributed to the maintenance of many traditional beliefs and practices by Native Americans (Spores 1984:142–64; Terraciano 2001:252–317; J. Zeitlin 2005:89–118). Attempts to convert indigenous peoples to Christianity were characterized by a long and complex history of negotiation and struggle. Subordinates always have some degree of penetration of domination, which can be actualized by engaging with elites in the construction of dominant discourses, by seeking independence from institutions and practices of domination, or by resisting domination (Joyce et al. 2001; Joyce & Weller 2007). Basing their research on historical case studies, Abercrombie and his colleagues (1980) argue that subordinates at times penetrate dominant ideologies to a great extent. In these instances, the dominant ideology may serve more as a means to create social cohesion among elites than a way to justify inequality to subordinates.

Social systems are fragmented and contested to varying degrees such that there is never complete closure in any system of domination and subordinates may develop alternative ideologies that contest the dominant one. This theoretical position contrasts with processual traditions that tend to view societies as functional wholes with elites making decisions for the good of the group. James Scott (1985, 1990) shows how resistance is expressed in a variety of forms both discursively and non-discursively. Although resistance may occur in the form of active rebellion, more frequently it is expressed in subtle ways that do not directly confront authority. These subtle, although important, forms of resistance are what J. C. Scott (1990) terms the “hidden transcript” and are usually disguised or conducted outside the view of elites or their functionaries. Examples of the “hidden transcript”

include distancing behavior such as humor and irony directed at dominant individuals, institutions, or ideas, which is oppositional in form if not in content (Goldstein 2003). Other examples of hidden transcripts include private rituals that challenge or bypass authority and foot dragging or withholding payments to rulers and ruling institutions in the form of labor or resources (Giddens 1979:145–50; J. C. Scott 1990). Subordinates are often limited to expressing resistance in subtle hidden forms because of the possibility of reprisals. It may also be difficult to invest in and organize more overt and challenging forms of protest because people are caught up in the daily struggle to make a living. Resistance can be undermined by geographical and cultural divisions that hinder the ability of non-elites to recognize their mutual subordination or to act in concert. Even under highly repressive and coercive forms of domination, people can at least express resistance passively. The frequency of peasant rebellions in recent history, however, indicates that people will at times express resistance overtly and at great risk in the face of coercion by dominant groups. A number of early colonial-period rebellions against the Spanish occurred in Oaxaca, for example.

Dominant ideologies provide openings for negotiation, contestation, and resistance because they usually include some form of social contract that delineates obligations of ruling authorities to their subjects. Authority can be more overtly contested if subordinates appear to affirm the dominant ideology by claiming that the social contract is not being properly enacted. For example, in ancient Oaxaca, commoners could have protested exploitation or oppression at the hands of authorities by claiming that nobles were not meeting their ritually prescribed responsibilities to their people. As a public affirmation of the dominant ideology, J. C. Scott (1990) views this as another example of the hidden transcript.

The expression of resistance in subtle and/or disguised forms often creates the historical impression that commoners have been duped by a dominant discourse, which may explain the prevalence of theories of false consciousness. The appearance of an uncontested domination is also a product of what J. C. Scott (1990) calls the “public transcript,” where the dominant discourse is overwhelmingly represented in overt expressions of power in writing, architecture, art, and ritual performance. It is in the interest of elites to represent power as uncontested, while public performances of subordinates “will out of prudence, fear, and the desire to curry favor, be shaped to appeal to the expectations of the powerful” (J. C. Scott 1990:2). Rituals objectify and embody particular power relations and may create a degree of social cohesion and a shared corporate identity, but they also tolerate a considerable degree of resistance and negotiated

appropriation (Bell 1992; Kertzer 1988). Expressions of resistance via the principles of a dominant ideology may also appear like affirmations of that ideology, further reinforcing hegemonic appearances. During periods of rebellion and political upheaval, however, hidden transcripts can become public and resistance is enthusiastically and openly expressed. Rebellions and periods marked by the collapse of established political orders can allow subordinates to express the anger that is stifled by coercive and oppressive systems. Such expressions of a hidden transcript of resistance are evident in several regions of Mesoamerica during and immediately following the collapse of ruling institutions at c.AD 600–900 (Joyce & Weller 2007).

History

Another implication of archaeology's embrace of poststructural theory has been an increasing convergence of archaeological and historical perspectives (e.g., Hodder 1987; Knapp 1992). Given the influence of systems theory and cultural evolutionism, archaeological theory has tended to view the past as the unfolding of general laws of social process and evolution (e.g., Flannery 1972). This approach views history as predetermined, often involving a sequence of episodic transitions from one stable system to another, which minimizes historical transformation and contingency.

In contrast poststructural theory, with its focus on the recursivity of social life, views social systems and structures as always in a state of becoming. Social conditions are never static, so there can never be a synchronic mode of analysis. Even the reproduction of cultural principles is the dynamic outcome of human activity. The negotiation of social conditions in practice is always a historical process (Pauketat 2001:80). Historical memories and tradition therefore are embedded in bodily practices and inscribed in material culture, architecture, and landscape (Connerton 1989; Pauketat 2001; A. Smith 2003). While society is always in a state of becoming, structures often persist well beyond the life of any one person (Giddens 1979; Hamann 2002; Hodder & Hutson 2003:127–45). Given the long time spans typically dealt with in archaeology, researchers have increasingly explored theories that address structural continuity and change on a variety of time scales.

The French *Annales* School of history examines the idea of longer-term historical processes that may underlay particular events and has been explicitly considered by a number of archaeologists (Hodder 1987; Knapp 1992). The most influential theorist from the *Annales* School is Fernand Braudel (1973, 1980) who argues that history occurs on three different, though interacting, time scales. Events involve the historical consequences

of short-term practices of social actors. The medium scale consists of processes such as cycles of economic prosperity and decline. The long term or *longue durée* involves enduring structures, which Braudel largely assigned to the consequences of the physical environment, although other researchers extend the *longue durée* to include structures of meaning or *mentalités* (Hamann 2002; Sahllins 1996). Long-term structures of meaning can be viewed as those cultural principles that are more deeply sedimented in time due to factors such as their inscription in material media like monumental architecture and landscape (Joyce 2009a; Hamann 2002).

Sewell (1992:22), for example, differentiates between deep and superficial structures. Deep structures involve the underlying, taken-for-granted principles that generate surface structures and practices. Though deep structures are often durable over long periods, their surface manifestations are more contested and dynamic. Deep structures historically generate a variety of superficial schemas, practices, and power relations. Examples of deep structures of the *longue durée* include the capitalist commodification of things (Sewell 1992:25–6), the “search for satisfaction” in Judeo-Christian cosmology (Sahllins 1996), and the interconnected ideas in indigenous Mesoamerica of cyclical world-transforming cataclysms followed by the rise of new social orders resulting from sacrificial debts to the divine (Hamann 2002). As I discuss later in this book, while sacrificial original debt can be seen as an element of deep structure in Mesoamerica, its surface manifestations such as specific forms of sacrificial rites and the political significance of sacrifice have changed dramatically (Hamann 2002; A. Joyce 2000, 2008b).

Perspectives on the *longue durée* acknowledge that major historical transformations can occur even with continuity in structures of the long term. In contrast, Foucault’s (1965, 1973, 1977, 1985) influential studies of the genealogy of knowledge have emphasized historical discontinuities or ruptures in discursive formations. Discursive formations are characterized by rules, mechanisms, procedures, and modalities analogous to deep structures that are implied in the construction of subjects. Foucault’s (1972, 1973, 1977) discursive formations are never total and there are always gaps, contradictions, and subjugated forms of knowledge that create the potential for change. Foucault views historical transformations as discontinuous ruptures rather than as the result of gradual change. Historical ruptures result in the emergence of new discursive formations such as the appearance of new forms of political organization and religious ideology in Mesoamerica after the collapse of Classic-period ruling institutions at c.AD 600–900 (Blomster 2008a; Ringle et al. 1998). Ruptures, however, are never total and elements of a previous discourse can be recuperated and

reconstituted under new cultural regimes (Foucault 1980; Stoler 1995). An important aspect of recuperation is that bodies of knowledge that are recuperated under new discursive formations are done so in ways which conceal their operation as a form of domination.

De Certeau (1984), however, critiques Foucault's primary focus on discursive formations. He likens Foucault's perspective to an observer looking down from a skyscraper onto the city. This observer acts as a voyeur, looking at the actions of the masses from a distance that simplifies and makes the city seem ordered and controlled. Instead, de Certeau urges us to consider the city from the perspective of the varied walkers who move through the "dark spaces" on the streets below. By this he is emphasizing that a dominant discourse is not a cohesive totality; that there are possibilities that are actualized by the "walkers" in the practices of everyday life that elude domination and constitute openings in discursive formations. As de Certeau states (1984:48): "A society is thus composed of certain foregrounded practices organizing its normative institutions *and* of innumerable other practices that remain 'minor,' always there but not organizing discourses . . . a '*polytheism*' of *scattered practices* survives, dominated but not erased by the triumphal success of one of their number" (italics in the original). De Certeau (1984) thus urges us to look not just at the discursive formation of the age, but at the everyday practices that may constitute openings in discourse and that can provide a reserve constituting the beginnings of major structural transformations.

Foucault's exploration of how discourse constructs subjectivities along with de Certeau's consideration of the ways in which everyday practice can create openings in discursive formations illustrates poststructuralism's movement between the micro-scale of the lives of people and the macro-scale of society and history. In this book, I apply the theoretical perspective developed in this chapter to examine the prehispanic Mixtec, Zapotec, and Chatino peoples. In the next chapter, I use ethnographic, linguistic, ethnohistorical, and environmental data to provide an understanding of indigenous culture and environments at the time of the Spanish Conquest that can be used to build analogies with which to address the archaeological record. These analogies, along with the theoretical approach outlined in this chapter, provide the interpretive tools that I will use to examine Oaxaca's archaeological record.