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The Conquest of the Place of Flame: Indigenous Daily Life at Late Pre-Hispanic and Early Colonial Achiutla, Oaxaca, Mexico

Jamie Emile Forde
University of Colorado Boulder, forde@colorado.edu

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THE CONQUEST OF THE PLACE OF FLAME: INDIGENOUS DAILY LIFE AT LATE PRE-HISPANIC AND EARLY COLONIAL ACHIUTLA, OAXACA, MEXICO

By

Jamie E. Forde

B.A. University of California Santa Cruz, 2002
M.A., University of Colorado at Boulder, 2006

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The Conquest of the Place of Flame: Indigenous Daily Life at Late Pre-Hispanic and Early Colonial Achiutla, Oaxaca, Mexico
written by Jamie E. Forde
has been approved for the Department of Anthropology

Dr. Arthur A. Joyce (Committee Chair)

Dr. Payson Sheets

Dr. Gerardo Gutiérrez

Dr. Elspeth Dusinberre

Date____________

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.
Forde, Jamie E. (Ph.D., Anthropology)

The Conquest of the Place of Flame: Indigenous Daily Life at Late Pre-Hispanic and Early Colonial Achiutla, Oaxaca, Mexico

Thesis directed by Professor Arthur A. Joyce

This dissertation combines archaeological, ethnohistorical, and iconographic data to examine how indigenous peoples of Mexico negotiated Spanish colonial rule during the early decades of contact with Europeans, by means of a focused case study. Specifically, this research is based at the site of Achiutla, located in Mixtec region of the state of Oaxaca, where I carried out archaeological excavations of indigenous households dating to the Late Postclassic (AD 1100-1523) Early Colonial (AD 1523-1650) periods. Pre-Hispanic codices and colonial chronicles indicate Achiutla was an important native religious center at the time of the Conquest, and legal records document numerous instances of conflict between indigenous residents and Spanish authorities during the ensuing decades. In focusing on households and material evidence, I explore how this rather traumatic historical rupture affected daily life in ways not accounted for in the historical record.

Results of the excavations paint a more complex picture than traditional models of colonial encounters in showing neither wholesale adoption of Spanish customs, nor dogged resistance. For example, native traditions of decorated ceramics flourished after the arrival of the Spanish, while at the same time European-influenced glazed and wheel-thrown pottery was adopted in more limited fashion. Carved stones with Catholic religious imagery were kept within households, yet in ways that were consistent with pre-Hispanic logics concerning the treatment of images. Pre-Hispanic networks of economic exchange were maintained while native peoples simultaneously adopted new technologies such as European forms of metallurgy.
The discussion of the data examines how domestic material culture practices were embroiled in social discourses surrounding identity and social negotiation. In focusing on native elites, these dynamics were likely especially complex, as elites relied on both Spanish authorities and their native subjects for their positions of power, and had to strike a delicate balance in negotiating the demands of both of these constituencies simultaneously. In sum, I argue that on the margins of New Spain, where colonial hegemony was more limited than scholars often assume, native peoples were more active participants in processes driving social change and continuity.
In loving memory of

Jeanne Chourre Forde

and

Jack L. Ferguson
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# Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction .................................................. 1

Chapter 2: Theorizing Indigenous Cultural Change in Colonial Encounters .................................................. 18

Chapter 3: The Mixteca Alta and Achiutla of the Postclassic and Colonial Periods .................................................. 49

Chapter 4: Site Center Reconnaissance .................................................. 81

Chapter 5: Excavation Strategy and Methodology .................................................. 125

Chapter 6: Excavation Operations at Achiutla .................................................. 137

Chapter 7: Achiutla Artifact Assemblages .................................................. 239

Chapter 8: Material Culture Practice and Tactical Appropriation at Early Colonial Achiutla .................................................. 310

Works Cited .................................................. 365

Appendix A: Mapping of the Molino Sector of San Miguel Achiutla (in Spanish) .................................................. 398

Appendix B: Project Permissions and Forms .................................................. 409

Appendix C: Achiutla Ceramic Types Compared by Weight .................................................. 417
List of Tables

Table 3.1: Mixteca Alta Ceramic Phases and Corresponding Mesoamerican Periods 54

Table 3.2: Tribute paid to Achiutla’s *encomendero* in the years 1560 and 1565 (adapted from Pérez 2009: 112) 76

Table 6.1: Features at Terrace 1 South 144

Table 6.2: Features at Operation 2, Test Pit 1 156

Table 6.3: Features at Operation 3, Terrace 13 North 166

Table 6.4: Features at Operation 4, Terrace 10 North 192

Table 7.1: Ceramic type frequencies for Postclassic midden at Terrace 10 241

Table 7.2: Ceramic type frequencies for Colonial midden at Terrace 10 242

Table 7.3: Ceramic type frequencies for densest deposits at Terrace 13 243

Table 7.4: Frequencies of chert artifacts for selected excavation contexts at Achiutla 285

Table 7.5: Frequencies of obsidian artifacts for selected excavation contexts at Achiutla 289

Table 7.6: Comparison of obsidian artifact frequencies per 1000 pottery sherds from selected contexts at Achiutla 293

Table 7.7: Species present in Postclassic and Colonial Middens at Terrace 10 295

Table 8.1: Frequencies of green obsidian artifacts from excavated Postclassic and Colonial contexts at Achiutla 327

Table 8.2: Comparison of frequencies of functional categories of ceramic rim sherds (by count and weight) from the Postclassic and Colonial middens at Terrace 10 341

Table 8.3: Comparison of utilitarian medium brown vessel form frequencies from the Postclassic and Colonial middens at Terrace 10, based on counts of diagnostic rim sherds 343

Table 8.4: Percentages of serving ware rim sherds by type for the Postclassic and Colonial middens at Terrace 10 349

Table C.1: Ceramic type frequencies by weight for Postclassic midden at Terrace 10 417

Table C.2: Ceramic type frequencies by weight for Colonial midden at Terrace 10 418
Table C.3: Ceramic type frequencies by weight for densest deposits at Terrace 13
List of Figures

Fig. 1.1: View of an excavated Colonial indigenous residence at Terrace 10 of the North sector at the site of Achiutla, with the town’s Dominican convent seen in the background 3

Figure 1.2: Map of Oaxaca, showing location of Achiutla and other important sites in the region (see Fig. 3.1 for more detail) 6

Fig. 1.3: Representation of Achiutla’s toponym, “Place of Flame,” in the Mixtec codex Selden, pg. 2 7

Fig. 3.1: Map of the Mixtec-speaking regions of Oaxaca and sites mentioned in the text 51

Fig. 4.1: Satellite image showing the extent of the area covered in the reconnaissance of Achiutla’s Pueblo Viejo (Image adapted from Google Earth) 83

Fig. 4.2: Topographic base map of the Achiutla region produced with ASTER data (contour interval=10m) 84

Fig. 4.3: GPS points taken in the field imported into the topographic base map 85

Fig. 4.4: GPS points and tape-and-compass drawings re-rendered as lines and polygons in the Achiutla site map 86

Fig. 4.5: The five delineated sectors of the Pueblo Viejo of Achiutla 89

Fig. 4.6: Map of the North Sector of the Pueblo Viejo 92

Fig. 4.7: A herd of goats descends upon an excavation operation in the North Sector 93

Fig. 4.8: Southern retaining wall of Terrace 9 of the North Sector 94

Fig. 4.9: Gravel fill beneath a stucco floor exposed in the retaining wall of Terrace 2 of the North Sector 95

Fig. 4.10: Stone-lined drain exposed in the southern retaining wall of Terrace 12 of the North Sector 95

Fig. 4.11: Remains of a structure on Terrace 16, abutting the retaining wall of Terrace 6 in the North Sector 97

Fig. 4.12: Mounds of stone atop Terrace 1 of the North Sector 97

Fig. 4.13: Photo of Mound 2 on Terrace 1 98

Fig. 4.14: Map of the Iglesias Sector of the Pueblo Viejo 100
Fig. 4.15: Achiutla’s 16th century Dominican convent

Fig. 4.16: Remains of one of the *posa* chapels in the atrium of Achiutla’s Dominican convent

Fig. 4.17: 18th century bread oven associated with Achiutla’s Dominican convent

Fig. 4.18: Segment of the southern defensive wall of Achiutla’s Dominican convent

Fig. 4.19: Detail of the defensive wall, showing one of its small “windows”

Fig. 4.20: The southern entrance of Achiutla’s ruined chapel

Fig. 4.21: West entrance of Achiutla’s ruined chapel with preserved wooden lintel

Fig. 4.22: Exhausted obsidian polyhedral cores collected in surface reconnaissance from the road-cut in the Iglesias Sector of the Pueblo Viejo

Fig. 4.23: Depiction of a woman seated atop an architectural platform or *chiyo* in Codex *Vienna*, pg. 7

Fig. 4.24: Architectural platform located at the summit of Cerro de la Corona in the Achiutla Valley

Fig. 4.25: Vaulted passageway exposed in the collapse of a mound located on the summit of the Casa del Sol in the Achiutla Valley

Fig. 4.26: Trajectory of the ritual procession for the “New Fire” ceremony at Achiutla, as reported by Gómez (1937)

Fig. 5.1: Locations of excavation operations carried out in Achiutla’s Pueblo Viejo

Fig. 5.2: Flotation machine used during the 2013 excavation season at Achiutla

Fig. 6.1: Location of Terrace 1, South Sector

Fig. 6.2: Terrace 1 South at the start of excavation operation

Fig. 6.3: Schematic of excavation units at Terrace 1 South, with trench profiles

Fig. 6.4: Stratigraphic profile of the north-south trench (west face) at Terrace 1, South

Fig. 6.5: Stratigraphic profile of the east-west trench (south face) at Terrace 1 South

Fig. 6.6: Plan map of Structure 1 and associated features
Fig. 6.7: Photo of the north wall (F4) of Structure 1 147
Fig. 6.8: Plan map of vessel cache (F6) at Terrace 1 South 149
Fig. 6.9: Complete ceramic bowls recovered from vessel cache (F6) at Terrace 1 South 150
Figure 6.10: Excavated circular feature (F7) at Terrace 1 South 152
Fig 6.11: Location of Operation 2, Test Pit 1 154
Fig. 6.12: Stratigraphic profile of Operation 2, Test Pit 1 (east face) 156
Fig. 6.13: Plan drawing of Burial 1 158
Fig. 6.14: Photograph of Burial 1, exposed in excavation 159
Fig. 6.15: Location of Operation 3 at Terrace 13, North Sector 162
Fig. 6.16: Standing remains of Building 2, found at Terrace 15, North Sector 163
Fig. 6.17: Schematic of excavation units at Terrace 13 North, with trench profiles demarcated in red 164
Fig. 6.18: Stratigraphic profile of the north-south trench (west face) at Terrace 13, North (south half above, north half below) 165
Fig. 6.19: Stratigraphic profile of the western trench (west face) at Terrace 13, North 166
Fig. 6.20: Plan drawing of Structure 1, Terrace 13 North 170
Fig. 6.21: Remains of a Colonial polychrome plate found in the de facto refuse concentration (F11) within the interior of Structure 1, Terrace 13 North 171
Fig. 6.22: Plan drawing of Structure 2, Structure 3, and the Drain at Terrace 13 North 173
Fig. 6.23: Exposed remains of Structure 3, Terrace 13 North 175
Fig. 6.24: Exposed remains of the drain at Terrace 13 North 176
Fig. 6.25: Locations of the ash pit (F21) and lead debris concentration (F22) in the patio area of Terrace 13 North 177
Fig. 6.26: Stratigraphic profile of the west face of the ash pit (F21) at Terrace 13 North 178
Fig. 6.27: Glazed molcajete fragment recovered in uppermost lot of Feature 21-s1, Terrace 13 North 178
Fig. 6.28: Fragments of lead debris recovered from Feature 22, Terrace 13 North

Fig. 6.29: Location of Terraces 10, 11, and 12 of the North sector

Fig. 6.30: Topographic map of Terraces 10-12 (contour interval=25cm). Illustration by Alex Baldillo

Fig. 6.31: Digital elevation model of Terraces 10-12 (contour interval=1m). Illustration by Alex Baldillo

Fig. 6.32: Photo of Platform 1, Terrace 12 North

Fig. 6.33: Schematic of excavation units at Terrace 10 North, with trench profiles demarcated in red

Fig. 6.34: Stratigraphic profile of the north-south trench (west face) at Terrace 10, North

Fig. 6.35: Stratigraphic profile of the east-west trench (south face) at Terrace 10, North

Fig. 6.36: Plan map of general architectural features excavated at Terraces 10 and 12 North

Fig. 6.37: Plan map of excavations integrated with digital elevation model of Terraces 10 and 12 North (contour interval=50cm). Illustration by Alex Baldillo

Fig. 6.38: Plan map of the North structure of the Terrace 10 residential complex and associated features

Fig. 6.39: Photo of the stairway leading up to the entrance of the North structure

Fig. 6.40: Plan map of the South structure of the Terrace 10 residential complex and associated features (sub-floor excavation unit outlined in red)

Fig. 6.41: Arch stone found in collapse of the South structure

Fig. 6.42: Key stone for arch found in collapse of the South structure

Fig. 6.43: Carved stone with flower motif found in corner storage compartment (F23) of the South Structure

Fig. 6.44 (drawing pending): Photo showing subfloor unit excavated in the South structure, with two red stucco floors (F28 and F29) underlying the later white floor (F21)

Fig. 6.45: Stone alignment (F30) found within subfloor unit of the South structure, with large Postclassic ceramic brazier fragment found just above
Fig. 6.46: Plan map of the East and West structures and central courtyard of the Terrace 10 residential complex

Fig. 6.47: Photo of Feature 44 exposed in excavation

Fig. 6.48: Feature 44, bisected in excavation

Fig. 6.49: Reconstructed fountain in the central courtyard of the cloister at the ex-convent of Cuilapan de Guerrero, Oaxaca

Fig. 6.50: The central courtyard of the cloister at the ex-convent of Achiutla, where a tree continues to be grown

Fig. 6.51: Plan map of features exposed in the central courtyard of the Terrace 10 residential complex

Fig. 6.52: Amorphous lead artifact found in the fire pit (F45) in the central courtyard of the Terrace 10 residential complex

Fig. 6.53: Plan map of West stairway and corridor, and associated features found at Terraces 10 and 12 (sub-floor excavation unit outlined in red)

Fig. 6.54: Carved stone embedded at the apex of the West stairway after being turned over during excavation operations

Fig. 6.55: Carved endeque blocks forming the eastern façade of Feature 38

Fig. 6.56: Close-up photo of stones wedged between endeque blocks on the eastern façade of Feature 48

Fig. 6.57: Photo of the southern face of the false wall (F50) found in the corridor

Fig. 6.58: Photo of the exterior façade of the northern wall of Structure 1, Terrace 12 (F54)

Fig. 6.59: Photo of the southern face of the earthen retaining wall (F51) defining the north side of the east-west portion of the corridor

Fig. 6.60: Architectural profile showing relationships between the false wall (F50) and stucco floors associated (F52 and F53) associated with the corridor

Fig. 6.61: Fragment of codex-style Postclassic polychrome pottery found in the fill (F57) between the two floors (F52 and F53) associate with the corridor

Fig. 6.62: Westernmost excavation unit in the corridor, with standing wall of Platform 1, Terrace 12
Fig. 6.63: Stratigraphic profile of the westernmost excavation unit in the corridor (west face) showing collapsed layers of midden and adobe 233

Fig. 6.64: A terrace retaining wall damaged by a strong hail storm at the Hotel Ini Ñuu in San Miguel Achiutla, 2013 234

Fig. 7.1: Fragments of medium brown ware olla rims 244

Fig. 7.2: Rim profiles for medium brown ware ollas 245

Fig. 7.3: Fragments of medium brown ware comal rims 245

Fig. 7.4: Rim profiles for medium brown ware comals 246

Fig. 7.5: Reconstructed near-complete medium brown brazier 248

Fig. 7.6: Vessel profile of a medium brown brazier 249

Fig. 7.7: Incised decorations on the top of a fragment of a medium brown brazier 250

Figure 7.8: “U”-shaped handle of a medium brown brazier 250

Figure 7.9: Possible jaguar effigy handle of a medium brown brazier 251

Figure 7.10: Anthropomorphic effigy on a handle of a medium brown brazier 251

Figure 7.11: Depiction of a tripod brazier within a temple or palace in *Codex Bodley*, pg. 14 252

Figure 7.12: A fragment of medium brown ware with green glaze 253

Fig. 7.13: Profiles of micaceous ware fragments including a body sherd with a handle (left) and the rim of an olla (right) 255

Fig. 7.15: Fragments of fine cream ware rims 256

Fig. 7.16: Fragment of a fine cream ladle handle 257

Fig. 7.17: Fragments of red on cream cajete rims 259

Fig. 7.18: Fragments of graphite on fine cream/orange rims 260

Fig. 7.19: Fragments of fine cream monochrome cajetes 262

Fig. 7.20: Fragments of fine cream monochrome ollas 262

Fig. 7.21: Rim profiles for fine cream monochrome cajetes (above) and ollas (below) 263
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.22</td>
<td>Supports for fine brown monochrome vessels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>Reconstructed fine brown monochrome cajete with serpent effigy supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.24</td>
<td>Fragments of fine brown monochrome incense burners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>Profile of a fine brown incense burner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.26</td>
<td>Interior of the bowl of a fine brown incense burner exhibiting dark staining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.27</td>
<td>Handle fragments of fine brown polychrome incense burners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.28</td>
<td>Fragments of fine brown polychromes exhibiting bird motifs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.29</td>
<td>Fragment of fine brown polychrome with a movement symbol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.30</td>
<td>Fragments of fine brown polychrome exhibiting abstract geometrical motifs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.31</td>
<td>Rim profiles for fine brown polychrome cajetes (above) and plates (below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>Curved conical supports of fine brown Colonial polychromes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>Effigy serpent support for a fine brown polychrome vessel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>Fragment of a white glazed fine brown brimmed plate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.35</td>
<td>Juxtaposition of the clay fabrics of white glazed fine brown (above) and fine brown Colonial polychrome (below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.36</td>
<td>Rim profiles for white glazed fine brown brimmed plates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.37</td>
<td>Fragments of ring bases for white glazed fine brown brimmed plates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.38</td>
<td>Fragment of green glazed fine brown from the Colonial midden at Terrace 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.39</td>
<td>Medial fragment of a biconical brazier from the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.40</td>
<td>Rim profile of a biconical brazier from the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.41</td>
<td>Fragment of a Texcoco Molded incense burner from the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.42</td>
<td>Rim profile of a Texcoco Molded incense burner from the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.43</td>
<td>Fragment of fine brown with chert inlays from Terrace 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 7.44: Fragment of a chert projectile point from the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10
Fig. 7.45: Examples of obsidian prismatic blades
Fig. 7.46: Examples of obsidian projectile points
Fig. 7.47: Examples of obsidian lancets from the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10
Fig. 7.48: Human remains from the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10
Fig. 7.49: Cow remains from the Colonial midden at Terrace 10
Fig. 7.50: Bone awl from the Colonial midden at Terrace 10
Fig. 7.51: Caret-headed nails recovered from the ash-pit at Terrace 13
Fig. 7.52: Caret-headed nail recovered from the Colonial midden at Terrace 10
Fig. 7.53: Looped iron piece recovered from the Colonial midden at Terrace 10
Fig. 7.54: Pointed iron piece with helical thread recovered from the Colonial midden at Terrace 10
Fig. 7.55: Carved stone recovered from the southeast corner storage compartment of the southern structure at Terrace 10
Fig. 7.56: Carved stone recovered from the apex of the stairway at Terrace 10
Fig. 7.57: Façade of a Posa chapel at the convent of Cálpan, Puebla, Mexico (Aguilar 2013)
Fig. 7.58: Close-up of flower-vase motif adorning the Posa chapel at Cálpan
Fig. 7.59: Façade of the entryway to the nave of the chapel of Tepoztlan, Morelos, Mexico (Photo by Elodie Dupey García)
Fig. 7.60: Close-up of flower-vase motif adorning the entryway to the Tepoztlan chapel (Photo by Elodie Dupey García)
Fig. 7.61: Mural painting within the nave of the chapel of Tepoztlan, Morelos, Mexico (Photo by Elodie Dupey García)
Fig. 7.62: Painted scene of The Annunciation within the nave of the chapel of Cuauhinchan, Puebla, Mexico (Image from Kiracofe 1995)
Fig. 7.63: Scene of The Annunciation in Sahagun’s (1543) Psalmodia Christiana (Image from the John Carter Brown Library)
Fig. 8.1: Lords holding flowers leading a procession in the codex Nuttall, pg. 36

Fig. 8.2: Polychrome ceramic sherd with floral motif from Terrace 10

Fig. 8.3: Creator deities Lord 1 Deer and Lady 1 Deer seated in their palace in the sky in codex Vienna, pg. 48

Fig. 8.4: Woodcut illustration from Fray Benito Hernández’s Doctrina Xpiiana en Lengua Misteca (1567, pg. 62), depicting the “stairway to heaven”

Fig. 8.5: A purchase of metal nails, depicted in the codex Sierra, pg. 17

Fig. 8.6: Depiction of metal knives (highlighted with red arrow) in the codex Sierra, pg. 54

Fig. 8.7: Close-up of white plates depicted in the codex Sierra, pg. 54

Fig. 8.8: Close-of items purchased for a religious feast, including wine, cacao, turkeys, a tripod cajete carrying tortillas, and a mortar and pestle for grinding chiles in the codex Sierra, pg. 3

Fig. 8.9: Close-up of cajetes with curved conical supports in the codex Sierra, pg. 13

Fig. 8.10: Close-up of Nahuatl text using the loan word plato (underlined in red) in the description of the purchase of plates in the codex Sierra, pg. 54

Fig. A.1: Dibujo planímetro del sector del molino

Fig. A.2: El muro norte, sector del molino (cara norte del muro)

Fig. A.3: Columnas al sur del muro norte, sector del molino

Fig. A.4: Desagüe de la “pila” y el daño causado por la retroexcavadora, Sector del Molino

Fig. A.5: El “acueducto,” Sector del Molino

Fig. A.6: Vista general del Edificio 1, Sector del Molino

Fig. A.7: Muro este, Edificio 1, Sector del Molino

Fig. A.8: Fragmentos de vigas de madera in situ, Edificio 1, Sector del Molino

Fig. A.9: Ruedas 1-3, Sector del Molino

Fig. A.10: Edificio 2 y Rueda 4, Sector del Molino

Fig. B.1: Permit from INAH’s Consejo de Arqueología to carry out the mapping phase
Fig. B.2: Permit from INAH’s *Consejo de Arqueología* to carry out the excavation phase  

Fig. B.3: Standard lot form used during the excavation phase at San Miguel Achiutla  

Fig. B.4: Standard field specimen log used during the excavation phase at San Miguel Achiutla in 2013  

Fig. B.5: Standard datum log used during the excavation phase at San Miguel Achiutla  

Fig. B.6: Standard photo log used during the excavation phase at San Miguel Achiutla
Chapter 1: Introduction

“[T]ienen muy capaz iglesia, y convento, todo fundado sobre peñas, que hasta entrar en el templo, se anda con dificultad entre ellas.”

(“They have a very capable church and convent, all founded over crags which, until entering the temple, one walks with difficulty among them.” Translation by the author.)

--Fray Francisco de Burgoa (1934 [1676]: 349)

Francisco de Burgoa, a friar of the Dominican order, included the above remark in the middle of providing a short laundry list of general characteristics of the Mixtec community of Achiutla, in a section of his voluminous Geográfica Descripción (“geographic description”) on the region of Oaxaca, first published in 1674. He likely visited the community, among many others throughout the region, in the mid-1600s, and his work provides not only geographical descriptions of these places, but devotes most of its ink to the successes of himself and his Dominican predecessors in evangelizing their native populations. Why include this somewhat mundane detail regarding how persons walked to church at Achiutla?

In part it was likely because this carried a symbolic connotation—climbing up the peak to the temple evoked visions of the ascent of Christ and his followers to the summit of Mount Calvary, where the crucifixion took place. In many indigenous communities in Mexico still today, on Good Friday of Holy Week, Catholics often make pilgrimages to shrines constructed on hilltops in commemoration of this event. Thus, during the time of Burgoa’s writing, the difficult walk that natives of Achiutla regularly made to church likely served as evidence of their piety, and of the victories of the Dominican clergy in converting them to Christianity.

It appears that not all of Achiutla’s residents made these walks during the Early Colonial period, however. The Dominican church and convent to which Burgoa refers is not
located over a crag precisely, but instead on a flat portion of a ridge that runs through the middle of the Achiutla Valley, a ridge that runs further upward as it extends north of this church (see Chapter 4 for more detail). If not at the time of Burgoa’s visit, then at least for a considerable period of time during the century prior, archaeological evidence demonstrates that certain natives of Achiutla lived on the higher portion of this ridge during the Early Colonial period, on a series of monumental terraces that had constituted the center of native political power during pre-Hispanic times. Thus, while many of the community’s residents living throughout the valley would indeed have had to ascend the ridge to attend church, for others, doing so would have entailed not a difficult ascent, but instead a brief stroll downhill.

The archaeological research presented in this dissertation demonstrates that at least one high-status native family maintained an elaborate residence in Achiutla’s monumental pre-Hispanic center during the Early Colonial period, in close proximity to the church, with a commanding view of it from above (Fig. 1.1). If the ideal arrangement for Spanish ecclesiastical authorities at Achiutla was for natives to live below the church as a means of prompting them into expressions of piety, the way in which the reality of this arrangement deviated from the ideal raises questions regarding who precisely was in power at the site.
Fig. 1.1: View of an excavated Colonial indigenous residence at Terrace 10 of the North sector at the site of Achiutla, with the town’s Dominican convent seen in the background.

This dissertation is about indigenous daily life and the negotiation of power on the margins of New Spain, in a place well outside the centers of European settlement in Mexico, where colonial authority was stretched thin, where Spanish civil and religious authorities were few and far between. In these places, while Spanish colonists maintained ideals regarding how they wanted conquered native communities to be organized and governed, in practice they had to rely on indigenous populations to instantiate the various sorts of projects they wished to carry out, ranging from church construction to the development of industries. They relied upon natives not only to perform labor, but to play instrumental roles in organizing and overseeing these projects. As such, Spanish colonists could not launch new ventures in these peripheral areas without significant indigenous cooperation, and native
groups were in turn able to use these circumstances to negotiate many of the particulars of new colonial arrangements. If realities on the ground in New Spain’s *pueblos de indios* differed considerably from Spanish ideals, as they appear to have here at Achiutla, it was often precisely due to these kinds of negotiations and compromises.

The Spanish Conquest undeniably brought about severe injustices and abuses for native peoples of the Americas. At the same time, however, the kinds of politicking and negotiation mentioned above opened spaces for indigenous groups to maintain measures of autonomy and continuity with pre-Hispanic traditions, while at the same time they were able to adopt goods, technologies, and symbols introduced from the Old World for their own purposes. In some ways this was most acute on the margins of New Spain, where Spanish presence was most limited. Given these dynamics, we therefore need to consider how the ways in which indigenous cultures changed following the Conquest were not merely the inevitable consequences of European hegemony, but were instead the outcomes of active practices and negotiations carried out by native peoples in the wake of a traumatic historical rupture. The research presented here was designed to explore these issues through archaeological excavations of a sample of indigenous households at the site of Achiutla. In the chapters to come, after first providing theoretical and historical background related to the project, I present data from preliminary surface reconnaissance at the site, then detail the results of the various excavations that were carried out, as well as the results of laboratory analyses of artifacts recovered from the excavations. This dissertation takes the site of Achiutla as a case study through which to examine how indigenous families coped with colonialism in lived daily practice, through careful analyses of the material traces of their domestic activities.
The Place of Flame and Matters of Scale

The site of Achiutla is located in virtually the center of the highland Mixtec-speaking region of Oaxaca, known as the Mixteca Alta (Fig. 1.2). The region has been home to complex societies for millennia, and by the time of the Postclassic period (AD 800-1521), it was littered with relatively small, semi-autonomous polities that are often referred to by scholars as city-states or cacicazgos (Gutiérrez 2012; Lind 2000; Smith 2003). Much of our knowledge of these polities comes from the largest corpus pre-Hispanic manuscripts from the Americas, the Mixtec codices. The codices are composed of long strips of deer hide or fig bark (amate) paper that, using a complex form of pictographic representation, chart sequences of dynastic succession for rulers of these polities, marriage alliances and conflicts between them, as well as other historical and mythical events. These sources, combined with ethnohistorical documents and archaeological data, provide a rich picture of Mixtec society on the eve of the Conquest, as a constellation of small city-states that were highly stratified and organized, governed by hereditary rulers and nobility, that maintained political and economic connections with one another over broad spans of terrain (Blomster 2008; Joyce 2010: 249; Lind 2000; Spores 1984: 64-96; Terraciano 2001: 2). When the Spanish brought Mixtec polities under colonial rule, they largely left these political structures intact, simply placing themselves at the tops of existing native hierarchies, as doing so provided immediate means for exacting tribute and mobilizing labor (Spores 1984: 166).
Of the many native polities distributed throughout the Mixteca Alta during the Postclassic period, Achiutla was one of particular significance. The name “Achiutla” is a Hispanicized version of the Nahuatl name *Achiotlan*, meaning “Place of the Achiote Plant.” This name was likely given to the community by Nahuatl-speaking Aztecs, who conquered the site prior to the arrival of the Spanish, and the name was later adopted by Spanish conquistadors who were accompanied by Nahuatl-speaking allies when they subsequently conquered the Mixteca. In indigenous Mixtec, however, the community is known by a quite different name—*Ñuu Ndecu*, meaning “Place of Flame,” or “Burning Place” (Jansen and Pérez 2011: 303)—and its toponym is depicted in the aforementioned codices as a rectangular frieze with a flame glyph attached to it. As the Place of Flame, the codices show that Mixtecs considered Achiutla to have been a place of primordial creation, where some of
the first rulers of the Mixteca Alta were born from sacred trees (Fig. 1.3). Ethnohistorical sources corroborate the notion of Achiutla having particular sacred significance. José Antonio Gay (1950: 74), a cleric that lived in Oaxaca during the nineteenth century, describes not one, but two trees growing in the Achiutla Valley that were purported to have produced the first male and female rulers of the Mixteca respectively.

Likely owing to its prominent place in indigenous creation history, Burgoa (1934: 318-319) writes that in late pre-Hispanic times, Achiutla was the most important religious center in all of the Mixteca Alta. He describes it as the “synagogue, and major temple of this nation,” home to an oracle that was consulted “for all resolutions of peace, and of war.”
People made pilgrimage to Achiutla from throughout the region and beyond, and the oracle there was so widely regarded that even the Aztec emperor Moctezuma the Second was purported to have sent emissaries there after the arrival of Hernán Cortés, seeking a prognostication regarding how his encounter with the new arrivals from across the sea would play out (Burgoa 1934: 277). Perhaps taking advantage of the benefit of hindsight, the native informants who ostensibly relayed this anecdote to Burgoa described the prognostication received by Moctezuma’s emissaries as resoundingly negative (Burgoa 1934: 277).

We have virtually nothing in the way of documentary information on the actual conquest of Achiutla by the Spanish. We do know a considerable amount about its aftermath, however, from a variety of sources, as will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 3, and the evidence suggests it was somewhat tumultuous. The first Dominican friar to take up residence in the community was harassed by the townspeople to the point that he feared for his life, and he eventually convinced his bishop assign him elsewhere (Burgoa 1934: 322). His successor was at one point imprisoned within his residence and denied food and drink, though Burgoa (1934: 330-331) writes that tensions were eventually ameliorated and the natives were successfully converted to Christianity. Conflicts continued into the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries nonetheless. In 1580, the people of Achiutla imprisoned and threatened a lieutenant of the alcalde mayor (a Spanish judicial and administrative official) for arresting a local man during the town’s patron saint festival (Romero Frizzi 1996: 196). In 1629, an alcalde mayor was himself similarly imprisoned by local residents for failing to provide a man with adequate compensation for rental of a horse (Romero Frizzi 1996: 196). In 1591, native nobles lodged formal complaints against
Dominican friars at Achiutla, accusing them of whipping, imprisoning, and fining indigenous residents who had challenged the church’s claims to parcels of land (Terraciano 2001: 340). Tensions even arose between different factions of the town’s indigenous populace, as in 1601 native commoners lodged legal complaints accusing Achiutla’s *caciques* (indigenous rulers) and the alcalde mayor of conspiring together to impose unfair tribute demands (Terraciano 2001: 240-241).

By the middle of the sixteenth century, Achiutla had gone from being a preeminent pre-Hispanic religious center to a conquered outpost on the margins of a new European empire, where Catholic clerics made aggressive efforts to indoctrinate its people into a new faith, and Spanish *encomenderos* (persons granted rights to receive tribute and labor from indigenous communities) introduced new industries and economic demands. In the wake of such a profound historical rupture, it is perhaps not a surprise that the documentary record suggests that tensions at times ran high, and indigenous residents asserted autonomy and resisted colonial authority fairly frequently. The research presented in this dissertation was designed to examine how this climate affected native daily practice and cultural change at the micro-scale of the household.

One might question the strategy of taking so narrow a focus, in examining the colonial encounter through the lens of one particular site, and by way of excavations of only a few households. A number of archaeologists studying the matter have argued—with good reason—that colonialism needs to be addressed at the macro-scale and through a comparative lens if we are to understand the broader social, political, and economic forces driving the dynamics of colonial encounters, as well as how these forces nevertheless resulted in diverse outcomes in different contexts (e.g., Gasco 2005; Gosden 2004; Lyons and Papadopoulos...
2002; Rowlands 1998; Stein 2005b; Voss 2008). A similar trend has been seen in the discipline of history, as scholars have increasingly taken “global” approaches in examining various political and economic matters (e.g., Beckhert 2014; Mazlich and Buultjens 1993; Sachsenmaier 2011). Valuable though these studies may be, micro-scale analyses continue to have the power to complement and inform these broader approaches. After all, it is in daily practices that we see how these global forces driving the expansion of empires come to actually impact peoples’ lives on the ground, and it is in daily practices that we see how people cope with and negotiate these shifting dynamics. Archaeologists have accordingly continued to focus on households as important contexts through which to understand colonial encounters (e.g., Deagan 1995; Lightfoot et al. 1998; Mitchell and Scheiber 2010; Rodríguez-Alegria 2005b). As Voss (2008: 875) writes, “the household scale of analysis is still essential, for it is through the material practices enacted in daily life that social actors negotiated the uneasy interface between institutional power and personal agency.”

This dissertation is about native peoples’ daily domestic practices at colonial Achiutla, yet through examining these practices, it simultaneously becomes about something more; it is also about these peoples’ connections with the broader world around them. As we will see in the chapters to come, the colonial encounter led to residents of Achiutla adopting and appropriating goods, technologies, and symbols from places as distant as Europe and Asia, incorporating them into their quotidian lives. We will also see how practices like obsidian production and consumption elucidate how natives of Achiutla maintained trade relations rooted in the pre-Hispanic past, with regions such as central Mexico and coastal Oaxaca after the Conquest. In a number of these cases, evidence of such activities could only have been gleaned through focused household archaeology—these details would have been
missed in broader surveys of either archaeological sites or archival ethnohistorical sources. As such, studies of the micro-scale continue to have much to contribute to our understandings of more macro-scale dynamics, and a goal of the present study is to provide contextualized empirical data that can be used to address questions of larger geographic scope in the future.

**Materials and Texts**

Archaeologists and other scholars working on historical periods have dedicated a great deal of thought to the relationships between material and textual data, and how these datasets work in concert to generate inferences regarding the past (e.g., Deetz 1977; Funari et al. 1999; Leone and Potter 1988; Moreland 2001; Orser 1996; Sauer 2004; Schuyler 1978). For a number of researchers, archaeological evidence presents potential supplements and correctives for limitations and biases found in documentary records. Various scholars (e.g., Alexander and Kepecs 2005; Hill 1998; Rogers and Wilson 1993; Silliman 2005; and Thomas 1998) have pointed out that archaeological evidence provides greater time depth for long-term studies of social change spanning periods both with and without written records. Others have highlighted that archaeological data supplements the documentary record by providing evidence of phenomena, including mundane aspects of daily life, that commonly go unrecorded in written accounts (e.g., Brumfiel 2003: 207; Dietler 2005: 50; Liebmann and Murphy 2010b: 4-5). Many scholars have stressed the issue of bias in the documentary record, pointing out that textual sources are often intentionally or unconsciously biased, skewed toward the viewpoints of those in power, such as conquistadors and colonizers, leaving little voice for colonized or subaltern peoples (e.g., Brumfiel 1992; Liebmann and
Murphy 2011; Lightfoot et al. 1998; Mitchell and Scheiber 2010; Overholtzer 2013; Rodríguez-Alegría 2012; Rowlands 1998).

The above points are all to an extent valid and have proved useful in pushing scholars to think more critically with regard to how they use different sources of evidence to develop accounts of the past. Yet it is curious that in much of these discussions, archaeological and historical data are treated as fundamentally distinct from one another. This has been much less the case in Mexican scholarship over the decades, perhaps especially so in Oaxaca, where there is a long tradition of investigators working simultaneously with archaeological materials, written sources, and codices (e.g., Bernal 1965; Byland and Pohl 1993; Caso 1949; Joyce et al. 2004; Spores 1967; Whitecotton 1977; Zborover and Kroefges 2015; see reviews in Zborover 2015a and 2015b). Furthermore, research in the last few decades in Mesoamerica by historians of the New Philology school, who focus on native-language textual sources, have helped to counterbalance earlier ethnohistorical studies that relied on documents composed by colonizers. Indeed, the fixation on the differences between archaeological and historical datasets seems to stem more from streams of archaeological thought in United States, Canada, and Western Europe, and I suspect this owes in large part to the aforementioned issue of “bias” in the historical record. In spheres of archaeology where scholars have long sought to tie the discipline more closely to the physical and nomothetic sciences than to the humanities, there tends to be a mistrust of textual sources, composed by humans, who can potentially “lie” about the phenomena they describe, or twist facts in service of particular agendas. How else to explain why researchers who are perfectly comfortable discussing data from sources as disparate as carved stone monuments, geospatial
analysis, and radiocarbon dates in the same breath treat historical data as something separate, something that must be “integrated” into more traditional archaeological analysis?

Documentary sources certainly cannot always be taken at face value, though as Zborover (2015b: 288) points out, much of the mistrust archaeologists at times hold for these sources likely stems from a lack of familiarity with critical historiography. Yet this situation is not so terribly different in archaeology, where we work with very diverse lines of data that present differences in how we move from analysis to inference, and different problems and pitfalls therein. Indeed, for example, archaeologists have spent considerable time thinking through the complexities and difficulties in applying analogical reasoning to understand the past (e.g., Ascher 1961; Gould and Watson 1982; Stahl 1993; Wylie 1985, 1988). As Liebmann and Murphy (2010b: 5) write: “Archaeology…is by no means a more objective or straightforward way of knowing the past than traditional text-based histories. To be sure, interpretations that build upon material culture suffer from vagaries and biases all their own.” Moreover, documentary data are in some ways more similar to some types of evidence than others that we might all typically lump under the broad umbrella of “archaeological data.” For example, I could argue that we make inferences about the past based on ceramic iconography in ways that are much more in line with how we might work with historical texts than how we work with soil chemistry signatures. Documents, in effect are simply just different kinds of “artifacts”—they were made by human beings for particular reasons at particular times, and are subject to empirical analysis just like any other kinds of “objects” that we study. In this regard, I therefore agree with Sheptack and his colleagues (2010: 15) that, “Documentary archives are a part of the archaeological record.”
I am an anthropological archaeologist by training, and the research presented here is largely archaeological in nature. Nevertheless, I incorporate documentary and iconographic data wherever I can in attempts to push interpretations further. I do this not only by seeking points of convergence between these different lines of evidence, but by holding them in productive tension with one another, by tacking back and forth between them in the manner proscribed by Wylie (2002: 161-167). For example, I opened this chapter discussing how Burgoa’s description of settlement at Achiutla differs from what is indicated by the archaeological record, at least during the sixteenth century, prior to his arrival. If we assume for a moment that Burgoa was taking liberties with his description (though it is by no means clear that he actually was), this disjunction might tell us something more interesting than an objective and accurate account could. It would perhaps provide insights regarding ideological pressures placed upon him by his contemporaries and superiors to paint the achievements of his order in a better light, and how he was compelled to do so because of compromises made between Dominican clerics and native populations. At the same time, even if Burgoa did possibly twist the truth with this detail, we would also see that much of his account is still very much accurate. It is quite clear that he spent a significant amount of time in Achiutla, and the community and its environs largely do resemble what he describes. Even pre-Hispanic rulers of the site that he mentions, who he likely heard stories of from native residents at the time, are still known in local oral histories in Achiutla today (Burgoa 1934: 319). Indeed, any exposure of inaccuracy or “bias” in his account would not be cause for us disregard it altogether. In this dissertation, the aim is not to use archaeological data to simply support or refute textual sources, but by moving back and forth between these different lines of data, learn things about the past that we could not if we were limited to
focusing only on material or textual data. My hope is that this study, at least in small measure, works toward what Deagan (1991: 102) writes of historical archaeology in general when she states: “When all these lines of evidence are integrated in historical archaeology, they should add up to more than the sum of their parts, and they often do.”

**Dissertation Structure**

In the chapters that follow, I provide theoretical, archaeological, and historical background informing the research at Achiutla, then go on to report on results of the archaeological project and offer my interpretations of the data. In Chapter 2, I discuss the various ways anthropologists and archaeologists have theorized processes of cultural change during colonial encounters. While highlighting the important contributions of earlier perspectives on these matters, I favor approaches informed by theories of practice and agency as a means to understand the active roles that native peoples played in fostering both continuity and change in material culture practices. At the same time, I try to avoid a focus solely on native resistance, and draw from Michel de Certeau’s (1984) concept of “tactics” to consider how colonized groups might actively embrace aspects of material culture introduced by colonizing powers for their own purposes, proposing that we view such practices as forms of “tactical appropriation.”

Chapter 3 is meant to provide readers with more context regarding native society in the Mixteca, and Achiutla specifically, during the Postclassic and Early Colonial periods. I review previous archaeological and ethnohistorical research carried out in the region to provide background on various aspects of social dynamics during these time periods. The chapter then focuses on documentary sources from Achiutla to flesh out issues of religion, political structure, economy, and social relations in the community.
Chapters 4 through 7 present the data from the field research carried out at Achiutla. Chapter 4 discusses the initial surface reconnaissance conducted at the site, including mapping of architecture and surface collections of artifacts. The chapter also incorporates ethnohistorical sources to discuss the construction and uses of colonial architecture, and concludes with broader thoughts on the relations of the core of the Postclassic site to earlier abandoned sites in the surrounding valley. Chapter 5 then describes how areas of the site were selected for excavation, and the specific methods of data collection employed in these operations. Chapter 6 presents the results of the excavation operations at Achiutla, which included expansive excavations in three different residential areas, and a more limited operation in an area associated with stone tool production. For each of these operations, I provide information on occupational history, architecture, and associated features. Chapter 7 then provides data on artifacts recovered from selected contexts in the Achiutla excavations, including descriptions of artifact types and tabulations of frequencies from distinct refuse deposits, facilitating intra-site, regional, and diachronic comparisons of household activity patterns.

Lastly, Chapter 8 delves into further analysis and synthesis of the data from Achiutla, examining matters of religion, economics, and social relations, drawing from material, iconographic, and documentary evidence. I argue that the data indicate that natives of Achiutla were actively coping with changes in power relations in diverse ways, maintaining aspects of autonomy, while also selectively appropriating elements of European culture for various purposes, and accommodating new demands of colonial rule. In focusing on Mixtec families of elite-status at Achiutla, I contend that these persons were faced with particularly vexing challenges during the Early Colonial period, attempting to maintain power and
autonomy for themselves, while simultaneously being held accountable to both Spanish colonial authorities and their indigenous commoner constituencies. In tracing out how these complex negotiations became manifest in daily domestic practices, it is my hope to produce a work that is of use to anthropologists, ethnohistorians, art historians, and other scholars interested in power relations and social change in the wake of colonial encounters, even though the present study is decidedly micro-scale in scope.
Chapter 2: Theorizing Indigenous Cultural Change in Colonial Encounters

The past several decades have witnessed a groundswell in archaeological studies of colonial encounters and other instances of intercultural contact in the Americas and beyond (e.g., Card 2013a; Cusick 1998a; Deagan 1983, 1995, 2004; Gasco et al. 1993; Gosden 2004; Lyons and Papadopoulos 2002; Jamieson 2000; Kepecs and Alexander 2005; Liebmann and Murphy 2010; Palka 2009; Pugh et al. 2012; Oland et al. 2012; Rodríguez-Alegria 2005, 2008; Rogers and Wilson 1993; Scheiber and Mitchell 2010; Silliman 2004; Speilmann et al. 2006; Spores and Robles 2007; Stein 2005a; Thomas 1991; Voss 2008; Wernke 2007; Zborover and Kroefges 2015; Zeitlin 2005). As interest in the subject has grown, archaeologists have given increased consideration to how and why aspects of indigenous cultures both change and endure in the wake of colonialism, building on earlier streams of anthropological thought, while also incorporating theoretical perspectives from elsewhere in the social sciences. In this chapter, I review a number of theoretical models and concepts that have shaped archaeological considerations of material culture change in colonial contexts. I first discuss approaches informed by acculturation studies and world systems theory. While these approaches have contributed much to our understandings of colonial interactions and social change, I argue that they are limited by their tendency to cast these processes as inevitable and unilinear, and by their assumptions that colonized groups play largely passive roles in these processes. I then discuss how perspectives informed by theories of agency, practice, postcolonialism, and hybridity can help overcome these limitations through more critical attention to power dynamics. The latter approaches are not without pitfalls of their own, however, and I join a number of scholars in advocating moving
beyond perspectives on agency that focus solely on domination and resistance (e.g., Liebmann and Murphy 2010; Hodder and Hutson 2004), while also noting certain problematic aspects of the concept of hybridity that researchers have pointed out (e.g., Dean and Leibsohn 2003; Silliman 2015). To eschew some of these potential problems, I suggest that de Certeau’s (1984) concept of “tactics” offers a vehicle through which we can potentially think about material culture practices during colonial encounters in more fluid ways, less tied to assumptions of domination and resistance, and possibly less encumbered by the cultural baggage of the hybridity concept. Lastly, to understand how material culture practices come to matter for colonized groups in relationships of power, I suggest that a semiotic perspective can elucidate ways in which even mundane aspects of domestic life can come to be potentially bound up with social discourse and identity politics.

Acculturation Studies

The concept of acculturation has been formulated in a variety of different ways by anthropologists, and has long framed considerations of cultural change within the discipline. Cusick (1998b) provides a detailed and insightful historiographical analysis of the concept that I will refer to frequently here. In the first half of the twentieth century, the concept of acculturation was elaborated and applied by a number of prominent anthropologists, including Redfield and colleagues (1936), Herskovits (1938), and Mead (1932). Amidst these various formulations, Cusick (1998b: 128, emphasis original) notes the four most common or principal definitions, which often may go hand in hand:

1. loss of traditional lifeways;
2. adoption of Western values and lifeways (Barnett 1940: 22);
3. any change in lifeways stemming from continuous direct contact between peoples of different cultures (Redfield et al. 1936); and
4. acceptance or incorporation of “outside ideas or technology within a generally persistent way of life.
These formulations were meant to apply to a host of different contact situations between cultures, not only those that were colonial in nature or where asymmetries in power were otherwise severe. Indeed, a number of anthropologists believed that acculturative change only truly took place in cases where power relations between groups were equitable (Cusick 1998b: 128), though it could be questioned whether this was ever, in fact, truly the case.

Thus, from a very early point in the history of the concept, there was considerable attention paid to how power relations might shape situations of culture contact, though scholars debated how inequality was to be accounted for. As anthropologists increasingly focused on colonial situations, however, these relationships of power were rarely problematized, and instead presumed to operate in rather predictable and mechanical ways. As Deagan (1998: 26) notes, most scholars tended to treat processes of acculturation “as unidirectional, imposed by a ‘dominant’ or ‘conquest’ culture onto a somewhat choiceless recipient culture.” Thus, in most cases, it was seen as virtually inevitable that, over time, the culture of the “dominant” group would come to replace that of the subordinate one. Particularly from the 1950’s onward, acculturation was largely seen as a universal process, often occurring in evolutionary stages (e.g., Foster 1960), and hence little attention was paid to differences in the specific contexts of culture contact. These approaches were very much “top-down” with respect to how power relations were conceived. For example, Foster (1960: 228) wrote that in the case of colonial Mexico, “the acculturation process took the familiar pattern of flow of influence downward and outward, from the urban-elite pole to lower classes and peasants.”

Expectedly, given the presumed passive nature of subordinated groups, the agency of colonized peoples was rarely considered a significant factor in these theories of acculturation.
Individual decision-making was at times factored into considerations of cultural change, but was framed in rather mechanistic ways, conceived of as “screening processes” or “selection” (Cusick 1998b: 131; see Foster 1960 and Linton 1940 for examples). In these formulations, various aspects of culture were divided into distinct individual “traits” that were seen as being passed on from the “donor” to the “recipient” group. Concepts like screening and selection were employed to account for why members of recipient groups adopted some aspects of the donor culture but not others (Cusick 1998b: 11). Motivations for these decisions were typically seen as guided by matters of practicality. For example, art historian George Kubler (1985: 73), studying Mexico, argued that indigenous adoptions of Spanish customs, as well as retention or abandonment of pre-Hispanic ones, was governed by “utility and practical need.” Hence, productive indigenous plants and animals were seen as most likely to continue to be used over the course of colonial interaction, while symbolism and religious beliefs were of “lowest value” and doomed to be replaced by Spanish customs.

These theories tended to assume that goods and customs introduced by groups in power (particularly Europeans) were inherently desirable to colonized peoples, due to technological superiority or associations with high status (Dietler 2005: 66, Wilson and Rogers 1993: 5). For example, remarking on the case of colonial Mexico, Beals (1952: 228) described the acculturation process as “rapid and often eager.” Kubler (1985: 72) went even further, in writing that, “The survival of antiquity in America rapidly faded into oblivion, as peoples gravitated into the domain of European technology and of Christian ethical standards, often of their own volition, as if in flight from the limitations of Preconquest cultural life.” In line with the adaptationist theoretical paradigms prevalent in anthropology and archaeology from the 1950’s and onward, adoption of foreign goods and customs was
frequently seen as a kind of “maximization” achieved via the securing of economic benefits. Furthermore, as the above discussion of Kubler’s work suggests, within such paradigms, aspects of culture such as ideology and religion were largely viewed as inconsequential, given their lack of practical utility.

An acculturation model has been most explicitly applied in Mesoamerican archaeology by Charlton and Fournier (1993), in a study of various sites in central Mexico. The authors take their model directly from George Foster’s (1960) *Culture and Conquest*. Borrowing from Foster, Charlton and Fournier (1993: 206) conceive of acculturation as entailing a reduction in complexity of the “donor” (i.e., Spanish) culture to form a kind of “conquest culture.” This “conquest culture” is then transmitted to indigenous groups in the form of various traits. In order to test this model archaeologically, the authors employ two concepts proposed by Lathrap (1956): the “site-unit intrusion” and the “trait-unit intrusion.” In essence, these two concepts simply describe the presence of Spanish culture in colonial archaeological contexts. “Site-unit intrusions” refer to functioning complexes introduced to entire sites or occupation levels (e.g. Spanish civic plazas or churches), while “trait-unit intrusions” refer to individual types of artifacts, or specific attributes of such artifacts found at colonial sites (e.g., pottery decorated with lead glaze).

Charlton and Fournier test this model through analyses of archaeological data from a number of sites. Their focus, more specifically, is to evaluate whether processes of acculturation occurred similarly or differently in urban and rural contexts. Hence they compare data from colonial occupations in present-day Mexico City to those from several rural sites in the outlying Otumba region. In their examination of artifacts recovered from households in Mexico City, the authors identify patterns of change over time that they argue
reflect the tripartite schema of evolutionary stages that Foster proposed to characterize the acculturation process in Mexico. The first stage is marked by the intrusion of Spanish site-units and trait-units, such as the presence of churches and imported Spanish artifacts (Charlton and Fournier 1993: 211). The second stage, defined somewhat more nebulously, entails “the stimulation and elaboration of indigenous elements, with some fusion” (ibid). The authors offer, as an example of the latter phenomenon, the later appearance of lead glaze on indigenous ceramic forms. Lastly, in the third stage is said to entail, “the reduction, for most Indians, in the cultural tradition to create a colonial culture, a cultural crystallization in Foster’s terms” (ibid). For the last stage, Charlton and Fournier cite a reduction in the variability and complexity of indigenous ceramic types as evidence of this phenomenon.

In turning their attention to rural contexts, Charlton and Fournier find essentially the same pattern, with assemblages at rural sites reflecting the same three stages of acculturation. The differences, they argue, were that the impacts of acculturation were less stark in rural areas, and the stages of acculturation that they outline were slower to occur. According to the authors (1993: 214), this was due to the fact that, “[i]nteraction between Spaniards and Indians in the cities was more intense and more complicated than in the rural areas. In the rural areas, interaction was primarily with religious, governmental, and encomienda personnel.” This characterization is questionable in several respects. First, while it is certainly true that full-time Spanish presence in rural communities in the Otumba region was quite limited in comparison with Mexico City, this by no means necessarily implies that residents of these communities were relatively isolated, as they were located less than 50km away from Mexico City. Moreover, and as the authors demonstrate in other work, indigenous groups in the region were highly active participants in a complex economic
exchange network that extended throughout the Basin of Mexico and beyond in late pre-
Hispanic times, and continued to be highly involved in regional market exchange well into
the Colonial period (e.g., Charlton and Fournier 2013). Indigenous persons in these outlying
regions would have had considerable exposure to Spanish material culture from an early date,
and could have easily acquired such goods given the necessary means and desire. What is
more problematic about the authors’ conclusions, and about acculturation approaches in
general, is that these questions of how and why indigenous peoples adopt (or do not adopt)
aspects of foreign material culture are not examined critically. Instead this phenomenon is
viewed as simply an inevitable function of the degree to which native groups live in
proximity to colonizers, denying indigenous actors agency in favor of a generalized and
unidirectional conception of power dynamics. By the Middle Colonial period (AD 1621-
1720), Charlton and Fournier (1993: 215) write that, “a continuum of influence from an
urban-elite pole to lower classes and indigenous people, both urban and rural, was fully
operative.”

It is not my intent to single out Charlton and Fournier as the only scholars to have
employed such approaches. A number of archaeologists have posed similar arguments in the
application of acculturation models in their studies (e.g., Deagan 1974; Farnsworth 1989;
Hoover 1992; Quimby and Spoehr 1951). I also do not wish to dismiss the important
contributions such scholarship has made. For example, Charlton and Fournier, though
glossing over power relations in certain respects, also highlight the importance of examining
regional variation through their comparison of urban and rural contexts. Acculturation
models, despite their problems, have been highly influential and have directed critical
attention to the social dynamics of colonial encounters in many important ways. As Cusick
(1998b: 136) argues, were archaeologists to entirely dismiss the contributions of acculturation models, “They would, in consequence, have to throw out almost fifty years or research, much of it quite profound.”

Building on earlier work, Deagan (1998) has argued that archaeologists can work towards correcting for such problems by moving away from strict models of acculturation and toward more dynamic models of transculturation and ethnogenesis (see also Voss 2008). Meanwhile, Cusick (1998b: 139) and Rowlands (1998: 331) have suggested that by engaging more recent theories of agency (e.g., Scott 1985, 1990; Guha 1983), archaeologists can more carefully examine the active roles that colonized peoples played in shaping relationships of power. These suggestions have presented promising directions through which the contributions of acculturation approaches have been and continue to be built upon. Before moving on to the latter approaches, however, I would like to turn to a discussion of a more recent theoretical paradigm popular in studies of colonialism and interregional interaction more generally that presents similar problems to those found in acculturation models; that of world-systems theory.

**World-Systems Models**

It is not surprising that world-systems theory has become widely popular in archaeological studies of colonialism. As elaborated by Immanuel Wallerstein (1974), this model was developed precisely to explain the spread of European capitalism that accompanied colonialism across the globe, beginning in the sixteenth century. Influenced heavily by Marxist theory, as well as Andre Gunder Frank’s (1966, 1967) dependency theory, Wallerstein sought to elucidate how relationships of production produced inequalities on an interregional scale. In contrast to other Marxist theorists of his time, however,
Wallerstein asserted that an understanding of such relations could not be achieved through a focus on individual nation-states alone; but instead through analysis of the global economy as a whole (Stein 1999: 10). In short, the world-system was produced through Europe’s exploitation of colonized regions such as the Americas and Africa as sources of cheap raw materials, which were processed into commodities in Europe, then sold back to consumers in Europe as well as in the colonies, generating surplus value. It must be noted, however, that the terms “world” and “global” need not be taken literally in Wallerstein’s framework—world-systems were not necessarily totalizing on this scale, and it was possible for multiple world-systems to exist at one time. “World” in this sense was meant more to simply highlight relationships of exchange that were large in geographic scale, including multiple cultural or ethnic groups.

Within this framework of economic interaction, Wallerstein (1974) divided individual polities or regions into three distinct categories: cores, peripheries, and semi-peripheries. Cores were viewed as the primary driving force behind the world-system, comprised of powerful European polities that accumulated surplus and frequently exercised hegemonic power over other regions. Cores were seen as the most politically centralized and economically complex. Peripheries, meanwhile, were polities exploited by cores by way of either direct political administration, or through local rulers that depended on the core (Stein 1999: 11), often focusing on the extraction of raw materials for production. The political dominance of cores was achieved through inequitable economic relations with peripheries. Semi-peripheries occupied a somewhat more muddled “middle space” between cores and peripheries, considered to be more centralized and complex than peripheries, yet still subordinate to cores in political and economic terms. In sum, while the world-system was in
some ways a more elaborate model than that of acculturation, this framework conceived of
power in a spirit reminiscent of Foster’s (1960: 228) notion of a “continuum of influence”
from a hegemonic Europe to marginalized colonial societies.

The conceptualization of power relations described above has led to some of the most
severe critiques of the world-systems model (e.g. Dietler 1998, 2005, Lycett 2005; Ortner
198; Sahllins 1994; Skocpol 1977; Stein 1999, 2005b; Stern 1988; Wolf 1982). Perhaps most
glaringly, Wallerstein’s theory tends to paint peoples of “peripheral” societies as passive in
much the same vein as colonized peoples have been portrayed in acculturation models. As
Stein (1999: 19) writes, “The most serious theoretical flaw in the world-system model lies in
the fact that the assumption of core dominance denies any kind of agency to the periphery.
The people of the periphery are treated as passive victims of the core’s dynamic expansion.”
Ironically, as pointed out by Sahllins (1994: 412-413) and Gosden (2004: 13), this
characterization of European cores determining the structure of societies across the globe
tended to produce precisely the sort of Eurocentric perspective on social relations that
Wallerstein initially sought to combat.

A number of archaeologists and anthropologists have adopted a world-systems
perspective in order to understand interregional interaction and exchange not only during the
age of European expansion, but during pre-capitalist times as well (e.g., Abu-Lughod 1989;
Blanton and Feinman 1984; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1991; Frank and Gills 1993; Kepecs and
Alexander 2005; Smith and Berdan 2003a; Whitecotton and Pailes 1986). Cognizant of the
kinds of critiques of the model mentioned above, scholars have made a number of
modifications to it in attempts to make it more applicable to a diverse range of cases of
interregional exchange. Perhaps first and foremost, given that Wallerstein’s theory was
tailored specifically to the case of European capitalist expansion, researchers examining pre-capitalist societies have had to alter it in order to accommodate other modes of exchange. In a seminal article, Schneider (1977: 21) critiqued Wallerstein’s formulation on the grounds that it posed a false dichotomy between bulk goods or “essentials” and luxury goods or “preciosities.” According to Wallerstein, it was the exchange of large quantities of essential goods, such as food, that characterized the modern world system. Schneider (1977: 22-23) countered this argument by detailing how much of the European expansion that brought the world system into being in the first place was, in fact, driven by exchange of luxury goods such as spices and sugar. Schneider then goes on to examine a number of historical and archaeological cases across the globe in which exchange of luxury goods spurred development of complex economies, arguing that these constituted world systems in their own right.

Building on the suggestions of Schneider, a number of archaeologists have altered the world systems model to highlight the role of the exchange of prestige goods in examinations of pre-Hispanic trade in Mesoamerica and other regions (Blanton and Feinman 1984; Blanton et al. 1992; Finsten 1996; Friedman 1982; Kristiansen 1987; McGuire 1987; Peregrine 1991; Schortman and Urban 1994). In general, these scholars have argued that prestige goods were critical to the consolidation of the political power of elites, which in turn helped create the relationships of economic interdependence inherent to world systems (but see Kowalewski 1996 for an argument to the contrary).

Making further modifications to the model, scholars working in Mesoamerica, such as Smith and Berdan (2003b) and Alexander and Kepecs (2005), have added additional categories to Wallerstein’s tripartite schema in order to account for greater variability in the
structures of past interregional exchange networks. Most subsequent scholars applying this
model have also downplayed the degree of core dominance, either by arguing that such
dominance varies considerably over time (Blanton et al. 1992), or by explicitly
acknowledging the significance of local agency within peripheries in shaping relationships of
exchange (e.g., Alexander and Kepecs 2005; Kepecs and Kohl 2003: 15; Chase-Dunn and
Hall 1997: 79). In perhaps the most extreme modification of the world-systems model,
Chase-Dunn and Hall (1993) largely do away with the core/periphery distinction, and argue
that world-systems can be used to describe virtually all societies across space and time, apart
from, perhaps, mobile hunter-gatherers. This same view is espoused by Kowalewski (1996:
32), who writes that, “In North America, macroregional cultural systems existed from the
moment Paleoindians came onto the scene…There was never a time without macroregional
cultural interaction, without world-systems.”

While these modifications to world-systems theory thoughtfully address many
problems inherent to Wallerstein’s initial formulation, at the same time, they run the risk of
broadening the model to the point that it becomes so generic and nebulous that it loses its
capacity to address socio-economic phenomena in any kind of specificity. Stein (1999: 42)
writes that, “The attempt to redefine world-systems as a universal framework for
comparative analysis has resulted in a perspective so generalized that it has become little
more than shorthand for a network of complex (and sometimes not-so-complex) societies
whose interaction has a major influence on developmental processes.” Indeed, Hall and
Chase-Dunn (1993: 121) more or less acknowledge this fact by describing their theory as
more of a heuristic device to be used in making comparisons as opposed to an explanatory
model (Stein 1999: 25). This is likely why Gosden (2004: 17) states that, “World systems
theory, despite its title, is more a description than a theory, a fact of which its protagonists are uncomfortably aware.”

World-systems as a description rather than theory may still be of heuristic value, but if generalized to the degree that it frequently has been, the question arises—what, in fact, is it a description of, other than economic interaction in the most basic and generic sense? One gets the sense that, in contemporary archaeology, world-systems theory is used, perhaps more than anything, as an orienting device that serves to privilege particular research foci over others—namely, privileging macro-regional scales of analysis over a focus on local dynamics, and economic behavior over other aspects of human sociality. Statements such as Chase-Dunn and Hall’s (1993: 855) proclamation that, “We claim that the fundamental unit of social change is the world-system, not the society” are potentially problematic in that, while interregional interaction is certainly a very worthy topic of study (and perhaps most obviously so for studies of colonialism), they potentially dismiss the importance of smaller scales of analysis. Privileging the macro-regional scale a priori in some ways risks putting the cart before the horse, so to speak—if one is to understand interactions between different societies, are not fine-grained understandings of the various societies involved in such interactions critically important? A considerable number of archaeologists studying colonial encounters agree that what broader understandings of such dynamics require are attention to multiple scales of analysis (e.g., Lightfoot et al. 1998, Stein 2005b, Voss 2008), rather than privileging either the global or the local. Studies of macro-regional interaction, such those in the spirit of world-systems approaches, are potentially of significant value, but ideally should be informed and augmented by nuanced understandings of the societies involved.
With regard to privileging economic behavior, Wallerstein’s view of world-systems was an explicit form of economic determinism (Dietler 1998, 2005; Sahlins 1994; Skocpol 1977; Stein 1999: 19; Stern 1988). Though many scholars drawing from his work have softened this stance, aspects of it are still at times implicit, at the very least. This has been the case for a number of archaeologists studying colonial Mexico that have drawn specifically from world systems theory (e.g., Kepecs 2005; Pollard 2005; Zeitlin and Thomas 1997). For example, Kepecs (2005), in her study of the colonial salt trade in the Yucatan Peninsula, rightly critiques earlier historians of the Maya for having focused too heavily on religious ideology, and for having at times characterized the Maya as being too entrenched in traditional values to be capable of change. However, in turning to formalist economic theory, she commits virtually the same sin in reverse. In refusing to draw virtually any sort of conceptual distinction between 1) Maya economies dating as far back as late pre-Hispanic times, and 2) the economy of modern capitalism of today, she removes ideology from the equation completely, rather than seeking a more balanced perspective (Kepecs 2005: 136). She does this despite the fact that a growing body of literature (e.g., Barber and Joyce 2007; Berdan 2007; Brumfiel 1991; Davis-Salazar 2007; Hendon 2000; Kovacevich 2007; Monaghan 1996; Pohl 2003a; Rodríguez-Alegria 2007; Wells 2006) suggests that economic interaction itself was in certain respects ideologically motivated throughout pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica. To diametrically oppose ideology and economics and privilege one of these aspects of social interaction at the expense of dismissing the other only serves to limit our understandings of the complexity of colonial social dynamics.
Practice, Postcolonialism, Hidden Transcripts, and Hybridity

Since at least the 1980’s, archaeologists have increasingly drawn from theories of practice, power, agency, and structuration—most notably from the works of Bourdieu (1977), Foucault (1979), Giddens (1979, 1984) and Sewell (1992)—to examine power dynamics in more critical ways (e.g., Brumfiel 1992; Dobres and Robb 2000; Dornan 2002; Hodder 1982, 1985; Hodder and Hutson 2003; Hutson 2010; Janusek 2004; Johnson 1989; A. Joyce 2010; R. Joyce 2000; Pauketat 2001; Shanks and Tilley 1992). Moving away from perspectives that conceive of social relations as largely determined by the prerogatives of those in power, or by more abstract systemic or ecological forces, these approaches place emphasis on how culture is continuously shaped and altered through daily practice and negotiation by all members of society. These practices may be largely shaped by the social norms and power relations into which individuals are born (what might be called “structure”), yet individuals retain the ability to critically monitor structural relations to some degree and to act back upon them, reformulating them. Based in Bourdieu’s (1977) theory of practice, and perhaps articulated most explicitly by Giddens (1979), social relations are thus continually produced, reproduced, and changed through a recursive relationship between structure and agency. These theories have advantages over approaches informed by acculturation and word-systems models in that they examine how social structure emerges through lived practice, rather than casting it as something largely external to society that acts upon persons from the outside. As such, theories focused on practice better account for contingency and the importance of context in understanding cultural change, whereas the approaches examined earlier in this chapter tended to paint these processes as largely pre-determined by structure. Moreover, in adopting a practice-based perspective, it is
insufficient in an analysis of colonialism to focus attention solely on the actions of dominant powers, for even in the wake of severe oppression the colonized still retain abilities to affect and negotiate their circumstances.

The above intellectual trends in anthropology and archaeology have paralleled those seen in postcolonial scholarship more broadly. Postcolonialism is difficult to define as a unified body of thought, though Klor de Alva (1995: 245) succinctly describes it as, “a form of contestatory/oppositional consciousness, emerging from either preexisting imperial, colonial, or ongoing subaltern conditions, which fosters processes aimed at revising the norms and practices of antecedent or still vital forms of domination.” To attempt to briefly summarize the impact of this stream of thought in academia, influenced perhaps most seminally by the work of Frantz Fanon (1963, 1967) and Edward Said (1978), postcolonial theory casts a critical eye on Western representations of colonized peoples and their histories, exposing biases and inaccuracies bound up with such representations. Postcolonial scholarship has been most dominated by studies in literary criticism, which has prompted critiques that it is overly focused on Western narratives and texts in general (Gosden 2004: 19, Van Dommelen 2005: 114, Young 1998: 4-5). While these Western narratives are typically analyzed in highly critical fashion, an over-reliance on texts is restrictive of the analytical scope of such scholarship. At the same time, what postcolonial theory does most effectively is problematize colonial relationships of power and examines how such relationships are constructed and continually negotiated by all parties involved (e.g., Bhabha 1994, Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, Cooper and Stoler 1997, Guha 1983, Gupta 1998). Drawing from the same theories of power, agency, and practice discussed previously (e.g. Bourdieu 1977, Foucault 1979, Giddens 1979, Gramsci 1971), postcolonial studies have
shifted attention away from the kinds of “grand theories” focused on macro-scale processes that typified acculturation and world-systems approaches. The postcolonial critique has instead highlighted the ways in which indigenous groups actively shape cultural change, rather than painting them as mere passive victims of European hegemony.

Given the theoretical turns described above, a natural tendency for archaeologists and other scholars engaged with practice theory and postcolonialism has been to focus on resistance to power on the part of subjugated or colonized groups. The work of James Scott (1985, 1990) has been notably seminal in many such studies, in particular his concept of “hidden transcripts.” To summarize briefly, while the “public transcript” can be defined as the ways in which dominant authorities present and legitimize power relationships to a society at large, hidden transcripts, on the other hand, are considered to be that which takes place “offstage”—how subjugated groups may accept, renegotiate, ridicule, or reject elements of the public transcript in their own daily practices. Social elites typically have very little control over such practices, and may in fact be forced to tolerate or accommodate them in order to avoid more direct forms of resistance. Taking into account such limitations of state or elite power, studies focused on the contexts in which hidden transcripts play out take bottom-up approaches to understanding power relations, providing more critical and nuanced views of power relations. Particularly through analyses of households, a number of archaeological studies have shed light on how the daily practices of commoners may often run contrary to the dictates of those in power, in a variety of different social arenas (e.g., Brumfiel 1996; Cusick 1998b; Hutson 2002; Joyce et al. 2001; Sheets 2000; Thomas 1998; Zeitlin 2015). These types of studies have provided important insights regarding how
subjugated groups work within the confines of hegemonic power structures to exercise measures of autonomy and affect broader cultural practice and change.

Indigenous agency has been highlighted in a similar vein in postcolonial scholarship (e.g., Bhabha 1985, 1994) through the concept of “hybridity,” which has been engaged by a number of archaeologists in recent decades (e.g., Card 2013a; Van Dommelen 2005). The concept has been defined and treated in different ways by different scholars (e.g., see reviews in Card 2013b; Dean and Leibsohn 2003; Silliman 2015; Stockhammer 2012; Van Valkenburgh 2013), though Van Dommelen (2005: 117) provides a fairly widely shared and operational summary in writing that, “by complying with colonial norms and standards and yet hanging onto certain indigenous perceptions, people develop new cultural norms of their own and effectively ‘invent’ new traditions.” In contrast to earlier views, scholars engaging this concept emphasize that such mixtures of different traditions are bound up with complex negotiations of power, rather than naturally resulting from the kinds coincidental parallels between native and colonizing traditions that are often referred to in discussions of “cultural syncretism” (Rowe and Schelling 1991; Stewart and Shaw 1994; Webster 1997: 328).

Symbols and objects of material culture are apt to constantly take on new meanings and be put toward new ends as their contexts change (Comaroff 2003; Dietler 1998; Hodder 1982; Jamieson 2000; Lightfoot 2005; Lightfoot et al. 1998; Miller 1985; Mobley-Tanaka 2002; Pugh 2009; Ruppel et al. 2003; Schreiber 2005; Silliman 2001; Van Dommelen 2005; Voss 2008). For example, historical anthropologist Jean Comaroff (2003) elucidates these kinds of dynamics in studying the adoption of Western clothing in colonial South Africa. While missionaries attempted to impose the adoption of such clothing as a means of “civilizing” the indigenous population, Comaroff (2003: 101) writes, “European costume, in short, opened up
a host of imaginative possibilities for Southern Tswana. It offered an enhanced language in which to play with new social identities.” Hence, in cases like these, adoption of aspects of the culture of colonizing groups does not merely reflect assimilation, but instead new strategies of social negotiation.

Similarly to hidden transcripts, scholars discussing hybridity often highlight its potentially subversive qualities, as first articulated by Bhaba (1984; 1994), who draws attention to how indigenous adoptions of practices introduced by colonizers can result in “mockery” and other forms of counter-hegemonic discourse. Thus, much like hidden transcripts, hybridity has been regularly seen in archaeology as another form of subtle resistance to subjugation (Card 2013b: 2; Pappa 2013: 25; Silliman 2015; Van Valkenburgh: 307). For example, Silliman (2015: 2) describes his earlier attraction to the concept in stating that: “In worlds differentiated into colonized/colonizer or Native/European, the ability to find and commemorate those individuals who did things that drew variably from both sides, while subverting unequal power in discourse and practice, was liberating.” Though not always, hybridity then is often conceived as a means by which colonized groups appropriate the cultural practices of colonizers in order to subvert colonial power structures.

But what are we to make of indigenous practices in colonial encounters when they do not ostensibly take the form of resistance? For example, how are we to understand the actions of indigenous nobles at Achiutla who, in the sixteenth century, petitioned through the Spanish legal system for rights to ride horses and carry swords in the manner of European colonizers? Such practices could be seen as contributing to the reinforcement and reification of a new colonial hegemonic regime. Are we to consider such persons mere “ideological dupes” who lack agency? A number of anthropologists and archaeologists have recently
critiqued the tendency of scholars engaging with practice and agency to focus so heavily on the domination-resistance dichotomy in doing so (e.g., Abu-Lughod 1990; Brown 1996; Hodder 1984; Hodder and Hutson 2003: 97-99; Liebmann and Murphy 2010b; Ortner 1984, 1995). As Hodder (2004) argues, such a focus can result in the homogenization of the agendas and motivations of subjugated groups who may have been internally diverse. For colonial encounters specifically, Liebmann and Murphy (2010b: 10) warn that, through such homogenization, “cursory studies of resistance can force past actors into rigidly predetermined roles in which colonizers dominate, the colonizers resist, and never the twain shall meet.” I join the latter authors in arguing for the need to attend to the agentive qualities of other types of practices that colonized groups may carry out, including accommodation, appropriation, cooperation, collusion, and the making of trade-offs (Liebmann and Murphy 2010b: 9). To return to the example of indigenous nobles at Achiutla adopting Spanish swords and horses, this likely was not simply an inevitable consequence of acculturation. Beyond the pragmatic reasons for adopting them, this was also likely rather a conscious political strategy designed to enhance credibility in the presence of colonial authorities through employment of Spanish symbols of status.

The hybridity concept, at its best, allows for more fluidity than that of hidden transcripts in understanding indigenous agency beyond the dichotomy of domination and resistance, highlighting phenomena such as the creative appropriation and manipulation of European customs. Two issues with the concept give me pause in employing it, however, and I largely eschew the term in the remainder of this dissertation. First, as Silliman (2015) articulates, use of the concept in archaeology has at times drifted far from its roots in postcolonial theory to refer to more generally to various forms of inter-cultural “mixing,” and
it often becomes unclear whether the term hybridity is meant to apply to practices, persons, or objects. For example, in many of the contributions in Card’s (2013a) edited volume on The Archaeology of Hybrid Material Culture, “hybrid” is applied as a descriptive category for certain types of artifacts that exhibit blending or fusion of different cultural traditions. Moreover, the term has also recently been employed in various manifestations of materiality theory, or actor-network theory (e.g., Latour 2005; Joyce and Barber 2015; see reviews in Silliman 2015 and Van Valkenburgh 2013), where it is used to describe how broad arrays of persons, objects, and ideas become enmeshed through situated practice. Though some of these studies still pay close attention to power dynamics in their considerations of such objects, I share Silliman’s (2015) concern that divorcing the concept from an explicit focus on practice and politics risks undoing much of the intellectual work that theorizations of hybridity initially set out to do. As a mere description of types of things or attributes of artifacts, rather than a consideration of how people negotiate power relations, the concept may have little more to offer than earlier theories such as acculturation and syncretism.

Meanwhile, though uses of the hybridity concept informed by materiality theory do typically remain rooted in a focus on practice, hybridity here becomes such a broad phenomenon that it risks similarly drifting from being necessarily connected to a focus on power and politics.

A second concern raised here is perhaps indirectly related to the first—the confusion regarding what the term hybrid actually refers to raises the risk of it being conflated with cultures or people more generally, and this carries with it some potentially rather problematic political connotations. As scholars employing the concept are well aware (e.g., Card 2013b: 2; Silliman 2015: 4; Van Valkenburgh 2013: 306), the word’s origins lie in nineteenth century biology, when it was largely used to describe types of selectively bred animals and
plants, including pigs and mules. In more recent vernacular usage, it is often times applied to amalgams of technologies like fuel-efficient vehicles, the kinds of amalgams that Silliman (2015: 6) likens to “Frankenstein monsters.” It is clear that proponents of hybridity do not intend for the term to evoke these sorts of potentially derogatory connotations, but as the concept continues to drift from its roots in postcolonial theory and be more promiscuously applied to objects and persons, this risk may be heightened regardless of the intentions of scholars. Furthermore, as archaeologists continue to more closely engage and collaborate with indigenous groups and descendant communities, that risk becomes more pernicious. In working and dialoguing with these communities, do we really want to talk about their ancestors in terms that are often equated with breeds of livestock and/or technological oddities? At this point, I am ambivalent as to whether hybridity is such an indispensable concept that it is worth retaining given its potential to cast past actors in this kind of dehumanizing light. Therefore, while I hope that the research presented in this dissertation remains in conversation with the many insightful archaeological works on hybridity that have been produced in recent decades, I avoid using the term in the pages that follow. In the next section, I propose that de Certeau’s concept of “tactics” offers a fruitful alternative to hybridity, in that it keeps focus on lived daily practice, and carries less colonial baggage than hybridity does.

Tactical Appropriation

Given the long-standing interest in practice theory within archaeology discussed previously, it is perhaps somewhat surprising that the work of Michel de Certeau (1984) has been engaged relatively infrequently within the field (but see Frazer 1999; Hutson 2002; A. Joyce 2009b; R. Joyce and Lopiparo 2005; Robin 2002; Sheptack et al. 2010). De Certeau’s
work, also focused on power relations and daily practice, was very much influenced by and in conversation with the ideas of Bourdieu and Foucault, who archaeologists engaging with practice theory more frequently cite. De Certeau (1984: 45-60), however, while drawing considerably from the latter scholars, found Foucault’s theories of power and Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* overly limiting in their focus on how subjects are produced and constrained through power relations and social structure, at the expense of a greater understanding of how ordinary persons might still exercise freedom and creativity within such structures.

Key to de Certeau’s formulation of practice is the distinction between *strategies* and *tactics*. Strategies are practices enacted by persons or institutions in power, informed by explicit long-term goals or “calculations,” to gain or maintain power for themselves at the expense of clearly defined “others” (de Certeau 1984: 35-36). Tactics, by contrast, are more commonly carried by those without power, and while “calculated,” are less directed toward making gains over explicitly or monolithically defined others, but instead are improvised and predicated upon contingent circumstances (de Certeau 1984: 36-37). They are the ways in which persons cope with the existing structural constraints of power relationships in daily practice, and how persons creatively manipulate and at times circumvent these constraints towards their own more immediate and pragmatic ends. De Certeau (1984: 29) likens these sorts of practices to what Levi-Strauss (1966) defined as *bricolage*: the ways in which persons selectively appropriate and recombine elements of existing structure (for Levi-Strauss, linguistic structure) in creative and novel ways for their own purposes.

Given de Certeau’s use of military metaphor and his description of tactics as principally enacted by “the weak,” it is easy to frame the distinction between strategies and
tactics as yet another formulation of a domination-resistance paradigm, and scholars have at times conceived of tactics rather explicitly as forms of resistance (e.g., Frazer 1999). I believe the concept of tactics provides much more flexibility to include acts beyond mere resistance, however, given that these acts are often not directed at persons or institutions of power, nor toward explicit long-term goals. Tactics are instead the manifold ways in which people cope with the restraints of power structures without altering or leaving them, which may include accommodation, trade-offs, and appropriation—what de Certeau (1984: 30) describes broadly merely as “making do.” These actions are not guided by broad overarching strategies, but are instead more temporally and contextually contingent, often improvisational in nature, as persons take advantage of opportunities and confront challenges in various moments.

While de Certeau (1984: PG#) was by no means deeply immersed in the ethnohistory of colonial Latin America, it is perhaps telling that he nevertheless chose to use native practices following Spanish Conquest as a prime illustration of his theory of tactics, writing that:

[T]he ambiguity that subverted from within the Spanish colonizers’ ‘success’ in imposing their own culture on the indigenous Indians is well known. Submissive, and even consenting to their subjection, the Indians nevertheless often made of the rituals, representations and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind; they subverted them not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept.

What makes this concept particularly appealing in the Mesoamerican context is that it allows for viewing colonial subjects as active and agentive without necessarily resisting domination, perhaps even complicit in it at certain moments. Such a conceptualization enables us to better account for the complexities and contingencies of these power dynamics, which often
confound rigid domination-resistance dichotomies. For example, Hutson (2002: 57), also engaging de Certeau’s work and drawing from Kellogg’s (1995) analysis of legal practices in colonial Mexico, notes that instances of native commoners utilizing the Spanish legal system to contest the demands of indigenous nobles simultaneously evidence overt resistance to local power dynamics as well as unintentional affirmation of European hegemonic structures. Yannakakis (2008) examines the triangulations of such power dynamics more exhaustively, and employs the concept of tactics explicitly to understand the actions of native elites and other intermediaries in the Zapotec Sierra during colonial times, who in the same moments were challenged with negotiating the demands of both Spanish authorities and their indigenous constituencies. In this dissertation, which similarly focuses on the roles and practices of native elites at Achiutla, I also use tactics as a conceptual device to think through how these actors did not simply acquiesce to or resist a new colonial power regime, but “made do” with these changing circumstances in complex and diverse ways. Though not always drawing from de Certeau, a number of archaeologists have examined similar dynamics in other contexts (e.g., Joyce et al. 2001; Joyce and Weller 2007; Sheptack et al. 2010). In taking this approach, I aim to show that residents of Early Colonial Achiutla asserted degrees of authority and autonomy in maintaining cultural continuity with the pre-Hispanic past, while simultaneously engaging structures of Spanish civil and religious power and adopting or appropriating elements of foreign culture. As such, neither unidirectional models of cultural change such as those found in acculturation theory, nor dichotomous conceptualizations of power focusing on domination and resistance, are sufficient to explain the data. The picture that emerges from Achiutla is one in which natives coped with stark
disruptions in social life in ways that were at once diverse, contextual, and active: in short, in ways that were “tactical.”

In turning attention specifically to material culture practices, I employ the term “tactical appropriation” in this dissertation in ways that other scholars might alternatively use “hybridity” in similar contexts. I do this in an attempt to eschew the issues raised regarding the hybridity concept discussed previously, as well as to highlight active and creative qualities of these practices. De Certeau emphasizes how tactics involve inventive uses of resources already available: how through consumption, users put resources not of their own making to different purposes, and combine them to create things potentially quite divergent from what their original makers intended. A quotidian example is the shopper at the local supermarket, who picks and chooses from materials offered and then combines them to create novel recipes, in a manner quite similar to Levi-Straussian *bricolage*. As such, “consumption” is anything but a passive act; it is instead not only active, but “productive.”

In subsequent chapters, I examine how natives of Achiutla similarly appropriated elements of foreign material culture, technologies, and symbols, while also maintaining aspects of pre-Hispanic tradition, or in some cases reformulating the latter traditions. I show that these decisions cannot be explained simply by colonial hegemonic pressures to assimilate, nor only by purely economic logics. They were choices actively made by natives according to a variety of economic, political, and ideological concerns. In discussing these as forms of tactical appropriation rather than hybridity, my aim is to keep the focus less on objects themselves and concerns of whether or not they are “hybrid,” but rather on the practices and social contexts involving these objects.
Colonial Encounters, Daily Practice, and Identity Politics

It could be argued that daily domestic practices have little to tell us about broader questions regarding colonial power relations, social negotiation, and identity politics. Spanish authorities were often rather unconcerned with these practices, and did little to actively change them unless they were associated with non-Christian religious activity. Moreover, informed by practice theory, we might be inclined to assume that these activities were unlikely to be reflected upon critically by natives themselves, as they would have been habituated practices typically taken for granted in daily life, what Bourdieu (1977) refers to as doxa. Yet colonial encounters bring about precisely the kinds of historical ruptures that Bourdieu (1977: 167-168) argues cause these otherwise taken for granted activities to come to the fore in social discourse, as persons are brought into interaction with foreign cultures and concomitantly confronted with possibilities of doing even mundane things differently. For example, being exposed to different manners of food preparation may cause persons to think differently and more self-consciously about their own. As Bourdieu (1977: 168) writes, this type of situation “brings the undiscussed into discussion.”

In contexts of culture contact, these previously unquestioned aspects of daily practice can become embroiled in discourses of identity politics, as groups seek to distinguish collective “selves” from “others.” Here I take a semiotic perspective on identity in viewing these practices as potentially signifying cultural affinity, affiliation, or difference, whether individuals intend for these practices to do so or not. While anthropologists have long been

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1 There were exceptions, however: as noted earlier in the chapter, natives of Mexico had to file legal petitions to practice Spanish customs of riding horses and carrying swords. In a more extreme example, a set of ordinances in mid-sixteenth century northern Peru forbade Indians from wearing European clothing, wearing their hair long, and even eating certain types of foods (Rostworowski 1975).
concerned with how groups intentionally and explicitly signify collective identities through materials such as dress and costume, here I am more concerned with how relatively mundane aspects of material culture and daily practice come to be involved in discourses surrounding identity amidst historical rupture (Lightfoot et al. 1998). Bourdieu (1977: 169) describes these forms of discourse a taking the forms of orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Under conditions of orthodoxy, persons—particularly those in power—attempt to naturalize and homogenize arbitrary aspects of social practice because they have an investment in a particular socio-political order associated with them. Under heterodoxy, meanwhile, persons may acknowledge, highlight, or accentuate differences in such practices for various agendas. As Silliman (2001: 205) argues, in reality both of these kinds of discourses may surround certain practices simultaneously, depending upon the scale or the perspective under analysis.

While Spanish colonizers certainly tried to homogenize and naturalize certain aspects of daily practice, particularly those associated with Catholic worship, they did not regulate many others, allowing heterodoxical discourses to emerge and materialize. For example, in the colonial codex Yanhuitlan from the Nochixtlán valley of Oaxaca, we can see natives and Spaniards clearly represented differently in terms of their modes of dress, hairstyles, and other features. Further, I argue in Chapter 8 that in the sixteenth-century codex Sierra, also from the Mixteca Alta region, we see representations of native foods and ceramics purchased for community religious feasts, yet when a Spanish bishop visits the town European ceramics and dining implements are purchased, and Spanish loan words are used to name them in the accompanying Nahuatl text. Both of these codices were painted by indigenous Mixtecs, and the representations found in them speak to a keen native awareness of differences in modes of daily practice, and that these practices were tied to perceptions of cultural identity.
What was at stake in these daily practices? Documentary sources shedding light on this question are elusive, but an account of a messianic movement in 1560 led by an indigenous commoner named Juan Teton in the central Mexican state of Hidalgo provides intriguing suggestions, and is analyzed by Ruíz (2010: 67-68). Teton, a Nahua commoner or macehual, convinced a number of native followers that a kind of doomsday was imminent, upon which people were at risk of being devoured by tzitzimime (star demons) and/or suffering various transformations. Ruíz (2010: 68, emphasis added) describes those who were especially at risk as follows:

Juan Teton was warning people that all baptized Indians would suffer a terrible transformation: for example, those who would eat the meat of a cow, a pig, or a sheep would turn into a cow, a pig, or a sheep, respectively, and even those who used ayates (a kind of blanket) made of wool would become sheep themselves. Those threats had to do with the end of a cycle of fifty-two years, when the normal order would be thrown into disarray. Juan Teton’s threat was directed specifically at those among the Indians who had accepted the European customs, including the food, clothing, and any other form of material culture alien to traditional indigenous practices.

In this admittedly extreme case, we see not only that indigenous persons were closely scrutinizing one another’s daily practices and distinguishing between European and native habits, but that these practices had very serious consequences. While in most cases these consequences were undoubtedly not as severe as being devoured by star demons or undergoing physical transformation, it is reasonable to assume that other native groups throughout Mesoamerica were similarly cognizant of one another’s domestic practices, and differences between them had the potential to become bound up with socio-political tensions. In the wake of the colonial encounter, these mundane aspects of daily life had newfound power to signify aspects of identity and to be brought into social discourse and negotiations of power, regardless of whether Spanish authorities were concerned with controlling them.
The archaeological evidence presented in this dissertation suggests that natives of Achiutla by no means took the kind of hard stance that Juan Teton did with regard to the adoption or appropriation of foreign material culture practices. Yet I argue nevertheless that there were important matters at stake here with regard to identity politics and socio-political negotiation. This was perhaps most acute for native elites, upon whom this dissertation focuses, who often had relatively close ties to colonial authorities while also being accountable to their indigenous subjects. They had the greatest means and motivations for adopting Spanish customs while they simultaneously were pressured to identify with their indigenous constituencies, and their daily practices had potential to signify aspects of identity to Spaniards and fellow natives whether they intended to do so or not. For native elites in particular, this situation may have required a delicate balancing act as they attempted to negotiate with both of these groups—a balancing act that Yannakakis (2008), also drawing from de Certeau in a discussion of colonial indigenous elites in Oaxaca, refers to as a kind of tactical “art of being in between.” Most explicitly in Chapter 8, I argue that this balancing act in part explains why the data from Achiutla do not neatly support models of social change based on theories of acculturation or resistance.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have reviewed a number of the theoretical perspectives that have informed archaeological approaches to understanding social change in colonial encounters. While recognizing the important contributions of theories of acculturation and world systems, I argued that these approaches are limiting in their lack of critical attention to power dynamics. Turning then to theories more explicitly focused on such power dynamics, I suggested that concepts such as hidden transcripts and ideas from postcolonial theory have
provided valuable correctives to previous approaches, though still at times tend to rely on too rigid of dichotomies based on notions of domination and resistance. While the concept of hybridity offers more nuance in the latter regard, both the inconsistent ways in which it has been employed archaeologically and the potentially negative connotations that the term carries more broadly have prompted me to largely eschew it in this dissertation in favor of a focus on tactical appropriation. Lastly, I made the case that daily domestic practices, which may often be taken for granted or non-discursive in certain times and places, can come to have more semiotic weight within contexts of colonial encounters as they become bound with significations of identity and socio-political negotiation. As such, they come to take on a heightened importance in our understandings power dynamics more broadly. These theoretical underpinnings inform interpretations of the data throughout this dissertation, and are revisited most explicitly in Chapter 8, in which the data and interpretations of this study are most fully synthesized.
Chapter 3: The Mixteca Alta and Achiutla of the Postclassic and Colonial Periods

The Mixtec region of Mexico has long been home to significant archaeological and ethnohistorical research, though the region has not received nearly the amount of scholarly attention that other areas of Mesoamerica have, such as central Mexico and the Maya region. Much of the previous research on the Postclassic and Colonial Mixteca has been recently synthesized in works by a number of scholars (e.g., Blomster 2008; Joyce 2010: 248-282; Pérez Rodríguez 2013; Romero Frizzi 1996; Spores 1984; Spores and Balkansky 2013; Terraciano 2001), and it is not my intent to reproduce these syntheses here. Instead, the aim in this chapter is simply to provide the reader with enough background to contextualize the present study. I begin by providing a general orientation to the Mixteca Alta region where Achiutla is located, then move on to a brief review of Postclassic society there, as is currently understood from archaeological and ethnohistorical evidence. I then turn to a discussion of key changes that occurred during the Early Colonial period and review the main civic and religious institutions imposed the Spanish following the Conquest. With this background established, the focus moves to Achiutla more specifically, and I detail documentary sources pertaining to the site that allow us to help reconstruct Postclassic and Early Colonial social dynamics there, contextualizing the archaeological data presented in the chapters to follow.

General Orientation

The Mixteca Alta is but one of three primary sub-regions of the Mixtec-speaking zone extending from western Oaxaca into southern Puebla and eastern Guerrero (Fig. 3.1). Though native Mixtec speakers formed the most numerous and widely distributed linguistic
group in the region at the time of Spanish Contact, the Mixteca has a deep history of ethnolinguistic diversity, and populations living in the region spoke Chatino, Triqui, Amuzgo, Tecuate, Chocho, Ixcatec, and variants of Nahuatl as their native languages as well. The Mixteca Alta forms the central-eastern portion of this region, while the Mixteca Baja borders it to the northwest, and the Mixteca de la Costa to the southwest. To the east lie predominantly Zapotec-speaking regions, including the Valley of Oaxaca. The Mixteca Baja owes its name due to the fact that it is lower in elevation than the Mixteca Alta, and the climate of the region is generally warmer. The Mixteca de la Costa, meanwhile, extends from the Sierra Madre del Sur of Oaxaca down to the narrow strip of coastal plain and intermittent river valleys along the Pacific Ocean. Due to its hot climate, high amounts of rainfall, and proximity to the ocean (as well as coastal lagoons and estuaries) the Mixteca de la Costa has long been an important region as a source of a host of resources that are unavailable in the highlands. Inhabitants of the Mixteca have taken advantage of this highland-lowland ecological complementarity through interregional exchange since the Formative period (Joyce 1993).
Turning to the Mixteca Alta, this area lays in the intersection of the southern and western Sierra Madre ranges, consisting of rugged mountains interspersed with flat valleys that are rather variable in spatial extent (Kowalewski et al. 2009: 5). Elevation in the valley
floors averages between 2000 and 2500m above sea level, with a humid-temperate climate (Tamayo 1950; Alvarez 1998). Vegetation is typified by pine and oak forests, and the area receives 650-900 mm in annual rainfall (Tamayo 1950), which is generally sufficient for non-irrigated maize agriculture. Geologically, the most prominent bedrock is the calcareous limestone Yanhuitlán formation, which is highly erodible, but produces rather productive soils for agriculture (Joyce and Mueller 1997; Kirkby 1972). The largest expanses of flat land in the region are found in the Nochixtlán Valley, and secondarily in the Teposcolula and Tamazulapan Valleys. Rivers largely drain into the Rio Verde and Rio Balsas systems as they descend toward the coasts.

**Socio-Political Dynamics in the Postclassic Mixteca Alta**

**Chronology**

The Mixteca Alta has been home to complex societies since the Formative period, including population centers such as Monte Negro (Acosta y Romero 1992), Yucuita (Plunket 1983; Robles 1988; Winter 1982), Tayata (Balkansky et al. 2008), Huamelulpan (Gaxiola 1984), and Etlatongo (Blomster 2004; Zárate 1987). Beginning in the Terminal Formative, and extending into the Classic period (Ramos and Las Flores phases), population growth and nucleation occurred, and larger polities emerged at sites including Cerro Jasmin, Huamelulpan, Monte Negro, and Yucuñudahui (Balkansky et al. 2004; Caso 1942; Gaxiola 1984; Spores 1972), though these centers did not approach the scale of sites like Monte Albán in the Valley of Oaxaca (Kowalewski et al. 2009: 338). The ensuing Postclassic period is frequently described as a time of “balkanization,” characterized by political fragmentation and the proliferation of smaller polities, often referred to as “city-states” (Lind 2000; Oudijk 2002), in the wake of the collapse of large centralized polities of the Classic
This is a fairly apt description for regions like the Valley of Oaxaca and the Mixteca de la Costa, where the collapses of the dominant centers of Monte Albán and Río Viejo ushered in major changes in socio-political organization. The Mixteca Alta, meanwhile, though likely affected by the collapses of the above Classic period polities and others throughout Mesoamerica, ostensibly never witnessed such a high degree of political centralization. As such, the distribution of dozens of relatively small, similarly sized political centers during the Postclassic was not profoundly different from the pattern seen during the Classic (Joyce 2010: 226-227), and the situation in the Mixteca Alta was likely more comparable to that in eastern Guerrero, where the impacts of the collapse of Classic period centers were fairly minimal (Gutiérrez 2008).

A difficulty in further exploring the issues above is that the Postclassic period in the Mixteca Alta, as currently defined, extends from AD 800 to 1521, ending upon the arrival of the Spanish. This period, termed the Natividad phase, spans over 700 years, and is symptomatic of the most vexing and long-standing problem in the archaeology of the Mixteca Alta today. The archaeological ceramic chronology, initially developed by Spores (1972) for the Nochixtlán Valley, has undergone virtually no revision or refinement since the 1970’s, with the important exception of Blomster’s (2004) refinements of the Formative period sequence (Table 3.1). This state of affairs stands in stark contrast to the Lower Río Verde region of the Mixteca de la Costa, and to the Valley of Oaxaca, where the Postclassic has at least been broken up into early and late phases, and scholars can examine socio-political changes that occurred after the collapse of many societies during the Classic period in more nuance (e.g., Joyce et al. 2001; Lind 2008; Markens et al. 2008). Making similar refinements to the Mixteca Alta ceramic chronology should be a top priority for
archaeologists currently working in the region, and it is hoped that the project presented in this dissertation will contribute to these efforts.

Table 3.1: Mixteca Alta Ceramic Phases and Corresponding Mesoamerican Periods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ceramic Phase</th>
<th>Mesoamerican Period</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natividad</td>
<td>Postclassic</td>
<td>AD 800-1521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las Flores</td>
<td>Classic</td>
<td>AD 300-800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramos</td>
<td>Late Formative-Classic</td>
<td>300 BC-AD 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yucuita</td>
<td>Middle-Late Formative</td>
<td>500-300 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruz D</td>
<td>Middle Formative</td>
<td>700-500 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruz C</td>
<td>Middle Formative</td>
<td>850-700 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruz B</td>
<td>Early Formative</td>
<td>1150-850 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruz A</td>
<td>Early Formative</td>
<td>1500-1150 BC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the above problems with chronology, I use the general term “Postclassic” throughout this dissertation in discussing the data from Achiutla, given that there are no defined “early” or “late” phases to speak of for the Mixteca Alta. The reader should understand, however, that I will normally be referring to the later portion of this time period unless otherwise specified. Diagnostic ceramics from the excavations presented later include Pilitas polychromes, which have not yet been found to occur earlier than AD 1350 elsewhere in the Mixteca Alta (Lind 2015). In the following discussion, I am thus largely referring to the last several centuries prior to the arrival of the Spanish.

Settlements and Social Structure

Chronological problems aside, a wealth of information on Postclassic societies of the Mixteca Alta is provided by archaeological research, as well as ethnohistorical sources, including the pre-Hispanic codices, colonial pictographic maps known as lienzos, chronicles of Spanish friars like Burgoa (discussed in Chapter 1), and other post-contact documents, such as the Relaciones Geograficas—questionnaires that were circulated to indigenous by the Spanish crown in the late sixteenth century. Together, these sources of information paint
a rich picture of the region just prior to the Spanish Conquest. The largest population centers were found at Yanhiutlán, Teposcolula, Tlaxiaco, and Coixtlahuaca. General information about population distribution comes from a number of archaeological surveys carried out in the Nochixtlán valley (Spores 1972), the Coixtlahuaca Valley (Rincón 1999), the Tilantongo region (Byland and Pohl 1994), and in a number of areas beyond by Kowalewski and his colleagues (2009). Settlements generally were diffuse in terms of density, distributed along low hill slopes surrounding valley floodplains. Flat land within floodplains was largely reserved for farming, though agriculture extended significantly into surrounding piedmont as well, as evidenced by extensive terracing of hill slopes throughout the region, a practice that was also common in earlier periods. Civic-ceremonial cores of communities that housed rulers and nobles tend to be found along hill slopes and atop low ridges as well, as is the case at Achiutla and at the original center of Postclassic Teposcolula, known as the archaeological site of Yucundaa. In general, monumental architecture is considerably less frequent, and smaller in scale, than seen in political centers of earlier periods in Oaxaca.

Mixtec peoples referred to themselves in their native language with the compound word Ñudzahui, meaning “people of the rain place,” and first component of this term, ñuu, simultaneously could reference both a settlement and the group of people who lived there. While Ñudzahui refers broadly to speakers of the Mixtec language and the region they inhabit, more commonly the term ñuu referred to a specific Mixtec community, to the kinds of small city-states discussed above (Terraciano 2001: 103). More often in colonial Mixtec sources, however, communities are described with the term yuhuitayu—a coupling of the term yuhui, meaning “reed mat,” and tayu, which could refer to both “seat,” or “pair,” the latter in reference the ruling male and female couple of the given community (Terraciano
In this way and others, the Mixtec political unit of the ñuu or yuhuitayu was highly analogous to the Nahua alteptl system of central Mexico described by Lockhart (1992). Within each community, smaller subdivisions existed, most commonly called siqui, which had their own internal forms of organization and administration, subordinate to that of the primary rulers. Terraciano (2001: 106-107) argues these siqui groups were largely unified through a combination of ethnic and kinship ties, as well as political and economic concerns.

Rigid distinctions of class existed within these communities, as three general social classes were recognized: 1) the yya toniñe, or hereditary ruling class, 2) the tay toho, or hereditary nobility, and 3) the tay ñandahi, or commoner class. Rulers, or yya toniñe, controlled vast extents of land and were entitled to large sums of tribute from nobles and commoners, in both goods and labor. They reserved special foods and clothing for themselves, and even used distinctive forms of reverential speech (Jansen and Pérez 2009). The yya maintained and bolstered their positions of power in part by intermarrying with ruling families of other Mixtec polities, and females as well as males were recognized as primary rulers. The pictographic pre-Hispanic codices are largely devoted to charting these dynastic successions and marriage alliances between communities. Tay toho, or nobles, meanwhile, also enjoyed wealth and privileges at lower levels, and wielded considerable authority through the performance of administrative functions for the community (Terraciano 2001: 137). As such, they served as important intermediaries between commoners and the yya, and may have acted as de facto rulers themselves when the yya of a given community resided in another with his or her spouse. They paid tribute to the yya in goods, but not in labor, while organizing much of the communal labor performed by commoners. The tay
ñandahi, or commoner class, constituted the vast majority and the economic backbone of Mixtec communities. Commoners produced agricultural surplus and participated in a variety of crafting activities, not only for tribute, but also for exchange at local and regional markets during the Postclassic, as shown by a number of archaeological studies, particularly in the Mixteca de la Costa region (e.g., Joyce et al. 2001; King 2008; Levine 2011; Levine et al. 2011). Though commoners were beholden to rulers and nobles, and required to pay tribute to them, these relationships were always negotiated to an extent (Forde 2006; Levine 2011). If nothing else, commoners could vote with their feet if displeased with the demands of their rulers, and relocate to a different ñuu.

*Houses and Households*

Relationships of land tenure are not entirely clear for the Mixteca Alta during the Postclassic. For example, Spores and Balkansky (2013: 111) argue that in many communities, all lands were considered property of the rulers, while nobles and commoners only had usufruct rights to lands via permission from the yya, provided they pay appropriate tribute. Whether or not this was the case in official discourse, Terraciano (2001: 199) cogently argues that, in practice, land tenure was primarily tied to the household—known in Mixtec as *huahi*—the fundamental unit of Mixtec society. In the Early Colonial period, though rulers and nobles possessed the largest and most productive tracts of land, commoners clearly had rights to own lands and passed them down to their heirs, as evidenced in numerous legal records (Spores 1984: 131-134; Terraciano 2001: 203-209). In the documents, it is quite clear that these lands were viewed as tied to specific households, no matter whether they were possessed by commoners or elites. Though rulers may have in
theory been the only “owners” of lands during the Postclassic, in practice lands were likely similarly tied to household units in pre-Hispanic times as well.

Households were generally composed of extended families living in multiple structures surrounding a central patio. Though the size and degree of architectural elaboration of these houses varied according to social class and wealth, they were largely analogous in form. A number of archaeological studies in the Mixteca have shed further light on Postclassic households. In the coastal Lower Río Verde region during the Early Postclassic, Joyce and colleagues (2001), and King (2008), show that commoners reoccupied Río Viejo’s acropolis after the collapse of its ruling institutions, and participated in a vibrant political economy through interregional exchange in the wake of this power vacuum. Political circumstances were quite different in the Lower Río Verde in the Late Postclassic, as the powerful Mixtec polity of Tututepec rose to power and came to control a relatively vast tribute empire along the Oaxaca coast (Joyce et al. 2004; Spores 1993). Nevertheless, excavations of households at Tututepec by Levine (2007, 2011; Levine et al. 2011, 2015) demonstrate that commoners enjoyed a relatively high level of affluence during this time, perhaps predominantly due to their participation in surplus production of cotton textiles, which they exchanged for valuable goods such as polychrome pottery and copper objects at markets.

In the Mixteca Alta, Lind’s (1979, 1984) excavations of a number of both Postclassic and colonial households at the sites of Chachoapan and Yucuita have been foundational for much of the subsequent work carried out in the region. In analyzing both architecture and associated domestic artifact assemblages, this work has shed considerable light on the range of household variability in the Mixteca Alta. Through a diachronic examination of both
commoner and elite contexts, Lind reveals important variations among Mixtec households across time and social class. More recently, Pérez (2006) has excavated households at the rural community of Nicayuju. In focusing on these households as corporate agrarian units, she shows that these groups enjoyed a certain degree of economic freedom from state institutions. She argues that important works of agricultural infrastructure, such as *lambombo* terraces (check-dams), could have been constructed by household groups without the intervention of rulers. Lastly, the largest scale excavations recently carried out in the Mixteca Alta have been at the site of Yucundaa, the center of the community of Teposcolula prior to 1550, when the community was forcibly relocated to the floor of the Teposcolula Valley (Spores and Robles 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008; Spores 2008). Excavations here have focused on elite palaces, commoner households, the first colonial church at the site, and a variety of other features. Lamentably, however, to this date relatively little on the project has been published. Apart from several broad synthesizes, which do provide significant insights, the majority of the data are buried in unpublished technical reports, and even these reports lack important information. Artifact analyses and detailed illustrations of architecture are only found in two unpublished theses by Diego (2010, 2014). At the time of this writing, a new edited volume was published in Mexico describing the results of the work at Yucundaa in more detail, however, the limited amount of copies printed prevented even interested scholars in Oaxaca from gaining access to the book. In the chapters to follow, I attempt to compare the data from Achiutla to those from Yucundaa wherever possible and appropriate, though the current state of affairs makes the task difficult.
The Codices and Postclassic Political Dynamics

More insights regarding interactions between the various yuhuitayu of the Postclassic Mixteca come from the pictographic codices, mentioned previously, as well as post-Conquest native documents such as maps and lienzos that incorporate many of the same conventions. These sources have been studied in depth by a number of scholars (e.g., Acuña 1982; Byland and Pohl 2011; Caso 1977; Gutiérrez et al. 2009; Hermann 2009; Jansen and Pérez 2007, 2011; León 1933; Parmenter 1982; Pohl 1994; Rincón 1999; Smith 1973; Van Doesburg 2001). The codices employ toponymic symbols or place-signs to represent these various city-states, and predominantly chart their successions of dynastic rulership, as well as marriages between members of ruling families of these communities, and conquests of various yuhuitayu by others. These histories at times reach back centuries, even as far back as into what Mixtecs viewed as earlier ages of creation (Hamann 2002). The codices in part served to allow rulers of various yuhuitayu to trace their ancestries back to important polities and dynasties, and to mytho-historical events of sacred creation. As will be seen later in this chapter, Achiutla was an important place in the latter regard.

The various Mixtec codices were created in particular communities at particular times and, as such, each contains a perspective that is localized to one degree or another. The codices focus on the yuhuitayu of the Nochixtlán Valley—frequently those of Tilantongo and Jaltepec—but their subject matter is wide-ranging both temporally and geographically, and scholars broadly agree that these documents at times evidence alliances between polities of the Mixteca Alta and those of the Mixteca de la Costa, the Mixteca Baja, and Valley of Oaxaca (e.g., Byland and Pohl 1994; Jansen and Pérez 2011; Oudijke 1998; Paddock 1983; Pohl 2003c). Pohl (2003c) draws from a wide array of codices and ethnohistorical
documents to map out how these alliances eventually came to form much broader networks, directly and indirectly connecting a vast array of Postclassic Mesoamerican polities stretching from the Mixteca up into Puebla and central Mexico, possibly forming loose confederacies. These alliances likely helped facilitate the movement of people, goods, and ideas across political and ethnolinguistic boundaries over the course of the Postclassic.

**Aztec Conquests**

Societies of the Oaxaca and central Mexico were brought into more direct contact and political interaction toward the end of the Postclassic via a series of military campaigns carried out by the Aztec Empire, or Mexica Triple alliance from the mid-fifteenth to early sixteenth centuries. Their first incursions into the region appear to have occurred in AD 1458, under the ruler Moctezuma Ilhuicamina, with the conquest of the important and powerful polity of Coixtlahuaca, in the northern reaches of the Mixteca Alta (Durán 1994: 182-187; Hassig 1988: 166). This campaign ostensibly led to conquests of other major allies of Coixtlahuaca in the area, including the important population centers of Teposcolula, Yanhuitlán, and Nochixtlán, as these and various others in the region appear as part of the same Aztec tributary province in the colonial native documents the *Codex Mendoza* and the *Matricula de Tributos*. Aztec political expansion into Oaxaca continued under the reigns of Ahuizotl and Moctezuma Xocoyotl (or Moctezuma II) during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Over the course of these campaigns, much of the Valley of Oaxaca was conquered (Barbosa-Cano 1994; Hassig 1988). Under the reign of Moctezuma II, a conflict with Tlaxiaco led to its conquest, along with that of its nearby political ally, Achiutla, which I discuss in more depth later in this chapter.
Aztec conquests in the Mixteca do not appear to have greatly impacted local institutions of politics and rulership. The codices, some of which chart dynastic histories extending into the colonial period, make no mention of these events. Dynastic lineages were ostensibly left in power and, after the initial violent campaigns, communities were largely only affected by the additional tribute burdens that were imposed on them. Aztec presence in the Mixteca was likely by and large limited to several *calpixque*—agents of the Aztec state charged with collecting and transporting goods required in tribute.

In examining the three Oaxacan tribute provinces listed in the *Codex Mendoza*, headed by the polities of Coixtlahuaca, Tlaxiaco, and Coyolapan—the former two based in the Mixteca, the latter in the Valley of Oaxaca—a curious feature stands out: all of these collections of polities, based in the mountain highlands, were to pay a portion of their tribute not in local goods, but with those acquired from the coast. All three provinces were required to pay the bulk of their tribute in various types of cotton cloth, the raw material for which would likely have been acquired from the coastal regions of Tututepec and/or Tehuantepec. Additionally, both the Coixtlahuaca and Tlaxiaco provinces were to pay portions of their tribute in bundles of quetzal feathers, an exotic bird not local to the region. Perhaps most curiously, for the Coixtlahuaca province, two strings of greenstone beads are listed as part of their obligated tribute, which may very well have had to be acquired from Guatemala. Here, it is important to understand that the items listed in sources like the *Codex Mendoza* and *Matricula de Tributos* do not necessarily represent what these conquered groups always provided to the Aztecs in reality. As Gutiérrez (2013) shows for the nearby kingdom of Tlapa-Tlachinollan in eastern Guerrero, local records kept in Guerrero reveal that this polity was frequently not paying its tribute in the specific items represented in the Aztec
documents, but instead with the approximate equivalents of these items in gold. This phenomenon demonstrates that conquered polities were able to negotiate certain aspects of the tribute demands that the Aztec empire imposed on them. Nevertheless, I argue that it is likely not happenstance or coincidence that led to coastal goods appearing in the tribute lists for the conquered polities of highland Oaxaca. Whether or not they actually always paid their tribute in these coastal products, these goods appear in the tribute lists likely because Aztec administrators believed it was reasonable to expect that they could be provided. I suspect this indicates the existence significant exchange relationships between the highland and coastal regions of Oaxaca, which the Aztecs sought to exploit in order to gain access to coastal products that they might not have been able to acquire directly. This is an issue I return to briefly later in this chapter, and in Chapter 8, where I discuss evidence for interregional exchange at Achiutla more broadly.

**Colonial Mixtec Society**

After making initial forays into the region as early as 1519, Spanish conquistadors had effectively established control in the Mixteca by 1523, following the fall of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan (Spores and Balkansky 2013: 143-144). The campaigns of conquest were led by Pedro de Alvarado, lieutenant of Hernán Cortés, and were by and large met with little resistance, apart from at the center of the coastal empire of Tututepec. While the Spanish conquest in the Mixteca Alta was relatively peaceful, at least in contrast with various other regions of Mesoamerica, the effects on the native population wrought by epidemic diseases were nevertheless severe, in both the short and long term. A population estimated at approximately 700,000 just prior to the Conquest had fallen to approximately 57,000 by the year 1590, and waves of disease continued to periodically further decimate the population
until the late seventeenth century (Cook and Borah 1969). In the years immediately following the conquest of the region, colonists and representatives of the Spanish government gradually established presence in the region, and control was fairly well established by 1530 (Spores 1984: 97; Terraciano 2001: 3). Nevertheless, Spanish settlers were never a large presence in the Mixteca Alta—even by as late as the end of the eighteenth century, non-native households never accounted for as much 5% of the total population. As such, apart from demographic loss, the major impacts of the Conquest for native peoples in the Mixteca had to do with institutional changes brought about by the imposition of Spanish authority, as opposed to sustained interactions with colonizers. To provide context for later chapters of this dissertation, in this section I briefly review a number of the major socio-political institutions imposed by Spanish authority or otherwise altered by it.

*Encomienda*

In the immediate aftermath of Spanish conquests throughout the Americas, *encomiendas* were typically assigned to various conquistadors involved. These were not grants of land, but instead entitlements to tribute and labor from particular communities based on existing indigenous settlement patterns. Individual conquistadors, or *encomenderos*, were often granted encomienda rights to multiple communities and typically did not reside for a significant period of time in any one of them (Gerhardt 1972). Thus, the encomienda system affected Mixtec communities with regard to tribute demands placed upon them, but did not entail the establishment of full-time presence of Spanish authority or supervision.

Initially, encomenderos were free to set tribute demands on indigenous communities as they saw fit, but during the 1530s and 1540s, the Spanish Crown fixed limits on both
tribute and labor that could be demanded as a means of preventing abuses (Spores and Balkansky 2013: 145). In 1549, a royal decree supposedly prohibited labor from being part of an encomienda obligation (Spores and Balkansky 2013: 145), but documents from Achiutla discussed later in this indicate that labor continued to be required as tribute by some encomenderos later in the sixteenth century. Encomenderos, as well as officials of the Crown, clerics, and other colonists introduced a number of new industries to Mixtec communities that became important to the tribute system and the economy at large. These included the raising of livestock (Spores 1984: 127-128), the growing of wheat (Spores and Balkansky 2013: 146), silk raising (Borah 1943), and gold and silver mining (Spores 1984: 126).

The encomienda system was not an enduring institution in the Spanish Americas, as the Crown sought to wrest administrative control of the colonies from private hands and eventually phased it out. The means by which this transition occurred varied in different parts of the colonies, but generally the Spanish government placed limits on the number of generations over which an encomienda could be passed down as heritable property before reverting to the Crown (Burkholder and Johnson 2014). In Oaxaca, this number was apparently three (Spores, personal communication), as was the case at Achiutla, which had three different ecomenderos before tribute there was transferred to viceregal authority. The encomienda system was largely extinct in Spanish America by the early seventeenth century (Burkholder and Johnson 2014).

The Alcalde Mayor or Corregimiento

By the 1530s, the Spanish Crown had established a hierarchy of administrative positions within New Spain, headed by the virrey, or viceroy, (representative of the king),
and the *audiencia* (royal court), based in Mexico City. New Spain was then further split into more localized provinces known as *alcaldías* or *corregimientos*, each with their own administrators, who were charged with collecting tribute, enforcing laws, and acting as judges at a level below the *audiencia*. For indigenous groups in more remote places like the Mixteca, these officials, known most commonly as *alcaldes mayores*, constituted the most significant local presence of Spanish authority, and provided the most immediate access to the Spanish legal system. In the Early Colonial period, the Mixteca Alta was split into two provinces, based in Yanhuitlán and Teposcolula. These offices were also in place in the Mixteca by the 1530’s (Terraciano 2001: 3; Spores and Balkansky 2013: 144). The provinces typically had multiple administrators—the alcaldes mayores were assisted by lieutenants and sub-governors (also typically known as *alcaldes* or *corregidores*) who were at times charged governing individual towns (Spores and Balkansky 2013: 168). Further, the courts based in the capitals of the provinces employed scribes and translators that could record testimonies in indigenous languages (Terraciano 2001: 46).

*Cazicazgos, Cabacercas, and Cabildos*

At the level of the individual community or municipality, day-to-day governance was largely left in indigenous hands. Native rulers, dubbed *caciques* or *caciquas* by the Spanish (an Arawak word for indigenous lords in the Caribbean that the Spanish quickly adopted), were largely left in charge of Mixtec yuhuitayu, and these communities became known as *cacicazgos*. At times, as these communities continued to follow pre-Hispanic patterns of dispersed settlement, the Spanish labeled the larger more nucleated centers of population and indigenous authority *cabacercas* (head towns), and the smaller settlements within their vicinities *sujetos* (subjects). These communities were recognized as single municipalities, at
times irrespective of whether these relationships actually reflected native political ties
(Terraciano 2001: 121-123).

Caciques were charged with ensuring that tribute demands were met and with
mobilizing corporate labor within their municipalities. The Crown continued to recognize
significant entitlements to tribute for indigenous caciques, and some grew considerably
wealthier than many Spanish colonists over the course of the Colonial period (Spores and
Balkansky 2013: 173-191). They did this in part through extending their authority to other
communities via marriage alliances with other native rulers, keeping with pre-Hispanic
political strategies. Beneath the caciques, the Spanish introduced the institution of the
cabildo (municipal council), but native communities effectively molded this institution to
correspond to pre-Hispanic custom, as the offices of these councils were inevitably occupied
by members of the indigenous nobility or tay toho (Terraciano 2001: 136-137). Indigenous
nobles thus continued to hold important administrative positions, wield considerable
authority, and serve as intermediaries with Spanish authorities.

The Church

Establishment of the Catholic Church and the conversion of natives to Christianity
largely fell to the hands of Dominican friars in the Mixteca, who first founded a convent in
Yanuitlán in 1529, though they abandoned in twice over the ensuring 15 years (Terraciano
2001: 274). Dominican convents were founded in the other major population centers of the
region over the course of the next three decades (Terraciano 2001: 285). Secular clergy were
in the region as well by the 1530’s (Gerhardt 1972: 201), though their activities are less well
documented. Though presence of churches and clerics appears to have increased steadily
over the course of the sixteenth century, the number of priests living in the Mixteca during
the Early Colonial period appears to have never exceeded more than a couple dozen or so (Gerhardt 1972).

Documents reveal a diversity of native receptions of Christianity during the first decades of the Colonial period. Perhaps most famous are the idolatry trials in Yanhuitlán held during the 1540’s (Greenleaf 1969; Hamann 2011; Sepúlveda y Herrera 1999; Terraciano 2001: 278-281), which reveal acts of resistance and continued practices of indigenous ritual. At the same time, other sources indicate that, at least by the mid-to-late sixteenth century, aspects of Christianity were being received relatively enthusiastically. For example, the codex Sierra, a native document from the Mixteca Alta dating to the second half of the sixteenth century, shows that the vast bulk of funds held collectively by the indigenous community of Tejupan were spent on religious festivals and upkeep of the town’s church during this time (León 1933). The large convents in the region, though designed by European architects, were inevitably constructed by indigenous hands, and with indigenous resources. Indeed, as Terraciano (2001: 284-286) notes, the spread of Catholicism in the Mixteca largely depended on native participation, particularly that of native nobles, who often were schooled by friars and held official positions within churches.

**Achiutla and Documentary Sources**

Achiutla is located in the central portion of the Mixteca Alta. It has long been known to archaeologists and historians as an important Postclassic political and ritual center, however, prior to this study, very little archaeological work had been carried out here. Survey of the region by Kowalewski and colleagues (2009: 190-201) demonstrates that the site was most heavily populated during the Postclassic period, spanning 779 hectares, with a population of approximately 11,700 (Kowalewski et al. 2009: 196). The civic-ceremonial
The center of the site is located atop a sizable hill at the head of the valley, now known to modern residents as the “Pueblo Viejo.” The site center is notable for its monumental terrace platforms and remains of standing architecture (Kowalewski et al. 2009:199-201; Balkansky et al. 2000: 380; see Chapter 4). An Early Colonial chapel now in ruins, and a larger convent that is still maintained, were constructed in this location, while other residences are found on surrounding lower terraces (Kowalewski et al. 2009: 201). The center of the site is described in much more detail in the following chapter. Apart from the survey by Kowalewski and colleagues and the present study, no other formal archaeological research has been carried out at the site.

Achiutla in the Codices

The majority of documentary information on pre-Hispanic Achiutla comes from the surviving Mixtec codices and the aforementioned writings of Fray Francisco de Burgoa (1934), who included accounts of local oral history from the Mixteca in his broader Geográfica Descripción of Oaxaca. Two different toponyms in the Mixtec codices have been identified by scholars as associated with Achiutla. The first, as seen in Chapter 1, represents Achiutla’s name in the Mixtec language—Ñuu Ndécu, meaning “place of flame”—and is depicted as a palace frieze with a flame motif attached. Its Mixtec name was first recorded by Fray Antonio de los Reyes in 1593. Achiutla’s glyph in the codices was first identified by Jiménez (1974), and this identification is widely agreed upon by codex scholars. In two separate cases, in the codex Selden and the codex Bodley, it is represented as a place in which an important personage is born from a sacred tree (Lord 2 Grass in the Selden and Lady 1 Death in the Bodley). Each of these persons goes on to play an important role in the foundation of various dynasties throughout the Mixteca (Byland 2008; Jansen and
Pérez 2007). Interestingly, an account that seems to parallel that seen in the codices is found in the work of José Antonio Gay, a 19th Century cleric that lived in Oaxaca. After describing the landscape of Achiutla valley, Gay (1950: 74, translation mine) mentions two trees that purportedly existed there in antiquity, saying of them: “These trees produced the first caciques, male and female, of whose generation gave the beginning of the Mixtec nation.”

Byland (2008) argues that it was important for rulers of kingdoms throughout the Mixteca during the Postclassic to be able to tie their genealogies to Achiutla and these sacred ancestors in order to justify their rights to rule. Support for this hypothesis is found in the work of Burgoa (1934: 275-276), who writes that when a new indigenous ruler came to power in the nearby cacicazgo of Tilantongo during the Early Colonial period, this person made pilgrimage to Achiutla as part of confirmation of his new position, ostensibly following pre-Hispanic custom.

Folio 45 of the colonial Aztec document, the codex Mendoza shows Achiutla (represented by a different toponym, as the “place of achiote”) as conquered by the Triple Alliance and having formed a “tribute province” in combination with the polities of Tlaxiaco and Tzapotlan. Collectively, these polities paid tribute that included mantles of cotton cloth, cochineal, gold dust, quetzal feathers, and warrior adornment. The presence of cotton cloth and quetzal feathers in this representation suggests possible economic connections with the coast, as alluded to previously. Some corroboration for this is provided by Burgoa (1934: 352-353) who makes reference to a conflict purported to have taken place between Achiutla and the coastal Mixtec empire of Tututepec, in which soldiers from Tututepec invaded Achiutla and the ensuing battle left more than 22,000 persons killed. This conflict arose when the ruler of Tututepec demanded that the people of Achiutla bring their crafts to the
community of Putla for the holding of a joint market. When Achiutla refused this demand, Tututepec responded by sending this military force. Though it is not clear what the specific political relationship was between these two polities, this account suggests that there was much at stake in the economic connections between them. In later chapters, I will argue that this likely owes in part to Achiutla’s concurrent ties to the obsidian trade in central Mexico, and their role in facilitating exchange between the highlands and the coast.

A second important toponym recognized by some scholars as associated with Achiutla is comprised of a hill glyph with a solar disk, and thus known as “the Hill of the Sun” (e.g., Byland 2008: 358; Byland and Pohl 1994: 199), though not all scholars agree on this point. Byland and Pohl (1994: 199) make this identification based on a connection between a colonial Mixtec term for ceremonial center—*yucu ndicandii* or “mountain of the sun”—and the name for a hill in the Achiutla Valley recorded by Castellanos (1910: 21) as *yucu gandi*. There is in fact a peak at the northern edge of a ridge that runs through the valley that is still known as “Casa del Sol,” or “house of the sun,” by people of Achiutla today. Byland and Pohl link this toponym to the description by Burgoa of the oracle at Achiutla, discussed below, and Byland (2008) expands upon this argument, exploring how Mixtecs may have viewed this place as the home of a solar deity named “1 Death,” or a prominent priest impersonating this deity, who played an important role in Postclassic politics in the Mixteca during the Postclassic. Jansen and Pérez (2011: 305-307) disagree with this identification, primarily because this Hill of the Sun glyph appears in certain parts of the codices in which the prominent ruler Lord 8 Deer “Jaguar Claw” undertakes a prolonged journey, which they assert extends far outside the Mixteca, perhaps to places as distant as Chichén Itzá in the Maya region. The latter argument is rather bold, and has not
been demonstrated conclusively. In any case, Jansen and Pérez (2011: 307) do not disagree so vociferously with the association of Achiutla with toponyms representing the Hill of the Sun, provided when the toponym occurs outside of this 8 Deer narrative, writing that, “It is always possible, however, that one or more of the other references to a Sun Temple within the Ñuu Dzahui region do represent the sanctuary of Achiutla or another ceremonial center dedicated to this deity.”

Despite the above debates, all scholars involved agree that Achiutla was a site of major religious importance. As the home of the oracle described by Burgoa (1934: 276) it is considered to have been the most prominent religious site in all of the Mixteca (see also Dahlgren 1979: 263-268). Burgoa (1934: 318) refers to Achiutla as “the synagogue, and major temple of this nation.” In particular, he notes that it was home to an idol of great veneration known as the *ini ñuu*, meaning “corazón del pueblo” of “heart of the community.” It was a large green stone adorned with carved images of a bird and a serpent (Burgoa 1934: 232-233). The oracle was purported to have been consulted by lords throughout the region, and even by emissaries of the Aztec emperor Moctezuma II after the arrival of the Spanish, who sought a prognostication of the outcome of their encounter with the conquistadors (Burgoa 1943: 266-267). Meanwhile, the priests in charge of attending to the oracle were held in particularly high esteem throughout the region, so much so that they were also said to have been entrusted with maintaining a second shrine in the neighboring valley of Yanhiutlán (Burgoa 1934: 277). As noted above, Byland and Pohl (1994) associate this oracle with the Hill of the Sun seen in the codices, where the solar deity Lord 1 Death at times appears to play a role in mediating disputes among Mixtec rulers. Burgoa’s description (1934: 318) may help support this claim insofar as he notes that the oracle was consulted regarding
matters of peace and war, echoing this diplomatic role played by Lord 1 Death. Jansen and Pérez (2011: 305) instead associate the oracle with the representation of a “jewel place” seen in the codex Selden, in one instance as part of a compound representing Achiutla as the Place of Flame, in another as a cave containing a jewel, a heart, a greca frieze, and a face of the rain deity dzahui. The latter suggestion is intriguing: the jewel itself may connote the green stone that Burgoa describes as the material manifestation of this oracle. Meanwhile the confluence of the heart, greca frieze, and dzahui face may form its name, “heart of the people”—as Mixtec peoples referred to themselves as ŕuū dzahui, the combination of the greca frieze, widely agreed by codex scholars to represent the concept of the ŕuū, with the heart and rain deity image could serve to form the expression ini ŕuū dzahui, or “heart of the people of the rain deity.”

Despite certain debates regarding representations in the codices, the data described above largely serve to corroborate one another in suggesting that Achiutla was a place of particular religious importance in the Mixtec region, and that the community likely held a certain amount of political clout as well, perhaps owing to the site’s association ritual, creation myth, and sacred history. The imposition of Spanish authority here was thus a major historical rupture, which at times led to conflict.

_Achiutla of the Early Colonial Period_

At the time of the Conquest, Burgoa (1934: 319) writes that Achiutla was ruled by a king named Dzahuindanda. This ruler is also discussed in later works of Manuel Martínez Gracida (1891-1894) and Abraham Castellanos (1910) who drew from both Burgoa and local folklore, and describe him as a powerful warrior-priest, whose palace supposedly lies beneath
the colonial convent. Dzahuindanda continues to be a major figure in oral histories people of Achiutla and the surrounding region today (Alavez Chávez 1988).

Documents specifically describing the conquest of Achiutla are not known, but this likely occurred by AD 1523. Gerhardt (1972: 287) suggests that the original community was divided into four barrios and may have included the modern towns of San Juan Achiutla, Santa Catarina Tayata, and Santo Domingo Huendio, as colonial documents list them as sujetos of the cabecera. Local residents today believe that along with San Juan Achiutla, the more closely located communities of Yucuañe and Atoyaquillo (today an agencia of San Miguel Achiutla) were once part of the polity. Population figures for Early Colonial Achiutla are elusive, though Spores (1984: 105), citing the Papeles de Nueva España (Paso y Troncoso 1905), gives a figure of 2,406, consisting of 402 households, during the years 1547 and 1548. Unfortunately, no 16th century Relación Geográfica exists for Achiutla. By the year 1746, Spores gives a figure of population figure of 260 “Indian families.” If we presume “Indian families” were equivalent to “households,” this would indicate that the population dropped by slightly less that 50% over 200 years, though these figures are unclear.

Tribute and the Encomienda

At an unknown date in early colonial times, Hernán Cortés granted an encomienda consisting of Achiutla and nine other communities in the Mixteca to the conquistador Francisco Maldonado (Gerhardt 1972: 285). It is known that by 1548, Maldonado was deceased, and his widow, had married another conquistador Tristán de Luna y Arellano. The son of the latter couple, Carlos, took possession of the encomienda in 1573, and was still alive in 1597 (Gerhardt 1972: 285). While the encomienda system certainly impacted
Achiutla economically, there is no evidence to suggest that its successive encomenderos ever resided in the community for any great length of time. Maldonado was also granted encomiendas in the Villa Alta region, east of the Oaxaca Valley, and was involved in putting down indigenous uprisings there (Gerhardt 1972: 195). His successor, Tristán de Luna y Arellano, largely lived in Mexico, participated in the Coronado Expedition, and later led an expedition to Florida that resulted in shipwreck (Priestly 1971). There is no documentary evidence to suggest that his son Carlos spent any considerable time in Achiutla either.

Records indicate that during one unspecified year, Maldonado received in tribute from Achiutla “48 vessels of gold dust, each one valuing 10 pesos, maintenance of a work gang in the mines, and servants to construct a house” (Pérez Ortíz 2009: 61, translation mine). Spores (1984) also cites documents mentioning that silver mining took place at Early Colonial Achiutla, though there is no evidence to suggest that these efforts were met with any significant success. Pérez Ortíz (2009: 62) further speculates that Maldonado may also have profited from taking timber from the forests in the Achiutla region and sending this material to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, where he was involved in shipbuilding ventures.

Records also exist regarding tribute paid to the encomendero Tristán de Luna y Arellano during the years 1560 and 1565. Pérez Ortíz (2009: 112, translation mine), provides a comparison of these records, which is summarized below:
Table 3.2: Tribute paid to Achiutla’s *encomendero* in the years 1560 and 1565 (adapted from Pérez 2009: 112)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1560</th>
<th>1565</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 vessels of gold dust</td>
<td>1,365 pesos and 6 tomines of common gold divided in:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 <em>libras</em> (pounds) of <em>semillas</em> of silk</td>
<td>10 reales of silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(“seeds,” likely eggs of silkworm larvae)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 measures of <em>hierba</em> (likely land for</td>
<td>Of the 1,365 pesos of gold paid in silk:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grazing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 bushels of maize</td>
<td>3 and a half pesos for each pound of silkworm eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half of the silk that is produced</td>
<td>17 pounds of the silkworm eggs that are raised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To maintain half of a work gang in the</td>
<td>The remainder will be for the town and its subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And for the payment of the salaries of the governor, alcaldes, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>other public functionaries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, we see that by 1565, tribute was no longer paid in gold dust, and labor in the mines was no longer required, suggesting that mining operations may have been abandoned by this time. We also see a shift to increased production of silk, corroborated by Burgoa (1934: 321), who describes that, “in this town they planted many contiguous leagues of mulberry trees.” Of further interest with respect to the latter is that in 1565 Achiutla was paying its tribute not only in silk itself, but also in *semilla*, or the eggs of silkworms that they were apparently raising. The aforementioned codex *Sierra*, which provides documents aspects of the silk industry at nearby Tejupan at the same time, shows the community regularly buying these eggs in order to produce their own silk. Achiutla, by contrast, appears to have been successful in raising silkworms to the point that they could pay these eggs as part of their tribute, and possibly sell them for profit to communities like Tejupan as well.

By the end of the 16th century, when encomienda tribute had been replaced by the repartamiento system, documents indicate that Achiutla was paying much of their tribute to
the alcalde mayor in woven silk and cotton cloth. Terraciano (2001: 240) points out that in 1601, native residents lodged legal complaints, accusing the alcalde mayor and indigenous nobles of conspiring to force them to produce these products in excess of legal requirements for their own profit.

The Cacicazgo

Detailed information regarding the indigenous caciques of Early Colonial Achiutla is scarce. The codex Selden, produced in pre-Hispanic style but also depicting events occurring during the first half-century of the Early Colonial period, shows royal marriages that would have allied Achiutla with the kingdoms of Tlaxiaco, Tilantongo, and Jaltepec (Jansen y Pérez 2007). In 1542, brief records indicate that a cacique named Don Francisco of Achiutla solicited the viceregal government for permission to own a horse (Pérez Ortiz 2009: 67). Documents from the latter half of the 16th century indicate that the indigenous caciques of Achiutla continued to maintain marriage alliances with other important cacicazgos in the Mixteca. In the mid-16th century, Doña Isabel de Rojas of Achiutla married Don Gabriel de Guzmán, cacique of Yanhuitlán (Spores 1967: 147). The couple had three children, and upon Don Gabriel’s death in 1591, the cacicazgo of Achiutla was given to their daughter, Doña María de Guzmán, who was to rule there with her husband, Don Miguel de Guzmán, cacique of Teposcolula (Terraciano 2001). Meanwhile, it was Don Gabriel’s oldest son who inherited the cacicazgo of Yanhuitlán, and married a caciqua of Tlaxiaco.

The Church

With respect to religion, while the Dominican order began construction of their monastery in Yanhuitlán in 1529, documents indicate that the monastery in Achiutla was not begun until 1556-1557 (Gerhardt 1972: 287; Mullen 1975: 40). It is unknown with what
frequency Dominican clerics may have made visits to the community previously. Interestingly, Gerhardt (1972: 287) notes that secular curates are recorded for Achiutla in the early 1550’s, and in the 1540’s for nearby Tlaxiaco, but I have yet to find more documentation of the activities of the secular clergy in the region.

Information regarding the first Dominican friars in Achiutla comes from Burgoa (1934), though the author does not provide specific dates as to when they resided in the community. First described is an unnamed cleric sent by the Bishop Zárate, who was of considerably old age and had great difficulty speaking the native language. He had little success converting native residents to the new faith, who were fiercely resistant to his presence, to the point that he began to fear for his life and requested his bishop that he be removed from Achiutla, a request that was granted (Burgoa 1934: 322).

The next to arrive was fray Benito Hernández, likely during the 1550’s (Van Doesburg and Swanton 2008: 87), whose work is lauded by Burgoa, and whose exploits are described in much more detail. Fray Benito resided in Achiutla for a considerable amount of time. He composed one version his Doctrina Xpiana en la Lengua Misteca (Christian Doctrine in the Mixtec Language) in Achiutla. Despite learning the native language, this friar’s efforts were met with much resistance as well. Burgoa writes that it was fray Benito who destroyed the idol known as the “heart of the people.” Nonetheless, according to Burgoa (1934: 339), years later fray Benito entered a cave within the Achiutla valley were pre-Hispanic rituals continued to be practiced and the remains of recently deceased caciques were venerated.

At one unspecified point, residents of Achiutla purportedly were able to imprison fray Benito within his quarter and denied food and drink, though he was saved by neighbors who
provided with him food (Burgoa 1934: 330-331). Despite these initial struggles, fray Benito’s efforts appear to have eventually been met with success, as he spent years residing in Achiutla, where he composed the first version of the aforementioned *Doctrina*, likely with the aid of indigenous nobles (Van Doesburg and Swanton 2008). Burgoa (1934: 347) writes that the community was his final resting place, where he was first buried beneath the community’s first church, and his remains were then moved to the Dominican convent upon its completion. Fray Benito died in 1570 (Van Doesburg and Swanton 2008: 90), and his successors are not discussed by Burgoa.

**Civil Conflicts**

Civic officials who involved themselves in Achiutla were also at times met with native resistance. Romero Frizzi (1996: 196) notes that indigenous rebellions against representatives of the alcalde mayor took place in both 1580 and 1629. The 1580 conflict is studied and discussed in more depth by Pérez Ortíz (2009), occurred when the lieutenant of the alcalde mayor attempted to imprison an indigenous person for being drunk during a town festival. The lieutenant was then attacked and imprisoned by the people of Achiutla, and allegedly has his life threatened. The second was provoked when an alcalde mayor borrowed a horse from the town’s alguacil, and only provided one real in compensation. The local populace responded by imprisoning the alcalde mayor as well as his servants. In both cases, the conflicts were eventually resolved without bloodshed, and with relatively minor legal punishments for the indigenous persons involved.

Lastly, documents also suggest that native residents of Achiutla also made use of the colonial legal system to resist various forms of authority. As already noted, complaints were lodged by commoners of Achiutla, accusing both the indigenous cacique and the alcalde
mayor of conspiring to impose exploitative tribute demands (Terraciano 2001: 240). This was not the first time a cacique was accused of abusing power—in 1578, a complaint was lodged against a cacique of Achiutla for having entered the house of a commoners named Juan Delgado and illegally taking items of value that had been bequeathed to Delgado by his deceased wife (Spores 1984: 203). Formal complaints were also made against the Dominican clergy, as in 1591, when nobles from Achiutla accused friars of whipping, imprisoning, and fining a group of natives that had challenged their claims to lands (Terraciano 2001: 340).

The events cited above suggest that the people of Achiutla did not passively accept colonial rule, and at times resisted it violently. Yet the picture one gleans is more complex than of mere domination or resistance. With respect to religion, fray Benito was at one point imprisoned, but at other points aided by natives in the composition of his doctrine. The imposition tribute demands not only fostered conflicts with Spanish authorities, but sparked tensions among different social classes. The archaeological research at Achiutla, presented in the chapters to come, was designed to explore how indigenous residents of Achiutla negotiated these conflicts and tensions in daily practice.
Chapter 4: Site Center Reconnaissance

Introduction

As discussed previously, the Achiutla Valley was included in a broad survey of the Mixteca Alta region by Kowalewski and colleagues (2009). Their project has provided invaluable data regarding the sizes, layouts, and occupational spans of various sites in the Achiutla Valley and broader region. To target specific Postclassic and Colonial residences for excavation, however, per the goals of the present study, more detailed inspection of individual terraces and other inhabitation areas was necessary. To this end, I directed intensive mapping and surface collections over an area of approximately 51 hectares in and around the area known as the “Pueblo Viejo” of Achiutla. This chapter discusses the methods employed and the results of this reconnaissance, though more detailed descriptions of all terraces and other structures mapped in the survey can be found in Forde and Faulseit 2012. For the sake of brevity, here I provide summary accounts of the findings from the principal survey areas, then go on to give more detailed descriptions of the areas termed the North sector and the Iglesias sector of the site, where the bulk of excavations took place. Thorough descriptions of the specific excavation loci are provided in Chapter 6. This chapter ends with some more general thoughts regarding the Pueblo Viejo’s position within the broader Achiutla Valley, and concomitant implications for the site’s ritual and ideological significance.

Mapping and Surface Collections: Survey Area and Methodology

Though Kowalewski and colleagues (2009: 199) report extensive Postclassic settlement in the outer east and west foothills of the Achiutla Valley, these areas are badly disturbed by modern farming. The survey described here therefore focused on the Pueblo
Viejo area of the site, located along the lower southern spur of a ridge running through the center of the valley, where Achiutla’s Postclassic monumental core is found, and preservation is better. Nevertheless, it should be noted that future research would benefit from more intensive reconnaissance within the outer flanks of the valley, as these areas are likely where the bulk of the Postclassic and Colonial commoner inhabitants resided.

The area covered in the survey spans approximately 1700m north-south, and 300m east-west, spanning the entire ridge spur that comprises the Pueblo Viejo, the valley floor immediately to the south, and along another low ridge further south still (Fig. 4.1). Very steep drainages flank the east and west limits of the survey area, while to the immediate north lies a barren upper slope of the ridge, atop which is found the site known as the “Casa del Sol,” dated to the Classic period by Kowalewski and colleagues (2009: 199). In total, over the course of the reconnaissance, 32 residential terraces, 25 structures, and various agricultural terraces and other features were mapped and recorded.
Mapping was carried out utilizing both hand-held Global Positioning System (GPS) devices as well as tape-and-compass methods. All data were eventually integrated into a Geographic Information System (GIS) database using Quantum GIS software. Before any data were collected, a base topographic contour map for the area was produced—with the aid of Dr. Gerardo Gutiérrez—by processing Advanced Spaceborne Thermal Emission and Reflection Radiometer (ASTER) digital elevation model data. These data, which are acquired via satellites and are available to the public through the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), contain elevation points taken every 30m in horizontal space. For the Achiutla area, the data were first processed through ArcGIS software, then imported into the Quantum GIS database for the site. The resulting topographic map (Fig. 4.2)
contains 10m contour intervals, a level of resolution that doubles that of the 1: 50,000 scale topographic maps available from Mexico’s National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), which are commonly used by archaeologists and contain 20m contour intervals. Though ideally, in the future, the site will be mapped in much more fine-grain detail by means of a laser transit, or through remote sensing technologies such as Lidar, resources were not sufficient to employ such methods at the time of the field research.

Figure 4.2: Topographic base map of the Achiutla region produced with ASTER data (contour interval=10m).

In the field, mapping and surface collections principally focused on terraces constructed along hill slopes. Terrace walls were mapped through use of two hand-held Garmin GPS devices, each of which had a horizontal error range of less than three meters. All points were measured in Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) coordinates, using the datum WGS84. Prior to fieldwork each day, points were recorded with each device at an
arbitrarily selected datum to ensure there were no discrepancies between the information recorded by each respective device, nor in how either individual device was recording points from day to day. Local assistants were employed to clear vegetation along terrace walls, and points were taken with these devices along the walls every 5-10 meters, depending on the length and contours of the features. Heights of retaining walls were recorded using tape measures, though these measurements should be considered approximate, given that high amounts of collapsed debris found near bases of walls often obscured their original heights. GPS points were imported each day into the Quantum GIS database (Fig. 5.3) and the software’s drawing program was used to create an overlay in which these points were connected and rendered as lines.

![Fig. 4.3: GPS points taken in the field imported into the topographic base map.](image)

For remains of standing walls and structures, tape-and-compas methods were used. Orientations of walls and structures were taken with a compass with respect to magnetic
north, and their exact dimensions were then measured and drawn to 1: 100 scale on
millimeter graph paper. GPS points were then taken at ends of walls or corners of buildings
so that the drawings could be subsequently geo-referenced. The drawings were subsequently
scanned and processed as raster images, then imported into the Quantum GIS database.
Finally, in similar fashion to the terraces mapped via GPS, these features were redrawn in a
separate layer within the software program (Fig. 4.4).

![Fig. 4.4: GPS points and tape-and-compass drawings re-rendered as lines and polygons in the Achiutla site map.](image)

A variety of terminology was used to distinguish between the various features
recorded during the mapping. As will be described shortly, the site was divided into five
general “sectors.” Within each sector, residential terraces, simply termed “terrazas,” were each given a unique number. Very narrow terraces, assumed to be agricultural given that they did not provide sufficient space to support houses, were also given unique numbers within each sector, and labeled “TA’s” (terrazas agrícolas). Occasionally, within individual residential terraces, very low lines of stones were encountered of unknown function, and were labeled “líneas,” also given numbers. Structures found on these terraces were treated in the same fashion and labeled “estructuras,” though several well-preserved remains of buildings in the sector were distinguished as “edificios” and numbered sequentially. Several other structures, such as the 16th century Dominican convent, were given unique names.

Surface collections predominantly took place on the residential terraces. Two local assistants and I spent a minimum of 15 minutes at each terrace, scanning the surface, and collecting all pottery sherds. Obsidian and chert were collected as well, bagged separately. Presence of ground stone was noted, but these materials were not collected, due to both their bulk and general lack of diagnostic features. Controlled surface collections—that is, collecting artifacts only within predefined spatial boundaries in order to compare surface artifact densities, as have been conducted by other archaeologists in Oaxaca (e.g., Faulseit 2012; Finsten 1996; Heredia Espinoza 2005; Kowalewski 1976)—were not carried out. This was due to both the unlikelihood that such artifact assemblages would strongly reflect past domestic activity at small spatial scales, and the relative paucity of artifacts visible on the surfaces of many of the terraces. On average, 101.1 ceramic sherds were collected from each terrace, though the vast bulk of these materials were non-diagnostic.

Surface collections were not carried out, or only done in limited fashion, in areas where high amounts of human activity continue to take place. Nor surface collections were
conducted on the two lowermost monumental terraces in the Northern sector of the site, which now house a cemetery that continues to be in use, nor at the Colonial church and convent, which also continue to be in use. Meanwhile, immediately behind and to the south of the latter convent, in a large open area associated with the building, three debris scatters were identified. In these areas, we defined circles of 10m in diameter, and collected all materials within these circles. A similar approach was taken in the Molino sector, where remains of a more recent historical mill are found, in which very few artifacts were present. Debris scatters were identified to the north and south of the northern wall of this area, and collections were carried out in 10m circles in these locations as well.

After surface collections were completed, I conducted preliminary laboratory analysis of the materials. Particular focus was paid to ceramics, and presence of diagnostic types was noted for each terrace or collection area, largely adhering to ceramic chronologies for the region established by Spores (1972), with modifications made by Gaxiola (1984), Lind (1987), and Blomster (2004). All materials collected were counted and weighed, and upon completion of the analysis, the artifacts were then transferred to the state INAH facility of Oaxaca, in Cuilapan de Guerrero, where they are currently housed.

Mapping and Surface Collections: Results

As mentioned in the previous section, over the course of the reconnaissance, the survey area was divided into five different “sectors” (Fig 4.5). Below, I list and provide short descriptions of each of them. I then move on to more thorough descriptions of the North and Iglesias sectors, where excavation operations were predominantly focused.
The North Sector: This sector extends from the peak of the lower spur of the ridge running through the center of the Achiutla valley, and extends downward to the south to the point where the ridge flattens and the area defined as the Iglesias Sector begins. The sector is predominantly composed of a series of monumental residential terraces, most approximately 5 meters in height. Occupation dates principally to the Postclassic and Early Colonial periods, and the area was likely home to Achiutla’s
elites, and perhaps the center of civic-ceremonial activity during these periods as well.

- The Iglesias Sector: This sector is found immediately to the south of the North Sector, at a point where the ridge is relatively flat, while its southern limit is defined by a stone wall surrounding the grounds of the 16th century convent. Most notable features include the aforementioned convent, a small colonial chapel, now in ruins, to the north of it, and a feature exposed in the profile of a road-cut associated with an obsidian workshop. Surface finds indicate that occupation dates primarily from the Postclassic into modern times, and the area was likely part of the site’s Postclassic civic ceremonial center, with pre-Hispanic structures destroyed or otherwise obscured by colonial architecture.

- The South Sector: This sector extends south from outside the wall surrounding the grounds of the convent to the bottom of the ridge. It is composed of a series of low, informally constructed residential terraces that likely housed commoners residing at the site. Occupation dates primarily to the Ramos phase (Terminal Formative) and Postclassic, with some probable Las Flores phase (Classic) occupation as well. No clear indicators of Colonial period occupation were found in either survey or excavation.

- The Molino Sector: This sector is found in the floodplain south of the ridge, just south of a small tributary of the Río de los Sabinos. The area is notable for the presence of ruins of a small historical wheat mill, though its date of construction is unknown. Based on architectural features such as well-preserved adobe walls and wooden roof beams, it appears significantly later than the Early Colonial architecture at Achiutla.
Romero Frizzi (1996: 188-192) suggests that it did not become common for natives in the Mixteca to lease lands to Spaniards for operations such as mills until at least the middle of the 17th century. Surface collections indicate that there was also some occupation of this area during the Postclassic, though no remains of pre-Hispanic structures are evident.

- The Southeast Sector: This sector lies east of the Molino sector on another low ridge, and was subjected to brief reconnaissance to round out the survey area. Most of the area is being used for modern farming, but two pre-Hispanic architectural complexes were identified here. One of these complexes consists of exposed foundations of walls, made of single courses of large and uncut limestone boulders. The foundations clearly define a complex of buildings surrounding a central patio. The date of occupation of this area is unclear—very few ceramics were visible from the surface, though those that were diagnostic date to the Postclassic. Curiously, however, the architectural style of the aforementioned complex is quite distinct from Postclassic and Colonial architecture excavated in the Pueblo Viejo and elsewhere in the Mixteca Alta, perhaps suggesting a somewhat earlier date.

The North Sector: A closer examination

The North Sector (Fig. 4.6) clearly comprises the monumental core of Postclassic Achiutla and, as will be described in more detail in the chapters to follow, excavations in this area demonstrate that it continued to be occupied by indigenous high status families into the Colonial period. This portion of the site is rather well preserved, despite claims to the contrary (Kowalewski 2009: 199), apart from the lowest two monumental terraces (Terraces 17 and 18) which are used as a cemetery. Older members of the modern community of San
Miguel Achiutla recall that some degree of cultivation took place upon the summit of the Pueblo Viejo (labeled here Terrace 1) as recently as the 1950’s. However, this apparently stopped, after an intervention by the eminent Mexican archaeologist Alfonso Caso, who is said to have visited the town at this time. Since then, the land of the Pueblo Viejo has been owned communally. Herds of goats are brought through the area to graze periodically (Fig. 4.7), but no farming continues to take place. The town’s municipal government maintains vigilance over the archaeological zone.

Fig. 4.6: Map of the North Sector of the Pueblo Viejo.
As summarized above, the north sector is comprised primarily of a series of monumental terraces, each approximately five meters in height. Following the slope of the natural bedrock, these terraces all face toward the Iglesias Sector, as their principal retaining walls are most substantial and formally constructed on their south sides. Some of these raised surfaces are not simply rectangular in form, but are comprised of complexes of retaining walls that abut one another. The surfaces of such levels, while at roughly the same elevation, but with different retaining walls, were classified as distinct terraces, with Terraces 6 to 7 and Terraces 10 to 12 being prime examples.

In sum, 18 terraces were mapped in this area, as well as four standing structures, and three other mounds or possible structures. Diagnostic ceramics collected from the surface date overwhelmingly to the Postclassic period, including types well known throughout the
Mixteca such as Pilitas Polychrome, Red on Cream, and Graphite on Orange. Curiously, few obviously post-Contact ceramics were found in the monumental sector, though excavations revealed significant Colonial period occupation. The terraces range between approximately 410m$^2$ and 7000m$^2$ in surface area. The retaining walls are composed largely of roughly hewn rectangular limestone and *endeque* (soft and chalky limestone) blocks, stabilized with mortar (Fig. 4.8). In places where collapse had occurred, it could be observed that dry gravel was at times used as construction fill behind these retaining walls (Fig. 4.9). Red painted stucco floors could be observed in a number of places, and in two disturbed contexts, small rectangular stone-lined drains (Fig. 4.10) were seen in the facades of terrace walls, which presumably would have channeled water from the living surfaces above.

![Fig. 4.8: Southern retaining wall of Terrace 9 of the North Sector.](image-url)
Fig. 4.9: Gravel fill beneath a stucco floor exposed in the retaining wall of Terrace 2 of the North Sector.

Fig. 4.10: Stone-lined drain exposed in the southern retaining wall of Terrace 12 of the North Sector.
Remains of several standing structures were found, including a rectangular stone structure on Terrace 16 (Fig. 4.11), which abuts the retaining wall of a terrace immediately above it. Several mounds were recorded as well that may be collapsed structures, though relatively few mounds were noted relative to other contemporaneous centers in the region. At Yucundaa in Teposcolula (Kowalewski et al. 2009: 93; Spores and Robles 2007: 336) and Cerro de Jasmín (Heredia Espinoza et al. 2009; Pérez Rodríguez et al. 2011), mounded architecture is abundant, particularly at the summits of the slopes upon which the sites lie. In contrast, at Terrace 1, which forms the summit of Achiutla’s Pueblo Viejo, only two mounds of stone, each approximately 1.5m in height are found (Figs. 4.12 and 4.13), and there is reason to doubt that these are collapsed ancient buildings. First, very little sediment had accumulated between the stones of the mounds, indicating that they were perhaps formed more recently. Second, each mound is only approximately 3.5m wide from east to west, rather narrow for a collapsed structure. It was in this area that modern residents mentioned that farming took place during the middle of the 20th century, thus these mounds may be a byproduct of clearing land for that activity.
Fig. 4.11: Remains of a structure on Terrace 16, abutting the retaining wall of Terrace 6 in the North Sector.

Fig. 4.12: Mounds of stone atop Terrace 1 of the North Sector.
The lack of obviously visible mounded monumental architecture in the Pueblo Viejo may be due to a variety of factors. Excavations at Terrace 10 revealed the presence of well-preserved foundations of buildings where no mounds were visible from the surface, these remains having been buried by slope-wash or erosion. Secondly, data from Terrace 10 as well as the aforementioned Terrace 16 suggest that principal buildings of architectural groups were at times located directly abutting the bases of the retaining walls of terraces above them. Thus, such buildings may be disproportionately buried under the collapsed debris of monumental terraces walls.

In sum, data from both survey and excavation make it quite clear that the north sector of Achiutla’s Pueblo Viejo constituted the center of the polity during the Postclassic, and it continued to be occupied by native elites well into the Colonial period. A number of
questions, however, still remain. Were the monumental terraces only used as residences, or did certain areas have religious or civic functions as well? Were all of these areas occupied simultaneously, or were new terraces and buildings constructed as new rulers and/or nobles came to power? These questions can only be addressed through further excavation within the Pueblo Viejo, and a useful starting point would be via a program of systematic test-excavations throughout the area. Indeed, much remains to be learned regarding the spatial organization of Achiutla’s urban core.

The Iglesias Sector: A closer examination

The Iglesias sector (Fig. 4.14) lies immediately below and to the south of the North Sector, in a “saddle” of the ridge that is relatively flat. This area likely comprised part of Achiutla’s Postclassic civic-ceremonial core as well, though it was separated from the North Sector over the course of survey, principally due to a number of Colonial and modern disturbances that serve to make it distinctive—most notably the presence of two churches in the area, from which the sector derives its name.
Dominating the landscape here is a Dominican convent (Fig. 4.15) that was likely constructed (or, at least construction of it had begun) during the 1550’s (Gerhardt 1972: 287; Mullen 1975: 40; Spores 1967: 145). The edifice is one of the largest of its kind in the region, rivaled or surpassed only by those of Yanhuitlán, Teposcolula, and Coixtlahuaca in
the Mixteca Alta, as Dominican friars seem to have deliberately constructed their most
grandiose churches in the largest or most important pre-Hispanic population centers in the
Mixteca (Spores 1984: 143). The church is constructed atop two nested platforms that may
have originally been constructed pre-Hispanic times, though this would need to be confirmed
through excavations. Postclassic ceramics collected immediately behind the church lend
some credence to this idea. Local residents claim that, according to oral histories, the church
was constructed on top of the ancient palace of Dzahuindanda, a personage believed to have
been the last pre-Hispanic ruler of Achiutla, and a renowned warrior-priest, also described by
Burgoa (1934: 319).

![Fig. 4.15: Achiutla’s 16th century Dominican convent.](image)

The building itself is two stories high and covers approximately 2,700m² in area.

Entrances to the nave of the church are found on the north and west sides of the building, a
common pattern seen in 16th century Dominican churches throughout Oaxaca. The church’s
atrium is on the north side, formed by the uppermost of the two aforementioned platforms.
At the corners of the atrium, remains of three small posa chapels are found (Fig. 4.16).
Originally, there were almost undoubtedly four, but one appears to have been completely destroyed or dismantled. These structures are typically used for various religious processions, but also were spaces where friars might have given instruction to natives in separated smaller groups (McAndrew 1965: 281), as this space likely also functioned as an open-air chapel (Mullen 1975: 148). Indeed, McAndrew (1965: 281) notes that individual posas of atriums were at times assigned to the confraternities of different barrios of a community. Such a scenario may have been the case here, as Gerhardt (1972: 287) writes that four different barrios of Achiutla were recognized in A.D. 1548, and modern residents continue to break the community into four different “sectors” today. Thus, at least for a time, the layout of the atrium at Achiutla may have been used in a way that coincided with the manner in which the native community was organized. Posa chapels, which were rare for Dominican churches to begin with, had largely fallen out of use by the end of the 16th century in Mexico generally, though the tradition might have endured longer in Oaxaca than in other regions (McAndrew 1965: 283-284).
Fig. 4.16: Remains of one of the *posa* chapels in the atrium of Achiutla’s Dominican convent.

Just below and to the west of the atrium is a complex of three standing structures surrounding a central patio, of unknown construction date. The west and south structures appear to be living quarters; the latter exhibits buttresses, possibly suggesting that it is contemporaneous with the church. If such is the case, however, these structures are unlikely to have housed members of the clergy, as the convent would have served that purpose. Intriguingly, the north structure is rather small, measuring approximately 4m by 4m in area. These dimensions are roughly consistent with those of jails recorded by Martínez Gracídá in 1883 in communities surrounding Achiutla. Furthermore, Pérez Ortíz (2009: 116) notes that documents pertaining to the 1580 conflict in Achiutla with the lieutenant of the *alcalde mayor* suggest that, at this time, both the town’s jail and municipal palace were located very near to the church. Thus, though it is impossible to confirm this at present, it is possible that
these buildings formed the center of indigenous municipal government or *cabildo* during the 16th century. If so, the proximity of these structures to the Dominican church would perhaps suggest a close relationship between resident clerics and native authorities.

South of the architectural complex discussed above are two other structures: one small stand-alone oven (Fig. 4.17), and a larger structure with remains of a two-chambered oven found on its east side. The stand-alone oven, at least, was likely constructed later, as a priest residing in Achiutla in 1803 mentioned in response to a questionnaire from the Bishop Antonio Bergoza y Jordan (Huesca et al. 1984) that he had built it, and that it was used for baking bread. Several other structures are described as having had already been there prior to his arrival, including one described as being used as a kitchen, perhaps this larger structure.

![Fig. 4.17: 18th century bread oven associated with Achiutla’s Dominican convent.](image)

A last interesting feature associated with the Dominican church and convent is a tall standing wall surrounding the area to the south. This wall is well preserved, extending over approximately 292m, ranging between 4 and 4.75m in height, and 1.2 to 1.4m in thickness.
Postclassic ceramics were observed in the mortar of the wall, though other lines of evidence suggest a significantly later construction date. The construction style is atypical of both Late Postclassic and Early Colonial architecture of the Mixteca, and is distinctive for long rectangular blocks placed vertically, interspersed throughout (Fig. 4.18). Even more distinctive is a series of fourteen small “windows,” measuring 37 by 65cm on average, features ostensibly unknown in any pre-Hispanic defensive wall (Fig. 4.19). These features were likely defensive in function, however, allowing a person to fire a projectile from behind the wall while in a relatively protected position. While many 16th century Catholic monasteries throughout Mexico are notable for having a defensive or “fortress-like” character to them (Perry 1992), given that the architectural styles of the wall and the church here are so distinct, I suspect they are not contemporary. A more plausible scenario, I argue, is that this wall was constructed during Mexico’s War of Independence. It is known that significant fighting took place during this time around the nearby city of Tlaxiaco (Spores and Balkansky 2013:193), and Martínez Gracída (1883: 602) writes that Spanish troops stationed themselves in the convent precisely during this war, over a span of three months.
Fig. 4.18: Segment of the southern defensive wall of Achiutla’s Dominican convent.

Fig. 4.19: Detail of the defensive wall, showing one of its small “windows.”
Curiously, a mere 255m away to the north, across the modern road, lay the ruins of another small chapel. This structure measures approximately 10.3 by 21.1m in area, and 7.54m in height, and is made of roughly rectangular endeque blocks, rather than the hard limestone used in the convent. An entrance to the south is flanked by large flying buttresses, which flare out at 45 degree angles (Fig. 4.20), while another entrance is found on the west side of the building. The mere fact that the building is in ruins, as well as the presence of the distinctive flying buttresses, seem to indicate an early date, perhaps earlier than the Dominican convent. Furthermore, in the nearby community of Teposcolula, the first church constructed there, found in the Yucundaa archaeological zone, is also distinctive for an entrance on its south side, opening up to the atrium (Spores and Balkansky 2013: 162).

Indeed, Burgoa (1934: 346-347) writes that there was in fact an earlier church in Achiutla prior to the convent being constructed, and it was in this first church that Fray Benito Hernández was interred upon his passing, though his remains were purportedly transported to the convent once its construction was complete. Unfortunately, Burgoa provides no description of the structure, nor mentions anything regarding its location. The chapel is not mentioned in any other Early Colonial documentation that I have been able to locate.
Later documentation provides support for the notion that the chapel was the first church constructed in Achiutla, however. In particular, a response to the questionnaire circulated by the Dominican Bishop Antonio Bergoza y Jordan to the senior priests of Oaxaca in the late 18th century provides insights (Huesca et al. 1984: 79). The priest Julián Josef Castellanos, who arrived in Achiutla in 1793 and resided there for ten years, provides an accounting of various matters related to the parish there, and concludes with a description of this chapel. He describes it as completely in ruin, with only the walls and the vault of the presbytery preserved, and laments its deplorable state (ibid). What is more, he then goes on to state that, according to elderly residents of the community, this was indeed the first church to have existed in the community following the Conquest (ibid).
Intriguingly, the priest Castellanos also mentions a convent or habitation for clerics associated with this church, very spacious and capable of housing many inhabitants, but also in complete ruin at the time of his writing (ibid). No such structure is visible from the surface near the chapel today, however Castellanos gives rather detailed description of the architecture, describing the walls as “ancient” and “poorly made,” composed of earth mixed with stones of various sizes, with only the facades made with well-cut masonry (ibid). As we will see in Chapter 6, this type of architecture is entirely characteristic of indigenous high status residences constructed in the Late Postclassic and Early Colonial periods. More curiously, Castellanos then goes on to note that of the facing stones of the walls, while some were squared, others were long and narrow (ibid). This brings me to an admittedly speculative possibility that I would like to raise—while remains of no such structure are visible on the surface near the chapel today, the form of stonework described here is reminiscent of that observed in the aforementioned defensive wall surrounding the south side of the convent, particularly the long narrow stones that, in the defensive wall, are set vertically. If the latter wall was constructed during the War of Independence, as I have suggested, it is possible that the stones used to build it were scavenged from the original convent. If so, this event would have occurred roughly 20 years after Castellanos’s writing.

With the evidence available, I believe it is highly probable that the chapel north of the convent is Achiutla’s first church. Complicating this claim, however, is the fact that while the structure is largely in ruins, several of its observed features look too recent to date to the 16th century, including re-plastered portions of the interior walls, and a wooden lintel above the western entrance (Fig. 4.21). Interestingly, even though the structure was ostensibly already in ruins by the 18th century, older residents of modern day San Miguel remember this
church having continued to be in use during the earlier parts of their lifetimes, referring to it as “El Calvario.” Calvario, or “Calvary” churches, are temples constructed for specific types of religious processions, normally related to the crucifixion of Christ, and frequently located atop hills in Mexico, as mentioned in Chapter 1. According to modern-day residents, the church was only used once a year, on Good Friday of Holy week, in commemoration of the crucifixion.

Elsewhere in the Mixteca, chapels specifically designed as Calvario churches were occasionally constructed in the Early Colonial period. In Yanhuitlán, Frassani (2012: 36) notes that this town’s Calvario church was already in place by 1601, and is mentioned by Burgoa. In the case of Yanhuitlán, the Calvario lies just under a kilometer to the north of the Dominican convent, and slightly above it, along the side of a low ridge outside the center the
town. In contrast, the position of the chapel in Achiutla relative to the convent is rather strange, given that it is located at such a short distance away and at a lower elevation, especially considering that Calvario churches were normally constructed on hilltops outside of villages. At the same time, when viewed relative to the location of the modern center of San Miguel Achiutla today, the chapel is in a location roughly consistent with other known Calvario churches.

In sum, while it is most likely that the chapel is the first church constructed at Achiutla, a second possibility is that it was constructed later—but likely by the early-18\textsuperscript{th} century at the very latest—as a Calvario church. In either case, the building was in ruin by the end of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, but minor repairs appear to have occasionally been made to the structure in more recent times, as it continued to be used on a very limited basis into the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

Before concluding this section on the Iglesias sector, one last feature merits attention. Exposed in the profile of a road-cut between the two aforementioned churches, a lens was found that is extremely dense with obsidian debitage. The feature extends at least 25m along the north side of the road, and a 2x1m test pit was excavated into it during the excavation season. Results of this excavation will be described in the chapters to follow, but for now, suffice to say that the feature appears to date to the Postclassic and possibly into the Early Colonial period, evidenced by associated pottery, as well as ground platforms observed on proximal portions of prismatic blade fragments, characteristic of this time period (Healan 2002: 30). Debitage found in both surface collections and excavations are associated with all stages of the process of producing prismatic blades, including cortical flakes, which indicate initial reduction of raw nodules, and exhausted polyhedral cores (Fig. 4.22). Excavations
revealed that chert was being manufactured in this location simultaneously. It is rather clear that raw nodules of obsidian were being exported to Achiutla in high quantities, principally from the source of Pachuca in central Mexico, after which production took place on a large and centralized scale. The more open, relatively flat area of the Iglesias sector may have been a convenient space for large public gatherings, such as market exchange, and perhaps this type of intensive workshop production. Given the proximity of this deposit of obsidian debitage to the monumental core of the Pueblo Viejo, this may suggest a form of attached craft production (Costin 1991), controlled or facilitated by elites. There is some evidence to indicate that Mixtec rulers attempted to exercise some measure of control over market exchange generally, for as we saw in Chapter 3, the purported conflict between Achiutla and Tututepec described by Burgioara arose when Tututepec’s ruler demanded that the two kingdoms hold a market jointly. It was perhaps the case that ruling elites at times similarly attempted to control surplus production over goods such as obsidian as well.
Fig. 4.22: Exhausted obsidian polyhedral cores collected in surface reconnaissance from the road-cut in the Iglesias Sector of the Pueblo Viejo.

Less clear are the implications that the presence of this workshop would have had for Achiutla’s place within interregional exchange networks. Such features have rarely been found in other surveys and excavations undertaken in the Mixteca Alta, although curiously, Kowalewski and colleagues report two located very near the Pueblo Viejo. The first is on the lower southern portion of the ridge upon which Cerro de la Corona is found, flanking the west side of the Achiutla valley, where the authors describe having encountered a “carpet of obsidian” (Kowalewski et al. 2009: 199). The same authors report a second similarly dense concentration of green obsidian in Santo Domingo Huendio, which was a subject community
of Achiutla in the Early Colonial period, and located just to the southwest (ibid.: 221).

Reported obsidian production areas elsewhere in the Mixteca are scarce, but are mentioned at the site of Totohuada, near Yucuita (Spores 1972: 119) and San Andres Lagunas, north of the Teposcolula Valley (Kowalewski et al. 2009: 136).

Thus, given that similar features associated with obsidian workshops are ostensibly rare elsewhere in the Mixteca Alta, it is tempting to conclude that the evidence here suggests that Achiutla may have had a privileged access to the material, and hence would have occupied a relatively unique position within regional economic networks. Such a scenario may help to explain Tututepec’s eagerness to trade with Achiutla, as described by Burgoa and mentioned above, an idea which I expand upon in Chapter 8. At the same time, however, one must exercise caution in making such an assessment, as the lack of evidence of such production at other sites in the Mixteca may owe more to a lack of intensive reconnaissance and excavation than anything else. Indeed, were it not for the fortuitous placement of the road-cut through the Pueblo Viejo, the feature described here might never have been found. Further research will be needed to more fully evaluate the possibility that Achiutla, owing to this access to obsidian, may have been a relatively important node in the broader exchange network of the Mixteca.

Conclusion

The Pueblo Viejo constituted Achiutla’s civic-ceremonial core from Postclassic times until well into the Colonial period. Though the center of the modern community now lies in the valley floodplain below, archaeological and ethnohistorical evidence suggest that the community was never subjected to a congregación, such as occurred at other Mixtec population centers like Teposcolula (Spores and Robles 2007). The monumental terraces of
the North sector served as living spaces for high status natives, and possibly contained civic and ritual structures as well. As we will see, excavation data show that Mixtec elites continued to live in this area during the Early Colonial period. The Iglesias sector, meanwhile, was clearly the center of religious activity during Colonial times, while the two churches constructed there may obscure earlier Postclassic features. The evidence associated with an obsidian workshop in this area suggests that intensive craft-production, and perhaps other important community functions, may have taken place in the Iglesias sector during the Postclassic. Just below, in the Southern sector, the data at hand suggest some occupation by commoners here during the Early Postclassic, though it appears to have largely been abandoned thereafter.

The reconnaissance carried out in the Pueblo Viejo was rather successful in mapping the layout of the site center and determining areas most appropriate for targeted residential excavations, which are described in Chapters 5 and 6. One aspect in which the reconnaissance fell short with respect to the goals of the project was identifying Early Colonial commoner residences. Such residences were originally hypothesized to be located within the South sector, but surface collections and excavations only yielded evidence of pre-Hispanic occupations. Future research would benefit from more intensive survey and mapping more broadly throughout the Achiutla Valley, and perhaps into adjacent communities such as San Juan Achiutla, Yucuañe, and Tayata, which are known to have comprised subject communities or barrios of Postclassic and Early Colonial Achiutla. Balkansky and colleagues (2008) have carried out an important project in the latter community of Tayata, but excavations there have been focused on Formative period occupations at the site. More research on Postclassic and Colonial sites in these surrounding
areas would also be useful in better understanding community organization of these periods, with the potential for identifying subordinate administrative centers, residences of nobles in charge of lower levels of administration, as well as commoner settlement. At this juncture, such relatively “macro-scale” questions will have to be tabled, as the rest of this dissertation focuses on households excavated within the Pueblo Viejo. Before shifting to this rather narrow spatial focus, however, I end this section by synthesizing some thoughts regarding the relationship of the Pueblo Viejo to earlier sites within the valley, and the implications of such relationships for the site’s ritual and ideological significance.

_Coda: The Pueblo Viejo of Achiutla and Pre-Sunrise Places_

As we saw in previous chapters, during the Postclassic period Achiutla was regarded as one of the most ritually important sites within all the Mixteca Alta, a place where ancestors of the first rulers were born from sacred trees, and the home of the most prominent shrine or oracle within the region. Interestingly, two older ruined sites laid atop ridges surrounding the polity’s center during the Postclassic: the Casa del Sol to the north, and the Cerro de la Corona, to the west. In this section, I argue that these phenomena may have been related.

Scholars such as Ashmore (2002) and Joyce (2009a) demonstrate that Mesoamerican archaeological sites may continue to constitute important features on the landscape and serve as important loci for ritual well after their initial occupations and abandonments. Byron Hamann (2002, 2008), meanwhile, has cogently argued that certain toponyms seen in the codices indicate that Postclassic Mixtecs viewed earlier ruined sites as places that were inhabited during previous ages of creation—that is, prior to the rise of the current sun. These pre-sunrise places were inhabited by ancestors, as well as divine and supernatural
beings, whose actions amidst a cataclysmic historical rupture prompted the rise of a new sun and brought about the current age of existence. In the codices, these places are depicted as ruins—more specifically as architectural platforms that lack palaces or other superstructures built atop them (Hamann 2008: 124), referred to in Mixtec as *chiyo*, roughly translating as “foundation” in English and Spanish (Fig. 4.23).

Fig. 4.23: Depiction of a woman seated atop an architectural platform or *chiyo* in Codex Vienna, pg. 7.

While pre-sunrise places appear most frequently and prominently in scenes recounting events prior to the creation of the current sun, such as the War that Came from Heaven (Hamann 2008: 127, see also Byland 2008: 346-350; Hamann 2002: 358-363), the codices indicate that persons continued visiting ruins of these places throughout the Postclassic period. Pre-sunrise ruins are shown as places where Postclassic elites interred mortuary bundles of deceased ancestors, consulted with supernatural beings, and made ritual offerings to ancestors and other divine forces (Hamann 2008: 137). Joyce (2009a), demonstrates that Monte Alban was seen as an especially important pre-sunrise place during the Postclassic, bringing together archaeological and ethnohistorical data to show how both elites and commoners performed similar rituals at the site, and how these rituals may have
played important roles in the construction of shared identities. Jansen (1982: 299) even documents how modern Mixtecs have continued to make offerings at ruined pre-Hispanic mounds in recent history. Hamann (2008: 137) concludes that these chiyo were places where one could contact and interact with ancestors and supernatural beings from both past and present ages, an idea complimentary to that proposed by Pohl (1994: 69-70), who argues that visitation with oracles or ancestor cults was a means by which Mixtec elites could curry favor from the divine during episodes of political turmoil.

As we saw in Chapter 3, a certain amount of ambiguity remains in associating certain toponyms with Achiutla, and at present, no chiyo images found in the codices can be confidently associated with the site. Nevertheless, whether they are represented in the codices or not, I argue that the Cerro de la Corona and the Casa del Sol may have been similarly viewed as important pre-sunrise places, and the polity’s association with these places may have been a significant reason why Achiutla was considered so important with respect to creation myth and religion in the Postclassic Mixteca Alta. First, it is rather clear from Burgoa’s writings that the Cerro de la Corona was where the “oracle” or ini ūu was kept, which was regarded as the most important shrine in all the Mixteca. Burgoa (1934: 330) described the shrine to the ini ūu as located atop the tallest ridge in the valley, which stretched a considerable distance from north to south. Modern residents of San Miguel Achiutla still refer to this place as the home of the oracle, specifically the archaeological site found along the ridge, dated by Kowalewski and colleagues (2009: 194) to the Terminal Formative, with reoccupation in the Postclassic. The site contains an extensive and well-preserved low mound at its summit, greatly resembling the kinds of chiyo depicted in the codices (Fig. 4.24). The area surrounding this architecture is ringed by two defensive walls,
with a ditch in between them. The date of construction of these walls is not known, though the feature is reminiscent of later Postclassic defensive walls seen at Monte Alban, Mitla, and Yagul, which may be associated with Aztec invasions (Joyce 2009a: 45).

**Fig. 4.24: Architectural platform located at the summit of Cerro de la Corona in the Achiutla Valley.**

We will also recall from the previous chapter that, according to Burgoa (1934: 320), just prior to the Conquest, the Mexica emperor Moctezuma supposedly sent ambassadors to Achiutla to consult with the ini ñuu regarding the outcome of his conflict with the Spanish. Why send ambassadors all the way to Achiutla? Such an act perhaps makes more sense if we recall a mythical incident involving one of Moctezuma’s predecessors (as well as his namesake)—Moctezuma Ilhuicamina—as related by the chronicler Diego Durán (1994: 212-222), and discussed by Boone (2000: 19) in an examination of Mesoamerican conceptions of time. According to Durán, Moctezuma Ilhuicamina sent emissaries, essentially via *time travel*, to the Mexica mythical homeland of Aztlan, where offerings were to be made to Coatlicue, the mother of their patron deity Huitzilopochtli. From a portal located at
Coatepec, these emissaries were able to reach Aztlan, where they found that time had passed much more slowly—persons who had stayed behind when the Mexica made their migration to central Mexico centuries prior were still alive (Boone 2000: 19).

One gleans from the above incident a sort of condensation of time and space in Mesoamerican worldview—the past did not simply vanish with the passage of time, but continued to exist in places of particular significance; places which one in the present could still visit. As Boone (ibid.) remarks, “The past and future do not seem to have been permanently closed to the Mexicans. These temporal states were separated from the present, true, but their bounding walls were porous to the extent that the past could be visited if approached correctly.” As such, visits to pre-sunrise places, if not constituting “time travel” in a literal sense, may have presented ways through which persons could interact with powerful deities and divine forces of previous ages. Coming back to Achiutla then, the allure that consulting with the ini ŋuu at Cerro de la Corona would have held for Moctezuma the Second, as well as for so many native Mixtecs in the region, would have derived not only from the renown of the priests and the idols there, nor only from the ability of the ini ŋuu to predict the future, but from the antiquity of the place, from its status as a ruined chiyo.

Moving now to the Casa del Sol, just north of the Pueblo Viejo, we saw in Chapter 3 that while this place may be identified with the Hill of the Sun seen in the codices (Byland and Pohl 1994: 197-198; Byland 2008), not all scholars agree on this matter (Jansen and Pérez 2011: 305-307). Nevertheless, I believe there is good reason to suspect that the site found at the summit of this hill was viewed as a pre-sunrise place as well, irrespective of whether it can confidently be identified in the codices. It is dated to the Classic period by Kowalewski and colleagues (2009: 194), and most notably contains a large mound of stone.
In one place on this mound, the collapse has been peeled away to expose a portion of a vaulted passageway (Fig. 4.25) reminiscent of that found in an earlier platform at Yucuita (Winter 1982: 20-21). Various structures in the vicinity appear to have been disturbed, perhaps a result of bean-farming that local residents recall having taken place here in more recent history.

Fig. 4.25: Vaulted passageway exposed in the collapse of a mound located on the summit of the Casa del Sol in the Achiutla Valley.

It is precisely this place that Abraham Castellanos (1910: 21) described as the location of “Yucu Gandi” or “Monte del Sol” in the early 20th century and linked it to mythical history, as mentioned in the previous chapter. More potential insights into the
significance of both the Casa del Sol as well as the Cerro de la Corona come from a Oaxacan journalist named Emiliano C. Gómez (1937), writing relatively shortly after Castellanos in the 1930’s. Gómez (1937: 8) visited Achiutla, where he claimed to have “broken the silence” of elderly natives, who then proceeded to recount in vivid detail to him how the New Fire Ceremony was practiced there in pre-Hispanic times. According to the journalist, led by a high priest and three subordinates, all the people of Achiutla, including the caciques, nobility, and rulers of allied polities, would come together and make a procession to the Casa del Sol. There they would pass an entire night carrying out various rituals. Afterwards, they would descend back into the valley, cross the river, and ascend to the Cerro de la Corona. It was at Cerro de la Corona that, after a number of other rituals were carried out, the new fire was eventually created, and with lighted pieces of pine, people would return to the community to ignite the fires within their homes (Fig. 4.26).
Fig. 4.26: Trajectory of the ritual procession for the “New Fire” ceremony at Achiutla, as reported by Gómez (1937).

It is fairly likely that Gómez here is influenced heavily by the writings of Burgoa, as well as scholars such as Martínez Gracida and Castellanos, and he is likely pulling from central Mexican sources as well. Indeed, we might be suspicious of just how much of this account was actually relayed to him by native informants, and how much was reconstructed from other sources. But it is rather clear from his descriptions that he spent time in Achiutla, and the fact that these two places—the Cerro de la Corona and the Casa del Sol—figure so prominently in his description of this ceremonial trajectory suggests a significant social memory of the importance of these hilltop ruins, and an association of them with religion and ritual processions. Whether these sites were associated precisely with the New Fire ceremony is perhaps debatable, yet I argue that Gomez’s account at minimum suggests an enduring memory of these ruins as prominent pre-sunrise places. At the same time, I leave
open the possibility that these sites may indeed have been associated with practices of the New Fire Ceremony, in that such ceremonies would encapsulate almost perfectly why pre-sunrise places were likely so important. As places that had collapsed into ruin in previous ages of creation, they were symbolically ideal settings for reenacting the creation of the New Sun out of a “predawn darkness” (Hamann 2008: 806). These ruined places also likely served as reminders as to the fate of those societies who failed to carry out such ceremonies properly. Given that these ceremonies were designed to prevent apocalyptic events that could bring an end to this current age, pre-sunrise ruins presented places where one could contact powerful forces in attempts to ensure the existence of a future.

While people may have made pilgrimage to Achiutla and its oracle during the Postclassic seeking prognostications regarding the future, the reasons for doing so likely laid in the site’s connections to the deep past. These connections could be made through the narration of creation myths and events of previous ages, which could be passed down orally or painted in codices. But such connections could also be made physically—these ruined sites, looming in such prominent locales within the immediate landscape, were places that one could visit, one could touch. If journeying to these places did not constitute time travel per se, they nevertheless allowed for a condensation of time and space, through which interaction with the past provided a means of negotiating an uncertain future.
Chapter 5: Excavation Strategy and Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the general strategies that guided the excavations carried out at Achiutla and the methods employed therein. I begin by describing the rationale behind the selection of the various areas that were targeted for excavation, then go on to discuss excavation strategies undertaken within these areas, and the specific methods of data collection and documentation used. Lastly, the chapter concludes with some notes on flotation of sediments for future paleoethnobotanical research, and the curation of the materials recovered over the course of the project.

The excavation season took place from May 1 to August 11 of 2013, and the project was dubbed, in Spanish, the “Proyecto Arqueológico San Miguel Achiutla,” abbreviated as “PASMA.” As such, virtually all data forms, excavation notes, and artifact tags and boxes bore the acronym “PASMA 2013” as well as more specific contextual information, including site sector, and terrace or operation number. Excavations were undertaken with the full permission of both INAH (see Appendix B) and the municipality of San Miguel Achiutla. After conferring with members of the municipal government in Achiutla prior to the research, I drafted a brief proposal or “solicitud” explaining where excavations would be conducted, how the project would proceed, and the goals of the research. These members of the municipal government then proceeded to present the solicitud to the community in a town meeting or “assemblea” where it was approved by consensus.

Site-level Sampling Strategy

Given time and budgetary constraints, the goals of the project were to carry out household excavations at three relatively small residential terraces within the Pueblo Viejo
dating to the Late Postclassic and Early Colonial periods. Selection of the terraces to be excavated was therefore based on both their relative dimensions as well as the presence of chronologically diagnostic materials found in surface reconnaissance. A number of terraces were identified in both the North and South sectors that would have otherwise been deemed good candidates for excavation, but were too expansive for intensive sampling to be feasible. No terrace selected for excavation was greater than 1000m² in area.

Furthermore, the project sought to sample a range of households of various social statuses. Noting that the general pattern in the Postclassic Mixteca Alta is for elite residences to be found at the tops of terraced sites, with commoner households distributed along the lower slopes (Spores 2008: 64), terraces were selected at different elevations along the Pueblo Viejo ridge. The three terraces selected for excavation were as follows (Fig. 5.1): 1) Terrace 10 of the North sector (“Terrace 10 North”), located in roughly the middle of the monumental core of the Pueblo Viejo, 2) Terrace 13 of the North sector (“Terrace 13 North”), found immediately below and west of the monumental terraces, and 3) Terrace 1 of the South sector (“Terrace 1 South”), the highest of the lower and less formally constructed series of terraces found south of the Iglesias sector. Lastly, in light of the identification of the feature associated with a lithic workshop during the reconnaissance season, the decision was made to excavate one 2x1m test unit within this feature, this operation being dubbed “Iglesias TP 1.”
As we will see in the next chapter, no demonstrably Colonial occupation was identified at Terrace 1 South, and diagnostic ceramics recovered appear to date to earlier than the Late Postclassic period, possibly corresponding to the Early Postclassic and to the
Terminal Formative. Because of this, excavations were limited there, and analysis of recovered materials has been postponed for future seasons. For the Iglesias TP 1 operation, a small sample of material was analyzed, but more detailed work is also pending for future seasons. As such, this dissertation principally focuses on data recovered from Terrace 10 North and Terrace 13 North.

**Excavation Strategy**

For each operation, investigation began with the given area being cleared of vegetation. In each excavation area, an arbitrary datum was established at a relative high point, and its location recorded with a GPS. Establishment of a datum allowed for both vertical control in subsequent excavations, as well as tying the given area into the overall site map.

Gridlines were then set up, using tape-and-compass methods, aligned with magnetic north, and staked out meter by meter with rebar. Individual 1x1m units were then assigned sequential north-south and east-west coordinates. For northing, units were assigned numbers from north to south in ascending order, while for easting, units were assigned letters from west to east in ascending order. Hence, the northeast corner of a given grid, unless later expanded, would be “1 A.” Very infrequently, excavations extended beyond the western limit originally defined, and were thence labeled with double letters in reverse alphabetical order, thus the unit immediately east of “A” would be dubbed “ZZ,” the following “YY,” and so on. Excavations never extended beyond the originally defined limits in any other direction.

Residential excavations then commenced by first working along trenches through the central axes of the excavation areas, running north-south and east-west, roughly
quadrisecting each terrace. These trenches were effective in exposing long profiles, allowing the general stratigraphy of the excavation to be documented and better understood. They also allowed for remains of domestic architecture to be detected relatively rapidly, and excavations were normally expanded in 1x1m units to follow wall foundations when this occurred, after stratigraphy had been documented. Excavations were also expanded when other features, such as middens, were identified. Certain features that could be well defined spatially, such as stone-lined storage compartments, were usually excavated separately, normally by first bisecting them to examine possible internal stratigraphy.

Much of the excavation work was dedicated to careful exposure of domestic architecture, in order to define the sizes and forms of structures and locate their access points. This largely involved following architectural foundations as they were exposed, but the interiors of structures were extensively explored as well. Once locations of house floors were determined, the last 5cm above a floor in a given unit were typically excavated separately, in order to find artifacts potentially left in situ on these surfaces. In several cases, limited sub-floor units were excavated beneath exposed floors as well to identify possible previous construction phases. While excavations largely focused on household architecture and midden deposits, considerable testing took place outside of structures in areas such as patios to examine other potential activity areas as well.

Excavation Methods

Excavations were predominantly carried out in 1x1m units, though occasionally these expanded into 2x1m units, and in one instance a 2x2m square, in order to proceed more expeditiously once the general context within an area under investigation was well understood. For vertical control within these units, excavations normally proceeded in
arbitrary 10cm lots, though in sensitive or ambiguous contexts, such as defined features, protocol often shifted to using 5cm lots. On rare occasions, once the stratigraphy in a given area had been well discerned, units were divided by natural stratum. For each excavated lot, starting and closing depth measurements were taken at all four corners and within the center of the given unit from sub-datums distributed throughout the excavation area. The elevation of each sub-datum relative to the master datum for the excavation area was measured immediately upon its establishment, such that all depth measurements could later be correlated. Starting and closing depth measurements also allowed for later calculations of volume of sediment excavated within various lots, useful in subsequent examinations of artifact densities.

In practice, a measure of versatility in excavation protocol proved useful in allowing research to progress efficiently without forfeiting precision in data collection in important contexts. For example, within interiors of structures, once architecture was well defined, we occasionally began by working in 2x1m units, excavating by natural stratum through slope-wash and erosional fill, then once the house floor was near, we shifted back to 1x1m units and proceeded in 5cm lots.

The actual excavation was done principally by a team of ten residents of San Miguel Achiutla employed and trained by myself, using shovels, barettas (metal digging bars), trowels, and small pick-axes. All excavated sediment was passed through 5mm mesh screens to recover small artifacts. Artifacts were separated by horizontal unit and vertical lot, as well as by material type, and placed in separate bags, accompanied by tags on which all provenience information was recorded. Each artifact bag was then immediately assigned a field specimen (FS) number prior to being brought back to the laboratory. These numbers
were simply assigned sequentially, according to the order in which the samples were taken. Thus, within a single lot of an individual unit, different classes of materials found or samples taken (e.g., ceramics, lithics, metal, sediment samples) would each have their own unique FS numbers. The only exceptions to this general protocol were carbon samples taken for dating purposes—in which case different samples even within the same lot were separated individually with unique FS numbers and more specific provenience information—and flotation samples, which were given single FS numbers in the field, but eventually separated into heavy fraction, light fraction, and sediment samples, all of which would be tied to the same original FS number. In total, 3206 field specimens were collected over the course of the excavation season.

*Excavation Documentation*

The methods of excavation documentation and terminology used were largely consistent with those employed in other projects in Oaxaca, specifically projects in the lower Río Verde region (see, for example, Barber 2005; Joyce 1991; Levine 2007). I carried out documentation, assisted by a small international team of archaeology students under my supervision, as excavations progressed. Standardized lot forms were used to record depth measurements, information on depositional context, field specimens collected, and initial interpretations (see Appendix B). Excavation supervisors also kept separate field notebooks, where other observations could be recorded that did not make their way onto the lot forms. Prepared logs were kept on hand as excavations progressed for field specimens, features, sub-datums, and photos, such that these could be entered sequentially and kept track of over the course of the project. Exposed stratigraphy, architecture, and features were drawn by hand on millimeter graph paper at a 1:10 scale, and these drawings were subsequently
stitched together and digitized in Adobe Illustrator. Copious amounts of photos of archaeological features, wide shots of excavation areas, etc., were taken with a digital SLR camera as well.

Sediment Flotation

For the excavations, an intensive program of sediment flotation was designed in consultation with project collaborator and paleoethnobotanist Shanti Morell-Hart. After the grid was established in a given area, one of every four 1x1m units was designated for flotation—that is samples of ten liters of sediment would be taken back to the laboratory for flotation in each vertical lot within a given unit. These units were staggered every four meters along the east-west and north-south transects of the grid to provide even coverage over the excavation area. Additional float samples were taken when features of particular interest were encountered, or instead smaller sediment samples when lots within features were too small to contain ten liters of sediment.

For units pre-designated for flotation, float samples were from taken every lot, even if certain lots were not of direct archaeological interest, as was the case for surface levels of units. Collection of these samples is nevertheless potentially useful, as analyses of botanical materials from surface units can provide an understanding of the “background noise” occurring in a particular environmental context—that is, shedding light on the kinds and frequencies of botanical remains occurring naturally within sediments in a given area, which can then be distinguished from materials resulting from human activity when looking at more primary archaeological contexts.

The actual flotation of sediment samples collected was carried out in the project laboratory in San Miguel Achiutla as excavations progressed. First, 250mL of sediment were
separated from the sample and curated for future analysis of micro-botanical remains. The remaining sediment was then placed in a flotation machine designed by Morell-Hart and Rob Cuthrell, with 100mL of detergent added to break up clays in the matrix. The machine was designed such that the sediment sat submerged in water cradled in a net of 1mm mesh within a plastic bin, and was constantly agitated by a spout of water beneath it. All organic materials were collected as they rose to the top and spilled out of a metal tray, and light and heavy fractions were thus separated (Fig. 5.2). Heavy fractions were inspected immediately after flotation and artifacts were separated, while the light fractions await future archaeobotanical analysis by Shanti Morell-Hart and her students at McMaster University.

![Fig. 5.2: Flotation machine used during the 2013 excavation season at Achiutla.](image-url)
Dating Methods

At present, dating of archaeological contexts from the excavations at Achiutla has only been done by way of diagnostic artifacts. While many carbon samples were collected for future radiometric dating, these samples have yet to be processed. This has in part been due to limitations of resources, but more so due to the fact that, given the complexities of calibration for radiocarbon dates corresponding to the Late Postclassic and Early Colonial periods, dating of samples from these time periods presents an arguably questionable allocation of resources. Specifically, an event that caused an inundation of C14 into the atmosphere near the time of the Contact period produces a “saddle” in the calibration curve for radiocarbon dates corresponding to this time, leading to colonial period dates having bimodal distributions and hence considerably wider error ranges (Overholtzer 2014: 1080). Thus, in a recently revised Postclassic and Colonial chronology for the site of Xaltocan in central Mexico, based on dozens of dates from sealed stratified midden contexts and refined using Bayesian statistical modeling, Overholtzer (2014: 1085), proposes an Early Colonial period Isla phase that is still nearly 160 years in length, spanning from AD 1521-1650. The start-date of 1521, moreover, is only defined as such due to the presence of clear post-Conquest artifacts. Without these materials, the phase would undoubtedly extend earlier back in time. In summary, even when taken from excellent contexts and employing the latest in analytical methods, radiocarbon dates for the Early Colonial period in Mexico stand to have error ranges of at least 150-200 years, providing rather coarse chronological resolution.

Given the above, in this dissertation, I largely rely on several types of diagnostic artifacts to make suggestions regarding the dates of occupation for the various residential areas excavated at Achiutla. These include Postclassic and Colonial types of indigenous
polychrome pottery, white glazed maiolica ceramics, and “caret-head” nails. These artifact types are described in detail in Chapter 7. Hopefully advances in methodologies will allow for more refined absolute dating of colonial materials in the future, possibly via luminescence or other means.

Artifact Curation

At the insistence of officials within the Oaxaca state branch of INAH, and in cooperation with municipal officials of San Miguel Achiutla, all materials collected over the course of the project were transported to the Ex-Convent of Cuilapan de Guerrero, Oaxaca, where they are currently housed, and where laboratory analyses was conducted during the summer of 2014. Small samples of artifacts were shipped, with permission from INAH, to the United States in the fall of 2014 for future archaeometric analyses. It should be noted that it is the strong preference of the community of Achiutla, as well as myself, that all materials from the project eventually be returned to the municipality. The town’s 16th century convent has recently been restored, and conditions there are more than adequate to house these materials in accord with INAH’s standards, both in terms of the quality of the facility and its security. While the people of Achiutla were gracious enough to allow the project to be carried out while being made aware that the materials would eventually have to be transported to Cuilapan, this was one of their largest concerns, and this requirement can create an impediment to research in other communities. The people of Achiutla strongly desire that their patrimony eventually be returned to them, and harbor ambitions of converting their Ex-Convent into a community museum, a project which we have discussed pursuing collaboratively. Particularly given that state facilities such as Cuilapan continually confront increasing limitations of space with which to curate artifacts, the INAH would be
well served to allow communities with sufficient facilities for housing archaeological materials to take custodianship of them, such as is the case at Achiutla.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the general strategies guiding the selection of areas within the Pueblo Viejo for excavation, the more specific strategies by which the excavations were carried out in these areas, and the methods of data recovery employed therein. The following two chapters proceed to describe these data. Chapter 6 details the results of the excavations, focusing on stratigraphy and architecture in each area. Chapter 7 then focuses on the analysis of artifacts recovered from domestic assemblages. The remainder of the dissertation synthesizes these data in discussing indigenous life and power relations in Late Postclassic and Early Colonial Achiutla.
Chapter 6: Excavation Operations at Achiutla

In this chapter I detail the results of the excavation operations carried out within the Pueblo Viejo of Achiutla. The chapter is broken up by operation, for each of which I first provide a description of the excavation area, then discuss its occupational history and provide spatial analysis of excavated features. Each section concludes with general interpretive commentary, while the chapter as a whole ends with more synthetic discussion of the results of these operations. While artifacts recovered from the excavations are occasionally referenced in this chapter in order to proffer interpretations regarding dating or uses of various features, much fuller treatment of these materials is provided in the chapter that follows.

Operation 1: Terrace 1, South Sector

Area Description

Terrace 1 of the South Sector is the highest and northernmost of the residential terraces identified along the slope south of the Dominican convent (Figs. 6.1 and Fig. 6.2). It is defined by a short retaining wall on its south side, approximately 50cm in height. Immediately to the west is a steep upper slope of the ridge upon which it lies, while to the east is a steep drop-off to the valley floor below. At the north end of the terrace is a large bedrock outcropping. The terrace covers approximately 400m² in area, relatively small in comparison to the much broader and more extensive terraces below it. No mounds or other features associated with architecture were visible here on the surface prior to excavations, however, the area was rather obviously artificially leveled and artifacts were abundant on the surface, leading to the inference that is was likely a residential space. Among the surface
materials collected were pottery sherds diagnostic of the Postclassic period, including polychrome, red-on-cream, graphite-on-red, graphite-on-orange, and incised brazier types. Thus, the terrace was selected for excavation due to both its manageable size, and the hope that occupation would date to the Late Postclassic and Early Colonial periods. Subsequent investigation, however, suggested that occupations at Terrace 1 South date predominantly to earlier periods including Terminal Formative, or Ramos Phase, and possibly to the Early Postclassic, as I will explain below. As such, excavations here were discontinued after the time of the terrace’s occupation became clearer. A total of 26m² in horizontal area were opened for excavation, and excavations rarely expanded from the primary trenches (Fig. 6.3). Further, units pre-designated for collection of flotation samples were largely avoided, left in place in the event of follow-up investigation in the future. Laboratory analyses of recovered materials from this operation have been postponed for future research seasons.
Fig. 6.1: Location of Terrace 1, South Sector.
Fig. 6.2: Terrace 1 South at the start of excavation operation.
Fig. 6.3: Schematic of excavation units at Terrace 1 South, with trench profiles demarcated in red.

**Occupational History**

Given the presence of bedrock outcrops just north of the terrace, it was expected that deposits would be relatively shallow. This proved not to be the case. In trenching operations at Terrace 1 South, the deepest units excavated extended over 1.2m below the surface. Three
principal strata were identified in trenching operations (Figs. 6.4 and 6.5; Table 6.1). These strata tended to be relatively thick (at points greater than 30cm in thickness) and rather difficult to discern from one another, differences being very subtle in terms of both visual and textural characteristics. This may owe, at least in part, to the location of the terrace with respect to the site’s topography. Flanked by steep and unterraced bedrock slopes to the north and the west, this terrace would have been particularly prone to the accumulation of stone and sediment washed down from above, as well as cultural material. All strata contained considerably more small and large limestone rocks than observed in other excavation operations at Achiutla. At the same time, sediment from Terrace 1 South could have been released via erosion to areas further below, to the east and the south. As can be seen in the profile of the north-south trench in Fig. 6.4, the strata tend to dip downward toward the south, suggesting erosion and removal of deposits from the terrace. Thus, on the whole, this relatively dynamic physical environment may have served to “wash out” visible differences in more distinct depositional events.
Fig. 6.4: Stratigraphic profile of the north-south trench (west face) at Terrace 1, South.
Fig. 6.5: Stratigraphic profile of the east-west trench (south face) at Terrace 1 South.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strata</th>
<th>Munsell and sediment description</th>
<th>Formation</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>10YR 4/3, Sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Surface overburden/slope wash</td>
<td>More compact than F1, more rock inclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>10YR 4/3, Sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Possible occupational surface and construction fill</td>
<td>More compact than F2, lighter in color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3</td>
<td>10YR 5/4, Sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Possible construction fill</td>
<td>More compact than F2, lighter in color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F4</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Wall</td>
<td>North wall, Structure 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Stone alignment</td>
<td>Possible east wall of Structure 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F6</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Vessel cache</td>
<td>Seven complete or near-complete small bowls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F7</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Circular stone alignment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though more much more work remains to be done with artifacts recovered from this operation, initial observations were that artifact densities in strata in Terrace 1 South were, on average, greater than in other residential operations. However, no distinct midden deposits were found, and the general condition of ceramic sherds (relatively small and eroded) suggests that these materials were not primary refuse. It is likely that accumulation of cultural materials here owes not only to inhabitation at the terrace itself, but to erosion and
slope wash from above-lying areas. As noted above, preliminary analysis of recovered ceramics indicated occupation of this terrace during both Postclassic (Natividad) and Terminal Formative (Ramos) phases. Further analysis and correlation of these materials with identified strata will hopefully shed more light on the history of occupation of this area.

_Spatial analysis_

_Structure 1_

Remains of only one structure were identified at Terrace 1 South, consisting of an alignment of stones—primarily large limestone boulders—running east to west, at an orientation of 8-10 degrees west of magnetic north (F4; Figs. 6.6 and 6.7; Table 6.1). This appears to be a platform retaining wall. The exposed portion of the wall extends 6.39m in length. The boulders comprising this foundation are roughly hewn or smoothed on their north (presumably exterior) faces, and are as large as 89cm in length, 31cm in thickness, and 60cm in height. Remains of a second possible wall foundation are found to the east (F5) though the association of these stones with the structure is less clear. Structure 1 was shallowly buried, with portions of some of its stones visible from the surface, and the base of the foundation lying approximately 60cm below the surface, or 2.21m below the operation datum. No floor or compacted surface was found in association with the structure. Large, jumbled, and unworked stones were observed to the immediate south, or interior, of the alignment, suggesting the jumbled stones were fill, and the structure as a whole was a raised platform, atop which would have sat a perishable superstructure.
Fig. 6.6: Plan map of Structure 1 and associated features.
Apart from the size of the rocks used in its construction, Structure 1 is devoid of distinctive formal characteristics that might be chronologically diagnostic. The use of large limestone boulders is reminiscent of the architectural complex identified during survey in the Southeast sector of the Pueblo Viejo, mentioned in Chapter 4. This architecture is distinctive relative to that found in other excavation operations in the Pueblo Viejo that can confidently be assigned to the Late Postclassic and Early Colonial periods, possibly consistent with an earlier construction date. At the same time, however, the orientation of Structure 1 at Terrace 1 South is the same as that of the excavated Late Postclassic and Early Colonial architecture: 8-10 degrees west of north (the architectural complex found in the Southeast sector of the site is slightly different: four degrees west of north). Thus, if this structure is earlier, this would
then suggest continuity over time with respect to aspects of architectural planning within the Pueblo Viejo.

**Vessel cache (F6)**

Feature 6 is directly associated with Structure 1, comprised of a cache of small ceramic vessels found interior to the wall (Fig. 6.8). This feature was found at a depth of 1.91m below the primary excavation datum, a mere 26cm below the surface. The cache itself consists of seven complete, or near-complete, small ceramic drinking vessels, bunched together and stacked on top of one another. Given that this feature is so well preserved despite being found at a level so near to the surface, it is certain that these artifacts were interred deliberately, after which they would have been relatively shielded from other potential disturbances. Further, because Feature 1 is found at a depth above the base of the stones comprising Structure 1, but beneath the apexes of these same stones, this supports the notion that the remains of Structure 1 represent a platform retaining wall atop which a superstructure was built, rather than a foundation of a superstructure, inside of which Feature 6 would have been interred. Taking this depositional context into account, I interpret Feature 6 as representing a ritual cache or offering buried beneath a living surface associated with Structure 1, possibly as part of a dedication or termination ritual (Mock 1998).
Fig. 6.8: Plan map of vessel cache (F6) at Terrace 1 South.

The vessels themselves are small and relatively simple semispherical bowls with direct rims, averaging 14cm in diameter and 3cm in height. Their wall forms are incurving, rather composite-silhouette. Most exhibit relatively minimal decoration, consisting of painted parallel bands around their interiors, though at least one bears a slightly more complex abstract geometrical design at its base, painted in black (Fig. 6.9). Stylistically, these vessels bear closest affinity to those assigned to the Early and Late Liboa Phases for the Valley of Oaxaca (Markens 2008: 77-79, personal communication) and the Yugüe Phase for the Lower Rio Verde region of the Oaxaca Coast (Hedgepeth 2009; Joyce et al. 2001; King 2003: 209-210, 2008: 268-269), these phases all corresponding to the Early Postclassic period, between roughly AD 800-1200. I therefore suggest that Structure 1 at Terrace 1 South may have been occupied principally during the Early Postclassic, a time period unfortunately rather poorly defined for the Mixteca Alta region (Kowalewski et al 2009).
Future radiometric dating of recovered materials might serve to evaluate this proposition, provided corresponding dates fall outside the problematic portion of the radiocarbon curve discussed in the previous chapter.

Fig. 6.9: Complete ceramic bowls recovered from vessel cache (F6) at Terrace 1 South.

Circular stone feature (F7)

Feature 7 (Figs. 6.6 and 6.10) is found 4.46m north of Structure 1, and is comprised of several unhewn and relatively flat stones arranged in a circular formation, the purpose of which is unknown. The feature has a diameter of 78cm, with an interior diameter of 38cm. The top surfaces of these stones lie at an elevation of 1.77m below datum, placing the feature
roughly at the same depth as Structure 1 and Feature 6. The interior and exterior of this feature were excavated separately, however, no significant differences in artifact densities or sediment characteristics could be discerned upon initial inspection. No evidence of burning or other phenomena that might suggest a specific use of the feature were observed. In a very simplistic sense, this feature is reminiscent of a circular ring of stones found at the center of a household patio at Terrace 10 North, to be described later in this chapter. In contrast, however, the latter feature is significantly larger in diameter, made of more formalized blocks, and serves to rather clearly define a subterranean feature. It is therefore unclear whether any similarity really exists between the two features apart from a basic superficial one. This feature thus remains quite ambiguous.
Terrace 1 South: Summary

Much more analysis remains to be done in order to better understand the sequence of occupation at Terrace 1 South, but preliminary analyses of recovered ceramic materials indicate that it was inhabited during the Postclassic and the Terminal Formative Ramos phase, and perhaps during intervening periods as well. Because the Postclassic occupation might be early, as suggested by Feature 1, and because no Colonial occupation was evident, data from this operation do not constitute a major portion of the remainder of this
dissertation. Nevertheless, future study of materials recovered from Terrace 1 South, and further research in the South sector of the Pueblo Viejo more generally, stand to provide broader insights for the archaeology of the Mixteca Alta region. In particular, solidly identifying Early Postclassic occupation and defining diagnostic materials corresponding to this period would present a welcome tonic for a regional ceramic chronology that has long suffered from an inability to distinguish sub-phases within a coarsely defined Natividad phase that stretches from AD 900 until Spanish Contact, spanning over 600 years. If I am correct in identifying the latest occupation at Terrace 1 South as corresponding principally to the Early Postclassic, more detailed analyses of artifact assemblages from this context will contribute to improving this chronological resolution, potentially making it possible to at least distinguish between Early and Late phases. Our current inability to do so has long been an impediment to understanding shifts in cultural dynamics that are known to have occurred in the Mixteca Alta during the Postclassic, as suggested by pre-Hispanic codices and other lines of data (Blomster 2008).

Operation 2: Test Pit 1, Lithic Debitage Deposit, Iglesias Sector

Area Description

A single 2x1m test pit was excavated in an arbitrary location just north of the road-cut in which the lens associated with lithic workshop production was identified over the course of reconnaissance, described in Chapter 4 (Fig. 6.11). This unit was then expanded slightly upon encountering a burial feature that will be described below. The excavation took place in an area where the ridge flattens fairly considerably, though the land does slope upward to the north and would have been prone to a degree of slope-wash from above. While the adjacent road-cut obviously presents a rather significant modern disturbance, the area to the
north of the road did not otherwise appear appreciably disturbed by modern activities. No architectural features were identified in or around the excavation area.

Fig 6.11: Location of Operation 2, Test Pit 1.

The unit was excavated in arbitrary 5cm lots, with sediment samples taken for flotation within each lot. A random “grab-bag” sample of obsidian materials from one lot was analyzed in order to compare with materials recovered from domestic contexts elsewhere, but much more detailed analyses remain to be carried out of not only the obsidian, but other materials collected in this operation as well.
**Occupational History**

The test pit reached a maximum depth of 91cm (Fig. 6.12), after which compact and sterile clay loam was encountered (N1). In the northern portion of the unit, soft bedrock tepetate (soft limestone bedrock) and more decaying friable bedrock crop out much closer to the surface (N2-s1 and N2-s2). Apart from the sterile sediment and bedrock, two strata were identified in the unit, both of which contain high quantities of lithic debitage associated with workshop production. The top stratum (F1) consists of a loose clay loam that appears to be slope wash, and includes colonial ceramics and metal artifacts. Density of lithic material in this layer is relatively moderate, suggesting that the feature associated with the lithic workshop extended further to the north, and materials were secondarily transported via erosion to the south, forming this sub-stratum. A stratum beneath (F2-s1) is a lighter colored clay loam that is much denser with lithic debitage, and appears to represent primary refuse disposal. No materials that were clearly Colonial in date were recovered in this stratum. At the bottom of F2-s1, the aforementioned burial feature was encountered (Burial 1), resting just above sterile sediment. While both the presence of a human burial and the high quantities of lithic debitage suggest that F2-s1 likely represents an intrusive feature—a pit that was cut into previously deposited sediments—the limited extent of the excavation unit and the presence of sterile bedrock make this difficult to determine with confidence.
Fig. 6.12: Stratigraphic profile of Operation 2, Test Pit 1 (east face).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strata</th>
<th>Munsell and sediment description</th>
<th>Formation</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>10YR 2/2, clay loam</td>
<td>Possible slope wash</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2-s1</td>
<td>10YR 4/2, clay loam</td>
<td>Refuse deposition</td>
<td>Considerably more dense with obsidian than F1-s1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burial 1</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Human burial, likely primary interment</td>
<td>In flexed, seated position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2-s2</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Stone</td>
<td>Possible burial marker?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N1</td>
<td>2.5Y 6/4, silty clay loam</td>
<td>Compact and sterile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2-s1</td>
<td>10YR 6/6, tepetate</td>
<td>Compact and sterile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2-s2</td>
<td>10YR 6/6, tepetate</td>
<td>Decaying/friable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The confluence of the human burial—which will be described in more detail below—and the dense deposit of lithic debitage found above and immediately surrounding the burial make the depositional history within this unit somewhat curious matter. Though not
common, human burials are occasionally found in midden deposits in Late Postclassic Oaxaca and central Mexico (e.g., Levine 2007: 517; Smith 2002: 109), typically found in seated and flexed positions, as is the case with Burial 1 here. Thus, it is very possible that F2-s1 represents a pit that was dug for primary interment of this individual and cut into the tepetate bedrock, and lithic waste materials were deposited shortly thereafter. A second, though perhaps less parsimonious scenario, is that the burial was initially deposited in what was once a hollow cavity within tepetate bedrock, and F2-s1 was only deposited after a later intrusion into this cavity. In Figure 6.12, it can be seen that the tepetate (N2-s1) found in the northern portion of the unit hangs over slightly to the south. It is possible that this tepetate once formed a larger overhang extending further south that would have served to seal the burial until a subsequent intrusive episode in which it the tepetate was excavated into and destroyed for the deposit of the lithic materials.

Spatial Analysis

Burial 1

Burial 1 (Figs. 6.13 and 6.14) comprises of a single articulated individual in seated and flexed position, unaccompanied by offerings. Age and sex of the individual are presently undetermined, as osteological analysis of the skeletal material is pending. Initial observations noted lipping of the vertebra, which may indicate an older individual, though thinness of the cranium and size of the long bones may suggest a younger age. The skeleton is fully articulated, indicating a primary interment, though some of the phalanges have been disturbed, and the right leg is found in what appears to be an anatomically impossible position, perhaps a result of placement and manipulation of the body postmortem.

Preservation of the bone itself was poor, frequently crumbling as skeletal elements were
exposed and removed. The burial was oriented at approximately 20 degrees west of magnetic north. A relatively large stone was found in near vertical position just above the skeleton (F2-s2). Speculatively, this stone may have served to mark the burial, but this is very much uncertain.

Fig. 6.13: Plan drawing of Burial 1.
The presence of this burial in what is ostensibly a refuse dump, unaccompanied by offerings, may elicit the interpretation that the individual in question was of low status. Drawing such a conclusion, however, runs the risk of ethnocentric assumption. As cited above, burials are found in midden deposits elsewhere in Postclassic Mesoamerica, and in broad terms, burial practices for this time period are simply not well understood for Oaxaca
and central Mexico in general. In the Mixteca, the pre-Hispanic codices provide insights regarding mortuary practices and ancestor veneration, focused on sacred bundle cults (Hermann 2008; Pohl 1994), however, it is not clear that such practices were carried out by the majority of the populace, or were instead restricted to social elites. In the case of Achiutla, as we saw in Chapter 3, Burgoa makes mention of a cave in the surrounding valley discovered by fray Benito in which remains of ancestors were curated and offerings were made to them, but this appears to have been the case only for deceased caciques. It is very much unclear where the majority of persons were buried at Achiutla during the Postclassic, as no other burials were encountered in excavations. Smith (2002: 108-109) notes a similar relative lack of household burials at excavated Late Postclassic Aztec sites, and notes the possible use of community cemeteries at sites like Xochicalco (Hirth 2000) as possibly accounting for this pattern. Similar practices may have more common in the Postclassic Mixteca as well.

*Test Pit 1, Lithic Debitage Deposit, Iglesias Sector: Summary*

The limited excavation of this test pit served to demonstrate unambiguously that a significant lithic workshop was present at Achiutla, where stone tools were produced in surplus, likely for market exchange. Tool manufacture was largely focused on obsidian imported from central Mexico, but chert debitage was also present in large quantities. The single unit yielded over 10,000 pieces of obsidian and over 2000 pieces of chert debris. Though detailed analysis of all recovered materials is pending, an analysis of a random “grab bag” sample of 500 pieces of obsidian has been conducted, and the data are presented in later chapters. The refuse deposit associated with the workshop, as well as the human burial below it, appear to date to the Late Postclassic. Absolute dating of recovered materials needs
to be carried out in order to more fully evaluate this assertion, perhaps via obsidian hydration, given the aforementioned challenges posed by radiocarbon. Continued work with recovered materials, as well as possible expansions of excavations that might reveal features such as buildings associated with the workshop, stand to shed greater light on craft production and exchange within the site and beyond.

**Operation 3: Terrace 13, North Sector**

*Area Description*

Terrace 13 of the North sector lies just outside the monumental area of the Pueblo Viejo, below and to the west of the series of monumental terraces (Fig. 6.15). The artificially leveled living surface is approximately 979m² in area, defined on the west side by a 1.5m retaining wall, and on the south by a short 50cm wall separating it from the adjacent Terrace 15 just below. Expansive bedrock outcroppings are found to the north and east sides of the terrace, and the area would have been prone to slope wash from the monumental terraces to the east. The adjacent Terrace 15 contains remains of a large and well-preserved structure, made of limestone blocks with walls reaching 3m in height, labeled Building 2 during surface reconnaissance (Fig. 6.16). Date of the building’s construction is unknown. Multiple residents of modern San Miguel Achiutla described the building to me as having been the home of their grandmother, perhaps suggesting relatively recent occupation, though it was unclear how literally these claims were meant to be taken. The building has an orientation of 15 degrees west of magnetic north, a slight deviation from the Colonial architecture observed elsewhere in excavation operations. If anything, as will be seen shortly, a drainage feature excavated at Terrace 13 suggests that it and Terrace 15 were not occupied simultaneously, possibly indicating that Building 2 on Terrace 15 was constructed later in time.
Fig. 6.15: Location of Operation 3 at Terrace 13, North Sector.
Returning to Terrace 13 itself, a total of 112 m$^2$ in horizontal area was opened for excavation (Fig. 6.17), the majority of these being rather shallow units as architecture and other features were not buried deeply. Deeper excavation units occasionally reached soft tepetate bedrock in some areas, hard limestone bedrock in others, and dry core fill composed of large stones toward the west edge of the terrace, used ostensibly to build up and extend the living surface. Evidence from architecture and associated artifacts indicates that the terrace was principally occupied during Postclassic and Colonial times, with no materials corresponding to earlier inhabitation.
Fig. 6.17: Schematic of excavation units at Terrace 13 North, with trench profiles demarcated in red.

*Occupational History*

Four principal strata were identified at Terrace 13 North, excluding an intrusive feature to be described later. These strata (Table 6.3) were best represented in the profiles exposed in the north-south trench (Fig. 6.18) and second shorter trench excavated 5m to the west (Fig. 6.19). Units excavated along the east-west trench encountered architecture almost immediately and were thus too shallow to provide good stratigraphic exposures.
Fig. 6.18: Stratigraphic profile of the north-south trench (west face) at Terrace 13, North (south half above, north half below).

![Stratigraphic profile of the north-south trench](image1)

Fig. 6.19: Stratigraphic profile of the western trench (west face) at Terrace 13, North.

Table 6.3: Features at Operation 3, Terrace 13 North.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strata</th>
<th>Munsell and sediment description</th>
<th>Formation</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>10YR 4/2, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Slope wash/overburden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>10YR 5/3, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Construction fill</td>
<td>Very dense with small rocks, high frequencies of Postclassic artifacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3</td>
<td>10YR 3/3, clay loam</td>
<td></td>
<td>Relatively humic/organic, very loosely compacted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F4</td>
<td>10YR 6/6, tepetate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Eroded/friable, though high amounts of carbon observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>South wall, Structure 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F6</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>North wall, Structure 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F7</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>White stucco floor, Structure 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F8</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Southern extension of floor #1, Structure 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F9</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Southern extension</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F10</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Western abutting wall, Structure 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F11</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>De facto refuse concentration, Structure 1, overlays F7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F12</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>White stucco floor, Structure 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F13</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Red stucco floor, Structure 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F14</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Compacted surface, Structure 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F15</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Alignment of adobes, Structure 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F16</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>North wall, Structure 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F17</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>East wall, Structure 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F18</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>South wall, Structure 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F19</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>East wall, drain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F20</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>West wall, drain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F21-s1</td>
<td>2.5Y 6/2, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Upper deposit, ash pit</td>
<td>Highly dense with ash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F21-s2</td>
<td>10YR 6/4, sandy clay</td>
<td>Eroded adobe lens in pit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F21-s3</td>
<td>2.5Y 4/2</td>
<td>Lower deposit, ash pit</td>
<td>Highly dense with ash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F22</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Lead debris concentration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N1</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Limestone bedrock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The top stratum (F1) ranges between approximately 15 and 30 cm in thickness and likely in large part represents slope wash that has covered the occupational surface over the centuries. Though no distinct occupational surface could be distinguished outside of structures, Colonial artifacts tended to cluster between 10-30 cm below the surface, and I suspect the patio surface to have been located near the bottom of F1.
The stratum beneath (F2), while exhibiting a similar sandy clay loam sediment matrix, is considerably denser with gravel and small-to-medium sized rocks. It is also contained relatively high densities of Postclassic ceramics that, given their eroded and fragmentary nature, appear to have be redeposited material. I interpret F2 as representing a filling event that would have served to raise the living surface of the terrace above various limestone bedrock outcroppings in the area and flatten it out. The material for this fill may have been collected from a nearby abandoned Postclassic habitation area, given the density of ceramic materials.

The third stratum (F3) is loosely compacted sandy clay, very dark in color. It is not found contiguously throughout the long exposures of stratigraphy, but instead tends to appear only near outcroppings of limestone bedrock. Given how loosely compacted the sediment is, I do not believe that this is a buried soil. I instead interpret this as indicating that previous slope wash occurred prior to the filling event, which would have tended to be channeled into cavities between bedrock outcroppings (N1). The dark color of the sediment, ostensibly suggesting high organic content, could owe to this slope wash principally coming from an organic-rich deposit, or alternatively, to vegetation subsequently clustering in spaces where sediment had accumulated at Terrace 13 between bedrock outcrops prior to the deposition of Feature 2.

A last stratum (F4) is found only in the southern portions of the north-south trench and the western trench, just above soft tepetate bedrock. It is sandier in texture and lighter in color, containing few artifacts. This stratum appears to represent eroded tepetate that was once exposed on the surface. Curiously, high amounts of carbon are found at the uppermost levels of this feature, and I therefore designate it as a cultural feature rather than a natural one.
to allow for the possibility that it may have been intentionally burned for initial land

clearance or other reasons.

In summary, occupation at Terrace 13 dates to no earlier than the Postclassic period,
given that materials found in the construction fill used to raise the living surface above the
uneven bedrock date virtually exclusively this period. Occupation appears to largely
correspond to the Colonial period. As will be seen shortly, the presence of de facto colonial
refuse on the floor of one of the residential structures indicates that the terrace was
abandoned during this time.

Spatial Analysis

Structure 1

The principal structure exposed at Terrace 13 North, Structure 1, is a long rectangular
building found at the north side of the terrace (Fig. 6.20). Though its eastern and western
limits could not be fully defined, the structure extends a minimum of 14.2m east to west, and
4.9m north to south, built at an orientation of 8-10 degrees west of magnetic north. The
architecture (F5 and F6) is comprised of a low stone foundation of limestone blocks,
consisting of one to three courses of stones, ranging between 20 and 40cm in height, atop of
which are found poorly preserved remains of what would have been an adobe superstructure.
The base of the foundation sits at a depth of approximately 45-50cm below the surface, or
1.11m below the primary excavation datum. A curious feature of the adobe blocks is that,
when they were found well preserved, they appeared to have a uniform size of approximately
30 by 60cm, possibly indicating the use of a frame or mold in their construction. Remains of
a white stucco floor (F7) were exposed within the interior of Structure 1, also poorly
preserved, buried a mere 15-20cm beneath the surface. A sub-floor unit excavated within the interior of the structure revealed no prior construction phases.

Fig. 6.20: Plan drawing of Structure 1, Terrace 13 North.

The southern wall (F5) of Structure 1 appears to have comprised the front of the building, facing the rest of the terrace. Where the stucco floor is preserved, it is often found inset to the foundation wall, presumably because it was laid down interior to the adobe superstructure. At least in two places, however, it extends out to the edge of the stone foundation (F8 and F9), possibly suggesting the structure had multiple entryways. Nevertheless, and despite the structure’s extent, no internal partitions of rooms were observed within Structure 1. Another stone wall (F10) abuts the southern wall of Structure 1 at a perpendicular angle and extends to the south for approximately 3.6m. The purpose of this wall is unknown, as it does not clearly appear to form part of another structure.
No midden deposit was found associated with Structure 1, however, a concentration of de facto refuse (F11) was found in contact with the floor in two units, including a relatively complete Colonial polychrome ceramic vessel (Fig. 6.21) and white glazed ceramics. The white stucco floor of the structure also suggests a Colonial date, as Mixtec peoples appeared to cease painting such floors red at an early date in the Colonial period at Achiutla and elsewhere in the region (Lind 1979). Given the above, I interpret Structure 1 to have been a large residential building occupied during the Early Colonial period, though likely only over a relatively short duration, given the lack of evidence of any remodeling or renovation of the building. Though large in spatial extent, the architecture is relatively unelaborate in contrast to that found at Terrace 10, which will be discussed later. Hence the family occupying Structure 1 was likely to be of lower status, possibly of the lower nobility or more affluent commoners.

Fig. 6.21: Remains of a Colonial polychrome plate found in the de facto refuse concentration (F11) within the interior of Structure 1, Terrace 13 North.
Structure 2

Poorly preserved remains of what may have been an adjacent structure were found extending south from the east side of the front wall of Structure 1 (Fig. 6.22). These remains consist only of eroded portions of stucco floor (F12 and F13) to the south, and a compacted surface with burned red rock (F14) and several adobe blocks found in alignment (F15) to the north, hence my designation of these remains as a separate structure is rather tentative. If this is in fact a structure, it ostensibly would have flanked the east side of the terrace’s central patio. The compacted surface (F14) to the north may evidence preparation of a surface prior to laying down a stucco floor—or floors—which have since eroded away. Curiously, to the south, remains of not one, but two, stucco floors are found. Portions of white stucco floor (F12) are found at a depth of only approximately 19cm below the surface, while remains of a red floor (F13) are found a mere 3 to 5cm further below. No remains of an associated stone foundation were encountered.
Though poorly preserved, likely due to being buried so shallowly, these features do appear to follow the same orientation of Structure 1. If this is indeed another structure forming part of the Terrace 13 residential complex, it would have extended a minimum length of 9.8 meters from north to south, and the two superimposed floors would indicate a longer span of occupation than that suggested by Structure 1, possibly extending back into Late Postclassic times, as the red floor would indicate Postclassic architectural conventions. Structure 1 would then have to be considered as part of a later construction phase that took place after the Contact period.

Structure 3
Structure 3 is also identified as such only tentatively, consisting of three alignments of small stones joined at perpendicular angles (F16, F17, and F18), possibly forming the foundation of a structure (Figs. 6.22 and 6.23), with the southeast portion of it no longer preserved. Curiously, these alignments are oriented at 28-30 degrees west of magnetic north, thus if this is indeed a structure, it would exhibit an orientation fairly distinct from the other architecture at Terrace 13. These stones lie at a depth approximately 20cm below the base of Structure 1, therefore, the differences in orientation could be explained by an earlier date of construction for Structure 3. The aforementioned intrusive feature, which will be described below, is found immediately east of this feature, possibly explaining why the structure would not have been preserved on its southwest side, having been destroyed by later cultural activity. It is possible that Structure 3 could have served as an altar in the center of a Postclassic or Colonial period patio, though its poor preservation prevents this idea from being fully evaluated.
Fig. 6.23: Exposed remains of Structure 3, Terrace 13 North.

Drain

At the southern end of Terrace 13, two parallel alignments of stones (F19 and F20), approximately 30cm apart, were found extending southward to the edge of the short terrace wall above Terrace 15 (Figs. 6.22 and 6.24). The stones themselves are long and thin, propped up on their sides. Some portions of this feature were visible at the surface, though the bases of the stones sat at a depth of approximately 40cm below the surface, or 1.44m below the excavation datum. The alignments follow an orientation of ten degrees west of magnetic north, consistent with that of Structure 1. This feature in all likelihood served as a drain, used to channel excess water from the surface of Terrace 13. As mentioned previously, because this feature then would have channeled water directly onto Terrace 15, very near to the standing structure that remains there, it is unlikely that the standing structure
is contemporaneous with the occupation of Terrace 13, instead probably having been constructed more recently.

![Exposed remains of the drain at Terrace 13 North.](image)

**Fig. 6.24: Exposed remains of the drain at Terrace 13 North.**

**Intrusive ash pit (F21)**

Feature 21 is a narrow pit located in the middle of the Terrace 13 patio area that appears to have been excavated to the level of bedrock during the Colonial period and filled in principally with ash (Fig. 6.25). Sediments with dense concentrations of ash were observed cutting into the stratigraphy of unit 15L in profile (Fig. 6.26, Table 6.3), with a thin deposit of eroded adobe intervening between them (F21-s2). Colonial ceramics and metal artifacts were recovered from all lots of this feature—including an iron nail just above bedrock—however, artifact frequencies were considerably lower than what would be expected of a typical midden. Diagnostic ceramics included fragments of the Colonial variety of Mixtec Polychrome, as well as Puebla Polychrome, a glazed wear produced in the 17th century.
Postclassic materials were mixed in as well, and the ceramics on the whole largely appear too fragmentary to be primary refuse, apart from remains of a glazed *molcaje*te* (grater bowl) found near the top of the ash feature (F21-s1, Fig. 6.27). As such, this feature does not appear to have been created for the purposes of general refuse discard, but instead was perhaps associated with a more specific activity that involved the creation of large quantities of ash, which subsequently would have been disposed of in the pit.

![Fig. 6.25: Locations of the ash pit (F21) and lead debris concentration (F22) in the patio area of Terrace 13 North.](image)
Fig. 6.26: Stratigraphic profile of the west face of the ash pit (F21) at Terrace 13 North.

Fig. 6.27: Glazed molcajete fragment recovered in uppermost lot of Feature 21-s1, Terrace 13 North.
Lead debris concentration (F22)

One such activity that may have led to deposition of ash of in Feature 1 may have involved the processing of lead. High concentrations of lead debris were recovered in 7m² area directly east and to the south of Feature 21 (Fig. 6.25). Within this area 113 small and amorphous pieces of oxidized lead were found (Fig. 6.28), weighing a total of 325 grams. Virtually no such artifacts were found outside of this area. Lead has a relatively low melting point in comparison with other metals, of approximately 327 degrees Celsius. As such, it can be melted down or smelted over a simple campfire, without necessarily requiring ovens or other specialized equipment. The ash pit may thus suggest this kind of simple processing of lead, however, no fire pits or other burning areas were found at Terrace 13 where this initial processing may have taken place.

Fig. 6.28: Fragments of lead debris recovered from Feature 22, Terrace 13 North.
It is unclear what specific activities would have resulted in the creation of these small amorphous chunks of lead. This type of lead oxide, also known as litharge, can be produced through the initial smelting of silver ores in which lead is present, and the resulting litharge is at times then used as a flux in subsequent steps of the refinement and cupellation of silver (Van Buren and Mills 2005: 7-9). Ash is also often used the subsequent cupellation process (Martinón-Torres et al. 2008). As we saw in Chapter 4, documentary evidence indicates that silver was mined at Achiutla during the Early Colonial period; however, the available sources make no mention of any subsequent processing of the material there. Interpreting the data at Terrace 13 as associated with the processing of silver is made further problematic because even small-scale traditional methods of silver production, such as those practiced in the Andes, required forms of specialized furnaces (Van Buren and Mills 2008), which are not found here.

However these pieces of lead were initially formed, another possible use for such materials would have been in the production of ceramic glazes. Lead oxide was most commonly used to create green glazes for pottery in Mexico and elsewhere, and it continues to be used for this purpose in Oaxacan communities such as Santa María Atzompa today. Green glazed pottery sherds are found in Colonial refuse deposits at Achiutla, and it is fairly evident that production of these types of ceramics began relatively shortly after the arrival of the Spanish (Gómez and Fernández 2007). In this case, the lead litharge would have to be ground into powder before being applied to the surface of a ceramic vessel for glazing (Rice 1987: 100). It is unclear whether this process would result in waste products resembling the lead artifacts found at Terrace 13. Therefore, as it stands, while I believe that Feature 2 represents an activity area involving the use or manipulation of lead during the Early
Colonial period, it is not possible to conclude with more specificity what this activity might have entailed. Production of ceramic glazes or activities associated with silver production may be possibilities, but the overall quantity of lead debris found appears too low to indicate that production of either could have taken place for any sustained period of time. This feature may thus have resulted from a more ad hoc or short-lived activity. Other colonial products that could have been made using small quantities of this type of lead include bullets and frames for stained-glass windows.

Terrace 13 North: Summary

Terrace 13 appears to have housed an indigenous residence occupied during the Early Colonial period, evidenced primarily by Structure 1 on the north side of the terrace, and remains of a possible second structure (Structure 2) that would have flanked the east side. Occupation may extend back into the Late Postclassic, as suggested by a red stucco floor found just beneath a white one in the latter Structure 2. Diagnostic cultural materials recovered from this residence largely correspond to the Postclassic, but these materials were for the most part redeposited in the construction fill of the terrace. Artifacts found just above this fill were more commonly Colonial. More analysis needs to be done to better secure and refine the dates of occupation of Terrace 13.

The location of the residence near the monumental core of the site, as well as the rather large floor plan of Structure 1, suggest that the inhabitants of this terrace were of relatively high status. As we will see in the next section, however, this residence exhibits considerably less architectural investment than is typical of houses associated with the high nobility at Achiutla and elsewhere in the Mixteca Alta during the Colonial period (Lind 1979). As such, I interpret Terrace 13 as having been occupied by relatively affluent
commoners or lower-status members of the nobility. The latter interpretation is perhaps more plausible given the presence of the concentration of lead debris at the terrace, in combination with what we know about indigenous organization of craft production in the Early Colonial period from documentary sources. Terraciano (2001: 137) writes of the Mixtec noble class, known as *tay toho* in the indigenous language, that: “toho in the sixteenth century performed a range of specialized tasks from metalworking to long-distance trade; toho dzehe [female nobles] managed craft production and traded a wide variety of goods in local and distant markets.” Terraciano (2001: 236) goes on to cite specific Early Colonial documents that make mention of indigenous nobles in the Mixteca Alta managing forges and metalworking houses (*huahi tihuicaa*), including a reference to male noble described as owner of a metalworking house near Teposcolula in the early seventeenth century. Though Terraciano’s discussion focuses on ironworking, it is likely that crafting activities involving lead were managed similarly. While the data from Terrace 13 do not suggest the kind of sustained production involving lead that would be expected at a forge, the presence of the material and evidence of its manipulation here may indicate that residents of the terrace were involved in activities more typical of the noble, rather than commoner, class.

Future insights regarding domestic practices at Terrace 13 may come from further analyses and dating of the excavated materials. It should be reiterated that substantial midden deposits were not encountered here, making it impossible to discuss consumption patterns and other domestic phenomena in the kinds of depth than would be the case otherwise. The shallow burial and concomitantly poor state of preservation of certain features also present complicating factors. Nevertheless the architecture and activity areas encountered in this excavation operation provide tantalizing clues with respect to indigenous
social status and community organization, especially when viewed in comparison with data recovered from Terrace 10 of the North sector, discussed in the next section.

**Operation 4: Terrace 10, North Sector**

*Area Description*

Terrace 10 of the North Sector is located in the monumental core of the Pueblo Viejo and comprises the eastern flank of a complex of three terraces at roughly the same elevation with adjoining retaining walls (Fig. 6.29). During the 2013 excavation season, Dr. Stacie King of University of Indiana was able to provide the project with brief access to a Total Station, and the surface of this area was mapped in more detail by Alex Baldillo and Ricardo Higelin, producing higher resolution topographic maps and digital elevation models (Fig. 6.30 and 6.31). Terrace 10 and Terrace 11, found on the west side of the complex, were both likely residential spaces, with quadrangular architectural groups surrounding central patios. Terrace 12, meanwhile, found between these two terraces, is raised slightly higher, extends further to the south, and contains a small platform with a tall standing wall on its north side (Fig. 6.32), named Platform 1. The platform measures 3 by 2.7m in area, and 1.3m in height, while the northern standing wall extends another 2.5m in height. The relatively small dimensions of this structure have led me to tentatively hypothesize that it was a type of shrine or altar, but this cannot be demonstrated with any degree of certainty. Though excavations at Terrace 10 extended directly behind the structure, these did little to shed light on its form or use.
Fig. 6.29: Location of Terraces 10, 11, and 12 of the North sector.
Fig. 6.30: Topographic map of Terraces 10-12 (contour interval=25cm). Illustration by Alex Baldillo.
Fig. 6.31: Digital elevation model of Terraces 10-12 (contour interval=1m). Illustration by Alex Baldillo.
Fig. 6.32: Photo of Platform 1, Terrace 12 North.

The retaining walls of these terraces average 3.3m in height, and are composed of roughly rectangular endeque blocks. The southeast corner of Terrace 12 was largely collapsed, as it appears to have been used as a footpath for both people and herds of goats for a considerable time. Near the southwest corner of Terrace 12, a stone-lined drain was found exposed in the retaining wall (see Figure 4.10). At Terrace 10, meanwhile, the eastern retaining wall was significantly eroded, and large fragments of Colonial polychrome ceramics were observed in the exposed cross-section, which contributed to the decision to select the area for excavation.
Excavations at Terrace 10 were the most expansive of the operations carried out in the Pueblo Viejo, with 178.5m$^2$ opened (Fig. 6.33). The terrace on the whole measures approximately 497m$^2$ in area. The area was largely flat, with a mound observed only at the northern edge of the terrace, directly beneath the retaining wall of Terrace 7. The terrace would have been prone to slope wash from Terrace 7 above, and preservation here was relatively very good, in contrast with Terrace 13 discussed in the previous section.

Excavations largely focused on the exposure of architecture and associated features that were buried less than one meter below the surface, however, certain units extended deeper, revealing the terrace to have been built up over dry core fill on its eastern edge, and soft tepetate bedrock within the center. As will be seen shortly, the excavation operation revealed Terrace 10 to have served as the living surface for a large and elaborate Colonial residence that was possibly occupied in Late Postclassic times as well. No evidence of any earlier occupation was recovered here.
Fig. 6.33: Schematic of excavation units at Terrace 10 North, with trench profiles demarcated in red.

**Occupational History**

Trench excavations at Terrace 10 exposed nine principal strata in profile (Figs. 6.34 and 6.35; Table 6.4). Several other strata were identified outside the two primary trenches, associated with particular architectural features, and are described in the next section. The principal strata here appear largely to have been formed via slope wash from Terrace 7, and erosion and collapse of architecture within Terrace 10 itself, though several strata at lower levels were likely formed in part as a result of cultural activity.
Fig. 6.34: Stratigraphic profile of the north-south trench (west face) at Terrace 10, North.
Fig. 6.35: Stratigraphic profile of the east-west trench (south face) at Terrace 10, North.
### Table 6.4: Features at Operation 4, Terrace 10 North.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strata</th>
<th>Munsell and sediment description</th>
<th>Formation</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<td>F1</td>
<td>2.5Y 4/2, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Slope wash/overburden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>2.5Y 5/4, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Slope wash/overburden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3</td>
<td>10YR 4/2-4/3, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Slope wash/overburden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F4-s1</td>
<td>10YR 4/1, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Sediment accumulation in patio</td>
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<tr>
<td>F4-s2</td>
<td>10YR 4/1, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Sediment accumulation in patio</td>
<td>More dense with eroded endeque than F4-s1</td>
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<td>F5</td>
<td>-na-, pebble concretion</td>
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</tr>
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<td>F6</td>
<td>10YR 3/2, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Infilling of F44</td>
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</tr>
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<td>2.5Y 6/4, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Sediment accumulation atop F8</td>
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<td>F8</td>
<td>10YR 3/2, sandy clay loam</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Eroded architecture?</td>
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<td>-na-</td>
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<td>F26</td>
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<td>High density of carbon.</td>
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<td>-na-</td>
<td>East wall, West structure (south side)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F38</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>West wall, West structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F39</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>South wall, West structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F40</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Stucco floor, West structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F41</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Partition wall, West structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F42</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Fire pit, West structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contains large fragments of carbonized wood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F43</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>East midden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Colonial materials found in high frequency, even at lowest levels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F44</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Circular feature, Terrace 10 patio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F45</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Fire pit, east side of Terrace 10 patio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contains large amorphous lead artifact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F46</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Stone “box,” Terrace 10 patio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F47</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Entryway to Terrace 10 patio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F48</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>West stairway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F49</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>East wall, Structure 1, Terrace 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F50</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>False wall between F49 and F38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F51</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Earthen retaining wall, north side of corridor (east-west</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature</td>
<td>Color/Type</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F52</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>White stucco floor, Corridor (east-west portion)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F53</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Red stucco floor, Corridor (east-west portion)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F54</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>North wall, Structure 1, Terrace 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F55</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Wall 3, Terrace 12</td>
<td>Likely, though not certain, that feature is an extension of F54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F56</td>
<td>2.5Y 5/3, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Sediment layer cut into for midden deposit (F8, F43)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F57</td>
<td>2.5Y 5/3, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Fill layer between stucco floors of Corridor (east-west portion)</td>
<td>Contains Postclassic ceramics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F58</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>Stucco floor, Structure 1, Terrace 12</td>
<td>Painted red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59 (encompassing all sub-features)</td>
<td>-na-</td>
<td>West midden and collapsed debris</td>
<td>Appears to have collapsed into Corridor from the living surface above and to the north, all cultural material is Postclassic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s1</td>
<td>10YR 2/2, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Overburden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s2</td>
<td>10YR 4/2, sandy clay</td>
<td>Earlier erosional layer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s3</td>
<td>10YR 5/2, sandy clay</td>
<td>Capping layer?</td>
<td>Atypically dense with large stones, possibly architectural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s4</td>
<td>10YR 4/1, clay loam</td>
<td>Collapsed midden</td>
<td>Organic, relatively compact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s5</td>
<td>10YR 3/1, sandy clay</td>
<td>Collapsed midden</td>
<td>Organic, loose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s6</td>
<td>10YR 3/1, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Collapsed midden</td>
<td>Loose, ashy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layer</td>
<td>Color</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s7</td>
<td>10YR 5/1, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Collapsed midden/wall</td>
<td>Adobe mixed with ash and gravel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s8</td>
<td>10YR 6/3, sandy clay</td>
<td>Collapsed midden/wall</td>
<td>Adobe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s9</td>
<td>10YR 4/1, clay loam</td>
<td>Collapsed midden</td>
<td>Loose, organic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s10</td>
<td>10YR 5/3, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Collapsed midden/wall</td>
<td>Adobe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s11</td>
<td>10YR 6/3, sandy clay</td>
<td>Collapsed midden/wall</td>
<td>Adobe, relatively compact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s12</td>
<td>10YR 4/1, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Collapsed midden</td>
<td>High concentrations of artifacts and carbon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s13</td>
<td>10YR 4/2, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Collapsed midden</td>
<td>Adobe mixed with ash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s14</td>
<td>10YR 5/3, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Collapsed midden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s15</td>
<td>10YR 3/1, sandy clay</td>
<td>Collapsed midden</td>
<td>High concentration of carbon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s16</td>
<td>10YR 4/2</td>
<td>Collapsed midden/wall</td>
<td>Adobe mixed with carbon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s17</td>
<td>10YR 5/3, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Collapsed midden/wall</td>
<td>Adobe mixed with gravel, relatively compact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s18</td>
<td>10YR 2/1, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Collapsed midden</td>
<td>High concentration of carbon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s19</td>
<td>10YR 5/3, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Collapsed midden/wall</td>
<td>Hard packed adobe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s20</td>
<td>10YR 5/3, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Collapsed midden/wall</td>
<td>Adobe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s21</td>
<td>10YR 2/1, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Collapsed midden/wall</td>
<td>High concentration of carbon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F59-s22</td>
<td>10YR 3/1, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Collapsed midden</td>
<td>High concentration of ash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F60</td>
<td>10YR 6/3, sandy loam</td>
<td>Fill between floors F21 and F28</td>
<td>High concentration of carbon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F61</td>
<td>10YR 5/3, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Fill between floors F28 and F29</td>
<td>High concentration of carbon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F62</td>
<td>10YR 5/3, sandy clay loam</td>
<td>Fill beneath floor F29</td>
<td>High concentration of carbon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Features 1 and 2 are found in the uppermost levels of the northern part of the terrace, and likely formed as a result of relatively recent erosion and collapse of portions of Terrace 7’s retaining wall and slope wash from its surface, which lies immediately above. Both these strata taper markedly as they extend to the south, and do not extend beyond the northern portion of the excavation area.

Feature 3 is relatively thick in most places, and is the principal layer burying the bulk of the architecture found at Terrace 10. In the southern portions of the terrace, this stratum extends from the ground surface to the floors of Colonial structures. This stratum likely formed over a long period of time, produced through a mix of slope wash from above, and collapse and erosion of the architecture at Terrace 10. Unfortunately more subtle differences within the stratum could not be distinguished in order to discern different episodes of deposition. Feature 3 had a rather low frequency of artifacts, most dating to the Postclassic period, which were likely washed in from earlier occupations above.

Feature 4 appears to have been formed as the result of an earlier post-abandonment erosional event that filled in the lower patio space between Terrace 10’s principal structures. It is distinguished from Feature 3 in exhibiting a slightly lighter and grayer color. In certain places, Feature 4 was divided into sub-features s1 and s2, the latter containing an appreciably higher density of chalky white stone, perhaps due to the erosion of endeque blocks in the surrounding architecture.

Feature 5 is also found in the central patio, immediately beneath Feature 4. It is a thin lens, no thicker than 5cm, dense with small rocks and pebbles. The surrounding sediment within the lens is compacted to such a degree that it gives the impression of being a concretion. This appears to have been the primary occupational surface of the Terrace 10
patio, and it is unclear whether its concreted texture owes to intentional construction or, alternatively, if the decay and erosion of an original plaster floor in the patio could have caused the surrounding matrix to be cemented to a degree, or perhaps the surface was compacted simply due to humans walking over it with great frequency. Feature 6, found beneath was formed by the infilling of a subterranean feature within the Terrace 10 patio, and is discussed in more depth in the next section.

Feature 7 is found on the eastern side of the terrace, immediately beneath Feature 3, and outside of the eastern structure. It appears to have formed as a result of sediment accumulation atop a midden pit that was filled in along Terrace 10’s eastern retaining wall. Deposition of this sediment likely occurred during occupation of the terrace or relatively shortly after its abandonment. Meanwhile, Feature 8 corresponds to the midden deposit found immediately below, and is treated more fully in the next section. This midden appears to cut into an earlier stratum, Feature 56, atop which sits residential architecture.

Feature 9 was observed only in the western portion of the east-west trench, and appears as a yellowish lens just east of a tall masonry wall. How this stratum formed is unclear, however, given its proximity to the wall, it is perhaps the case that it is the byproduct of the erosion of stone and adobe forming the adjacent architecture.

In all of the above features, no materials dating to earlier than the Postclassic period were found in significant quantities. The data at hand suggest then that Terrace 10 was likely constructed during the Postclassic, and occupied into the Colonial period. Artifactual evidence from middens in this area, discussed in the next chapter, indicate that that the area was primarily inhabited during the Late Postclassic and during the first century after the Conquest, after which the terrace was likely abandoned.
**Spatial Analysis**

The principal architecture exposed in excavations at Terrace 10 consisted of a complex of four buildings surrounding a central patio, and a large feature that I have dubbed the “corridor,” found immediately west of this complex, which extends into Terrace 12 (Fig. 6.36). To provide the reader with reference to the location of this architecture with respect to the retaining walls and other features of the terraces, the plan map of the excavations was integrated with the digital elevation model presented previously (Fig. 6.37). All of the architecture is oriented at 8-10 degrees west of magnetic north, the same orientation seen at Terrace 13. This orientation is also very close to what appears to be typical of the architecture of Late Postclassic and Early Colonial Yucundaa in Teposcolula (Diego 2014). In this section, I first begin with the patio complex, describing the various buildings and features associated with them, and then move on to discussion of the adjacent corridor.
Fig. 6.36: Plan map of general architectural features excavated at Terraces 10 and 12 North.

Fig. 6.37: Plan map of excavations integrated with digital elevation model of Terraces 10 and 12 North (contour interval=50cm). Illustration by Alex Baldillo.

Patio Complex: North Structure

The North structure was the most elaborate of the buildings found in the patio complex, but also the least extensively excavated (Fig. 6.38). A single 1m-wide trench was excavated along its north-south axis, and excavations expanded slightly to expose more of the entrance of the building, found on its southern side. A stairway (F10) leads up to the entrance, extending 2.3m south from the southern façade of the building (Fig. 6.39). It was likely composed of four to five steps (though only the bottom two were well preserved), leading up to the top of the platform, which raises the floor of the North structure 1.6m above the patio surface, considerably higher than the other structures in the complex. Balustrades flank the stairway, and columns or pillars may have framed the entrance at the top of the
platform, as a portion of a circular stone—possibly a column drum, or a base to support a wooden pillar—was found one side of the entrance, just outside east balustrade. The small portion of the exterior façade of the southern wall (F13) that was exposed was made of well-cut endeque facing stones in the bottom portion where it was preserved. The northern wall (F11), meanwhile, appears to directly abut the retaining wall of Terrace 7. The interior floor (F14) and the steps of the stairway that were well preserved were covered in white stucco. The structure as a whole measures 3.7m from north to south. Though its eastern and western limits were not defined, given the positions of the other buildings surrounding the patio, it likely extended between 9.35m and 15.35m east to west.

**Fig. 6.38: Plan map of the North structure of the Terrace 10 residential complex and associated features.**
Though relatively little of it was excavated, the North structure rather clearly was the principal building of the patio complex, raised higher than the other structures and exhibiting more elaborate architecture. This is not a pattern seen throughout all of the Postclassic and Early Colonial Mixteca Alta, but in certain other excavated household complexes in the region, the north structure appears to be most elaborate, such as in Patio H5 at Yucundaa (Diego 2010: 118-119). Future excavations at Achiutla may reveal if this is a more widespread pattern here, in which case this may have symbolic connotations, as opposed to being an idiosyncratic phenomenon. The structure likely served as a residential building as
well, though without more excavation it is unclear if it was associated with any specific types of activities.

**Patio Complex: South Structure**

The South structure was the most extensively excavated structure within the patio complex (Fig. 6.40). It measures 7.05m from east to west, and 3.5m from north to south, consisting of a single room. A white stucco floor was found preserved throughout much of the building’s interior (F21). The walls were composed of cores made of a mix of earth, stone, and adobe blocks, while their exterior faces were covered with well-cut rectangular endeque blocks, though many of these had fallen and were found in the collapse surrounding the structure. The preserved portions of walls that were exposed reached a maximum height of approximately 50cm, the upper portions of the walls having collapsed. Within the collapse, several arch stones were found (Fig. 6.41), indicating a European architectural influence. Similar stones were found at residences excavated at Yucundaa, in houses that Spores and Robles (2009: 38) argue were inhabited by nobles. In the South Structure, a vault stone for an arch was found in the collapse immediately surrounding the entryway (Fig. 6.42), suggesting an arch extended over the entrance, similarly to the entrance of one of the buildings of the Colonial “Casa de la Cacica” in Teposcolula. The latter building, a colonial indigenous palace, dates to the second half of the sixteenth century, constructed after the community was relocated from the site of Yucundaa Another stone, found in the collapse surrounding the northeast side of the South Structure, appears to have functioned as a drain, or at least part of one. Given that this was found in the collapse, it is possible that the stone’s original location was not upon the living surface, but within the wall of the South Structure, perhaps atop the building’s cornice and used to channel water from the roof.
Fig. 6.40: Plan map of the South structure of the Terrace 10 residential complex and associated features (sub-floor excavation unit outlined in red).
Returning to the entrance of the South structure (F15), which is found on the north side of the building, a short and low step or *banqueta* extends into the patio space. The East
and West structures have virtually identical steps in front of their entrances, and this architectural feature is typical of Postclassic houses at Yucundaa (Diego 2014: 137) and Nicayuhu (Pérez 2003: 132) as well. Within the structure, while there are no internal divisions of different rooms, three notable features are found on the east side of the interior, labeled Features 22, 23, and 24. Features 22 and 23 are both rectangular storage compartments, measuring 50cm by 1.1 m, in the northeast and southeast corners of the building respectively. Between the two, a hearth was found (F24), containing high quantities of ash and fire cracked rock, but no other artifacts. All these features are defined by stone slabs used to separate them from rest of the room, and the interior surfaces of the two storage compartments were covered with white stucco. The storage compartments were most likely used to house materials associated with food preparation, however, by the time of the South Structure’s abandonment, at least one of these appears to have been used for a different purpose. While Feature 22, in the northeast corner, had no artifacts found in contact with the floor of its interior, Feature 23 did—namely a decorative carved stone adorned with a flower motif, made of endeque and inlaid with slate, with vestiges of red paint on its carved surface (Fig. 6.43), left in situ. Much more will be said about this artifact in the next chapter, but for the moment, suffice it to say that this stone was likely located in a different building originally, only to be later curated within the South Structure. The flower motif on the stone is rather generic, but the undulating form of its stem suggests a European influence, a further indication that the building was occupied during the Colonial period.
One sub-floor unit was excavated within the South Structure, just interior to its entrance, a unit that was eventually expanded to 2m by 2m in area. This excavation revealed at least two earlier construction phases of the building, evidenced primarily by remains of two stucco floors (F28 and F29)—both painted red—beneath the white floor (F21) (Fig. 6.44). Feature 26 lays approximately 18cm beneath the white floor, while Feature 27 lays 13cm further below, just above sterile tepetate bedrock. Because neither floor extends continuously throughout the profiles of the subfloor excavation unit, is possible that the occupants of the South Structure broke through both of these floors prior to laying down the white one. In the bottom of the unit, a stone alignment (F30) was found that may have formed part of an earlier foundation of the building, exhibiting the same orientation as the rest of the architecture at Terrace 10. Immediately above this alignment, a large portion of a
Postclassic ceramic brazier was found (Fig. 6.45) and other fragments of the vessel were recovered in the surrounding fill below. Given these data, I suggest that prior to the white floor (F21) having been laid down, the occupants of Terrace 10 may have broken through the earlier floors of the South Structure and deposited the brazier as an offering, though this cannot be demonstrated with absolute certainty. Intervening strata between all three floors were relatively high in carbon content, and numbers carbons samples were taken. No artifacts that were clearly Colonial in date were found within the sub-floor unit, though future dating of recovered carbon samples may shed light on the timing of this event, and/or the earlier construction phases of the building.

Fig. 6.44 (drawing pending): Photo showing subfloor unit excavated in the South structure, with two red stucco floors (F28 and F29) underlying the later white floor (F21).
Fig. 6.45: Stone alignment (F30) found within subfloor unit of the South structure, with large Postclassic ceramic brazier fragment found just above.

Lind (1979: 63) notes that, in his excavations at Chachoapan and Yucuita, houses with red plaster floors corresponded to Postclassic occupations, while those with white ones dated to the Early Colonial period. The pattern of superimposed floors at Achiutla, with white floors built atop red ones, supports the conclusion that this is a time-sensitive phenomenon. At least in the case for Achiutla, however, better chronological resolution is needed to determine whether red floors invariably date to the Postclassic, or, alternatively, if this is a transition that perhaps occurred slightly later, after contact with Europeans. There may have been multiple reasons for this transition to white floors to have occurred in
Colonial times. Lind (1979: 71) offers that a reduction in labor supply during the Early Colonial period may have prompted Mixtec families to eliminate various production steps in the processes of house construction, and a change to white floors would have removed the needs to procure and prepare pigments. At present, it is unclear whether these pigments were made with cochineal dye, or another material. In any case, there may have been symbolic reasons for this change as well. Red floors—at least for the Spanish—perhaps evoked the kinds of bloodstained pre-Hispanic shrines where sacrifices were carried out; shrines that were described as having been present at Achiutla and remarked upon with great disgust by Burgoa (1934: 332). White stucco thus may have been a means for native families to represent themselves as keeping with expectations of proper Christian practice, or as a means of protecting themselves from potential accusations of idolatry.

In sum, the three superimposed floors within the South structure indicate that it was likely occupied over several generations, perhaps extending back into Late Postclassic times. While the primary midden associated with the patio complex dates to the Early Colonial period, it is possible earlier midden deposits were simply missed in the excavation operations at Terrace 10, or were covered over when the by subsequent construction of Colonial architecture, similarly to what Lind (1979: 52) has observed at Chachoapan. Subfloor units were not excavated in any of the other structures of the patio complex, thus, while it is quite likely that these buildings were occupied simultaneously in Colonial times, it is not certain whether they all had exactly the same kinds occupational and construction histories as the South structure.
Patio Complex: East and West Structures

The East and West Structures of the patio complex are virtual mirror images of one another, both measuring approximately 12m north to south, and 3m east to west (Fig. 6.46). Both had extensive portions of white stucco floors preserved within their interiors F34 and F40), and steps in front of their entrances leading out to the central patio (F31 and F35). These structures were also constructed using white endeque stones to face the exteriors of walls made of mixed materials. While the East Structure and South Structure abut one another, sharing a portion of one wall (F20), the West Structure is set 1.3m west of the South Structure. The space between the latter two buildings almost certainly formed the main passageway used to access the patio-complex (F47), as the patio is otherwise entirely surrounded by walls, restricting access and making it a rather private space.
While the East Structure contains no internal partitions, in the West Structure a wall was exposed extending from the back of it (F41), apparently dividing off a second room, with a passageway in between (Fig. 6.46). This wall was clearly laid over the structure’s stucco floor, indicating it was constructed later. Curiously, this partitioning wall follows an odd orientation, deviating from that of the rest of the architecture in the complex. Furthermore, within the southern partition of the West Structure, an informal fire pit was found, labeled Feature 42 (F42). The pit was shallowly dug into the stucco floor, and contained large fist-sized pieces of carbonized wood placed up against the east wall of the structure. The confluence of the wall having been laid over the floor, its odd orientation, and the presence of the fire pit lead me to suspect that what we are seeing here is a later
reoccupation of the structure—likely a relatively brief or expeditious one—perhaps akin to “squatting.” Future dating of the carbon material found in the fire pit may shed further light on this issue.

In contrast with the South Structure, no features like hearths were found within the East and West structures to suggest that these buildings had specific functions. No evidence of specialized activities taking place within these structures was found, such as primary refuse found in contact with the floors. Instead these were likely general living quarters that, in combination, were used to house an extended family. The white stucco floors and the association of the buildings with the South Structure indicate that these were likely inhabited primarily during the Early Colonial period as well.

**Patio Complex: East Midden**

Along the eastern edge of Terrace 10, just behind a retaining wall that has now partially collapsed, excavations encountered a midden associated with the Colonial occupation of the patio complex. This feature was relatively dense with artifacts and ash, and extended over at least 10m² in area (Fig. 6.46). Artifact densities were highest in the eastern and southern portions of the midden, tapering off at the northern and western margins. The midden deposit ranged between 43 and 71cm in thickness, at the bottom of which were found large stacked stones forming dry core fill used to build up the eastern side of the terrace platform. During excavation, the midden appeared unstratified, and subsequent analyses of recovered artifacts revealed no significant changes in frequencies of artifact types in either vertical or horizontal dimensions. Diagnostic Colonial artifacts, including glazed pottery and iron nails, were found even in the deepest lots. Thus, it appears that this feature was likely dug out as a refuse pit in Colonial times, after which it was filled with material
relatively rapidly, as no distinct strata formed. Materials from this midden provided the best data on Colonial domestic life in Achiutla recovered over the course of the project, and will be discussed in more depth in the chapters to follow.

**Patio Complex: Feature 44, Interior Courtyard**

A number of features were found within the interior courtyard of the patio complex, the most distinctive of which was Feature 44: a circular feature composed of a ring of thin stones, approximately 1.7m in diameter (Figs. 6.46 and 6.47). In reviewing the literature, I have yet to find a pre-Hispanic analogue for this feature in Oaxaca or beyond. While circular foundations or platforms are somewhat common in Mesoamerica (e.g., de Montmollin 1985; Finsten et al. 1996; Pollock 1936; Rattray 1989; Smith 1992) these tend to be considerably larger and are not found in the centers of patios. Finsten and colleagues (1996: 21) document a number of circular stone features associated with domestic architecture in the Peñoles region of the Mixteca Alta and argue that they functioned as *temazcales*, or sweat baths, however, the features they document tend to be larger in diameter, averaging 2.9m, with fireboxes within them or adjacent to them. Feature 44 contained no such firebox.

Furthermore, at least for the Postclassic, the claim such stone circles are sweat baths is problematic in that none of the features that Finsten and colleagues document were excavated, and the formal similarities of them to examples of sweat baths seen in the codices, ethnohistorical sources, and ethnographic cases are shaky at best. A much more compelling case for an archaeological example of a sweat bath is made by Pérez (2003: 80), with respect to a structure she excavated at the site of Nicayuhu. This structure had two chambers, in one of which a stucco floor and a drain were found, and in the other a hearth, ash, and volcanic rock. The structure at Nicayuhu bares great formal similarity to modern sweat baths I have
seen in San Miguel Achiutla and that Pérez (2003: 80) describes in the town of Teposcolula. These modern sweat baths also contain two chambers—one for the bather to sit within and the other for the burning of fuel and heating of rock. While it is certainly possible that the structures Finsten and colleagues document represent earlier forms of sweat baths, there is no evidence to suggest that Feature 44 of the Terrace 10 patio complex functioned as such.

Fig. 6.47: Photo of Feature 44 exposed in excavation.

The only feature truly similar to Feature 44 that I am aware of comes from Lind’s (1979: 53) excavation of a Colonial noble house at Chachoapan. This household also contained a circular feature located directly in the center of the patio. Lind notes that decayed wood was found within the feature at Chachoapan, and suggests that it may have once contained a large tree growing within the courtyard. No such material was found in Feature 44, however. Instead, when it was bisected in excavation (Fig. 6.48), it was found to
contain very organic sediment, but also moderate frequencies of colonial refuse, and in profile it could be observed as “funneling” into soft tepetate bedrock beneath. Curiously, excavated units within this feature contained far higher frequencies of obsidian debitage than any other excavation units apart from those in Operation 2 in features associated with the lithic workshop. Given the data, what I believe we have here is more likely to have been subterranean feature, a pit dug down to bedrock that was later filled in. Obsidian knapping may have taken place nearby in the patio, and debitage occasionally tossed in, explaining the presence of these materials in the feature. What its original purpose may have been is difficult to ascertain—it was unlikely to have functioned as a cistern, because water tends to permeate through the tepetate bedrock, and the stone-lined drains seen in some of Achiutla’s terrace walls indicate that inhabitants of the terraces were more concerned with channeling water away from their residences than collecting it. I suggest then that it is at least possible that Feature 44 was used instead for drainage. While no formal drain was found at the bottom of it, the way in which it narrows may have allowed for water to be channeled into a drain feature lying outside the feature that would have been missed during the excavation operation.
Whatever the functions of these features at Terrace 10 and at Chachoapan—whether for draining water, for housing trees, or for other purposes—in form they are perhaps most reminiscent of stone circles often found within the centers of the courtyards of cloisters found in Catholic convents of 16th century Spain and Mexico. Features within the centers of these courtyards were alternatively used to house fountains or for planting trees. Examples abound throughout 16th century churches in Mexico, including an example from Cuilapan de Guerrero that has now been repurposed as a drainage well (Fig. 6.49). A tree continues to be planted in the center of the cloister’s courtyard in Achiutla’s Dominican convent (Fig. 6.50), in similar fashion to other colonial churches. Given that Feature 44 ostensibly has no pre-Hispanic analogue, I suspect that this is a colonial innovation inspired by European religious architecture. While indigenous Mixtecs likely had rather restricted access to cloisters of
Dominican convents, they would have seen them at very least when they were enlisted to build these structures in the first place, and others would have subsequently passed through these spaces while working as attendants within friars’ residences. I argue that what we see here with these stone circles in the centers of courtyards may reflect efforts by indigenous families to construct their homes as sacred spaces, in aspects similar to those that they encountered in colonial convents. This argument is elaborated upon in Chapter 8.

Fig. 6.49: Reconstructed fountain in the central courtyard of the cloister at the ex-convent of Cuilapan de Guerrero, Oaxaca.
Fig. 6.50: The central courtyard of the cloister at the ex-convent of Achiutla, where a tree continues to be grown.

Patio Complex: Features 45 and 46, Central Courtyard

Two other features were encountered within the open space of Terrace 10’s courtyard (Fig. 6.51). The first, Feature 45, is an informal fire pit, found directly in front of the step leading to the entryway of the East Structure. The pit was ovoid in shape, dug from the level of the patio to approximately 23cm beneath, and filled with charcoal and fire cracked rock. Apart from charcoal, few artifacts were found within, but two were notable: a relatively large fragment of a Postclassic-style brazier, and a large fragment of lead (Fig. 6.52). The lead artifact is particularly curious, as it is much larger than the lead materials recovered from
Terrace 13, and as such the only artifact of its kind found in excavation operations at Achiutla. Its long and sinuous, but otherwise amorphous form leads me to suspect that it could have been produced in the initial process of smelting, and perhaps this was the primary purpose of the pit. The presence of the brazier fragment is more ambiguous, perhaps reused as furniture to prop up other material within the pit while burning or cooking. In any event, because this feature is found directly in front of the entryway of the East structure (F31), I suspect it was produced after the abandonment of that structure, if not of the entire residential complex. Given the similarity of this feature to the fire pit found within the interior of the West structure (F42), it is perhaps the case that these features correspond to the same reoccupation of the terrace, though this idea would of course have to be evaluated through future dating of associated materials.

Fig. 6.51: Plan map of features exposed in the central courtyard of the Terrace 10 residential complex.
Feature 46, meanwhile, is a small rectangular stone-lined box found in the northeast portion of the patio, south of Feature 45. It measures approximately 38 by 23cm. While resembling a hearth feature, excavation of it revealed no evidence of burning in or around it. The scant artifacts found within appear to have been washed in, with no in situ materials recovered inside. As it stands, the use of this feature is unknown, though perhaps it was designed for storage of materials associated with an activity carried out in the patio.

**Patio Complex: West Stairway**

Immediately adjacent to the back wall of the West structure (F38), a stairway was found (F48), ascending to the north, ostensibly built to provide access to a living surface.
higher above (Fig. 6.53). The stairway is composed of six steps of roughly uniform size and height, with stucco still preserved on portions of them, ascending 1.28m in total. Both north and south of the stairway is a pathway that runs between the west wall of the West structure of the patio complex (F38), and the east wall another structure just further west of it (F49), labeled Terrace 12 Structure 1. Only the exteriors of portions of the latter structure’s walls were exposed in most excavation units. The single 1m² unit that exposed part of the interior of the latter building revealed a red stucco floor at the bottom (F58), possibly suggesting that it was built prior to at least the last construction episodes in the Terrace 10 patio complex. The stairway was constructed directly between the two structures, spanning the entirety of the short distance separating them.

![Plan map of West stairway and corridor, and associated features found at Terraces 10 and 12 (sub-floor excavation unit outlined in red).](image)

**Fig. 6.53:** Plan map of West stairway and corridor, and associated features found at Terraces 10 and 12 (sub-floor excavation unit outlined in red).
At the apex of the stairway, a conspicuous stone was found laid flat just north of the top of the highest step. When it was flipped over, it was revealed to exhibit a carved mosaic image on its bottom side (Fig. 6.54), similar to that found in the storage compartment of the South Structure, but with a much more complex floral motif that undoubtedly came from a Colonial Catholic religious scene, likely related to the Virgin Mary, as will be discussed in the next chapter. For the moment, suffice it to say that the presence of this stone indicates that construction of the stairway took place during the Early Colonial period, at earliest. Immediately beyond this stone, however, a prepared living surface was not found, but instead, conspicuous fill consisting of large rocks. Removal of this fill led to the exposure of the corridor feature, referred to earlier in this chapter.

Fig. 6.54: Carved stone embedded at the apex of the West stairway after being turned over during excavation operations.
The Corridor: North-South Portion

Removal of the fill north of the West Stairway, which was clearly deposited deliberately, likely when the stairway was constructed, revealed more of the pathway between the West Structure of the patio complex and Terrace 12 Structure 1. Walls of these structures (F38 and F49, respectively) were faced with well-cut rectangular endeque blocks, with smaller stones wedged between them at times (Figs. 6.55 and 6.56), and were preserved up to heights of nearly 1.6m. The deep level of large rock fill extended to the bases of the surrounding walls, beneath which was a compacted surface that was not covered with stucco. At the northern end of this space, an informal wall that I will refer to as a “false wall” (F50) was found blocking further passage between the two structures (Fig. 6.57). This wall was composed of a mix of stone blocks, adobe, and earth, with a drain at its base, reaching 1.11m in height and 28cm in thickness. The wall appears to have been constructed to prevent further passage through the corridor, and undoubtedly was constructed prior the event in which the space was filled in with rock. Construction of the West Stairway also likely postdates that of the false wall, as the stairway most probably was constructed in order to access an area at higher elevation that the filling event would have helped to provide access to. I synthesize my interpretations of the construction history of this area at the end of this section.
Fig. 6.55: Carved endeque blocks forming the eastern façade of Feature 38.

Fig. 6.56: Close-up photo of stones wedged between endeque blocks on the eastern façade of Feature 48.
Fig. 6.57: Photo of the southern face of the false wall (F50) found in the corridor.

The Corridor: East-West Portion

North of the false wall, excavations revealed the corridor to continue, but now taking a 90-degree turn to the west, formed by the confluence of what is likely the north wall of
Terrace 12 Structure 1 (F54) to the south, and a tall earthen retaining wall to the north (F51) (Fig. 6.53). The southern wall defining this portion of the corridor (F54) was faced with well-cut endeque blocks, reaching a maximum height of approximately 1.87m (Fig. 6.58). The earthen retaining wall flanking the north side of the corridor (F51) reached a maximum height of 2.31m (Fig. 6.59). The corridor continued to be filled with large rocks, with little sediment and artifacts intervening. The few diagnostic artifacts found in the lowest levels of the boulder fill included a sherd of Puebla Polychrome pottery, mentioned previously, that was produced between 1650 and 1725 (Deagan 1987). If this pottery was in fact originally included in the dry-core fill, not having trickled into it later, it would place the possible earliest date for this filling episode into the 17th or 18th century.

Fig. 6.58: Photo of the exterior façade of the northern wall of Structure 1, Terrace 12 (F54).
In this portion of the corridor a white stucco floor (F52) was found at the bottom of the fill, well above the base of the false wall (Fig. 6.60), clearly having been laid down after the area was sealed off by the wall. A sub-floor unit excavated immediately behind the false wall revealed a second red-painted floor (F53) approximately 31cm below, right at the level of the base of the false wall (F50) and appearing to lip up to it, possibly indicating that these features were constructed at roughly the same time. Diagnostic materials recovered in the fill (F57) beneath between the white and red floors included Postclassic polychrome ceramics (Fig. 6.61), but no artifacts that clearly dated to after the Conquest. No other floors were found further below. Given the similarity of the white floor (F52) to those found in the Terrace 10 patio complex, I suspect it was constructed in the Early Colonial period, while the red floor (F53) dates to the Postclassic or early years of Contact.
Fig. 6.60: Architectural profile showing relationships between the false wall (F50) and stucco floors associated (F52 and F53) associated with the corridor.

Fig. 6.61: Fragment of codex-style Postclassic polychrome pottery found in the fill (F57) between the two floors (F52 and F53) associated with the corridor.
The East-West portion of the corridor exposed in excavation ran 10.26m to the west, directly behind the platform and tall standing wall on Terrace 12 described at the beginning of this section. It undoubtedly continued further west, but limitations of time and resources forced the excavation operation to end at this point. It is curious, however, that the corridor appears to widen directly behind Platform 1 of Terrace 12 (Fig. 6.62), as Feature 55—likely a continuation of Feature 54—angles off 90 degrees, extending approximately 68cm to the south, before cutting back toward the west once again. The westernmost unit excavated behind the corridor fell directly behind, or to the south of Platform 1, however, the standing wall of the platform does not appear to directly articulate with the wall defining this part of the corridor (F55). The relationship between these architectural features is unclear, and it is possible that the unexcavated Platform 1 was a later construction built atop the architecture associated with the corridor. In sum, without more excavation in the future, it cannot be known where the corridor led or what its purpose was. What is clear, however, is that it was an intentionally constructed and used space, evidenced by the fact that the red stucco floor (F53) extends throughout the excavated extent of it.
The white floor (F52), in contrast, is a more complicated matter. It extends across only the easternmost 3.56m of the corridor (Fig. 6.53). Beyond this point, the fill of the corridor became less dense with large rocks and richer with artifacts, ash, and sediment. The westernmost 2m of the corridor were not filled in with large rocks at all for the most part, but instead with an extremely rich Postclassic midden deposit (F59) mixed with adobe, as well as
architectural debris including a stone column drum. In stratigraphic profile here (Fig. 6.63, Table 6.4) alternating bands of adobe and midden deposit were observed dipping downward to the south, to the level of the red floor, which was found still intact. Analyses of the midden materials from this context revealed that artifacts from the highest to lowest levels all corresponded to the same deposit. I interpret this as indicating that along the western side of this portion of the corridor, the earthen retaining wall to the north (F51) collapsed, behind which there was a large Postclassic midden, possibly originally located on Terrace 7 further above. This collapse likely occurred relatively rapidly, though not all at once, suggested by the relatively thin alternating bands—that is, as more of the wall continued to collapse, more of the midden behind it fell into the corridor as well. In the Mixteca Alta, hard rainstorms can cause this type of rapid erosion or crumbling of terrace walls. During the 2013 field season, I witnessed one such event first hand, which had unfortunate consequences for the septic tank at our project field house (Fig. 6.64).
Fig. 6.63: Stratigraphic profile of the westernmost excavation unit in the corridor (west face) showing collapsed layers of midden and adobe.
Fig. 6.64: A terrace retaining wall damaged by a strong hail storm at the Hotel Ini Ñuu in San Miguel Achiutla, 2013.

Determining precisely when this collapse event occurred would be difficult, but the incomplete white stucco floor in the eastern part of the corridor provides a tantalizing clue. The scenario I propose is that, near the time of the construction of the false wall (F50), the red stucco floor (F53) was laid down throughout the entirety of the corridor. Later on, likely during the Early Colonial period, despite the space having been sealed by the false wall, people re-entered the space and attempted to renovate it by laying down fill and the white
stucco floor (F52) on top of it. This effort would have been cut short by the collapse event to the west, however, explaining why the white floor extends only a short distance. With the west side of the corridor now filled in with collapsed debris, this renovation project was abandoned and inhabitants of the area eventually filled in the rest of the space with stone to create a living surface above, and constructed the Western Stairway in order to provide access to it.

_Terrace 10 North: Summary_

Terrace 10 of the North Sector housed a large and elaborate residential complex during the Early Colonial period, likely inhabited by an indigenous family of high nobility status. Occupation may have extended earlier back into Postclassic times, as evidenced by the superimposed floors encountered in the sub-floor unit excavated in the South Structure, though the richest data associated with this residence date to after Contact, including the architecture and its associated midden. The architectural data suggest that the occupants of the terrace largely lived similarly to native elites of the Postclassic. The layouts of the structures and the materials used to build them are consistent with those of pre-Hispanic palaces found at the sites of Yucundaa (Diego 2010, 2014; Spores and Robles 2007, 2009) and Yucuía (Lind 1979). While Lind (1979: 70) found at Chachoapan that the Colonial period brought about a shift in construction methods, in that noble houses were built with hard unshaped limestone, rather than carved endeque blocks, such was not the case at Terrace 10, as buildings continued to be constructed and renovated as they were during the Postclassic. The corridor space as well, though its purpose is unknown, also continued to be used and renovated in colonial times, with a new floor constructed despite it having been previously sealed by a false wall. The patio complex as a whole, located atop one of the
monumental terrace platforms, had a commanding view of the Catholic churches below. As discussed at the beginning of this dissertation, this may have had symbolic connotations regarding who was really in power at Early Colonial Achiutla. Furthermore, Terrace 10 was a very private space, with only one narrow passageway providing access to the patio and the entrances of the buildings. It was by no means a place that Spanish authorities could easily access or monitor. These data all speak to the maintenance of authority, autonomy, and continuity with the pre-Hispanic past for native elites at Early Colonial Achiutla.

The features cited above do not tell the entire story, however. As we also saw, the Conquest brought about changes and innovations in the architecture at Terrace 10. The shift from red-painted stucco floors to white ones may have been prompted by disruptions in the local economy, symbolic concerns, or perhaps by a combination of these factors. European design elements such as the arch were appropriated and incorporated into the house and, as I have argued, the stone circle at the center of the patio likely represents a similar appropriation. Furthermore, two carved stones bearing European-influenced floral and religious imagery were curated within the residential complex, kept in the storage compartment of the South Structure, and embedded into the architecture of the West Stairway, respectively. In sum, the data paint a complex picture of Terrace 10’s residents simultaneously maintaining autonomy and continuity with pre-Hispanic tradition, while appropriating and reformulating aspects of material culture as they became entangled with new objects and symbols. Domestic artifact assemblages recovered from the residence indicate similarly complex dynamics, as we will see in the next chapter.
Excavation Operations: Summary

While the limited excavations at Operation 1, located at Terrace 1 South, did not reveal any Colonial occupation and the area is not discussed further in this dissertation, the operation did recover data that will likely prove important through future study. With occupations that appear at first glance to date to the earlier portion of the Postclassic and to the Terminal Formative periods, future dating and analyses will hopefully help to refine portions of the ceramic sequence for the region.

The materials recovered from Operation 2—the test pit excavated in the feature associated with the lithic workshop in the Iglesias Sector—also merit a great deal of further study. Preliminary analysis has been carried out for a sample of the obsidian from this operation, and results are presented in the next chapter for comparison with obsidian recovered from Postclassic and Colonial domestic contexts. More detailed future analyses of the large amounts of lithic material found in this operation stand to provide rich information regarding centralized surplus production of stone tools during the Postclassic in the Mixteca, with potentially important implications for our understandings of regional exchange networks.

While the richest information on Colonial domestic life at Achiutla comes from Terrace 10 North, just summarized in the previous section, data from Terrace 13 North also provide significant insights. The two residences appear to have roughly contemporaneous Colonial occupations, as evidenced by the structures’ white stucco floors and associated ceramics. Terrace 13’s occupation may extend back into the Postclassic as well, suggested by very fragmentary remnants of a red stucco floor. The raised platform supporting Terrace 13’s living surface appears to have been constructed during Postclassic times at the earliest,
indicated by artifacts found in the construction construction fill. While Structure 1 of Terrace 13 has a very expansive floor plan, the level of architectural investment pales in comparison to that seen at Terrace 10, indicating that the family inhabiting Terrace 13 was of lower status. I have argued that these persons have been members of the lower nobility, rather than affluent commoners, given the central location of the residence, the presence of the lead debris, and ethnohistorical evidence suggesting lesser nobles managed indigenous craft production in colonial Oaxaca. Though the amount of lead debris found at Terrace 13 is too low to suggest any prolonged form of production of the material, evidence of access to and manipulation of lead may similarly indicate the involvement of native nobles in new kinds of crafting activities introduced by the Spanish in the Early Colonial period. Access to new materials, such as lead and others, may have afforded native families new opportunities with respect to economics, expression of identity, and other aspects of social life. In the next chapter, I present analyses of artifacts recovered from the excavations described here, and further explore these different material entanglements.
Chapter 7: Achiutla Artifact Assemblages

In this chapter I provide descriptions of various classes of artifacts recovered and analyzed from the excavations at Achiutla. Analyses were focused on the two primary midden deposits excavated at Terrace 10—the Colonial midden found on the east edge of the patio complex (Operation 4, F43; Fig. 6.46), and the Postclassic midden found in the west end of the corridor, which likely collapsed into the architectural feature from Terrace 7, located directly above (Operation 4, F59; Fig. 6.63). The presence of these two middens provides an excellent opportunity to compare the Colonial domestic artifact assemblages of Terrace 10’s inhabitants to the Postclassic ones of their immediate neighbors above, revealing changes and continuities in material culture practices for Achiutla’s social elites over the course of the Conquest. Less extensive analyses were conducted for artifacts from several other contexts: the densest artifact deposits from Terrace 13 (Operation 3, F2, F11, and F22; Figs. 6.18, 6.20, and 6.25); Feature 44 of Operation 4, found within the center of Terrace 10’s patio; and a sample of obsidian recovered from a context in the test-pit excavated associated Achiutla’s lithic workshop (Operation 2, F1; Fig. 6.12). The data are used to characterize artifact types found at Achiutla more broadly, as well as for more focused comparisons of practices associated with these different contexts, though further comparisons and synthesis are provided in Chapter 8.

Analyses were most heavily focused on ceramic artifacts, but data on lithic, metal, and bone materials were recorded as well. In the pages to follow, each of these artifact classes is treated in turn. The chapter then concludes with a discussion of the two carved stones recovered from Terrace 10.
Ceramic Artifacts

Preliminary typological and formal analysis was carried out during the summer of 2014 on a sample of 10,486 ceramic artifacts, including both rim and body sherds. Ceramics were first sorted into general paste types, based on macroscopic inspection, then further subdivided based on surface decoration, when present. More detailed analyses remain to be done in order to refine this preliminary typology, however, categories largely conformed to those defined by Lind (1987) for materials at Chachoapan and Yucuita. Lind’s work continues to be the most thorough typology of Postclassic and Colonial ceramics from the Mixteca Alta. Immediately below, I provide summaries of frequencies of ceramic types for the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10 (Table 7.1), the Colonial midden at Terrace 10 (Table 7.2), and the densest artifact deposits at Terrace 13 (Table 7.3). Unfortunately, in the case of Terrace 13, it was not possible to separate materials from Postclassic and Early Colonial contexts, as no distinct middens were encountered in excavations there.

While frequencies of ceramic types at Achiutla were recorded by weight as well as by counts of sherds, here I only present counts, as weights are not available for the other datasets to which I compare the Achiutla ceramics in this dissertation. Nevertheless, I provide figures for weights of these types in Appendix C. In sections that follow, I describe and discuss the various ceramic types present. When Achiutla ceramic categories appear to parallel those defined by Lind, I note the names he gives them in parentheses in the titles of the subsequent descriptions.
Table 7.1: Ceramic type frequencies for Postclassic midden at Terrace 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ceramic Type</th>
<th>No. Rim Sherds</th>
<th>% Rim Sherds</th>
<th>No. Total Sherds</th>
<th>% Total Rim and Body Sherds</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium Brown</td>
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<td>20.95</td>
<td>2288</td>
<td>54.44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium Brown Brazier</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2.07</td>
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<td>Fine Cream</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>48.73</td>
<td>1085</td>
<td>25.82</td>
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<td>Micaceous Ware</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>3.62</td>
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<td>Red on Fine Cream</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graphite on Fine Cream/Orange</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.05</td>
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<td>Fine Gray</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Undecorated</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Monocrome</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>13.56</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>8.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Monocrome Incense Burner</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Polychrome Incense Burner</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Polychrome (Postclassic)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1.76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Biconical Brazier with Appliques</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texcoco Molded</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other/Unidentified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>907</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>4202</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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### Table 7.2: Ceramic type frequencies for Colonial midden at Terrace 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ceramic Type</th>
<th>No. Rim Sherds</th>
<th>% Rim Sherds</th>
<th>No. Total Sherds</th>
<th>% Total Sherds</th>
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<tr>
<td>Medium Brown</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>39.25</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>64.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium Brown Brazier</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine Cream</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>9.21</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>6.54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Micaceous Ware</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>10.56</td>
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<td>Red on Fine Cream</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graphite on Fine Cream/Orange</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Gray</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Undecorated</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Monochrome</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Monochrome Incense Burner</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Polychrome (Colonial)</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>26.32</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>12.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>White Glazed Fine Brown</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>9.43</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>2.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Glazed Wares</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>456</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>3088</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 7.3: Ceramic type frequencies for densest deposits at Terrace 13.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ceramic Type</th>
<th>No. Rim Sherds</th>
<th>% Rim Sherds</th>
<th>No. Total Sherds</th>
<th>% Total Sherds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium Brown</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>32.34</td>
<td>1748</td>
<td>59.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Brown Brazier</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.51</td>
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Medium Brown Ware (Chachoapan Sandy Cream)

Medium brown wares were the most abundant ceramics in the analyzed samples, accounting for 20.95%, 39.25%, and 32.34% of total rim sherds in the three assemblages. These are almost invariably undecorated. Pastes of these ceramics were rather heterogeneous, but tended to be medium or sandy in texture, and occasionally coarser. Colors ranged from brown (7.5 YR 4/2) to light reddish brown (5 YR 6/4). Inclusions were variable as well, with micas often present in wide-ranging amounts, as well as quartz sands, and occasionally small pebbles. The most frequent forms are comals (tortilla griddles), and ollas (jars), with hemispherical bowls and neck-less jars occurring less frequently. Very rarely, and only in the Postclassic, remains of patojos (shoe-shaped vessels) and botellones (long-necked bottles) were found.

Ollas (Figs. 7.1 and 7.2) tend to be unburnished, only roughly smoothed and often wiped on their exteriors. They often exhibited flat bases, and appliqued handles on their bodies, or less frequently, handles extending from their rims to just below their necks. These vessels were likely used for storage, and perhaps as water jars. Comals (Figs. 7.3 and 7.4), meanwhile, were undoubtedly used for cooking tortillas, as well as possibly other types of foods. These vessels are very wide in diameter (over 40cm on average) and shallow to the point of nearly being flat. They invariably exhibit roughened exteriors, with interiors that are well smoothed and burnished. While Levine (2007: 253) notes that Postclassic comals at Tututepec were likely mold-made, due in part to great regularity in the forms of their rims, comals from the Achiutla sample exhibit considerable variability in rim-form, casting doubt on whether the same was the case here.
Fig. 7.1: Fragments of medium brown ware olla rims.
Fig. 7.2: Rim profiles for medium brown ware ollas.

Fig. 7.3: Fragments of medium brown ware comal rims.
Fig. 7.4: Rim profiles for medium brown ware comals.

Of the less frequent forms, hemispherical bowls were likely for cooking, while neckless jars were for storage. The purposes of botellones and patojos are less clear. None of these vessels exhibited any decoration or surface treatment, apart from rough smoothing of their exteriors. In sum, medium brown wares appear to have constituted the most common type of utilitarian pottery in the Achiutla assemblage, during both Postclassic and Colonial times. Lind (1979: 53-56) describes similar ceramics constituting the main utilitarian wares at Chachoapan and Yucuita, though the sources of clays for the Achiutla ceramics likely come from a local source.

Medium Brown Braziers (Chachoapan Incised Censer Covers)

Apart from the utilitarian forms discussed above, one common form of medium brown ware found at Achiutla is particularly distinctive and is likely to have served ritual
purposes. These vessels appear to be braziers, with tripod supports, handles over their tops (though these were invariably broken off all recovered examples), with incised and sometimes punctate designs on their tops and sides (Figs. 7.5 and 7.6). These were particularly abundant in the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10, where several nearly complete pieces were found. The interiors or bottoms of these vessels were in all cases blackened by layers of soot, indicating that they were placed over fires or burning materials. Their exteriors, or tops, had variable and roughly executed incised designs including series of parallel lines along the rims, to designs that resemble Postclassic-style representations of feathers (Fig. 7.7). Some examples also had narrow punctate holes, which may have allowed smoke to slowly waft out from below. While the handles of these objects appear to have typically been “U”-shaped (Fig. 7.8), one recovered artifact from the Postclassic midden, molded in the form of a jaguar (Fig. 7.9), also may have been a handle for one of these vessels, as the “feet” were clearly broken off a flat ceramic surface of the same paste type. A number of “U”-shaped handle fragments had small anthropomorphic figures applied to them, with the heads extending from the tops of the handles and depictions of limbs splayed over the sides (Fig. 7.10).
Fig. 7.5: Reconstructed near-complete medium brown brazier.
Fig. 7.6: Vessel profile of a medium brown brazier.
Fig. 7.7: Incised decorations on the top of a fragment of a medium brown brazier.

Figure 7.8: “U”-shaped handle of a medium brown brazier.
Figure 7.9: Possible jaguar effigy handle of a medium brown brazier.

Figure 7.10: Anthropomorphic effigy on a handle of a medium brown brazier.

Lind (1979: 72-74) suggests that these objects were used as covers, placed inside ladle censers for the burning of incense. This is a logical interpretation, given that these vessels clearly were placed over fires, and that their tops were decorated and had handles—thus their tops were unlikely to have been used as cooking/heating surfaces. My only doubts
regarding this interpretation stem from the facts that while numerous fragments of ladle censers were found in the same midden where the frequency of these brazier fragments was greatest, the fragments of ladle censers were of a different paste type, and did not exhibit similarly intense burning within their interiors. That is to say, for the Achiutla assemblage, these vessel types have no obvious “companions” that they can clearly be demonstrated to have been placed within. Keeping this in mind, it is interesting that in the one clear depiction of such a vessel in the Mixtec codices (Fig. 7.11), which is cited by Lind, the vessel is not shown inside a censer, but instead sitting on a floor within a palace. In sum, while not discounting Lind’s hypothesis, given the data at hand, I would allow for the possibility that these vessels were not necessarily at all times covers for other ceramics, but may have instead been placed over fires or burning debris in other contexts. At the same time, I support the interpretation that these vessels were used in the burning of ritual offerings, due to their decorated designs, their intensely burned bottoms, and the fact that in the Postclassic midden these vessels appear to have been deliberately smashed or broken (see Hamann 2008).

Figure 7.11: Depiction of a tripod brazier within a temple or palace in Codex Bodley, pg. 14.
Green Glazed Medium Brown

Very few fragments of green glazed medium brown body sherds were found in Colonial contexts at Terrace 10 and Terrace 13 (less than 1% in each context; Fig. 7.12). These sherds are otherwise virtually identical to utilitarian ceramic pastes described previously. Forms of these vessels are unknown. Because the green glazed examples occur on the predominant utilitarian type of pottery at the site—likely produced locally—I suspect that this indicates Colonial indigenous production of glazed ceramics in the Achiutla region. Future characterization of both glazed and unglazed samples of material will hopefully shed further light on this possibility. In Tables 8.2 and 8.3, these artifacts are grouped with “Other Glazed Wares.”

Figure 7.12: A fragment of medium brown ware with green glaze.

Micaceous Ware

A second paste type used for undecorated utilitarian wares was distinguished by extremely high densities of mica inclusions, often packed against one another, and is hence dubbed Micaceous Ware. This type accounts for 1.21%, 3.73%, and 2.16% of total rim sherds in the three samples. The paste, medium to coarse in texture, is otherwise rather
heterogeneous, as its color ranges from reddish brown (5 YR 5/4) to gray (7.5 YR 5/1), likely owing to differences in firing. The density of micas (which at times are as large as 5mm), and possibly other sheet-like minerals such as plagioclase, which likely occur naturally in the clay source, gives this paste type a brittle texture. This paste type may resemble the type Spores (1972: 67) describes as Nochixtlán Rustware, and is apparently common in the nearby Huamelulpan Valley (Cira Martínez López, personal communication). This may therefore represent a more distinct local ceramic type.

Micaceous wares were far less frequent than medium brown wares. All examples were smoothed on their exteriors, but exhibited no burnishing or decoration. Most identifiable rim fragments were of ollas, which occasionally had handles appliqued to their bodies (Fig. 7.13), while fragments of cajetes and neck-less jars of this paste type were found rarely. While this may be a more distinctive local variety of utilitarian pottery in the Achiutla region, it does not appear to have constituted the preferred type at the site in Late Postclassic and Early Colonial times, as indicated by its low frequency in middens relative to medium brown wares.
Fig. 7.13: Profiles of micaceous ware fragments including a body sherd with a handle (left) and the rim of an olla (right).

*Fine Cream Wares (Yanhuitlán Fine Cream)*

Fine cream wares are reported widely throughout the Mixteca Alta (Bernal 1948: 48-54; Diego 2010: 163-198; Lind 1987: 41-49; Pérez 2003: 236; Spores 1972: 26-28), and are common at Achiutla as well. The pastes of these wares are fine-grained and chalky in texture, with little or no inclusions. Color can be quite variable, even within a single vessel, likely due to variations in firing, and clouding occurring during production (Fig. 7.14). Surface colors can range from light gray (10YR 7/1) to black (10 YR 2/1). Vessel surfaces are commonly very well smoothed and burnished, though they are normally not burnished as completely or intensely as decorated wares.
At Achiutla, as is the case for other parts of the Mixteca, fine cream wares predominantly take the form of semispherical bowls composite silhouette *cajetes*, the latter often with a subtle outcurving angular break in the vessel wall (Fig. 7.15) near the rim. Walls of these vessels are thin, ranging between 4 and 7mm in thickness, while the vessel rims average 16cm in diameter. These were likely simple serving vessels. Extremely rarely in the Achiutla assemblage, fine cream wares exhibit much more highly burnished surfaces and much sharper angular breaks in their walls, corresponding to the “Cacique Burnished” sub-category defined by Lind (1987: 45). Ladle forms, typically identifiable by fragments of their handles (Fig. 7.16) also occur rarely.
Fig. 7.15: Rim profiles for fine cream cajetes.

Fig. 7.16: Fragment of a fine cream ladle handle.
Fine cream wares were distributed widely throughout the Mixteca Alta in the Postclassic, and for the Postclassic midden excavated at Terrace 10, only medium brown wares are more frequent. For the Colonial midden at Terrace 10, however, fine cream pottery is far less common, constituting less than 10% of the recovered sample. This contrasts with the pattern observed by Lind (1987: 104), where at Chachoapan and Yucuita fine cream wares remain the most common types of pottery well into the Colonial period. If this type of pottery was produced in a centralized location, perhaps closer to the Nochixtlán Valley than Achiutla, disruptions in regional exchange networks following the Conquest may account for the sharp reduction in fine cream pottery in Terrace 10’s Colonial midden. Chronological discrepancies between the Achiutla contexts and Lind’s data may also account for these differences, however, as discussed in Chapter 5, the coarse temporal resolution for Early Colonial radiocarbon dates makes teasing out such differences difficult.

Red on Fine Cream (Yanhuitlán Red-on-Cream)

Red on cream vessels are also well known in various parts of the Mixteca Alta (e.g., Bernal 1949; Byland 1980; Lind 1987; Spores 1972), distinctive for being decorated commonly with abstract geometrical motifs reminiscent of the Mixteca Puebla style, painted in red (Fig. 7.17). The paste for this type appears the same as undecorated examples described above, though vessel surfaces tend to be more highly burnished and uniform in color. While Spores (1972: 30) describes this type as “the hallmark of the Natividad Phase in the Nochixtlán Valley,” curiously, red on cream ceramics are nearly absent in the Postclassic and Colonial middens at Terrace 10, constituting well under 1% of each ceramic sample. These ceramics are slightly more frequent in construction fill at Terrace 13, but still make up less than 2% of the sample there. A similar pattern appears to occur at Postclassic and Early
Colonial Yucundaa as well, where red on cream ceramics constitute less than 1% of the pottery in all reported midden samples (Diego 2010: 163-198). Given the data, it may be the case that while red on cream wares were popular decorated serving wares in the Nochixtlán and Tamazulapan valleys, they did not circulate widely outside these regions.

Fig. 7.17: Fragments of red on cream cajete rims.

Graphite on Cream/Orange (Mixtec Graphite on Orange)

Similar sherds to the red on cream variety were found at Achiutla with designs executed in graphite, rather than red paint (Fig. 7.18). Pastes of these materials closely resemble other fine cream wares, though surfaces are at times better burnished and more beige or orange in color. These were found in very low frequencies at Achiutla, accounting for well under 1% of the ceramics from both the middens excavated at Terrace 10. Curiously, they are more frequent at Terrace 13, accounting for nearly 3% of the sample there. This type has been reported in very low quantities at Nicayuhu (Pérez 2003: 74), Chachoapan, and Yucuita (Lind 1987: 33). Lind (1987: 33) cites a personal communication from Marcus Winter, describing this type as being relatively common at Huamelulpan, and
speculates that it may be characteristic of the Early Postclassic, rather than later. The same sentiment is shared by Cira Martínez López (personal communication), who has worked with the Huamelulpan materials recently. This notion may be supported by the relatively higher frequency of this type at Terrace 13, where it was predominantly found in construction fill (Operation 3, F2) that may contain earlier materials. Initial inspection of materials at Terrace 1 South suggested graphite on orange ceramics may be more common in that context as well, which I have tentatively suggested was occupied in the Early Postclassic, based on affinities in their designs with Early Postclassic materials elsewhere in Oaxaca (e.g., Hedgepeth 2009; Joyce et al. 2001).

**Fig. 7.18: Fragments of graphite on fine cream/orange rims.**

*Fine Gray Ware (Miguelito Hard Fine Gray)*

Gray wares were found in extremely low proportions at Achiutla, and only merit brief mention. They are found in similarly low frequencies at Yucundaa (Diego 2010: 163-198), though are more common at Chachoapan (Lind 1987: 49). They appear to resemble the type of gray ware common in the Valley of Oaxaca during the Postclassic known as G-3M (Caso et al. 1967). It is perhaps the case that gray wares were more common in the Nochixtlán
Valley given the region’s greater proximity to the Valley of Oaxaca, with this type becoming less frequent further beyond.

*Fine Brown Ware*

This paste category includes a number of different types of decorated serving and ritual vessels found at Achiutla, though undecorated fine brown ceramics were also recovered in small amounts. Pastes of fine brown wares range from brown (7.5 YR 5/4) to reddish yellow (5 YR 6/6). Colors tend to be fairly uniform over the surfaces of a given vessel, though black staining or fire clouding occurs occasionally. Textures are fine-grained with occasional sand-sized inclusions of quartz and mica. Undecorated examples are not slipped, but are normally smoothed and burnished. Among undecorated fine brown wares, cajetes were the most common vessel shapes.

*Fine Brown Monochrome*

In Postclassic contexts, the most common fine brown wares were cajetes and composite-silhouette ollas, that were painted over their entire bodies in uniform colors—most typically in red, but also in black and brown (Figs. 7.19-7.21). Painted surfaces of these vessels are always well burnished. Lind (1987: 27-31) describes finding small quantities of Postclassic and Colonial types of burnished red painted pottery, though these most commonly have black designs painted on them, which is rare in the Achiutla materials. Diego (2010: 163-198) lists a type named “Rojo Bruñido” (“Red Burnished”) as occurring at Yucundaa, which may more closely correspond to the materials described here. At Yucundaa, these painted wares do not appear to be common either, though more so than at Chachoapan and Yucuita. It is possible, therefore, that these serving wares are more restricted to the Achiutla region.
Fig. 7.19: Fragments of fine cream monochrome cajetes.

Fig. 7.20: Fragments of fine cream monochrome ollas.
Fig. 7.21: Rim profiles for fine cream monochrome cajetes (above) and ollas (below).

Monochrome fine brown ollas and cajetes all likely had hollow tripod supports, given how frequently supports were found in excavations, particularly in the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10. Most commonly, these supports are simple in form, cylindrical with small tapered “feet” extending from their ends (Fig. 7.22). Far less common forms include serpent effigy supports (Fig. 7.23). Cajetes have average diameters of 17.27cm, while ollas average 10.25cm in diameter. Formally, these vessels very much resemble Postclassic Mixtec
polychromes, and I believe they were likely used in the same manner, for the serving of food and drink in commensal feasting events (Forde 2006; Hernández 2005, 2008; Lind 1994). In part because Postclassic polychromes occur rather rarely at Terrace 10, it is possible that these painted wares served as substitutes for their more elaborate counterparts.

Fig. 7.22: Supports for fine brown monochrome vessels.
Fine Brown Monochrome Incense Burners

A second type of fine brown monochrome was separated from that described above, distinctive for taking the form of *sahumadores* or incense burners. These forms of vessels are well known throughout Postclassic Oaxaca and elsewhere (e.g., Levine 2007: 267; Lind 1987: 67-70; Smith 2002: 99-101), and were clearly used for the burning of incense in rituals, as they are depicted as such in the Mixtec codices and are described being used in this way in Colonial ethnohistorical sources as well (Motolinía 1996: 433). They are typically described as taking the shape of “frying pans,” with shallow bowls connected to long hollow handles. At Achiutla, fine brown incense burners are typically painted red over the tops and ends of their handles, and around the interior rims of their bowls (Fig. 7.24). In at least one
example, a triangular protuberance was found at the top of the end of the handle, presumably to help one’s grip of the object (Fig. 7.25). The interiors of the bowls of these vessels often exhibited dark staining (Fig. 7.26), likely owing to the burning of copal or other materials within them. Remains of these vessels were only found in the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10 and the construction fill of Terrace 13.

Fig. 7.24: Fragments of fine brown monochrome incense burners.
Very few fragments of a second type of incense burner were found at Achiutla, only identified from the remains of the handles. These are distinctive for being painted with colors including, red, blue, and white, and with roughly incised designs including lobes and parallel bands (Fig. 7.27). At least one example had a triangular protuberance at its end.
similar to that seen for the monochrome incense burners. In contrast to typical Mixtec polychrome pottery, fragments of these vessels are not burnished, with a rather rough exterior texture. This likely corresponds to a different pottery type, though I have not found similar materials reported in Oaxaca or beyond.

Fig. 7.27: Handle fragments of fine brown polychrome incense burners.

Postclassic Fine Brown Polychromes (Pilitas Polychrome)

Given that the monumental core of Achiutla’s Pueblo Viejo was inhabited largely by elites, it was expected that, particularly in the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10, codex-style polychrome ceramics would be recovered with great frequency. This turned out not to be the case. In the Postclassic midden, polychromes accounted for less than 2% of the ceramic assemblage in terms of both rims and total sherds. Outside of the Tututepec region, however, where polychromes are more common, this is typical even for elite residences excavated elsewhere in the Mixteca (for comparison, see Levine 207: Table 6.02). While at commoner
residences at Tututepec, polychromes occur in frequencies ranging from nearly 5% to over 11% of all total rim sherds, they account for less than 3% of rim sherds from middens associated with high status residences at Chachoapan and Yucuita (Levine 2007: Table 6.02). From the very few rim sherds in the Achiutla sample, it could be seen that both ollas and cajetes were present. All forms likely had tripod supports, though few large fragments were found to better characterize them. For painted designs, lines are executed very precisely, and colors present on the materials include black, white, red, and orange, typical of polychromes from throughout Oaxaca, and also pink and blue, which are more common in the Tututepec region (Forde 2006: 61). Designs present include codical motifs such as stepped frets, feathers, birds (Fig. 7.28), flowers, and movement symbols (Fig. 7.29). Unfortunately, the sample is too small to draw any serious inferences from patterns in the motifs represented on these ceramics.

Fig. 7.28: Fragments of fine brown polychromes exhibiting bird motifs.
Colonial Fine Brown Polychromes (Iglesia Polychrome)

In contrast to the Postclassic midden, polychrome ceramics were relatively abundant in the Colonial midden on the east edge of Terrace 10, accounting for over 12% of the total ceramic sample from that context, 26.32% in terms of rim sherds. Much more will be said about this patterning in the next chapter. The Colonial polychromes exhibit a fair degree of continuity with their Postclassic counterparts in many respects, but in others differ markedly, and on the whole constitute a distinct type that generally resembles the “Iglesia” polychrome variety defined by Lind (1987: 23-27).

In terms of their painted designs, Colonial polychromes are distinct for exhibiting considerably thicker and less precise brush strokes, used to depict much more abstract geometrical motifs (Fig. 7.30). No overtly codical motifs were identified in the sample. Furthermore, while in the Postclassic period, open vessels like cajetes were normally painted over their entire interior and exterior surfaces, for the Colonial polychromes, such vessels
were often left unpainted on their exterior bases and much of their walls. Vessels often had only a simple strip of white paint around their exterior rims. Lind (1987: 27) observes similar patterns, though he also notes the presence of floral motifs that show clear European influence, which do not occur in the Colonial polychromes from Achiutla.

Colonial Achiutla polychromes are distinct from Postclassic materials in formal characteristics as well. While for Postclassic Mixtec polychromes, cajetes and ollas are the predominant forms (Forde 2006: 84; Lind 1987: 15), for the Colonial materials cajetes persist, but ollas drop out almost entirely. In place of ollas, a new form appears in the Achiutla assemblage—shallow plates with outleaning walls (Fig. 7.31). Lind (1987: 23) describes a similar pattern occurring at Chachoapan and Yucuita, where plates are even more frequent than Achiutla, accounting for nearly 58% of all rim sherds. At Achiutla, plates only account for 26.8% of recovered Colonial polychrome rim sherds. These vessel forms do not differ radically in size—cajetes average 19.5cm in diameter, while plates average 22.3.

While vessel forms analogous to plates appear in low frequencies in the Mixteca in pre-Hispanic times, in shapes that Lind (1994) terms “platters” (see also, Forde 2006: 82), as well
as at Cholula (McCafferty 2001; Lind 1994), the forms of plates seen in the Colonial polychromes are distinct and do not appear to have pre-Hispanic antecedents. I suspect the appearance of plates owes to European influence, as indigenous groups newly adopted this vessel form and incorporated it into existing ceramic traditions in Colonial times in central Mexico (Charlton and Fournier 2010) and El Salvador (Card 2013) as well.

Fig. 7.31: Rim profiles for fine brown polychrome cajetes (above) and plates (below).

Tripod supports were very abundant in the Colonial polychrome assemblage at Achiutla, indicating that at least cajetes all typically had supports. Lind (1987: 23) reports that polychrome plates lack supports, though at Achiutla plate fragments were not complete enough to make this same assessment. At Achiutla, the most common form of support by far is long and conical, curving outward from the body of the vessel (Fig. 7.32). I have not seen
this form of tripod support documented anywhere else in the Mixteca-Puebla region, and it appears to be a Colonial innovation. Much more rarely in the Achiutla assemblage, supports take the form of serpents (Fig. 7.33), resembling the common Colonial form at Chachoapan and Yucuita (Lind 1987: 23). While serpent effigies were common support forms in Postclassic polychrome materials (Forde 2006: 76; Lind 1994: 92), the Colonial manifestations appear distinct from their pre-Hispanic counterparts, in that they are more schematized with simpler decoration, and that the ends of the supports do not flare out as “feet.” Nevertheless, given that overtly codical motifs seemingly drop out of the painted designs of Colonial polychromes through the Mixteca Alta, it is somewhat surprising that icons like serpents—so deeply charged with pre-Hispanic meaning—persist in the form of vessel supports.

Fig. 7.32: Curved conical supports of fine brown Colonial polychromes.
Fig. 7.33: Effigy serpent support for a fine brown polychrome vessel.

**White Glazed Fine Brown**

After polychromes, the second most common decorated serving ware found in the Colonial midden of Terrace 10 is an earthenware also made of fine brown paste, but with a tin enameled white glaze covering all surfaces (Fig. 7.34). Sherds of this type are considerably less frequent than Colonial polychromes, accounting for 2.7% of the total ceramics from the Colonial midden, 9.43% in terms of rim sherds. These vessels were clearly wheel-thrown, indicated by the presence of “rilling” (undulating ridges and striations, see Rice 1987: 132), especially notable on their exterior walls. These appear to be plain white *maiolica* ceramics, or imitations thereof, which were popular for centuries in the Mediterranean prior to the discovery of the Americas, and were brought to Mexico shortly thereafter (Lister and Lister 1982). Production of similar ceramics in Mexico appears to have begun as early as 1540 (Lister and Lister 1982: 13). Curiously, in the Achiutla materials, the brown paste color typical of these glazed ceramics is virtually indistinguishable from that of the polychrome ceramics (Fig. 7.35). Though given that this brown is such a generic color, it cannot be claimed with any confidence that these were made with precisely the same pastes; future characterization studies are needed to address this issue. I would, however, like to at
least entertain the possibility that this maiolica pottery found at Achiutla was produced locally. White maiolicas produced in Mexico City typically have a more reddish paste, while those imported from Sevilla have a paste that is often pale yellow (Lister and Lister 1982). Production of the white glaze would have required both lead and tin additives (Lister and Lister 1975: 43). We have already seen that residents of Achiutla had access to lead, meanwhile tin was mined in Mexico at an early date, and the material was not prohibitively expensive, given a 1546 price for tin reported by Borah and Cook (1958: Table 11).

Fig. 7.34: Fragment of a white glazed fine brown brimmed plate.
While the plain white glazes of these ceramics are not chronologically diagnostic, the forms of the vessels are. Virtually all identifiable rim sherds of white glazed maiolicas in the Achiutla sample were of brimmed plates, a form not seen in pre-Hispanic Oaxaca, but a popular European maiolica form during the 16th century (Card 2013c; Lister and Lister 1975: 52). In profile (Fig. 7.36) these forms resemble shallow semispherical bowls with everted or outflaring rims (termed “brims”), averaging 19cm in diameter. Such vessels were referred to as *platos* by the Spanish, and they continue to be termed plates in scholarly literature. The few remains of bases that were recovered at Achiutla indicate that at least some of these vessels had low ring bases (Fig. 7.37), also typical of maiolica brimmed plates during the 16th century (Lister and Lister 1982: 14). These forms, while introduced to Mexico by the Spanish, are Italian in origin, hence often referred to as “Italianate,” though Italian potters were producing them in Spain in the early 16th century (Card 2013c: 110; Lister and Lister 1975).
Card (2013: 110) has compiled data from a number of sources to produce a seriation of maiolica vessel forms, based on morphological types defined by Rackham (1977) and Lessmann (1979). The forms of brimmed maiolica bowls at Achiutla appear to correspond to form numbers 2 and 5 in Rackham’s (1977: 456-457) classification schema. Card (2013: 114) shows these forms to occur largely from the early sixteenth century until approximately 1580. Brimmed bowls appear to largely fall out of fashion by the early seventeenth century,
thus these data help to support the dating of the occupation of the Terrace 10 residential complex to the Early Colonial period. Oddly, presence of these maiolicas is not reported at all in excavations of contemporaneous residences in Yucundaa, Chachoapan, and Yucuita. For Yucundaa, this might be explained by the fact that the site was largely abandoned and the population was relocated to the valley floor of Teposcolula in 1550. If maiolicas only began to be produced in Mexico in the 1540’s, they may have been difficult to acquire during the bulk of the time that Yucundaa was occupied. For Chachoapan and Yucuita, however, the matter is more curious, as Lind suggests that Colonial residences there were occupied into the 17th century, yet virtually no glazed sherds were found. Especially given that in the Colonial period midden at Yucuita, Lind (1987: 104) reports similarly high proportions of Iglesia polychromes to those seen here, the contrast between these two cases in frequencies of glazed wares stands out. It is unclear what could account for this, but it is possible that for a variety of reasons, indigenous families at Achiutla had greater access to glazed ceramics than those at other Mixtec centers, regardless of whether they were produced locally or further afar.

Other Glazed Wares

Other types of glazed ceramics were found at Achiutla in rather minimal proportions, and are described here only briefly. White glazed ceramics similar to those described above, but with a pale brown (2.5Y 8/4) paste approaching yellow in color, were found in limited quantities in the Colonial midden at Terrace 10, and in a deposit associated with primary refuse behind Structure 1 at Terrace 13. These may correspond to the type known as Sevilla White, described by Lister and Lister (1982: 60), and may represent foreign imports. Green glazes, meanwhile, were occasionally seen not only on medium brown pastes, described
previously, but also fine brown (Fig. 7.38), as well as reddish pastes at Terrace 13 and in the Colonial midden at Terrace 10. Blue-painted glazed wares are very infrequent, and known only from small fragments which, as such, cannot currently be assigned to types. The one exception to this, as noted in the previous chapter, is the type known as Puebla Polychrome, which dates to the early 17\textsuperscript{th} century and persists until perhaps as late as the early 18\textsuperscript{th} century (Lister and Lister 1987: 346), thus potentially later than the bulk of the Colonial ceramics recovered at Achiutla. Small sherds of this type were found in association with the ash pit at Terrace 13 and the dry core fill in the northern portion of the corridor at Terrace 10, possibly suggesting later depositional events in those locations. Lastly, as mentioned in the previous chapter, fragments of a wheel thrown molcajete or grater bowl with stripes of red and green glaze around its rim were recovered in association with the ash pit at Terrace 13. This type of pottery, made with a reddish paste, is not reported in other regions.

Fig. 7.38: Fragment of green glazed fine brown from the Colonial midden at Terrace 10.
Special Forms

Three other distinctive ceramic types, found in low frequencies, merit brief mention. The first includes fragments of a single biconical brazier with cone-shaped appliques on its exterior walls, reminiscent of the thorns of the pochote tree (Figs. 7.39 and 7.40). The only vessels I have seen reported exhibiting similar decorations come from tombs at Monte Albán (Caso et al. 1967: Fig. 279; López et al. 2014: 87), and are dated to the Pitao phase (AD 500-600) of the Classic period. The latter vessels do not appear to be biconical in form, however. If the materials from Achiutla do correspond to this same type—perhaps unlikely given the early date of the Monte Albán vessels—they would then possibly indicate heirlooming of ritual objects eventually disposed of in the Postclassic midden.

Fig. 7.39: Medial fragment of a biconical brazier from the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10.
A second type is known from only several fragments in the Postclassic midden that appear to correspond to the type known in central Mexico as Texcoco Molded (Figs. 7.41 and 7.42). Production of this pottery has been documented at Otumba (Charlton et al. 1991), though it is found outside the Basin of Mexico, in locales as distant as coastal Veracruz (Ohnersorgen 2006). The materials from Achiutla, with virtually identical stamped decorative patterns to examples seen in other regions, appear to have been part of an incense burner or ladle censer.
Fig. 7.41: Fragment of a Texcoco Molded incense burner from the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10.

Fig. 7.42: Rim profile of a Texcoco Molded incense burner from the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10.
Lastly, one piece of fine brown monochrome was found at Terrace 13 that had small flakes of what appear to be chert embedded in the unpainted interior surface of the vessel (Fig. 7.43). The exterior surface of the piece is painted red. The bits of chert on the interior side were clearly pressed into the wet clay fabric prior to the vessel being fired. I have not seen similar ceramics reported elsewhere in the literature, but the embedded pieces of chert were likely used for grinding, and the vessel thus functioned perhaps similarly to a grater bowl, though possibly used for grinding different materials other than foodstuffs. This piece was found in association with primary refuse behind Structure 1 at Terrace 13.

![Fig. 7.43: Fragment of fine brown with chert inlays from Terrace 13.](image)

**Lithic Artifacts**

Lithic materials from the Postclassic and Colonial middens at Terrace 10 (Operation 4, F43 and F59; Figs. 6.46 and 6.63), as well as from the densest deposits at Terrace 13 (Operation 3, F2, F11, and F12; Figs. 6.18, 6.20, and 6.25), were subjected to preliminary analysis, including both chert and obsidian materials. Additionally, a sample of obsidian
recovered from the feature associated from the lithic workshop was analyzed as well (Operation 2, F1; Fig. 6.12). Preliminary analysis involved recording frequencies of morphological categories such as flake, blade, core, etc. Much more detailed analyses of both tools and debitage remain for future laboratory seasons. It should be noted that very few ground stone and polished stone artifacts were recovered from primary contexts, and hence have yet to be analyzed. The paucity of ground stone artifacts may owe to short occupation spans of the residences excavated combined with the relatively long use-lives of these types of artifacts.

**Chert Artifacts**

Here I use the term “chert” in a broad sense to refer to a variety of types of silica-rich cryptocrystalline rocks that can otherwise be variable in their mineralogy and appearance, including flint, jasper, chalcedony and others (Luedtke 1992). Chert sources are found within the Mixteca, including at Yucuñudahui in the Nochixtlán Valley (Kirkby 1972: 11), thus these materials were likely procured at least semi-locally. Preliminary analysis of chert artifacts was carried out for materials in the Postclassic and Colonial midden at Terrace 10 (Operation 4, F43 and F59; Figs. 6.46 and 6.63), the circular feature within the patio of Terrace 10 (Operation 4, F-44; Fig. 6.46), the densest deposits at Terrace 13 (Operation 3, F2, F11, and F12; Figs. 6.18, 6.20, and 6.25), and a random sample of 200 pieces from a single lot within the test pit in the Iglesias lithic debitage deposit, located at a depth of 30-35cm below the surface (Operation 2, F1; Fig. 6.12). Artifacts were sorted into the following types: flakes, blades, cores, debitage, and bifacial pieces. Frequencies of chert artifacts analyzed for the different excavation contexts are provided below (Table 7.4).
Table 7.4: Frequencies of chert artifacts for selected excavation contexts at Achiutla

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>No. Flake</th>
<th>% Flake</th>
<th>No. Blade</th>
<th>% Blade</th>
<th>No. Core</th>
<th>% Core</th>
<th>No. Debitage</th>
<th>% Debitage</th>
<th>No. Biface</th>
<th>% Biface</th>
<th>Total Pieces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrace 10 Postclassic Midden</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.57</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57.14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace 10 Colonial Midden</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>77.43</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19.35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace 10 Circular Feature (F44)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace 13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>81.25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iglesias Sector Test Pit</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>44.50</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>40.50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The chert artifact sample on the whole is dominated by expedient flakes and debitage. While the sample is small, several interesting patterns stand out. First, while the feature located in the Iglesias Sector associated with the lithic workshop provides rather unambiguous evidence that intensive and centralized chert manufacture took place at Achiutla during the Postclassic period, chert artifacts are considerably less frequent in the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10 than in the Colonial midden. The few that are present are largely retouched pieces, rather than expedient flake tools, including one fragment of a projectile point (Fig. 7.44). Why Postclassic elites would use so few chert artifacts despite them having been produced locally is difficult to explain, but it is possible that these tools tended to be distributed more amongst commoner classes.

![Fragment of a chert projectile point from the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10.](image)

Expedient flakes become more frequent in the Colonial midden. While chert pieces account for only 2.1% of chipped stone artifacts in the Postclassic midden (n=334), in the Colonial midden they account for 41.3% (n=75). Though not providing specific figures, Zeitlin (2005: 156) notes a similar pattern for the site of Rancho Santa Cruz in the
Tehuantepec region, where use of chert and quartzite objects continues into the Colonial period as access to obsidian decreases. Comparable figures are not available for the Colonial contexts at Chachoapan and Yucuita. The increase in frequency of chert artifacts may in part owe to disruptions of indigenous economic networks following the Conquest. As we will see in the following section, comparison of the two middens suggests a sizeable decrease in access to obsidian at Achiutla; however, obsidian still remained relatively common, and appears to have by no means been a scarce resource. The functions of the expedient flakes are unclear, and their increase in frequency may be due to changes in activity patterns as well.

The few chert materials associated with the circular feature at Terrace 10 (F44) are provided only to serve as a point of comparison to obsidian artifacts from the same context, which will be presented below. The data indicate that while obsidian debitage was disproportionately deposited within this feature, chert materials were not. Meanwhile, frequencies of chert artifacts from Terrace 13 are more difficult to explain, given that the analyzed sample comes largely from deposits associated with construction fill. That the material appears more common than is observed in the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10 may owe to differences in status as well as length of occupation, and also to different domestic activities, as chert may have been employed in tasks distinct from ones in which obsidian was used.

**Obsidian Artifacts**

Preliminary analysis was also conducted for obsidian artifacts found in the Postclassic and Colonial middens at Terrace 10, the circular feature within the patio of Terrace 10, the densest deposits at Terrace 13, and a random sample of 500 pieces from a single lot within
the test pit in the Iglesias sector, located at a depth of 30-35cm below the surface. Obsidian artifacts were sorted into the following types: prismatic blades, lancets, projectile points, flakes, and shatter. Frequencies for these artifact types, separated by context, are presented below (Table 7.5).
Table 7.5: Frequencies of obsidian artifacts for selected excavation contexts at Achiutla.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>No. Prismatic Blades</th>
<th>% Prismatic Blades</th>
<th>No. Lancets</th>
<th>% Lancets</th>
<th>No. Points</th>
<th>% Points</th>
<th>No. Flakes</th>
<th>% Flakes</th>
<th>No. Debitage</th>
<th>% Debitage</th>
<th>Total Pieces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrace 10 Postclassic Midden</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>83.79</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10.09</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace 10 Colonial Midden</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace 10 Circular Feature (F44)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22.93</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>43.31</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>33.76</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace 13 (Densest Deposits)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>73.78</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.42</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iglesias Sector Test Pit</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For both middens at Terrace 10, as well as the analyzed artifacts from Terrace 13, prismatic blades predominate (Fig. 7.45). When proximal ends of these artifacts were found, they inevitably exhibited finely ground platforms. This is common of prismatic blades of the Postclassic period throughout Mesoamerica (MacNeish et al. 1967: 25; Sheets 1978). Platforms of polyhedral cores were ground to provide more friction during pressure-flaking, preventing tools from slipping during blade removal (Flenniken and Hirth 2003: 105), and allowing for blades to removed more consistently and with less pressure applied (Titmus and Clark 2003: 92). Prismatic blades likely had a wide variety of uses, ranging from serving as utilitarian cutting implements to being hafted onto weapons (Taube 1991). A recent study of microresidues found on prismatic blades from pre-Hispanic Honduras (Morell-Hart et al. 2014) suggests that individual blades may have had specific domestic purposes, including food processing and the working of wood and fibers. The high frequencies of blades in the Postclassic and Colonial middens at Terrace 10 suggest that the bulk of these artifact found in excavations at Achiutla were used for domestic purposes. Future analyses may shed more light on the specific activities with which they were associated.

Fig. 7.45: Examples of obsidian prismatic blades.
Other formal obsidian tools found at Achiutla include projectile points and lancets. Projectile points were found in the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10, and in construction fill deposits at Terrace 13. None were found in Colonial contexts. These artifacts are small, ranging between 2 and 3 cm in length, averaging approximately 1 cm in width at their bases. Given these small dimensions, they were likely hafted onto arrows. The projectile points typically exhibit notches on their sides, and occasionally concave bases (Fig. 7.46). These points are similar in to Postclassic obsidian artifacts recovered from Tututepec (Levine 2007: 305-306), though in contrast to the Tututepec materials, the points from Achiutla were not refashioned from prismatic blades. The presence of these artifacts in the Postclassic midden, where remains of animals such as deer and rabbit are also found, indicate that projectile points found here were most likely used for the hunting of wild game within the area, though they could have been used in warfare as well.

Fig. 7.46: Examples of obsidian projectile points.

Lancets, meanwhile, are prismatic blades that taper to a point on their distal ends (Fig. 7.47). Fragments of these artifacts range between 4 and 6 cm in length, and are approximately 5 mm in maximum width. These artifacts were only found in the Postclassic
midden at Terrace 10. A sixteenth-century description of a religious festival in Tlaxcala from Motolinía (1973: 44-47; translated in Serra et al. 2014: 265-266) indicates that lancets were crafted during general blade production, and that these artifacts were reserved specifically for bloodletting rituals: “[A]nd they put the stone in between the feet and with a stick they apply force to the edges of the stone, and with each push they give they make a thin blade jump off with its edges like a razor; and they will take off more than 200 blades from a stone and then turn some into lancets for bloodletting.” Though residue analyses of recovered artifacts may shed more light on this issue, the data at hand suggest that bloodletting was practiced as a form of domestic ritual at Achiutla during the Postclassic, at least among the nobility. The absence of lancets in the Colonial midden at Terrace 10 may indicate that people ceased to carry out such rituals after Contact, or that these practices were driven “underground.”

Fig. 7.47: Examples of obsidian lancets from the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10.

The remainder of the obsidian artifacts recovered from Achiutla includes flakes and debitage. Flakes here did not exhibit retouching or use-wear. Flakes and debitage were present in all contexts analyzed, but were most common in the Iglesias Sector test pit (Operation 2, F1), and the interior of the circular feature in the Terrace 10 patio (Operation 4, F44). In the former context this is of course not surprising, as the excavated feature was
associated with a lithic workshop. The high frequency of debitage in the circular feature is curious, however, and obsidian deposition within this feature stands out even more when comparing proportions of obsidian per 1000 pottery sherds for various excavated contexts (Table 7.6).

Table 7.6: Comparison of obsidian artifact frequencies per 1000 pottery sherds from selected contexts at Achiutla.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>No. Obsidian Artifacts</th>
<th>No. Sherds</th>
<th>Obsidian Artifacts per 100 Sherds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrace 10 Postclassic Midden</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>4202</td>
<td>77.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace 10 Colonial Midden</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2980</td>
<td>14.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace 13</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>43.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace 10 Circular Feature (F44)</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>596.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the extraordinarily high ratio of obsidian debris to ceramics found within the interior of the circular feature at Terrace 10, and because the majority of this debris is debitage, I argue that the feature was associated with obsidian manufacture, though likely indirectly. It is probable that knapping of obsidian took place within the interior patio of the Terrace 10 residential complex, and debitage was then periodically discarded in the subterranean feature. As I argued in the previous chapter, the circular feature appears to be a Colonial period architectural innovation, thus deposition of the materials would have taken place after Contact. Limited remains of glass and iron artifacts recovered within the circular feature substantiate this claim. The data thus suggest that obsidian production persisted at Achiutla into Colonial times in this domestic context, perhaps indicating a shift away from centralized workshop production.
Looking further at the data in Table 7.6, more insights come from comparison of the obsidian frequencies in the Postclassic and Colonial middens at Terrace 10. We can see immediately that there is a considerable drop in the ratio of obsidian to ceramic artifacts in the Colonial period household assemblage. In broader perspective, however, the frequency of obsidian in the Colonial midden is not terribly low. Levine (2011: Table 3) provides a comparison of frequencies of obsidian artifacts per 1000 ceramic sherds for Postclassic Tututepec and contemporaneous sites elsewhere in the Mixteca and central Mexico. According to his figures, frequencies for households at Tututepec range between 12.2 and 16.4, while at Nicayuhi and Teposcolula, frequencies are considerably lower, ranging from 0.7 to 5.4. Thus the frequency of obsidian in the Colonial midden at Terrace 10 is comparable to or higher than Postclassic households elsewhere in Oaxaca, indicating that obsidian did not simply become scarce after Contact. Levine’s (2011: Table 4) comparison also shows that for Postclassic households in Morelos, much closer to central Mexican obsidian sources, figures are higher, ranging between 25.8 and 26.8. These are dwarfed by the frequency of obsidian in Achiutla’s Postclassic midden, however, likely owing to the presence of the lithic workshop at the site, likely very near to Terrace 10 and other surrounding residences specifically. In sum, while the data indicate a drop in access to obsidian from Postclassic to Colonial times at Achiutla, this drop is in part accounted for access to the material being especially high during the Postclassic. Obsidian was still acquired and used in considerable amounts during the Colonial period despite access to metal tools, and it continued to be manufactured at Achiutla as well, as indicated by the materials recovered from the circular feature at Terrace 10.
Bone Artifacts

Bone artifacts from the Postclassic and Colonial middens at Terrace 10 were briefly inspected by biologist Silva Pérez Hernández, and presence of identifiable species was recorded for each context. These materials await more in-depth study and are discussed only briefly here. Below I present the species present documented for each midden.

Table 7.7: Species present in Postclassic and Colonial Middens at Terrace 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postclassic Midden</th>
<th>Colonial Midden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White tailed deer</td>
<td>White tailed deer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog</td>
<td>Rabbit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabbit</td>
<td>Cow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified birds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the Postclassic midden, identified remains correspond largely to wild and domesticated species that are known to have been consumed broadly in Mesoamerica in pre-Hispanic times. The one exception to this, of course, is human remains. Fragments of human humerus, radius, ribs, and vertebrae were found in the Postclassic midden (Fig. 7.48). No specimens displayed visible cut-marks. One radius fragment was burned, though this likely occurred secondarily, as much of the material in the midden on the whole appears to have been burned following the discard of refuse, likely to eliminate odors and keep away scavenging animals. It is thus unclear whether the human remains in the Postclassic midden owes to secondary interment of an individual (or multiple individuals), or another phenomenon such as human sacrifice.
For the Colonial midden, the only identified European-introduced species present is cow, including remains of mandible and pelvis (Fig. 7.49). These remains may not actually indicate consumption of this species by residents of Terrace 10, given that the identified specimens exhibited much higher degrees of weathering than other faunal material found in the midden. As such, the cow remains were likely exposed to the elements for considerable amount of time before being deposited in the midden, and therefore may not represent primary refuse. Given the data currently available, there is little to suggest that the introduction of Old World fauna at Achiutla had a significant impact on the diets of elite families during the Early Colonial period.
Lastly, three bone awls were recovered from the Colonial midden. These were likely used for weaving or sewing thread (Fig. 7.50). No similar artifacts were found in the Postclassic midden. As discussed in Chapter 4, ethnohistorical records indicate that native families at Achiutla were paying part of their tribute to Spanish encomenderos in the form of cotton cloth. What is surprising is that no ceramic spindle whorls—which would have been used for the initial spinning of cotton thread—were found in any of the excavated midden contexts at Achiutla, with only a scant few fragments of these artifacts found in slope wash. This may suggest that native elites at Achiutla were not involved in cloth production, and the needles were used only for alteration and repair of their own textiles, or alternatively, that they were only involved in the later stages of production.
Metal Artifacts

A number of metal artifacts were found in both the Colonial midden at Terrace 10 and in various deposits at Terrace 13. Most abundant of these were the amorphous chunks of lead described in the previous chapter, concentrated near the ash pit at Terrace 13, and the single large piece of lead found in the fire pit in the Terrace 10 patio. I have argued that these materials are likely evidence that native residents were directly involved in lead processing, though toward what end is unclear. Given the available data, it is most probable that these waste materials resulted from making ceramic glazes or from the refinement of silver, though more research is needed to clarify this matter.

The second most abundant metal artifacts from the excavations at Achiutla are iron nails. These nails are relatively short, averaging approximately 2cm in length, and are found in both the Colonial midden at Terrace 10, and within the ash pit at Terrace 13. All of these nails appear to exhibit what scholars refer to as bifaceted or “caret” heads (Figs. 7.51 and 7.52). These forms of nails have been found almost exclusively at sites dating to the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century (Mathers and Haeker 2011: 302), including sites associated with the Coronado expedition (Flint and Flint 2011) and Columbus period sites in the Caribbean (Deagan and Cruxent 2002). As such, these are perhaps the most chronologically diagnostic artifacts recovered in excavation operations at Achiutla.
Deposition of these artifacts at Achiutla may have taken place after the first half of the sixteenth century, but nevertheless these materials serve to most strongly confirm Early Colonial occupation at both Terrace 10 and Terrace 13. Two such nails were found in the Colonial midden at Terrace 10, while seven of them were recovered from the ash pit at Terrace 13.

Fig. 7.51: Caret-headed nails recovered from the ash-pit at Terrace 13.

Fig. 7.52: Caret-headed nail recovered from the Colonial midden at Terrace 10.

What these caret-headed nails were used for is less clear. They have reportedly been found in mule shoes at Colonial sites in Panama (Brecheisen 2003), though for smaller versions of these nails—the size of those found at Achiutla—it has been debated as to whether they could have functioned in this way (Blakeslee and Blaine 2003:212-213;
Schmader 2011: 321). These artifacts may have had multiple functions, particularly as Achiutla’s native residents acquired them.

Few other metal artifacts were found in good context at Achiutla. Among them, in the Colonial midden at Terrace 10, was a piece of wire with a looped end (Fig. 7.53), as well as another iron piece, pointed at both ends, with a helical thread (Fig. 7.54). The latter object may have been used as a drill or large screw. In sum, the data indicate that Achiutla’s native residents had significant access to metal objects during the Early Colonial period. The lead artifacts suggest indigenous families may have been involved in the manufacture of certain metal materials, and Colonial records indicate they participated in mining at the site. For iron objects, on the other hand, these were likely acquired directly or indirectly from Spaniards, at least until native involvement in ironworking became more prevalent during the last quarter of the sixteenth century (Terraciano 2001: 236). These materials were acquired and appropriated while pre-Hispanic traditions of manufacture and use of lithic tools persisted, suggesting that European-introduced technologies did not simply replace indigenous ones (Rodríguez Alegría 2008). Instead, native residents creatively employed both old and new technologies.

Fig. 7.53: Loop iron piece recovered from the Colonial midden at Terrace 10.
Carved Stones

This chapter concludes with description and discussion of the two carved stones found at Terrace 10, though more interpretation of these objects is found in the chapter to follow. As noted in the previous chapter, these stones were left *in situ* in the southeast storage compartment of the southern structure of the residential complex, and embedded face-down into the apex of the stairway just west of the residential complex, respectively. Both of these stones are made of soft white endeque stone, with dark slate mosaic inlays that provide contrast for their carved motifs. This decorative technique is reminiscent of the adornments of the cornices of Mixtec palaces, such as the Early Colonial Casa de la Cacica at Teposcolula, where stone endeque disks, or *chalchihuites*, are set against a black stone background, serving to symbolize the buildings as *huahi andehui* or “houses of heaven.” Thus, as evidenced by the Casa de la Cacica, this decorative architectural tradition continued into colonial times at Teposcolula, and excavations of the earlier church at the site of Yucundaa—the original center of Teposcolula before the population was resettled in the valley floor in 1550—show that this tradition was adapted into early religious architecture. A number of carved white endeque disks were found in association with the site’s first Dominican convent, bearing religious motifs such as the Dominican seal and a Santa María
symbol (Spores 2005: 281). These likely adorned the church in similar fashion to the stone disks at the Casa de la Cacica, and were almost certainly crafted by indigenous artisans.

I argue that the carved stones at Achiutla also contain Christian iconography and, though found in the Terrace 10 residence, were likely originally located in the community’s first church. The first stone (Fig. 7.55), found in the storage compartment, bears a rather generic floral motif with vestiges of red pain on the petals. The undulating form of its stem, however, suggests a European influence in the iconography. This stone measures approximately 36cm by 24cm. The second stone, meanwhile, measures approximately 61cm by 32cm, and exhibits a much more distinctive motif: small flowers growing out of a pedestalled vase with handles on each side (Fig. 7.56). In the sixteenth century, this motif is virtually only found in depictions of the Virgin Mary, most commonly in scenes of *The Annunciation*, during which Mary is informed by the archangel Gabriel that she is pregnant with the Christ child, and is given a vase of white lilies to signify her purity. The motif also appears at times accompanying the Virgin after the Christ child is born, and in other references to the Immaculate Conception. Similar motifs to that seen in the Achiutla example can be found in carved stone adorning the facades of sixteenth century Mexican convents in Cálpan (Fig. 8.57) and Tepoztlan (Fig. 7.58), in mural paintings inside the naves of Tepoztlan (Fig. 8.59), Cuauhtinchan (Fig. 7.60), and Huejotzingo, and in woodcut illustrations found within Fray Bernardino de Sahagun’s 1543 *Psalmodia Christiana* (Fig. 7.61).
Fig. 7.55: Carve stone recovered from the southeast corner storage compartment of the southern structure at Terrace 10.
Fig. 7.56: Carved stone recovered from the apex of the stairway at Terrace 10.
Fig. 7.57: Façade of a Posa chapel at the convent of Cálpan, Puebla, Mexico (from Aguilar 2013).

Fig. 7.58: Close-up of flower-vase motif adorning the Posa chapel at Cálpan.
Fig. 7.59: Façade of the entryway to the nave of the chapel of Tepoztlan, Morelos, Mexico (Photo by Elodie Dupey García).

Fig. 7.60: Close-up of flower-vase motif adorning the entryway to the Tepoztlan chapel (Photo by Elodie Dupey García).
Fig. 7.61: Mural painting within the nave of the chapel of Tepoztlan, Morelos, Mexico (Photo by Elodie Dupey García).

Fig. 7.62: Painted scene of The Annunciation within the nave of the chapel of Cuauhinchan, Puebla, Mexico (Image from Kiracofe 1995).
Examining the irregular angled edges of the two carved stones from Achiutla, it is rather evident that they were both carved out of larger scenes, while efforts were made to keep their flower motifs intact. Because both stones are so similar, and because the stone depicting the flower vase almost certainly comes from a Virgin Mary scene, I argue that both of these artifacts were taken from an Early Colonial church and curated at Terrace 10. While it is impossible to know with certainty which church they would have come from, the most obvious candidate would be a church in Achiutla, where native residents lived and where they would have attended mass. As the small chapel across from the Dominican convent appears to have fallen into disuse during the Early Colonial period, as I argued in Chapter 4, carved stones from this building could have perhaps been “scavenged” with little interference.

Fig. 7.63: Scene of *The Annunciation* in Sahagun’s (1543) *Psalmodia Christiana* (Image from the John Carter Brown Library).
from resident clergy at the site after the chapel was abandoned. Furthermore, while no carved stones adorn the facades of this chapel today, during a brief visit to San Miguel Achiutla during the summer of 2014, I was told by a number of people that several months prior a researcher from Mexico City had visited the town, and attempted to “investigate” the chapel during the middle of the night. The researcher was forced to leave town after attempting to do this without the municipality’s permission, but members of the community claimed that he had found a stone depicting *hojas* (leaves) embedded in one of the walls, its carved design facing the interior of the wall. Further investigation of the chapel—with the permission of the community—needs to be carried out in order to confirm this, but the account provides a tantalizing clue regarding the original location of the artifacts found at Terrace 10.

These carved stones indicate that native residents engaged with Catholicism and appropriated religious icons in complex ways. The next chapter, which provides broader synthesis and interpretation of the data, begins with further consideration of these practices and why they would have been carried out, as well as the potential meanings that would have surrounded them.
Chapter 8: Material Culture Practice and Tactical Appropriation at Early Colonial Achiutla

In this chapter I provide further synthesis and interpretation of the data presented in Chapters 6 and 7, focusing on Terraces 10 and 13 of the North Sector of Achiutla’s Pueblo Viejo. In examining various features and patterns in architecture and artifact assemblages, I argue that changes and continuity seen in material culture practices at Colonial Achiutla cannot be neatly explained by either acculturation or resistance models. Instead, the data suggest ways of “making do” on the part of indigenous families in the sense theorized by de Certeau, described in Chapter 2. While maintaining much continuity with pre-Hispanic ways of life in some respects, they simultaneously tactically appropriated materials, symbols, and bodies of knowledge introduced by the Spanish, toward a variety of ends. Though some of these appropriations were likely spurred in response to the demands placed on indigenous subjects by a colonizing power regime—such as the adoption of Christianity—I argue that many were not, but instead comprised active innovations by native persons faced with new opportunities and constraints. I consider these practices as tactics in the de Certeauian sense, in that they were likely creative and improvisational, motivated by a number of social, economic, and spiritual concerns. As such, cultural change at Achiutla appears less as the inevitable result of Colonial domination, but rather the composite outcome of complex practices and negotiations of power carried out by indigenous residents at the site.

This chapter begins where Chapter 7 left off, with a fuller consideration of the carved stones found at Terrace 10, their potential meanings, and reasons for curating them within the residential complex. The discussion then moves to a broader consideration of these artifacts and other architectural features at Terrace 10, in which I argue that through various manners,
residents there may have been making attempts to sacralize their domestic space in certain respects, in line with their understandings of Christianity. The chapter then shifts to a discussion of craft production, exchange, and appropriation of European-introduced technologies at Terraces 10 and 13. In examining practices including obsidian procurement and manufacture, and the adoption of metal tools, I suggest that while the data indicate that the Conquest disrupted aspects of the indigenous economy and interregional exchange networks, a tradition of obsidian production endured at Achiutla, in altered form, even as new technologies were also appropriated. Colonialism brought about transformations in persons’ entanglements with materials, which native families at Achiutla engaged with actively and creatively, though these entanglements also likely came with unintended consequences. I then examine more closely household provisioning and domestic consumption. In particular, I focus on ceramics, with emphasis on decorated serving wares, which I argue played important social roles in domestic feasting events, where aspects of identity were produced and reproduced collectively. Again, the data do not indicate either rapid adoption of Spanish customs, nor dogged resistance to them, but instead a complex mix of cultural continuity, reformulation, and tactical appropriation. The chapter then moves to contextualize these varied practices by way of a brief discussion of broader issues of the negotiation of power between Spanish authorities, native elites, and commoners, before providing a summary conclusion.

**Broken Flowers: Sacralizing Domestic Space at Terrace 10**

In Colonial Mexico, flowers were one of the kinds of religious icons that seemingly everyone could agree on. For Spanish clergy, flowers were associated with the heavens and human origins in the paradisiacal Garden of Eden (Burkhart 1992: 89). Their images
lavishly adorned sixteenth century Christian artwork in Mexico, perhaps most notably in the murals of Malinalco (Peterson 1993), but also in depictions of the Virgin Mary and many other contexts. Pre-Columbian cultures of Mesoamerica also widely associated flowers with ritual practices and sacred realms. For the Nahua of central Mexico, Book 11 of Sahagun’s (1959) Florentine Codex contains a whole section on “flower makers”—native craftspersons who specialized in creating ritual paraphernalia and adornments made of flowers. Throughout the codex, these flowers are commonly seen adorning sacred spaces and costumes of persons involved in ritual events, and being given as offerings during such rituals (Alcántara 2012). There is evidence to suggest that the Mixtec regarded flowers similarly. In the codices, flowers are frequently shown adorning crowns and costumes, and held in the hands of persons making ritual offerings and processions, such as a procession made by a group of four lords or priests from Apoala (Fig. 8.1). Flower motifs are also found adorning polychrome ceramics from Achiutla (Fig. 8.2) and elsewhere in the Mixteca (Forde 2006; Lind 1987). Meanwhile, Arena and Swadesh (1965: 39) note that the Mixtec word siya, recorded in the sixteenth century, referred specifically to a crown of flowers. Pohl (1994: 59) even notes a parallelism between white lilies seen in Dominican heraldic imagery and white flowers depicted on the robes of native priests in the codices.
Fig. 8.1: Lords holding flowers leading a procession from Apoala in the codex *Nuttall*, pg. 36.

Fig. 8.2: Polychrome ceramic sherd with floral motif from the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10.

Scholars studying the sixteenth century Nahua have further argued that for this culture, flowers were associated with a kind of upper world or heaven that fostered a further parallelism between Christian and native beliefs (Burkhart 1992; see also Alcántara 2012; Heyden 1983; Hill 1992). As summarized by Alcántara (2012: 121-122), this flowery upper realm was “a place full of light, heat, fire, war, singing, and dancing—a world in which
forces and powers manifested themselves among humankind.” Flowers themselves were manifestations of these sacred forces. It is less clear whether belief in a similar flowery upper realm existed for the Mixtec, as such realms are normally depicted as simple celestial bands in the codices, but a connection is found in the writings of Fray Gregorio García (2005: 324-326), first published in 1607. The cleric describes a Mixtec creation myth said to have occurred in the region of Apoala, atop a very tall hill known as “Place Where the Sky Was.” This place was considered the location of the palaces of the gods, home of the creator god and goddess, both named One Deer, who are depicted on page 48 of the codex Vienna residing in a celestial realm (Fig. 8.3). According to García (2005: 324), these creator deities had two sons who, while residing in their parents’ palace, made the world’s first sacrifices by way of burning offerings over ceramic braziers. The result of their sacrifice was the creation of a garden, which contained “trees that had flowers and roses, and others that had fruit, many fragrant herbs and other spices” (García 2005: 325, translation by the author). He goes on to say that this garden contained all that was necessary for making continued sacrifices to the gods. Thus this garden was located in a celestial realm was linked to the creation of the world, and the flowers within it could be used to make contact with the sacred.
For Mixtecs as well as Nahuas, then, flowers could have connoted celestial realms of creation that found parallel with the Christian Garden of Eden, and Catholic rituals involving flowers likely appealed to native persons in part due to their similarities with pre-Hispanic practices. Spanish clergy were often eager to exploit these points of connection as they allowed for the new faith to be received more swiftly and enthusiastically. Yet, for clerics, this eagerness at times gave way to ambivalence and doubt, as they realized that these points of connection or similarities between the religions could potentially serve as veneers beneath which idolatrous beliefs would continue to persist. Dominican Friar Diego Durán (vol. 2: 51), working among Nahuas of central Mexico in the middle of the sixteenth century expressed such ambivalence specifically regarding the matter of flowers:

[Before,] they used to fold flowers in their hands as they do today in some solemnities, particularly in the feasts of the Ascension and of the Holy Ghost around May, and in some others that correspond to their ancient ones. I see this and I remain silent, because no one notices it; then, I also hold my flower staff, as everyone else, even if I consider our great ignorance; thus there could be evil in it (translated in Alcántara 2012: 116, note 7).
It is perhaps not surprising that both the carved stones found at Terrace 10 depict flowers, as native residents were likely to have been most attracted to Catholic icons that resonated with more deeply entrenched beliefs, regardless of whether their conversions to Christianity were sincere or not. Why they placed them where they did within the household complex is a more complicated matter, however. The stones were evidently not for display, particularly in the case of the flowers associated with the Virgin Mary, embedded facedown in the architecture of the stairway. Intriguingly, this practice of embedding reused carved stones into new architecture in Colonial Mexico, while not known archaeologically from other studies of Colonial households, is common in another architectural context—that of churches. This is a phenomenon that is widespread throughout Oaxaca and central Mexico, and has finally been subjected to serious analysis in a thorough study by Eleanor Wake (2010). The practice has at times been attributed to the Spanish dismantling pre-Hispanic temples after the Conquest and building churches in their places, serving to symbolically represent the victory of the new religion over the old. As Wake (2010: 139) points out, however, there are reasons to doubt this was how native peoples understood this phenomenon: these churches, though designed by Europeans, were constructed with native hands (Kubler 1948), and the stones embedded within them are often carefully cut to preserve their images intact, and are placed face down, similarly to the Achiutla example. In a number of cases, such as at Teotitlán del Valle and Tututepec in Oaxaca, carved stones have been revealed embedded in the interior facades of buildings that were once concealed by being covered over in plaster. Furthermore, as seen at Achiutla, and in a considerable number of cases documented by Wake, this practice was not restricted to pre-Hispanic images, but included Colonial ones as well. Thus this was not simply a form of iconoclasm,
as Christian stone images were treated similarly, nor was it likely a form of convenient recycling, considering the care with which the images are commonly chiseled around and conserved. Further, there appears to be a degree of patterning in the kinds of motifs that were selected for this treatment. Remarkably, in her tabulation of motif categories found represented in stones embedded in Colonial Mexican churches, Wake (2010: Table 5.1) lists flowers as the most frequent of all.

While I have not found any other examples of this phenomenon reported in Colonial households archaeologically, sparse ethnohistorical sources suggest that embedding did indeed extend to the domestic sphere. As Wake notes, in the early 1800’s, Spanish captain Guillermo Dupaix (1969) documented this practice as still ongoing in a number of central Mexican villages while undertaking a broad survey of pre-Hispanic ruins. Notably, while the majority of the stones he recorded were embedded in walls, in the village of Mixquic he observed stones that were curated within buildings but not incorporated into architecture—thus similarly to the stone found in the storage compartment of Terrace 10’s southern structure—in both a residence, and the community’s tecpan or municipal palace (Dupaix 1969: 87-89). What is more, as Wake also highlights, Dupaix (1969: 74) often found these stones by asking local residents, who could direct him to who had them and where. Thus these objects were important enough that knowledge of them circulated relatively widely within native communities. Dupaix did not note any Colonial carved stones in his writings; however, he was interested only in pre-Hispanic artifacts and architecture, and thus may not have been inclined to remark upon any he encountered. Regardless, given the data from Achiutla, and that Colonial objects were treated similarly in churches, I suspect this treatment...
of Colonial stone images likely occurred elsewhere as well, if not in the communities visited by Dupaix.

Unfortunately for us, Dupaix ostensibly lacked an ethnographic streak, and either did not ask, or did not feel compelled to comment upon why people curated these stones in their homes, or what kinds of meanings were attributed to them. The only direct glimpse into this matter that I have come across is found in the idolatry trial in 1537-1539 of an indigenous noble from Texcoco, which is also examined by Wake (2010) and Hamann (2008). The noble, Don Carlos Ometochtli, was accused of, among other things, keeping dozens of stone idols, including ones bearing images of pre-Hispanic deities, within two houses belonging to his family and making offerings to them (Hamann 2008: 808-809). As both Hamman (2008: 809) and Wake (2010: 145) point out, one indigenous witness in the trial, named Grabiel Xaltemo, reportedly gave a remarkable response when asked if he had seen these idols: “Questioned if this witness saw the said idols in the said houses, he said that yes, he had seen those that were in the fabric of the wall, toward the outside, as broken stones placed in the wall, and he didn’t see anything more” (translated in Hamann 2008: 809).

What is most revealing here for our purposes is that, while this native witness was asked only about idols contained inside the house, he nevertheless immediately included those embedded in the external architecture of the buildings in the same category (Hamann 2008: 810; Wake 2008: 145). He did so likely to make clear that he could not have avoided seeing them, and was otherwise not involved in any activity that could potentially be construed as idolatrous. Indeed, as Hamann (2008: 810) notes, in the formal accusation against Don Carlos, reference is only made to those idols that could not be seen, placed within the walls and covered over with stucco. This shows us that for indigenous peoples in
the Colonial period, these embedded carved stone images were, if not always “idols,” at least potentially sacred things, things embodying or bound up with divine forces, regardless of whether or not they were visible or concealed. Here it is instructive to keep in mind the Nahua concept of *ixiptla*, the word most often used to refer to images of gods or “idols” in sixteenth century Mexico. As Gruzinski (2001: 51) states in a detailed examination of the concept, “The *ixiptla* was the container for a power: the localizable, epiphanic presence; the actualization the power infused into the object; a ‘being-here;’ native thought did not take the time to distinguish between divine essence and material support.” The image as *ixiptla* was not a representation of something else, located in another place or another time; instead it served to make that thing or that force present, even when it was concealed. Indeed, it was often necessary to conceal images in order to protect them, as multiple sources contain accounts of indigenous persons hiding pre-Hispanic carved stones in order to prevent them from being destroyed by the Spanish (Gruzinski 2001: 52-55). Hamann (2008: 811) meanwhile, returning to the idolatry trial of Don Carlos, argues that the carved stones concealed and stuccoed over within the interior walls of the Texcoco houses were divine presences that could still receive veneration, while those embedded and invisible on the exterior were considered *tlazolli* (sacred things whose lives as objects of veneration had ended) that served to imbue the structures with power. More broadly, these practices resemble acts of “ensoulment” that were common throughout pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica, in which the placement of sacred objects within structures served to animate and sustain important buildings (Joyce and Barber 2015; Mock 1998).

There is considerable evidence that Mixtec peoples also considered carved stone images as embodiments of powerful divine forces, as things that made these forces present,
even when they could not be seen. As we saw in Chapter 3, at Achiutla, the *ini ñuu*—the most revered “idol” in the community—was a carved green stone containing depictions of a bird and a serpent. Descriptions and depictions of similar carved stones abound in the codices and ethnohistorical sources as well. As Terraciano (2001: 271) points out, in fray Francisco de Alvarado’s (1962) *Vocabulario en Lengua Mixteca*, written in 1593, one of the entries for the general act of idolatry is *yoquidza ñuhu yuu quacu*, or “to make stone images.”

As seen in the codices and described in the ethnohistorical literature, these stone images were most commonly wrapped in cloth and concealed as sacred bundles (Hamann 2011: 389-400; Hermann 2008; Pohl 1994: 23-41; Terraciano 2001: 260-265). The wrapping and unwrapping of these bundles were central to interacting with the images. They were typically kept wrapped throughout the year, only unwrapped on certain occasions. On these occasions, various rites and offerings had to be performed before the image could be wrapped once more (Pohl 1994: 24; Terraciano 2001: 262). Thus the sacrality of these objects owed in significant ways to the fact that they were largely not made visible. This is consistent with an ideology seen throughout pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica, in which sacred persons and objects are often not meant to be looked upon. Hamann (2011: 325, emphasis original) writes, with regard to the practice of averting one’s gaze during religious rituals, that “Casting one’s eyes to the ground was a way to show respect, to acknowledge the blinding sun-like sacrality radiating from nobles and gods.”

In summary, I have argued that the carved stones at Terrace 10 depict icons that would have been compatible with both pre-Hispanic and Catholic notions of the sacred, in both cases bound up with associations with celestial worlds or heavens. The treatment of these objects—curated within a structure and embedded in the architecture of a stairway—
finds parallels with practices documented in churches and households elsewhere in the Colonial period, but these practices appear to follow distinctly pre-Columbian logics concerning the treatment of images. I argue that these were means of making the sacred present, or imbuing space with sacred power. The residents of Terrace 10 ostensibly chose images of flowers as their means of presencing sacred forces; carved stone flowers likely taken from Achiutla’s first church. Earlier, I alluded to the idea that rituals involving flowers could provide veneers under which idolatrous practices could still continue, and as we saw in the case of the trial of Don Carlos of Texcoco, cited above, the embedding of carved stone images was also at times deemed an act of idolatry.

Yet I do not believe that what we see at Terrace 10 would have been considered idolatrous, at least by the inhabitants of the residence. While particularly for the case of the stone representing the vase of white lilies, the act of carving out the image of the flowers signifying the Virgin’s purity can potentially be read as iconoclastic, the question remains as to why this image would have been sought after if the intent was to merely continue a pre-Hispanic form of religious practice. It cannot be known whether residents of Terrace 10 acquired these stones with or without the knowledge of the town’s resident clergy, but if friars would have considered this idolatrous, then taking the carved stones would have been an especially risky act of appropriation, particularly if other alternatives were available, such as recycling pre-Hispanic carved stones or commissioning new ones. Instead, I believe these artifacts in part reflect an embracing of Christianity rather than a rejection of it, albeit one that was filtered through indigenous sensibilities. These stones were likely curated not only because doing so was compatible with pre-Hispanic beliefs, but because of these objects’ associations with Catholicism and with the church. Indeed, the specific spatial placement of
the stone representing the vase of white lilies at the apex of the stairway may be particularly telling. While stairways were viewed in pre-Columbian cosmology as passageways between upper and lower worlds, they were also seen as pathways to the heavens in Catholicism. This relationship was made clear in graphic form in a woodcut illustration from fray Benito Hernandez’s *Doctrina Xpiana en Lengua Misteca*, which he compiled in Achiutla and published in 1568. The image (Fig. 8.4) depicts a friar holding a bible at the base of a stairway, with God seated in heaven above, and the Latin phrase *scala celi*, or “stairway to heaven” written just below the image, the same phrase translated into Mixtec above it. Residents of Achiutla exposed to fray Benito’s sermons would have undoubtedly been familiar with this concept and furthermore, as van Doesburg and Swanton (2008: 88-90) point out, elites of Achiutla and other communities within the region likely collaborated with fray Benito in the *Doctrina’s* composition, as the reverential form of the Mixtec language, which was largely restricted to native elites, is strongly present in the text. There is thus evidence to suggest that Achiutla’s elites were receptive to Christianity, and may have been interested to appropriate elements of it that they found particularly powerful.
Thus while the selection of flowers for this kind of appropriation likely owes to parallels in the roles these objects played in Christian and pre-Hispanic worldviews, their placement likely owes to similar parallels in ideas of sacred space. As we have already seen, stones with flower imagery are known to most commonly have been embedded in Colonial
churches in Mexico. Furthermore, I argued in Chapter 6 that the circular feature in the center of Terrace 10’s patio was a Colonial architectural innovation, likely inspired by the layouts of interior cloisters within Dominican convents. Likewise, the arch stones associated with the southern structure of the residential complex were also architectural elements that indigenous residents of Achiutla would have first been exposed to in Early Colonial churches. Taken together, I argue that these features may evidence an attempt by Terrace 10’s residents to construct their domestic space that in certain ways mimicked Christian churches, appropriating elements from them to similarly imbue their household with sacred presence. These appropriations, while very much informed by pre-Hispanic semiotic ideologies (Keane 2003) concerning the nature and power of images, simultaneously suggest that the terrace’s inhabitants were receptive of and drawn to aspects of Catholicism, creating a hybridized view of the sacred.

A desire on the part of native elites to sacralize their homes in ways similar to Catholic churches becomes more plausible in light of accounts from sixteenth century idolatry trials, analyzed by Hamann (2011). A case from 1536, albeit from Mexico City, deals with the arrest of a native religious specialist named Don Martín Ocelotl, who was reported to have kept a shrine or oratorio within the patio of his palace that contained murals depicting saints (Hamann 2011: 320). Meanwhile, in 1544, during the idolatry trials of Yanhuitlán, the indigenous noble Don Domingo was accused of arranging for a visiting vicar to say mass at a chapel that he had within his home (Hamann 2011: 325-326). These attempts at mimicry of churches within native households at times bred fear of mockery on the part of Colonial authorities, in ways echoing those described by Bhaba (1990), and a principal from Teposcolula described Don Domingo’s act precisely as a mockery of
Christianity (Hamann 2011: 325-326). I am in agreement with Hamann (2011: 330), however, that these practices more likely represent creative acts of bricolage or tactical appropriation. Native peoples of Achiutla and elsewhere were drawn to aspects of Catholicism not to mock them, but because they took them seriously; they presented new ways of manifesting and interacting with divine forces.

De Certeau (1984: 37) writes of tactics, of peoples’ means of making do in unequal relationships of power, that: “The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power.” What we see here at Achiutla with these carved stones is perhaps something quite different then, at least in a literal sense. The residents of Terrace 10 appropriated iconic objects of a foreign power, but then incorporated them into a space that was decidedly of their own making. As discussed in previous chapters, this space was located in what was the center of pre-Hispanic power at the site, a rather private domestic space, in a location that maintained a commanding view over the churches below it. To perhaps extend the spatial metaphor, these objects were not only incorporated into physical structures, but ideological structures as well. The carved stone flowers, while in part evidencing an embracing of Christianity, were likely appropriated for their connections to pre-Hispanic cosmology, and were treated in ways consistent with indigenous understandings of the power of images. Though it is not clear whether Colonial authorities would have approved of such practices or not, their limited presence at Achiutla likely precluded them being able to fully monitor and control these acts of appropriation. In the next section, I examine how other objects and materials, from diverse places, were also brought into the spaces of Colonial native households at Achiutla through networks of exchange.
Shifting Networks of Exchange and Material Entanglements

As seen in previous chapters, the presence of the obsidian workshop at Achiutla indicates that the community participated in an extensive network of interregional exchange during the Postclassic period. Connections with central Mexico, from where the bulk of the obsidian would have been imported, are perhaps not surprising, given that the polity appears as part of a tributary province of the Aztec Triple Alliance in the codex *Mendoza* (discussed in Chapter 3). It is likely, however, that these connections existed prior to the Aztec conquest of the site, which probably occurred in 1511 or 1512, just prior to the arrival of the Spanish (Hassig 1988: 232). Given that the Aztec conquest of Achiutla occurred so late, it is curious that the overwhelming majority of the obsidian imported there came from the source of Pachuca, which ethnohistorical accounts strongly suggest was controlled by the Aztecs during the fifteenth century (Pastrana 1998). Obsidian from this source exhibits a distinctive green color that can be identified macroscopically (Braswell et al. 2000). During preliminary analysis of obsidian materials recovered from Achiutla, frequencies of green vs. non-green artifacts were recorded for all analyzed contexts (Table 8.1). For both the random sample of 500 obsidian artifacts analyzed from the workshop debris context (the Iglesias Sector test pit), as well as for the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10, green obsidian accounts for over 90% of each of the respective samples. These frequencies are on par with ratios of green vs. non-green obsidian at Late Postclassic Xaltocán (presented in ratio form as 13.7 :1), a site adjacent to Tenochtitlan that was clearly under Mexica domination (Rodriguez-Alegría 2008: 39).
Table 8.1: Frequencies of green obsidian artifacts from excavated Postclassic and Colonial contexts at Achiutla.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>No. Total obsidian artifacts</th>
<th>No. Green obsidian artifacts</th>
<th>% Green obsidian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iglesias Sector Test Pit</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>90.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace 10 Postclassic Midden</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>97.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace 10 Colonial Midden</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>59.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace 10 Circular Feature</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>69.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data at hand suggest that during the Postclassic, Achiutla was importing its obsidian almost exclusively from Pachuca. This raises the interesting question as to how they were able to acquire it. In this section, I argue that this was likely due to their ability to play an intermediary role in facilitating exchange between central Mexico and the Oaxaca coast.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Burgoa recounts a tale of a battle between Achiutla and the coastal empire of Tututepec that arose in Postclassic times over a dispute regarding the holding of a joint market by the two polities, suggesting an economic relationship in which stakes were high. Tututepec was the capital of a Mixtec empire that stretched along the Oaxaca coast and remained independent of the Aztecs throughout the Postclassic, and the polity was enriched by its access to lowland and marine resources (Joyce et al. 2004, 2014; Levine 2011; Spores 1993). Tututepec likely utilized its advantageous economic position in part to exchange lowland goods for materials such as obsidian that they needed to import from the highlands (Joyce et al. 2004, 2014; Levine 2011; Levine et al. 2011; Spores 1993), and excavations of Late Postclassic households at the site have demonstrated that commoners there not only had access to considerable amounts of obsidian in general, but that much of it
came from Pachuca. For Late Postclassic households at Tututepec, 44% of all analyzed obsidian material came from Pachuca, second only to the source of Orizaba in frequency (Levine 2014: Table 6.5). As Levine and his colleagues (2011: 129) point out, by the middle of the fifteenth century, the Aztec empire was likely encroaching upon Tututepec’s territory, and Tututepec’s political elites were unlikely to have allowed Mexica *pochteca* merchants to enter the community, given that these merchants were notorious for playing dual roles as “spies,” gathering information to facilitate conquest of rival polities (Hassig 1985). Levine and his colleagues (2011: 219) argue that while residents of Tututepec acquired high quantities of Pachuca obsidian during this time, they likely did so via intermediaries, and perhaps at markets held in relatively neutral boundary zones, as described by Pohl and his colleagues (1997). Achiutla would have almost certainly been an important one of these intermediaries, and it is notable that Putla, site of the joint market that was to be held by Tututepec and Achiutla, is located precisely in one of these boundary zones (Pohl et al. 1997). Moreover, according to Durán (1994: 470-471), the Aztec conquest of Tlaxiaco (and, concomitantly, its ally Achiutla) was prompted when envoys from the already-conquered province of Coixtlahuaca, accompanied by Aztec *calpixque* (tribute collectors), were robbed by people of Tlaxiaco while returning to Tenochtitlan. Where exactly these envoys were returning from is not specified, but given that they passed by Tlaxiaco, it is implied that they travelled considerably further south than Coixtlahuaca itself, and I believe this may indicate that they were journeying further down a trade-route between the highlands and the coast.

A closer consideration of the Tlaxiaco-Achiutla province’s appearance in the tribute list of the codex *Mendoza* provides more evidence of the polity playing an important intermediary role in exchange between the Aztec Triple Alliance and coastal regions. While
the tribute they paid collectively with the kingdoms of Tlaxiaco and Tzapotlan included cochineal, which was available locally, the bulk of the tribute they are shown to have paid was in non-local goods, including 400 mantles of cotton cloth, and 400 quetzal feathers. Cotton may have come directly from the coast, while quetzal feathers likely were acquired from the humid highlands of Guatemala and Central America, perhaps via coastal trade routes. We cannot assume that Achiutla and its fellow conquered polities always paid their tribute in precisely these items or in these quantities because, as Gutierrez (2013; see also Gutierrez et al. 2009) demonstrates, Aztec tribute demands were more fluid and subject to negotiation, and depictions in sources like the codex Mendoza did not always match realities on the ground. Nevertheless, the appearance of these goods here indicates at the very least that Aztecs believed they could acquire them via Achiutla and these other polities, and this likely served as a motivating factor in conquering them.

Meanwhile, Levine (2011: 31), citing extremely high frequencies of small spindle whorls recovered from commoner households at Tututepec, argues that residents of the site were producing surplus cotton cloth for market exchange. The dearth of spindle whorls recovered from residential excavations at Achiutla, as mentioned in the previous chapter, may suggest that families here were acquiring cotton in the form of pre-spun thread or finished mantles. Though sampling of Postclassic commoner households needs to be carried out to determine whether this pattern holds, no spindle whorls were found in surface collections during the reconnaissance discussed in Chapter 4, nor do Kowalewski and colleagues (2009) make any mention of spindle whorls in their broader survey of the surrounding region. Residents of Achiutla, if not spinning fibers themselves, could have acquired spun cotton thread from Tututepec in exchange for obsidian, and some of this
cotton, woven into finished mantles, would have then been passed onto the Aztecs as part of the polity’s tribute payment just prior to contact with the Spanish. The Aztecs, cognizant that they could not trade for certain exotic goods directly with Tututepec, may have thus had incentive to provide communities like Achiutla with access to obsidian from Pachuca in order to facilitate indirect acquisition of these products, even prior to conquering these communities. In the case of Achiutla, people here apparently imported obsidian as raw material rather than as finished tools and prepared cores, then manufactured prismatic blades in surplus, which they may have benefited from economically.

The confluence of the presence of the obsidian workshop at Achiutla and the documented payment of tribute to the Triple Alliance in coastal goods provides strong indication that the polity constituted a significant node in networks of exchange extending from central Mexico to the coastal lowlands during the Postclassic, regardless of whether this took place during the period when it was subject to the Aztecs or prior. Achiutla’s province may not have been unique in this regard, as the Oaxacan provinces of Coayxtlahuacan (Coixtlahuaca) and Coyolapan (Cuilapan) are shown in the Mendoza paying tribute in coastal goods as well. While scholars have long recognized Postclassic Mixtec polities as economically important for producing luxury goods such as polychrome pottery (e.g., Nicholson and Keber 1994), at times referring to them as “affluent production zones” from world systems perspectives (Smith and Berdan 2003), the data here suggest more dynamic roles for sites like Achiutla. People here did not have immediate access to valued materials that were geographically circumscribed such as obsidian and cotton, yet they appear to have been able to use their position along exchange networks to acquire them and, in the case of obsidian, in such great quantities that they were able to engage in surplus production. Even
under Aztec subjugation, families at Achiutla likely negotiated their positions within these extensive webs of Postclassic interregional exchange for socio-economic gain.

Archaeological and ethnohistorical evidence indicate that aspects of these networks endured over time, and that indigenous residents of Achiutla were actively engaged in attempts to maintain these interregional connections. As discussed in the previous chapter, data from Terrace 10 indicate that Colonial indigenous residents there were still acquiring and using obsidian in considerable amounts. A legal complaint from 1601 reveals that residents of Achiutla continued to pay tribute to Spanish and native authorities in cotton cloth, among other goods (Terraciano 2001: 240). Other historical documents provide more glimpses into interregional exchange at the site. A legal record from 1616 documents the purchase by a man from Tehuacán, Puebla—an important locale along the route from Oaxaca to central Mexico—of over 1,000 goats from a resident of Achiutla (AJT-Pr, 01:10.24). Just earlier, in 1604, another legal record involves a case in which an indigenous merchant from Yanhuitlán stopped in Achiutla with his muleteer along a return trip from the “mar del sur” or Pacific Ocean (AJT-Pe, 07:02). The muleteer was tried and convicted of attempting to rob the merchant he was accompanying during their stopover in the community.

Thus residents of Achiutla maintained links with the Mexican highlands and Oaxaca coast, to a degree, but evidence also indicates disruption of these networks, likely due to both native demographic loss throughout Mesoamerica, as well as Spanish interference in indigenous exchange. As we saw in the previous chapter, while data from the Colonial midden at Terrace 10 indicate that native residents continued to have access to considerable amounts of obsidian, the frequency of obsidian artifacts per 1000 ceramic rim sherds in this context is dramatically lower than that seen in the Postclassic midden excavated in the same
area. As we also saw, the high frequency of obsidian debitage found within the circular
feature in the center of the Terrace 10 patio suggests that manufacture was taking place
within households rather than workshop contexts. Thus, at some point after the Conquest,
native elites were likely no longer able to acquire the large quantities of obsidian necessary to
organize surplus production in workshops and, at least in the case of Terrace 10, were
carrying out more limited production within their homes. Furthermore, if we look back at
Table 8.1, we can see that the channels through which residents of Achiutla acquired
obsidian likely shifted as well. While in the Postclassic contexts of the Iglesias Sector test pit
and the Postclassic midden at Terrace 10, green obsidian accounts for over 90% of all
analyzed materials, in the Colonial contexts of the circular feature and the Colonial midden at
Terrace 10 these frequencies drop to between 69 and 59%. A chi-square statistical test
comparing frequencies of green obsidian vs. non-green obsidian in the two Postclassic
contexts to the two Colonial contexts indicates the differences are statistically significant
($\chi^2=106.762$, $P<0.0001$, Cramer’s $V=0.32$). While the majority of the obsidian that Terrace
10’s residents acquired continued to come from Pachuca during the Colonial period, they
used this material less exclusively than before.

A number of factors likely account for the decreases in consumption of obsidian in
general, and of green obsidian specifically. Almost certainly, the fall of the Mexica Triple
Alliance and the concomitant severing of political ties that Achiutla had to it would have
played a large role. As a result, merchants who traded obsidian from other sources likely had
more opportunities to exchange with Achiutla’s residents, and vice-versa. What is perhaps
surprising, however, is that the data suggest a continued preference for green obsidian from
Pachuca, as it constitutes over 50% of the obsidian artifacts in each Colonial sample, despite
other options having ostensibly opened up. For example, the closest source of obsidian to Achiutla was Pico de Orizaba in Puebla, and the majority of obsidian artifacts recovered from Late Postclassic households at Tututepec come from this source (Levine 2014: 170). From economic perspectives focused on factors such as efficiency and maximization, we might expect a greater shift to reliance on materials from Orizaba and elsewhere at Achiutla, yet the preference for Pachuca obsidian instead appears to endure. While scholars have noted that preferences for Pachuca obsidian in Mesoamerica may have in part owed to the material’s fracture mechanics allowing for more efficient blade manufacture (Ponomarenko 2004), scholars have also noted that green obsidian was also likely valued for its color and symbolic associations (e.g., Levine 2014; Levine et al. 2011; Pastrana and Athie 2014). The data suggest that despite disruptions in interregional exchange networks, residents of Achiutla still actively sought out this material.

Disruption of exchange networks may have affected families at Achiutla on a more local level as well. Though I discuss acquisition and use of ceramics in more depth in subsequent sections of this chapter, ceramic data may be indicative of this. As noted in the previous chapter, frequencies of fine cream and burnished monochrome serving wares drop sharply in the Colonial midden at Terrace 10. Burnished monochrome wares are not reported as common elsewhere in the Mixteca, and reasons for their decrease in frequency are unclear. Speculatively, if this is in fact a more localized serving ware, its drop in frequency may be due to changing tastes during the Colonial period, demographic loss impacting local producers, or a combination of factors. Fine cream wares, on the other hand, were distributed widely throughout the Mixteca Alta in the Postclassic, and they continue to be highly frequent in Colonial contexts excavated in the Nochixtlán Valley and at Yucundaa.
Why Achiutla should deviate from this pattern is unclear. Differences may in part owe to discrepancies in times of occupation at these sites that have yet to be teased out via more refined dating. Yet the drop in frequency in fine cream wares at Achiutla may also reflect disruptions in regional exchange networks that led to less access to goods produced closer to the Nochixtlán area. Future chemical characterization of Postclassic and Colonial ceramic materials from various sites in the Mixteca may shed more light on these relationships.

While disruptions in exchange networks led to more restricted access to certain objects and materials, they created new possibilities as well, particularly with regard to goods newly introduced to the region by the Spanish. As discussed in previous chapters, data indicate that crafting activities involving lead took place, particularly at Terrace 13, though it is unclear whether these activities related to ceramic glaze production, silver refinement, or other kinds of craft production. Documentary sources shed little to no light on manufacture and uses of lead in Colonial Oaxaca, however, as we saw in Chapter 3, we do know that silver mining took place at Achiutla during the sixteenth century. Because lead commonly occurs in ores with silver, it is possible that access to it for residents of Achiutla arose as an unintended consequence of Spanish imposed silver mining. While more research is needed to fully understand the nature of lead manufacture at the site, it was perhaps the case that even oppressive Colonial labor demands opened new opportunities for appropriation for indigenous residents by way of such unintended consequences.

Iron objects, meanwhile, were first imported to the Mixteca from Europe and central Mexico in the Early Colonial period, but as discussed in the previous chapter, ethnohistorical records indicate that by the mid-to-late sixteenth century, local ironworking had become fairly common. As Romero Frizzi (1996: 182-183) notes, iron objects would have been
rather costly for Mixtec commoners to acquire, often prohibitively so. But such was not likely the case for higher status nobles, as suggested by the evidence from Terraces 10 and 13. More insights regarding native acquisitions of iron objects are provided by the Colonial codex Sierra, from the nearby community of Tejupan, written between the years 1550 and 1564. The codex primarily documents the use of funds held within Tejupan’s community chest for tribute payments to Colonial authorities, for purchases of objects for the community’s church, and for food and other materials required for religious celebrations. These transactions are depicted using pictographic representations of the objects purchased and funds spent side by side with Roman alphabetic descriptions of the transactions in Nahuatl. For our present purposes, the document is most interesting in that it shows iron objects purchased by natives with considerable regularity for Tejupan’s church. While some of these objects are rather ornate, most are utilitarian items purchased for general upkeep, including iron nails like those found in residential excavations at Achiutla. The codex depicts 400 nails purchased in 1558 for 6 pesos (Fig. 8.5), priced at 1.5 pesos per 100 nails, a relatively inexpensive cost (León 1933: 33).

Fig. 8.5: A purchase of metal nails, depicted in the codex Sierra, pg. 17.

The Sierra also occasionally depicts purchases of objects for domestic use, including metal goods, particularly for hosting important visitors. On page 54 of the document (Fig. 8.6), one row depicts purchases made for a large fiesta held in honor of a visit by a Spanish
bishop. The accompanying text lists the items purchased as including six tablecloths, 12 napkins, 12 plates, six spoons (not depicted pictographically), and two pairs of metal knives, totaling 21 pesos in cost. While the appearance of plates here is an interesting matter that I will return to later in this chapter, the inclusion of knives in this purchase is most germane to the matter at hand. It is impossible to extrapolate from this lump purchase the exact cost of individual metal knives. The tablecloths alone, however, would have accounted for approximately 8 pesos of the cost, given depictions of tablecloth purchases elsewhere in the document, leaving the cost of the remaining items together at approximately 13 pesos. Even if metal knives were among the more expensive of these remaining items, the document suggests that Mixtec nobles could likely afford them and had ready access to such items.

![Fig. 8.6: Depiction of metal knives (highlighted with red arrow) in the codex Sierra, pg. 54.](image)

Thus, similarly to their contemporaries at Tejupan, nobles at Achiutla would have had the means of acquiring various metal objects, and likely had frequent opportunity to do so at markets. And while we saw in the last chapter that residents of Achiutla certainly did use certain metal objects, including nails, the fact that no fragments of metal knives or other cutting implements were recovered in excavations is telling. Despite having access to these
goods, residents of Terrace 10 not only continued to use obsidian cutting implements, they
continued to manufacture obsidian blades, despite disruptions in the obsidian trade discussed
previously, and despite the simultaneous emergence of new European-introduced
alternatives. These data support Rodríguez-Alegría’s (2008) argument that it is erroneous to
assume metal cutting tools should have rapidly replaced lithic ones in Colonial Mexico based
on assertions of the inherent technological “superiority” of the former. Not only are such
assumptions problematic in that they are bound up with Euro-centric biases regarding
superiority and efficiency, they ignore a number of other factors that may affect whether
natives choose to appropriate aspects of foreign material culture or not. Rodríguez-Alegría
(2008: 41) argues that at Colonial Xaltocan, access to means of production was a major
reason why indigenous people at the site revived traditions of obsidian manufacture there
rather than adopting metal cutting implements. The situation at Achiutla is perhaps more
complex. We have seen that native residents here similarly had access to means of obsidian
production, as best evidenced by debitage in the circular feature at Terrace 10. At the same
time, however, they did acquire other metal objects, and residents of Terrace 13 were
involved in lead production during the Colonial period. Moreover, as discussed previously,
ethnohistorical sources indicate that indigenous nobles elsewhere in the immediate region
owned metalworking houses by the late sixteenth century (Terraciano 2001: 236), and the
above-cited Codex Sierra shows natives of Tejupan regularly purchasing iron objects, likely
at markets. At least for indigenous elites at Achiutla, a lack of access to metal objects and/or
to the technologies involved in their production does not appear to sufficiently explain why
they would have continued to produce and use obsidian implements instead.
Returning to the depiction of metal knives in the codex *Sierra*, seen in Fig. 8.6 above, it is notable that this purchase was prompted by the visit of a Spanish bishop, and that this is the *only* purchase of metal knives seen in the entire codex. While purchases of food and ceramic vessels are seen frequently in the codex for religious celebrations, knives otherwise never accompany these items. This depiction in the *Sierra* bespeaks an indigenous awareness of Spanish dining habits, and an effort to accommodate an honored guest. Simultaneously, it indicates an awareness of *difference* in European and native habits, depicting a rare occasion upon which unusual items were necessary for a commensal feasting event at which foreigners were present. Just as Spanish officials had deeply entrenched habits with regard to food preparation and consumption, indigenous Mixtecs had their own. Obsidian prismatic blades had been bound up with the daily rhythms of food preparation and other crafting activities for thousands of years, and these sensibilities endured despite people being confronted with new technological alternatives and different traditions of material culture practice. This cannot simply be chalked up to a stubborn conservatism, as we have already seen that residents of Achiutla simultaneously appropriated Spanish-introduced religious symbols, architectural forms, and other aspects of material culture fairly readily. Nevertheless, despite ruptures in interregional exchange following the Conquest, residents of Achiutla actively continued to acquire, produce, and use obsidian cutting implements, concomitantly continuing practices involving these artifacts that distinguished themselves from Spanish colonizers, regardless of whether signification of this difference was intentional or not. Such practices would thus have served to reproduce aspects of indigenous identity.

Native residents of Achiutla maintained continuity with the pre-Hispanic past, while at the same time selectively appropriating newly introduced material culture objects by way
of their involvements in broad exchange networks. Reasons for doing so cannot be neatly ascribed to pure economizing logics, nor to blanket ideological motivations to either adopt or resist Spanish customs on the whole. Instead, these were likely contextually contingent tactical maneuvers born out of a combination of social, economic, and ideological concerns simultaneously fostered perpetuations, innovations, and combinations of traditions. More fine grained analyses in the future—for example, by way of micro-residue analyses examining particular uses of obsidian and metal artifacts—may shed more light the kinds of practices that led to these phenomena.

While I have been highlighting how indigenous families were active in driving these dynamics, it is important at the same time to consider how new entanglements with materials and webs of exchange came with potential costs and unintended consequences as well. Involvements in lead processing like that evidenced at Terrace 13, for example, undoubtedly came with serious health risks that native Mixtecs were unlikely to have been aware of, at least initially. This is a problem that continues to plague the Oaxacan community of Atzompa today, where lead glaze continues to be used in ceramic production (Pérez 2007). Colonial evidence of this phenomenon might be gleaned in the future via studies of bone chemistry. Furthermore, as discussed previously, documentary sources indicate intensive raising of silk, wheat, and European-introduced fauna at Early Colonial Achiutla. Introduction of these species had potentially disruptive consequences for local eco-systems, erosional patterns, and other environmental dynamics, an important topic for future research. Spores (1984: 217) cites a legal complaint lodged jointly by the communities of Achiutla and Tlaxiaco in 1614, in which residents claimed that large herds of sheep and goats from a nearby ranch had caused significant damage to native-owned cultigens and salt wells.
Reliance on these industries as sources of income was fraught with other risks bound up with dependency (Hodder 2012: 17-18) as well. For example, successful silk raising depended upon the survival of silkworms which, as the codex *Sierra* makes clear, was a constantly tenuous matter (e.g., Léon 1982: 58). These new material entanglements also fostered new socio-economic entanglements that were likewise fraught with risk. To again use the example of silk, while this industry was successful in the Mixteca for a considerable part of the sixteenth century, it met a swift and sharp decline near the end of the century due to a combination of factors including new plagues of European-introduced diseases that swept through the region, and economic competition with China, who drastically lowered the price of silk exported to the Americas (Borah 1934:94). Socio-economic continuity and change at Achiutla depended then not only on local dynamics and individual sensibilities, but on entangled relations of people and things that stretched across oceans.

Though material entanglements at Achiutla extended from central Mexico, to the Oaxaca coast, to even East Asia and beyond, it was nevertheless in lived practice that the effects of these entanglements were instantiated and negotiated. Therefore, in the next section, I turn the focus back inward to the micro-scale of the household. As materials flowed into households via these broad networks of exchange, they helped create new possibilities, new constraints, and new risks, regarding how native families could negotiate social, political, and spiritual relationships, and how identities could be formulated.

**Ceramics and Socio-politics**

This section focuses on indigenous domestic practice at Achiutla by way of further examination of the Postclassic and Colonial ceramic assemblages recovered from Terrace 10. To begin examining changes and continuities in household activities, I first present
frequencies of rim sherds recovered from these two contexts, merging the various types described in the previous chapter into broad functional categories largely corresponding to those defined by Lind (1987: 87-88). These categories are dubbed “kitchen ware,” “ritual ware,” and “serving ware,” only the latter title deviating from Lind’s terminology in favor of a more culturally neutral description. Below (Table 8.2) I present frequencies for each of these categories, then go on to discuss each in turn.

Table 8.2: Comparison of frequencies of functional categories of ceramic rim sherds (by count and weight) from the Postclassic and Colonial middens at Terrace 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kitchen Ware</th>
<th>Ritual Ware</th>
<th>Serving Ware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count (%)</td>
<td>Weight (%)</td>
<td>Count (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postclassic Midden, Terrace 10*</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Midden, Terrace 10**</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Total rim sherds for this context number 905, weighing 18,482 grams.
** Total rim sherds for this context number 453, weighing 4,790 grams.

Kitchen Wares

The category of kitchen ware includes medium brown and micaceous wares from the Achiutla artifact assemblages, both of which appear to have had utilitarian cooking and storage functions. In looking at the figures in Table 9.2, it can be seen that the largest discrepancy between the two middens is in the frequencies of these ceramics. In both sherd count and weight, frequencies of kitchen wares rise by over 20% in the Colonial midden at Terrace 10. This pattern is very similar to that noted by Lind (1987: Table 37), who in comparing Natividad and Convent phase middens at Yucuita shows proportions of kitchen wares rising from 27% to nearly 42% in the Colonial Convento phase. Lind (1987: 105-106), citing Spores (1967: 232), points out that ethnohistorical documents demonstrate that
Mixtec nobles continued to receive tribute in the form of domestic services from commoners during the Colonial period, which included making tortillas and other tasks involved with food preparation. At the same time, records also indicate that Mixtec nobles lodged complaints that Spanish colonizers impeded their access to these domestic services during the Colonial period (Spores 1967: 162-164). Thus, Lind (1987: 106) concludes that this diminished access to domestic labor forced indigenous nobles to perform more food preparation themselves, accounting for the notable rise in the frequency of kitchen wares.

The data presented here from Achiutla support this conclusion, though it must be noted that several other factors apart from competition between Spanish authorities and Mixtec nobles over tribute from commoners may have contributed to this phenomenon. First, as discussed in Chapter 3, in 1601 commoners at Achiutla lodged a complaint that native nobles and the Spanish alcalde of conspiring together to impose unfair labor demands (Terraciano 2001: 240), suggesting that the relationship between the latter two parties was not always competitive. A reduction in tribute to nobles at Achiutla may therefore also have resulted from successful negotiation of these demands by commoners. Alternatively, as we have also seen, the Colonial period ushered in new collective industries at Achiutla, such as silk raising. Labor requirements for these industries may have siphoned off tributary labor that could have otherwise been dedicated to domestic services and other tasks.

While frequencies of kitchen wares may suggest a reorganization of domestic labor for native noble families at Achiutla, a closer examination of the forms of these vessels indicates considerable continuity in household provisioning. Below (Table 8.3) I present a comparison of frequencies of utilitarian vessel forms from the Postclassic and Colonial middens at Terrace 10, based on counts of diagnostic medium brown rim sherds from these
contexts. These data were recorded only for rim sherds that were large enough such that form could be inferred confidently, and that clearly corresponded to unique vessels, resulting in lower sample sizes than in the previous ceramic comparisons. Nevertheless, the data reveal interesting patterns.

Table 8.3: Comparison of utilitarian medium brown vessel form frequencies from the Postclassic and Colonial middens at Terrace 10, based on counts of diagnostic rim sherds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vessel Form</th>
<th>% Postclassic Midden, Terrace 10 (n=144)</th>
<th>% Colonial Midden, Terrace 10 (n=79)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comal</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jar</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowl</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neck-less jar</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patojo</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the two contexts, frequencies of comals and bowls are very close to one another, which were both likely used for cooking. While there are pronounced discrepancies in frequencies of jars and neck-less jars, these may have both been used similarly for storage. The neck-less jars are relatively large, averaging 24.7cm in rim diameter, making them unlikely to have been used as drinking vessels. Further, the aggregated frequency of the two forms is similar across the two chronological contexts. Why there would be a shift towards more frequent use of neckl-ess jars in the Colonial period is unclear. Nevertheless, the similar frequencies in cooking vessels in the Postclassic and colonial deposits compliment the preliminary faunal analysis presented in the previous chapter in suggesting little change to native culinary practices following the arrival of the Spanish.

Though perhaps rulers and nobles would have had most access to livestock and plants like wheat that were introduced from Europe, there is little to indicate that these comestibles were consumed in significant quantity, at least as evidenced by ceramics and archaeofauna.
Future paleoethnobotanical analyses of flotation samples and artifact residues will further explore this issue. The data currently at hand suggest that, in similar fashion to obsidian cutting implements discussed previously, Colonial indigenous nobles at Achiutla continued preparing and consuming foodstuffs as they did in pre-Hispanic times despite having new alternatives available to them. While these were likely deeply habituated practices cultivated over generations and centuries, the rupture of the Colonial encounter would have made native residents aware of possibilities of doing otherwise. The preliminary evidence presented here suggests that residents of Achiutla may have continued these practices all the same.

_Ritual Wares_

Returning to table 8.2, a much more pronounced change is seen in the frequencies of ritual wares—principally ladle censers and incised braziers—as these vessels become virtually absent in the Colonial midden. As described in the previous chapter, depictions in the Mixtec codices suggest that both brazier forms were used in religious ceremonies (see also Lind 1987, 1994). For the Postclassic, frequencies of ritual wares at Achiutla are considerably high in comparison with Lind’s (1987: Table 37) data from Chachoapan and Yucuita, where they account for less than 1% of rim sherds in all reported contexts. At Achiutla, by contrast, ritual wares account for over 11% of total rim sherds in terms of count, and over 21% in terms of weight, though the higher figure for weight likely owes to the fact that brazier fragments—the most frequent type of ritual wares—tend to be relatively thick and bulky.

Particularly given their high frequency in the Postclassic midden, it is somewhat surprising that remains of ritual vessels are nearly absent in the Colonial refuse deposit. While this undoubtedly owes at least in part to Spanish efforts to curb idolatry, we have seen
that Terrace 10 was a rather private domestic space that could not have easily been monitored by ecclesiastical authorities, and at the same time, Spanish presence at the site was so limited that such surveillance would have been difficult to carry out regardless. That is to say, if people living at Terrace 10 wanted to continue practicing pre-Hispanic rituals using these objects within their household, they likely could have done so with little consequence.

The low frequency of ritual wares in the Colonial midden becomes more curious when one takes into account Burgoa’s (1934: 339-341) description, as discussed in Chapter 3, of pre-Hispanic mortuary rituals being conducted within a cave in the surrounding Achiutla valley during the Early Colonial period, supposedly witnessed by fray Benito. It is possible that the deposition of materials in Colonial midden at Terrace 10 postdates these practices. Alternatively, it may be that while pre-Hispanic types of rituals continued to be carried out in special contexts such as mortuary caves, these practices did not extend into other spheres like that of the household. Here it is of note to recall that in Burgoa’s description, the caciques interred within the cave at Cumbre de Cervatillos were persons that Hernández had known as good Christians. Though Burgoa’s account paints the discovery of the cave as a scandal revealing the persistence of idolatry, contradicting fray Benito’s previous assessment of sincere Christian conversion, it is important to remember that for many Mixtecs, matters of religious conversion were not the kinds of “either-or” propositions that Spanish clerics framed them as. For natives, it was not necessarily contradictory to alternatively carry out both Christian and pre-Hispanic rituals, or to mix them together (e.g., Hamann 2011:330; Terraciano 2001: 317). Certain natives of Achiutla may have largely embraced Christianity and ceased to practice certain kinds rituals, like the kinds associated with ritual wares found in Terrace 10’s Postclassic midden, yet nevertheless have been
involved in other forms of pre-Hispanic ritual on special occasions. In day-to-day practice, they may very well have largely comported themselves as “good Christians” regardless.

In summary, the precipitous drop in ritual wares in Terrace 10’s Colonial midden suggests that the kinds of domestic rituals involving ladle censers and braziers, so abundant in the Postclassic midden, largely halted. Obsidian lancets, associated with bloodletting rituals and found in the Postclassic midden, are likewise absent in Colonial contexts, as documented in the previous chapter. This is perhaps to be expected, given that the carved stones and other architectural features at the terrace indicate an embracing of certain elements of Christianity, albeit fused with pre-Hispanic logics. Moreover, as noted previously, language in fray Benito’s sixteenth century *Doctrina* suggests that native elites assisted in the translation of the text and, by extension, in the larger product of evangelization. Yet I would stress caution in reading these phenomena as indicating a kind of monolithic “completeness” of conversion. Certain occasions, such as the practice of mortuary rites alluded to above, may have still prompted enactments of pre-Hispanic forms of ritual. One possible example of this might be found in the sub-floor unit excavated in the south structure of the patio complex of Terrace 10. As described in Chapter 6, relatively complete fragments of an incised brazier were found deposited under the three stucco floors of the structure, which I tentatively interpreted as an offering. Dating of this context is needed in order to determine whether the deposition of this material took place in the Postclassic or during the Colonial period, but if the latter is the case, this may represent the endurance of one such ritual, perhaps consecrating a new construction phase of the household.
Serving Wares

While domestic rituals appear to have largely halted at Terrace 10 during the Early Colonial period, one form of ritual clearly persisted—that of household feasting. As Table 8.2 shows, the frequency of serving wares does not drop terribly in the Colonial midden at Terrace 10, by just over 10% in terms of counts of rim sherds, and by only 4% in terms of weight. As argued by Lind (1987: 106) and evidenced in ethnohistorical records (Spores 1967: 162-164; Terraciano 2001: 321-314), serving wares were likely often used by Mixtec elites when hosting commensal celebrations for their retainers, guests, and others. This is clearly in part the continuation of a pre-Hispanic tradition, and a rich literature exists on archaeological evidence of domestic feasting for the Postclassic Mixteca and elsewhere in Mesoamerica (e.g., Brumfiel 1987, 2004; Clark and Blake 1994; Hendon 2003; Hernández 2005, 2008, 2010; Levine 2007: 364-377; Pohl 2003b; Yaeger 2000). Commensal feasting continues to be an important component of social and ritual life in some Mixtec communities to this day (e.g., Monaghan 1995).

Elsewhere I (Forde 2006) have argued, following scholars such as Brumfiel (2004: 242) and Dietler (2001: 67) that these ritual feasts were socially and symbolically charged events, where ideologies and worldviews were collectively produced and reproduced. On Postclassic Mixtec polychrome ceramics, painted designs served in part to express and reinforce salient themes of these ideologies. Here, I would like to push that argument further. In focusing on whole vessels rather than individual design motifs, I theorize ceramics used in these ritual feasting contexts as signs that were bundled together with persons and practices to help potentially signify identity as discussed in Chapter 2. Particularly in the aftermath of the Colonial encounter, as interactions with Spaniards created conditions of heterodoxy a
la those outlined by Bourdieu (1977) for indigenous Mixtecs, practices bound up with these events were less apt to be taken for granted and more prone to discursive reflection. As natives were familiarized with and gained access to other ways of carrying out these practices, by way of newly introduced items of material culture and exposure to foreign dining habits, there were greater possibilities of doing otherwise, for symbolizing and interpreting identities as other. As such, in these commensal contexts where social bonds were forged and reinforced, more was at stake in terms of identity politics amidst this historical rupture.

Returning to the data, we see that the midden materials from Terrace 10 indicate a fair bit of continuity with regard to the frequency of ritual feasting. A closer examination of the specific types of serving wares used, however, reveals rather stark changes. Presented below are frequencies of types within the broader category of serving wares for the Postclassic and Colonial middens, calculated by number of rim sherds (Table 8.4). It becomes immediately evident that while for the Postclassic midden, undecorated fine creams and fine brown monochromes are the most frequent types of serving wares, the pattern shifts drastically in the Colonial midden. In stark contrast, polychromes become the most frequent type in the Colonial midden, and tin-enameled maiolicas are the second most frequent, slightly higher than fine cream wares.
Table 8.4: Percentages of serving ware rim sherds by type for the Postclassic and Colonial middens at Terrace 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fine brown monochrome</th>
<th>Fine cream</th>
<th>Polychrome</th>
<th>Tin-enameled maiolica</th>
<th>Other glazed ware</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrace 10 Postclassic midden (n=601)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace 10 Colonial Midden (n=253)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The jump in the frequency of polychrome ceramics is perhaps unexpected, but a similar increase in polychromes is seen in Lind’s (1987: Table 36) data from the Colonial midden at Yucuita as well. What is curious about the Achiutla case is that this increase appears to coincide with the adoption of wheel-thrown glazed ceramics, which are virtually absent in the assemblages excavated by Lind (1987: 98). Taken together, the Achiutla data baffle traditional models of acculturation and resistance, which tend to posit either rapid replacement of indigenous technologies by those introduced by colonizers, or cultural conservatism on the part of natives and rejection of foreign material culture, respectively (see review in Liebmann and Murphy 2010). Residents of Terrace 10 appear to have simultaneously appropriated Spanish-introduced styles of serving wares while using the most artistically elaborate form of indigenous pottery more than ever before.

What could account for this pattern? Lind (1987: 108-110) groups types of serving wares from Chachoapan into the categories of “commoner and elite dinner wares,” the elite variety including more elaborately decorated ceramic types such as polychromes. He notes a significant increase in these more elaborate types of serving wares following the Spanish
Conquest, and attributes this phenomenon to indigenous concerns regarding social status. He notes that Mixtec nobles repeatedly had to prove their status to Spanish authorities in order to maintain their social privileges, and argues that they thus made efforts to assert their status symbolically and distinguish themselves from commoners through architecture, dress, ceramics, and other aspects of material culture (Lind 1987: 115). While maintaining status was of no doubt an eminently important concern for Mixtec nobles during the Colonial period, it could be seen as curious in the Chachoapan and Yucuita cases that such nobles ostensibly did not adopt European-style glazed wares as means of signifying status, especially if, as Lind surmises, their main concern was asserting this status to Spanish authorities.

Rodríguez-Alegría (2010) takes a somewhat different tact in his examination of the distribution of Colonial glazed pottery at Xaltocan, in the Basin of Mexico. His analysis reveals that, contrary to initial expectations, European-style ceramics at the site do not cluster around the main plaza, where indigenous rulers would have lived, but instead in more peripheral areas inhabited by lower nobles and commoners. He interprets these data as indicating that the latter groups—aspiring to heighten their statuses in the wake of disruptions to indigenous power structures following the Conquest—deployed novel Spanish-style ceramics in their own household feasts to impress other native community members, attract followers, and possibly rise in status as a result (Rodríguez-Alegría 2010: 65). Rulers, meanwhile, more secure in their status, are argued to have not needed such objects, instead relying on more traditional material culture in feasting events they hosted, but at the same time adopting other Spanish symbols of status including clothing, swords, and horses (Rodríguez-Alegría 2010: 65-66). This interpretation provides more nuance, as
while it similarly theorizes serving wares as playing a role in signifying status for indigenous hosts, it considers how such signification was directed not only to Spaniards, but native commoners as well. Natives needed sanction from Spanish authorities to gain and maintain positions of power, true, but it was the support of commoners who largely made these positions possible, and the attendees of domestic feasts would have predominantly been indigenous community members. Rodríguez-Alegria’s interpretation thus brings more attention to how these feasts not only served to produce social difference, but also social cohesion through collective identity.

What remains unclear for the Xaltocan case discussed above, however, is why European style maiolicas would have been preferentially used. Rodríguez-Alegría (2010:65), drawing from archaeological literature on feasting focused on social “aggrandizers” (e.g., Clark and Blake 1994), relies on the somewhat universalist argument that these wares would have been inherently impressive due to their exotic and shiny qualities. Yet if this were the case, why would higher elites of Xaltocan not similarly have adopted these wares, given their broad appeal? While the statuses of rulers and high nobles may have been more firmly entrenched, maintaining their positions would still have required continuous negotiation with Spanish authorities and native subjects. The pattern is not easily explained, perhaps because meanings surrounding maiolica ceramics are somewhat elusive. While they have often been assumed to be markers of high status by archaeologists studying Colonial encounters in the Americas, Voss (2012) shows that for late eighteenth century Northern California (a case that is admittedly at far remove from Early Colonial Mexico), imported maiolicas were among the cheapest types of ceramics available. Voss (2012), while noting that circumstances may vary greatly across time and space, implores caution in immediately
viewing such ceramics as markers of high status. While Rodríguez-Alegría’s (2010) argument may prove correct for Xaltocan, maiolica ceramics may have signified differently for residents of Early Colonial Achiutla.

Returning to the Mixteca, meanings bound up with maiolica ceramics are similarly elusive, however, I would like to suggest that during the sixteenth century natives may have symbolically associated these vessels more closely with notions of Spanish identity. The one tantalizing suggestion of this that I have come across in the ethnohistorical record comes from the purchase depicted in the codex Sierra, discussed in the previous section of this chapter with regard to metal knives. In the same depiction of items purchased for the hosting of a Spanish bishop in Tejupan, we see a representation of plates, painted white, four stacked on top of each other (Fig. 8.7). The concentric circle within the top plate may depict a brim, similar in form to the brimmed maiolica plates found in the Terrace 10 Colonial midden. Just below, we see another vessel in profile, also white, that exhibits an everted rim similar to these vessels. That these vessels are painted white stands out, because throughout the rest of the document, serving wares are often depicted in purchases of food for religious feasts, yet these are *always* painted red, pink, or yellow (Fig. 8.8), sometimes with curved conical tripod supports like those found on Colonial polychromes as well (Fig. 8.9). The representation of white plates is the only one of its kind found in the codex, and it accompanies metal knives purchased for a Spanish bishop. Furthermore, in the alphabetic text in Nahuatl describing this purchase, the plates are referred to by using the Spanish loan word *plato* (Fig. 8.10), suggesting that a word for this particular item may not have existed in native Mesoamerican languages at the time. Taken together, I suggest that the codex provides indication that these
types of ceramics may have been viewed as relatively unusual and foreign, associated with
Spanish colonists and authorities.

Fig. 8.7: Close-up of white plates depicted in the codex Sierra, pg. 54.

Fig. 8.8: Close-up of items purchased for a religious feast, including wine, cacao, turkeys, a tripod cajete carrying tortillas, and a mortar and pestle for grinding chiles in the codex Sierra, pg. 3.

Fig. 8.9: Close-up of cajetes with curved conical supports in the codex Sierra, pg. 13.
Why would residents of Achiutla have used considerable quantities of these maiolica ceramics? First, on certain occasions, they may very well have hosted visiting Spanish authorities and invited them to dine within their households. Particularly when Achiutla’s caciques were not in residence, as was often the case during the sixteenth century, responsibilities for entertaining such foreign visitors likely fell to members of the high nobility. In this sense, the situation may have resembled that which Rodríguez-Alegria (2005b) proposes for Colonial Spanish households in Mexico City, in which the confluence of decorated maiolicas and indigenous decorated serving wares associated with these households is interpreted as indicating that their residents were simultaneously entertaining both Spaniards and natives. At the same time, these ceramics could also have signified ties that elite natives had to Spanish authority and served as symbols of prestige. Indeed, documentary sources suggest that native elites at Achiutla at times employed material culture to do just that, as two separate legal records from the community contain requests from native nobles for permissions to ride a horse, carry a sword, and wear Spanish clothing (Romero Frizzi 1996).

While matters of status were no doubt at play during domestic feasting events at Achiutla, what was perhaps more critical for native elites was fostering ideas of shared identity and social cohesion, and this may account for why indigenous polychrome ceramics occur far more frequently than glazed wares in the Colonial midden at Terrace 10. Though
Spanish authorities may have occasionally attended such events, household feasts likely were more frequently held to entertain other indigenous nobles and commoners, upon whom elites relied on for support to maintain their positions of authority. Thus matters of status did not simply entail signification of social difference, but of producing and reproducing collective identities through commensal practices that required generosity and redistribution of wealth (Dietler 2001: 76-82; Rodríguez-Alegría 2010: 65). Colonial polychrome ceramics, though in certain ways distinct from their pre-Hispanic antecedents, were elaborate forms of serving ware that were decidedly not Spanish, and evoked continuities with the Postclassic past. The overt symbols related to ideology found on Postclassic polychrome ceramics and codices (Forde 2006) may have been absent in these new forms, yet such symbols were not replaced with Spanish iconography in the Achiutla materials, but instead with abstract geometrical motifs. As these objects continued to circulate in contexts of indigenous commensality and social negotiation, they likely were similarly entangled with notions of indigenous identity, even if these identities, like the ceramics themselves, were changing. Bundled with pre-Hispanic practices of food preparation and consumption, these notions would have been further reinforced.

For native elites at Achiutla, fostering social cohesion with other indigenous community members may have been more crucial than ever following the Spanish Conquest, which might explain the sharp rise in polychrome ceramics in the Colonial period. In the wake of disruptions to pre-Hispanic systems of political authority, tensions between elites and commoners could potentially be exacerbated. For example, as discussed in Chapter 3, in 1601, a group of commoners from Achiutla and its subject communities refused to continue paying tribute to nobles, and accused them of conspiring with the Spanish alcalde mayor to
exploit their labor for profit (Terraciano 2001: 149), which resulted in these commoners winning a legal settlement. For native elites at Achiutla, there was therefore a danger in appearing to identify or ally with Spaniards too closely, a danger in “acculturating too much.” They had to negotiate between the demands of Spanish authorities as well native commoners, both of whom they relied upon for their positions of power, two groups who had vastly different social agendas. Indigenous nobles therefore had to strike a delicate balance between tactical appropriation of Spanish practices, continuity with the pre-Hispanic past, and reformulations of traditions, as they navigated these complex social dynamics. They had to deploy different kinds of material culture in different moments, in different contexts, that had the potential to be bound up with how their identities were signified, whether they intended to do so or not. The data from Colonial households at Achiutla, which on the whole indicate continuity, appropriation, and reformulation occurring simultaneously, suggest that indigenous elites were indeed attempting to walk this tight rope, but as the ethnohistorical account just cited shows, these efforts could nevertheless still be met with failure.

The Ties That Bind and Fray

Spanish colonialism left native elites at Achiutla, like their counterparts throughout much of Mesoamerica, in an especially precarious sort of bind. They were accountable to their native subjects, a situation that was by no means new, as Mixtec rulers and commoners had been negotiating relationships of power for centuries (e.g., Blomster 2008; Joyce 2010; Joyce et al. 2014; Levine 2011). Yet they were now simultaneously accountable to Spanish authorities, who could potentially help enable them or alternatively strip them of power. New tribute demands imposed by Spanish colonists had the potential to create or exacerbate
tensions between native elites and commoners, and as we saw in the 1601 case referenced above, the latter could refuse or resist these demands.

Such potential for resistance placed elites in a doubly vulnerable position, because they were valuable to Spanish colonists and allowed to maintain positions of power precisely due to their ability to mobilize native labor for agriculture, industry, church construction, and other tasks. For indigenous rulers and nobles then, any erosion of their credibility with commoners could simultaneously damage their credibility with Colonial authorities. This made for a state of affairs that verged on the paradoxical—elites were left to negotiate the essentially diametrically opposed social agendas of two groups of people upon whom they depended for their authority, while also attempting to maintain privileges for themselves, which likewise risked generating conflicts with both of these other constituencies (see also Yannakakis 2008). Adding perhaps a final layer of irony to this situation, just as Spanish authorities depended upon and encouraged the exploitation of native labor by elites, enhancing the risk of sparking unrest amongst commoners, the legal system they imposed at the same time provided commoners new channels through which to voice this unrest and resist the demands of nobles, as the 1601 conflict in Achiutla also makes clear. Indigenous residents of Achiutla were able to tactically appropriate Spanish legal practices in order to negotiate these conflicts.

Though the Spanish imposed these new structural conditions, as we saw in Chapter 3, they otherwise had limited presence in Achiutla. Clerical presence was largely limited to one or two friars at a time, civil officials were based in the alcalde of Teposcolula, over 20km away, and encomenderos not only did not reside in the town, but were at times venturing off to places as distant as Florida. Thus while the Spanish certainly interceded in matters
involving the church, tribute, and introducing new industries like silk and wheat production, outside colonial centers in places like Achiutla, they largely left indigenous people to sort out the messy details of these arrangements for themselves. As they did so, internal conflicts at times emerged. Prior to the 1601 conflict, in 1578 a native gobernador of Achiutla—likely a member of the high nobility—was charged with abuse of authority after entering the house of resident Juan Delgado and taking over 68 pesos in gold and textiles that were bequeathed to Delgado by his late wife (Spores 1984: 203). Yet as we also saw in Chapter 3, in various external conflicts, people of Achiutla were ostensibly able to come together to assert autonomy and resist Spanish authorities at certain moments. Fray Benito Hernández’s Dominican predecessor was driven out of town, and fray Benito himself was imprisoned within the community for a time. Rebellions and imprisonments of representatives of the alcalde mayor took place in both 1580 and 1629. Complaints were lodged in 1591 against Dominican clerics who had purportedly abused native residents that challenged their claims to land.

I point to the above events and the social dynamics underlying them to highlight the fact that even though Achiutla may have been a relatively peripheral community in Colonial Mexico with little daily Spanish presence, the population was nevertheless profoundly impacted by the Conquest in multiple and complex ways. I have emphasized the lack of daily Spanish presence in order to make clear that the ways in which native residents made do and coped with these new realities were not inevitable results of Colonial hegemonic domination, but were instead active, creative, diverse, and contextually contingent. In doing so, I hope to have elucidated certain ways in which indigenous peoples were agentive in driving many of the social and cultural changes that followed the Conquest, rather than
casting them as passive victims of the inevitable. At the same time, in discussing these agentive practices and how residents of Achiutla maintained aspects of autonomy and cultural continuity, I reference the kinds of rupture and conflict that accompanied the Colonial period above to underscore that the effects of the Spanish Conquest were nevertheless severe. While highlighting aspects of indigenous agency during this period, I hope to avoid doing so in any way that might trivialize or naively ignore the very real forms of trauma, suffering, and injustice that native peoples experienced over the course of the Colonial encounter. I hope to have avoided some of the trappings of a focus on resistance that risk casting such encounters in a romanticized light (Abu-Lughod 1990; Brown 1996; Liebmann and Murphy 2010). I instead seek to approach a middle ground between emphases on resistance and domination, between polarized narratives that historian Vincent Brown (2009: 1235) contrasts, in discussing the historiography of African slavery, as “hopeful stories of heroic subalterns versus anatomies of doom.”

Native elites at Colonial Achiutla employed a diverse array of tactics as they coped with new circumstances that were rather chaotic, as pre-Hispanic religion was oppressed, political and economic relationships were disrupted, and populations were ravaged by epidemics of disease. While retaining considerable measures of power and autonomy, elites were faced with new demands from Spanish religious and civil authorities, which in part helped spark new tensions with commoners that they had to juggle simultaneously. In looking across different types of practices and material culture archaeologically, it is therefore not surprising that we do not see uniform trajectories of change or continuity, but instead mixed patterns reflecting how native families employed different tactics contingently and improvisationally while navigating this rocky and varied socio-political terrain.
Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to synthesize data from the residential excavations at Achiutla and trace out the ways in which indigenous families at the site coped with Colonial rule along three principal threads. First, in a closer examination of the carved stones found at Terrace 10, I explored matters of religion and argued that the practice of curating these stones suggests an embrace of Christianity and an appropriation of its symbols influenced by a pre-Hispanic logic regarding the power of images. More broadly, I offered that these stones and other features of the architecture at Terrace 10 indicate that Terrace 10’s residents were attempting to make their domestic space sacred in part by constructing it to mimic aspects of Catholic churches. On the whole, I take the data to suggest that these native elites were not resistant to Christianity, but engaged and appropriated it in complex ways that were bound up with pre-Hispanic worldviews.

In the next section I then moved to matters of economics principally by way of examining the endurance of pre-Hispanic relationships of interregional exchange, the ways in which these relationships were disrupted, and how natives at Achiutla also appropriated new materials like ferrous metals. I argued that during the Late Postclassic, Achiutla managed to negotiate its position along a trade route between central Mexico and the Oaxaca coast to obtain green obsidian from Pachuca for surplus production, and to acquire goods from or by way of the coast. During the fifteenth century, Achiutla likely played a role as an intermediary facilitating indirect exchange between the powerful empires of the Mexica and Tututepec. I then argued that after the Spanish Conquest, these economic relationships with the Mexican highlands and the Oaxaca coast endured to an extent despite political upheaval, as archaeological evidence shows that obsidian was still being manufactured at Achiutla,
while documentary sources indicate residents were still acquiring coastal goods such as cotton, and that traders from disparate regions continued to pass through the site. In examining why residents of Achiutla would have continued to manufacture and use obsidian cutting implements, I then moved to a consideration of alternatives they potentially would have had in the forms of metal tools introduced from Europe. Through archaeological and documentary evidence, I showed that native elites at Achiutla had access to certain iron objects such as nails, were likely involved in the production of lead, and would have been able to purchase other metal tools like knives at markets. Nevertheless, obsidian blades continued to be manufactured and used at Achiutla in high frequencies during the Colonial period, despite ruptures in networks of exchange that impacted how people were able to acquire this material. This continuity with regard to practices related to obsidian technology was therefore something that was maintained actively, rather than simply a product of cultural conservatism or other kinds of inertia. In sum, residents of Achiutla simultaneously maintained cultural continuity and appropriated new technologies as they became entangled with new materials and exchange networks, in ways that were not motivated merely by economizing logics.

The discussion then turned to matters of domestic practice, identity, and social negotiation through further examination and diachronic comparison of the ceramic assemblages from Terrace 10. I argued that the data indicate considerable continuity from pre-Hispanic times in terms of household provisioning and food preparation, as the forms of utilitarian vessels and the frequencies with which they occur exhibit little change over time. Conversely, ritual ceramic forms such as braziers and ladle censers show stark change, as these types of vessels virtually vanish in the Colonial period assemblage. These two
patterns—continuity in food preparation and rupture in domestic ritual—perhaps might be expected under models of cultural change that assume Spanish domination and hegemony, as colonizers may have been little concerned with mundane practices such as cooking, but greatly concerned with halting pre-Hispanic ritual practices. As I have tried to make clear, however, Spanish presence at Achiutla was so limited that none of these daily household activities could be monitored with any great frequency. Residents of Achiutla had options for doing things otherwise, and must be seen as playing more active roles in fostering these changes and continuities.

Issues of identity were then addressed through a focus on types of domestic serving wares used in Postclassic and Early Colonial times that would have signified aspects of social identity during household feasting events. The data show that while residents of Terrace 10 adopted Spanish-introduced forms of pottery like glazed maiolicas, at the same time they used more elaborate polychrome ceramics in the native tradition than ever before, a pattern that flies in the face of simple models of acculturation and resistance. I suggested that the glazed ceramics may have connoted associations with Spanish identity, and could have been appropriated to co-opt elements of prestige associated with Spanish authorities, or to actually entertain visiting Spaniards, which likely happened occasionally. Meanwhile, Colonial polychrome ceramics, while distinct from their Postclassic counterparts, exhibit considerable continuity with pre-Hispanic tradition, and I argued that their high rate of occurrence may owe to elites at Achiutla entertaining and negotiating relationships with other indigenous nobles and commoners with greater frequency due to social tensions that arose as a result of the Colonial encounter. In the last section, I tried to further contextualize these social dynamics through a broader discussion of the new kinds of sociopolitical pressures native
elites faced as they had to simultaneously attend to the demands of both Spanish authorities and Mixtec commoners.

The data I have presented are by no means without their limitations. The problem of small sample size, which plagues so many doctoral dissertation projects based on excavations, certainly looms large here. My discussion has largely been focused on materials from Terrace 10, an elite residence where two middens containing large quantities of refuse were found. Terrace 13 has mostly been discussed peripherally, as little in the way of primary refuse was recovered here, though architecture and associated materials indicate that it was occupied lower-status nobles or commoners during the Colonial period who were involved in similar practices. Considerably more research will need to be done in order to determine whether the patterns of material culture practice described for Terrace 10 apply to a large segment of the population at Achiutla, or are instead more idiosyncratic. This is particularly the case because the present analysis has been focused on elites at the site, and future research needs to be directed toward locating and excavating Colonial residences of commoners at the site, which are likely dispersed throughout the Achiutla Valley.

At the same time, however, it has not been my aim in this dissertation to conclude with sweeping generalizations or grand normative statements about what native peoples did following the Conquest, but rather examine the diversity of ways in which they made do during this period through the material evidence of their daily activities. While some scholars (e.g., Smith 2008: 101) have dismissed focusing on variability in colonial encounters as “postmodern posturing” that leads to “unremarkable conclusions,” others have argued that this variability and diversity is important (e.g., Gasco 2005; Liebmann and Murphy 2010b; Lycett 2005; Mitchel and Scheiber 2010; Rodríguez-Alegría 2005; Stein...
First, attenuating to this variability, quite simply, allows us to ground our interpretations more closely in empirical data, which are exceedingly variable for different colonial contexts. Moreover, it allows us to account for realities of indigenous experiences of colonialism in more nuance, to better examine the diversity of these experiences for various societies, and to shed light on internal divisions and tensions within these societies.

In following this approach, I have attempted to present social change not as something abstract, simply dictated by external stimuli, but instead as something that emerges through peoples’ daily experiences, activities, and decisions. In this regard, it is my hope that this study complements a broader body of archaeological scholarship informed by practice theory (e.g., Hodder and Hutson 2003; Hutson 2010; Januseck 2004; Joyce 2010; Joyce and Lopiparo 2005; Pauketat 2001) that treats cultural change as contingent and bound up with negotiations of power, rather than being guided by monolithic and systemic processes. The lives of the people who occupied the small sample of households at Achiutla examined in this study do not allow us to make broad generalizations about indigenous society during the Colonial period on the whole, but they provide important insights regarding what was possible for native families during this time, and into the complex ways in which people confronted this tumultuous period of history in daily practice.
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Fig. A.1: Dibujo planímétrie del sector del molino.

Esta pequeña área se define por la presencia de un molino histórico, presumiblemente para la molienda de trigo. Su fecha de construcción es incierta. Se encuentra a unos 200 metros al sur del Sector Sur, del otro lado del río sobre la planicie de inundación del valle. Presenta varios elementos arquitectónicos muy bien conservados que describimos a continuación.

El muro norte (Fig. 3.35) parece definir este espacio hacia el norte. Tiene 26.6m de longitud y 5,9 m de altura y está orientado a 30 grados al este del norte. Sobre su costado
norte se encuentran cuatro contrafuertes, mientras que una fila de nichos, cuya función no es clara, se extienden a todo lo largo del costado sur, a unos 105cm por encima de la base del muro. Al sur de este muro hay dos columnas cuadradas, cuyas dimensiones son de aproximadamente 62cm por 62cm (Fig. 3.36). Además de definir el límite norte del espacio, las funciones del muro norte o de las columnas no son claras.

Fig. A.2: El muro norte, sector del molino (cara norte del muro).
Cerca de las columnas en dirección sur hay un elemento que hemos denominado "la pila". Parece ser un elemento con seis lados, cavado en la tierra, que se hace más angosto a medida que se extiende hacia el suroeste, y que presenta además una pequeña abertura en su extremo suroeste que parece haber sido un conducto de desagüe. El conducto desemboca justo al sur en un punto donde la superficie del terreno desciende abruptamente. En los últimos años esta área fue gravemente dañada por una retroexcavadora (Fig. 3.37). Creemos que la pila era un depósito de agua cuyo líquido se liberaba con el fin de echar a andar la rueda de paletas del molino.
Fig. A.4: Desagüe de la “pila” y el daño causado por la retroexcavadora, Sector del Molino.

Por el lado oriental del elemento que llamamos la “pila” se encuentra un elemento que corre a unos 70cm junto a esta siguiendo todo su largo de esta. Se compone de dos líneas paralelas de piedras, separadas una de otra por un espacio que mide 65 cm y que tienen 22.5m de longitud. Hemos denominado a esta estructura "el acueducto" (Fig. 3.38) pues creemos que su función también fue la de canalizar el agua. Sin embargo, no sabemos exactamente cómo puede haber funcionado en concierto con la pila. Tendremos que ampliar nuestros conocimientos sobre este tipo de arquitectura.
Fig. A.5: El “acueducto,” Sector del Molino.

Hacia el sureste y a un nivel que está 4.25m abajo de la pila y el acueducto se encuentran los bien conservados restos de un gran edificio de 2 pisos al que hemos denominado Edificio 1 (Fig. 3.39). La pared norte del edificio se apoya sobre la superficie superior del corte donde se encuentran la pila y los otros elementos descritos anteriormente.
Este edificio mide 10.55m por 6m en planta, mientras que las paredes tienen una altura de hasta 7.56m. Aún se puede observar que sobre la pared este, alguna vez hubo dos puertas en dos niveles diferentes, una para cada piso del edificio. Cada puerta tendría 105cm de ancho antes de que fueran selladas (Fig. 3.40). No quedan restos del segundo piso, ni del acceso que conducía a él, pero la puerta superior antes mencionada y las oquedades a manera de nichos regulares que contienen fragmentos de vigas de madera a todo lo largo de las parte media de las paredes norte y sur nos permiten inferir que existió una vez un piso a ese nivel (Fig. 3.41). Sobre el costado sur del edificio hay un acceso que mide 6.2 m de ancho. El costado occidental presenta una pequeña ventana cuadrada cuyas dimensiones son de 65 por 65 cm.

Fig. A.6: Vista general del Edificio 1, Sector del Molino.
Fig. A.7: Muro este, Edificio 1, Sector del Molino.
Tenemos la impresión de que en este edificio donde se realizaba la molienda. Tres grandes piedras de moler, entre 90 y 95 cm en diámetro, y de 22 a 33 cm de espesor, se encuentran a las afueras del edificio hacia el sur (Ruedas 1-3; Fig. 3.42). Sospechamos que estas fueron movidas de su lugar original en los últimos tiempos, ya que dos de estas ruedas están sobre encimadas. Nuestra hipótesis es que alguna vez hubo una rueda de paletas de madera, situada justo al oeste de Edificio 1, que era alimentada por el agua de la pila y / o acueducto anteriormente mencionados. Dicha rueda hubiese estado conectada a las piedras de moler situadas en el interior del edificio a través de un eje que corría a través de la ventana que se observa en la pared oeste.
Desde la esquina noreste del Edificio 1, se extiende en esa misma dirección un bien construido muro de contención para una terraza. Dicho muro mide aproximadamente 18,5 m de largo. El muro de la terraza tiene 3,2 m de altura y presenta nichos a lo largo del costado exterior. Se desconoce la función que haya tenido este elemento.

Al oriente del muro de la terraza se encuentran los restos de otra pequeña estructura, que hemos denominado Edificio 2 (Fig. 3.43). Dicha estructura presenta un muro que aún permanece de pie y que mide 2.85 m de altura, pero que tiene sólo 1.5 m de longitud. Además se articula con otro muro, de menor altura que corre de norte a sur. Resulta curioso que haya otra rueda de piedra justo al occidente (Rueda 4) del muro. Desconocemos cual haya sido la función de Edificio 2.
En general podemos decir que fueron muy pocos los artefactos visibles sobre la superficie en el Sector del Molino. Se identificaron dos áreas pequeñas de escombros esparcidos, al norte y al sur del muro norte. Realizamos una colecta de la superficie aplicando el mismo procedimiento que habíamos empleado en el Sector de las Iglesias, es decir, usando círculos con diámetros de 10m alrededor de dichos lugares con escombros. Como era de esperarse, las cerámicas que encontramos eran en su mayoría poscontacto pero de fecha incierta, ya que presentaban un vidriado verde. Sin embargo, también encontramos varios fragmentos de braseros incisos del Posclásico al norte del muro norte, lo que sugiere que esta área bien pudo haber sido ocupado en tiempos prehispánicos.
El Sector del Molino: comentario general

Si bien es cierto que no somos expertos sobre la arquitectura de los molinos, esperamos haber hecho una descripción suficientemente detallada para que sea de utilidad a los estudiosos de la materia. La fecha de construcción del molino se desconoce actualmente, pero esperamos que la investigación de archivos pueda aclararlo. La presencia del molino genera varias preguntas que serían de interés para futuras investigaciones antropológicas. Por ejemplo, sería interesante saber si los residentes indígenas de Achiutla hubiesen tenido acceso a los productos de la molienda, y de qué manera ello pudo haber afectado la economía política de la comunidad.
Appendix B: Project Permits and Forms

This appendix includes copies of official permissions received from Mexico’s National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) to carry out the research presented in this dissertation, as well as the forms most commonly used to record data over the course of the research.

Project Permits

Field research was divided into two field seasons, in 2012 and 2013 respectively. The first was devoted to surface reconnaissance and mapping, the second to excavations of residential terraces. These permits are presented in the figures below.
Oficio Núm. 401.B(4)19.2012/36/0749
México, D.F., a 18 de abril de 2012

LIC. ENRIQUE ÁLVAREZ TOSTADO
DIRECTOR DE ASUNTOS DE LO CONSULTIVO
COORDINACIÓN NACIONAL DE ASUNTOS JURÍDICOS
PRESENTÉ.

Estimado Lic. Álvarez Tostado:

Anexo al presente me permito enviarle copia del documento aprobado por este Consejo de Arqueología, acerca de la "Propuesta de Investigación del "Proyecto San Miguel Achütla", que dirige el Mtro. Jamie E. Forde, Investigador del Departamento de Antropología de la Universidad de Colorado en Boulder. Lo anterior a fin de que se elabore la autorización correspondiente.

No omito aclararle que dicho proyecto está sujeto al cobro del 15% por tratarse de un proyecto financiado por una institución extranjera.

Sin más por el momento aprovecho la oportunidad para enviarle un cordial saludo.

ATENTAMENTE

DR. PEDRO FRANCISCO SÁNCHEZ NAVAR
PRESIDENTE DEL CONSEJO DE ARQUEOLOGÍA

C.c.p. Lic. Alfonso de María y Campos.- Director General del I.N.A.H.
Lic. Miguel Ángel Echegaray Zúñiga.- Secretario Técnico del I.N.A.H.
Arq. Jesús Pérez Sibaja.- Delegado del Centro INAH Oaxaca.
Sección de Arqueología del Centro INAH Oaxaca.
Archivo Técnico.
PFSN/csf.

CONSEJO DE ARQUEOLOGÍA
Av. de los Insurgentes No. 60, Entre Hidalgo y Av. de los Insurgentes
C.P. 06100, México D.F.
Tel.: 01 55 5520 1000
Fax: 01 55 5520 1005
email: consejo.arqueologia@inah.gob.mx

Fig. B.1: Permit from INAH’s Consejo de Arqueología to carry out the mapping phase in 2012.
MTRO. JAMIE E. FORDE  
INVESTIGADOR DEL DEPARTAMENTO DE ANTROPOLOGÍA DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE COLORADO EN BOULDER  
PRESENTÉ  

En seguimiento al Oficio núm. 401.B(4)19.2012/36/2307, relacionado con el informe y propuesta del Proyecto San Miguel Achivitla, me permito agradecer el envío de la información solicitada por este Consejo, con lo cual la propuesta ha sido aprobada.  

Sin otro particular, aprovecho la oportunidad para enviarle un cordial saludo.  

ATENTAMENTE  

DRA. MARÍA DE LOS ÁNGELES OLAY BARRIENTOS  
PRESIDENTE  

C.c.p. Endojo. Sergio Raúl Arroyo García - Director General del INAH.  
Dr. Roddy E. Cortes Ulloa.- Secretario Técnico del INAH.  
Dr. Pedro Francisco Sánchez Navia.- Coordinador Nacional de Arqueología.  
Lic. Humberto Carillo Rovalaba.- Coordinador Nacional de Centros INAH.  
Arq. Eloy Jesús Peralta.- Delegado del Centro INAH Oaxaca.  
Sección de Arqueología del Centro INAH Oaxaca.  
Archivo.  
MAOB /asf.  

CONSEJO DE ARQUEOLOGÍA  
Avenida No. 12, 2do. Piso (entrada por Diocesana)  
Colonia Centro, Delegación Cuauhtémoc, C.P. 06000, México, D.F.  
Tel.: (55) 5702 6434  e-mail: consejo.arqueologia@inah.gob.mx  

Fig. B.2: Permit from INAH’s Consejo de Arqueología to carry out the excavation phase in 2013.
Project Forms

In the figures below, I present the forms most commonly used to record data over the course of the excavation season at Achiutla in 2013.

**PROYECTO ARQUEOLÓGICO SAN MIGUEL ACHIUTLA 2013**

**Excavation Form**

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<td>End Date:</td>
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Top Elev: SW _____ NW _____ NE ____ SE ____ Center __
Bottom Elev: SW _____ NW _____ NE ____ SE ____ Center __

**Lot Description:**

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Notes:

Associated Features:

**Physical Relationships**

This lot underlies lot: [ ]
This lot abuts lot: [ ]
This lot overlies lot: [ ]

**Digital Photos**

Photo number(s): __________
Date(s) taken: __________

**Artifact Inventory (Field Specimen Numbers)**

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<td>Cerámica</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Obsidiana</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedernal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hueso</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piedra Pulida</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piedra de Moler</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concha</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flotación</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otro</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

**Drawings or sketches:**

________________________________________________________________________

Fig. B.3: Standard lot form used during the excavation phase at San Miguel Achiutla in 2013.
Fig. B.4: Standard field specimen log used during the excavation phase at San Miguel Achiutla in 2013.
Fig. B.5: Standard datum log used during the excavation phase at San Miguel Achiutla in 2013.
Fig. B.6: Standard photo log used during the excavation phase at San Miguel Achiutla in 2013.
Appendix C: Achiutla Ceramic Types Compared by Weight

In Chapter 7 (Tables 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3) frequencies of ceramic types recovered from selected contexts at Achiutla are presented in terms of counts of sherds, as the datasets to which these figures are compared are likewise all tabulated in terms of sherd counts. However, weights of sherds, rather than counts, can be argued to be a more preferable means of evaluating ceramic frequencies for a variety of reasons, and during initial analyses of the Achiutla ceramics carried out during 2014, weights of various types were recorded in addition to frequencies. In this appendix, I therefore present frequencies of ceramic types for the same contexts presented in Chapter 7 as measured by weight, for interested readers and/or those with comparable datasets.

Table C.1: Ceramic type frequencies by weight for Postclassic midden at Terrace 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ceramic Type</th>
<th>Weight. Rim Sherds</th>
<th>% Rim Sherds</th>
<th>Weigh. Total Sherds</th>
<th>% Total Sherds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium Brown</td>
<td>5830</td>
<td>31.39</td>
<td>33166</td>
<td>53.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Brown Brazier</td>
<td>2707</td>
<td>14.58</td>
<td>5209</td>
<td>8.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Cream</td>
<td>5226</td>
<td>28.14</td>
<td>11418</td>
<td>18.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micaceous Ware</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red on Fine Cream</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphite on Fine Cream/Orange</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Gray</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Undecorated</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Monochrome</td>
<td>2792</td>
<td>15.03</td>
<td>6828</td>
<td>10.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Monochrome Incense Burner</td>
<td>867</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>896</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Polychrome Incense Burner</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Polychrome (Postclassic)</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>682</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Biconical Brazier with Apilques</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texcoco Molded</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Unidentified</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18571</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>62163</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table C.2: Ceramic type frequencies by weight for Colonial midden at Terrace 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ceramic Type</th>
<th>Weight Rim Sherds</th>
<th>% Rim Sherds</th>
<th>Weight Total Sherds</th>
<th>% Total Sherds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium Brown</td>
<td>2527</td>
<td>52.64</td>
<td>17119</td>
<td>71.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Brown Brazier</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Cream</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micaceous Ware</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1231</td>
<td>5.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red on Fine Cream</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphite on Fine Cream/Orange</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Gray</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Undecorated</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Monochrome</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Monochrome Incense Burner</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Polychrome (Colonial)</td>
<td>1267</td>
<td>26.40</td>
<td>3640</td>
<td>15.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Glazed Fine Brown</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>1.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Glazed Wares</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4800</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>23871</td>
<td>100</td>
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Table C.3: Ceramic type frequencies by weight for densest deposits at Terrace 13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ceramic Type</th>
<th>Weight Rim Sherds</th>
<th>% Rim Sherds</th>
<th>Weight Total Sherds</th>
<th>% Total Sherds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium Brown</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>35.15</td>
<td>14645</td>
<td>59.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Brown Brazier</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Cream</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>17.02</td>
<td>2795</td>
<td>11.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micaceous Ware</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>838</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red on Fine Cream</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphite on Fine Cream/Orange</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>7.28</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Gray</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Undecorated</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>8.41</td>
<td>1278</td>
<td>5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Monochrome</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>1517</td>
<td>6.43</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Monochrome Incense Burner</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>1.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Polychrome Incense Burner</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Brown Polychrome (Postclassic and Colonial)</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>7.80</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Glazed Ware</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5553</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>24687</td>
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