



Figure 5.45. Map showing the projected distribution of prehispanic houses in the area with surface shell debris on the east side of Ejutla.

derived from the regional survey based on 10–25 people per hectare for valley floor sites.

5.5. The Ejutla House and the Broader Region

The excavated house is located in a barrio of craftworkers at the edge of the Ejutla site, approximately 350 m east of the main civic-ceremonial core of the site, where several large mounds are still visible above surrounding modern house lots. All of the mounds are heavily damaged, and none have been excavated. The only other excavations at the site are those by Diguet (1905), who investigated a later Postclassic cruciform tomb in the early twentieth century. There are no visible remains of this tomb today. So, the house we excavated provides the most detailed set of information on Ejutla and its relations with the Valley of Oaxaca.

Even though the Ejutla site is located in a small alluvial valley at the southern end of the much larger valley to the north, the house we excavated has many characteristics that are typical of prehispanic houses in the Valley of Oaxaca. The residential complex consisted of a series of small rooms that enclosed a central patio. There was a subfloor tomb under one of the rooms that was entered through the patio. The walls of the rooms sat on foundations of cut and roughly formed stones. Plaster remnants indicate that at least some of the floors had been plastered at one time. The size of the Ejutla house fits well within the size range of middle-status Classic period houses in the Valley of Oaxaca. The shell craftworkers were neither low nor high status.

Except for the unusual quantities of Pacific marine shell at Ejutla, the domestic artifact assemblage has typical forms

and elements found across the Valley of Oaxaca, including an abundance of grayware pottery. The funerary urn that was one of the mortuary offerings in the tomb and other urn fragments in the middens (see Figure 4.52, Figure 4.53, Figure 4.54, Figure 5.9) have a range of characteristics that identify them as Zapotec (Caso and Bernal 1952; Caso et al. 1967), similar to effigy vessels found across the valley. The paired vases in the dedicatory offering were carved with distinctive imagery that represents the mythological figures '1 Tiger' and '2 J' (also referred to as '2 Maize') (see Figure 4.56, Appendix 2; Bernal 1947–48, 62; Caso and Bernal 1952, 62–64, 78–81; Caso et al. 1967, 326; Urcid 2005, figure 2.2). Similar sets of paired vessels have been found at Monte Albán (Caso et al. 1967, 328) and elsewhere in the Valley of Oaxaca (Marcus and Flannery 1996, 224; Urcid 2005, 21). The effigy vessel and vases help tie the house to a larger network of interactions that connects it to communities in the Valley of Oaxaca and the broader region.

The residents of the excavated Classic period Ejutla house clearly shared an array of stylistic practices and conventions with their contemporaries to the north in the Valley of Oaxaca. Therefore, as we detail in chapters 6 through 9, it is not that surprising that the occupants of this house were participants in economic networks that ranged from the Pacific Coast to the Valley of Oaxaca and even well beyond (chapters 8 and 9). At the same time, as we see with the intensity of shell craftwork (chapter 8), food consumption patterns, and even the stylistic (clothing) differences of molded fired-clay, male, warrior figurines (chapter 7), the Classic period past of the Central Valleys of Oaxaca was not homogeneous. Activities and practices in Ejutla had key distinctions as compared to more centrally situated sites in the Valley of Oaxaca.

Domestic Specialization and Multicrafting in Theoretical Context

To this point, we have established that a Classic period domestic unit at the eastern edge of the Ejutla site engaged in crafting goods that almost certainly were not produced primarily for their own consumption. In this chapter and those that follow, we outline and contextualize this finding and why it is important for understanding the Classic period economy of Oaxaca, and present further details regarding the production technologies and practices for a range of materials. We also outline what we know about the distribution of the products that were made by this household, and what and how these production and distribution practices tell us about premodern economies.

The archaeological investigations at and findings from the Ejutla site have had a significant influence on our own thinking regarding craft specialization and prehispanic Mesoamerican economies more generally. In this chapter, we step back from the description and analysis of empirical discoveries and place those findings and current thoughts on production in a broader historical and conceptual context. By so doing, we illustrate how archaeological data, first from the Ejutla site, and then when examined in a wider context of new research elsewhere, stimulated our theoretical rethinking. In the process, we moved away from generalized, unilinear models and categorical treatments of specialization, which were derived principally from selective attention to the Eurasian past, toward a major reframing of prehispanic Mesoamerican economies (Feinman and Nicholas 2012) and premodern economies more generally (Feinman 2017).

We begin by defining craft specialization and placing the archaeological examination of this practice in historical context. This intellectual background is relevant as the senior author's research in the Valley of Oaxaca began with an interest in economic specialization (Feinman 1980), and those perspectives shifted to a degree in concert with the new findings derived from the Ejutla research. Thus, the emphasis here is to tie changing disciplinary views of craft specialization to seeming conundrums posed by observations from the Ejutla research. Their iterative juxtaposition had a role in formulating how we think about prehispanic Mesoamerican economies and specifically production and distribution at Ejutla.

6.1. Craft Specialization and Its Early Archaeological Framing

The term 'craft specialization' has been critically examined (Clark 1995; Rice 2009), yet we think it is a useful term to describe nonagricultural production intended for

exchange. By craft, we infer manufacture by humans as opposed to grown in the field or garden. Use of the term does not imply a specific level of skill or technical expertise. In using the term 'specialization,' we reference John Clark and William Parry (1990, 297), who broadly define it as the "production of alienable durable goods for nondependent consumption." That is, the products are destined for consumers beyond the maker's or the producer's immediate domestic unit. We employ this broad definition so as to intentionally decouple any presumptions that have been previously assumed regarding the intensity or location of production, the targeting to a specific subset of consumers, or a particular mode of distribution. We see craft specialization as an activity more than a category or taxonomic attribute always linked to a specific social scale (Cross 1993). The realm of behaviors associated with craft specializations should be fleshed out and defined as much as possible for each historical context.

Given the global breadth and analytical depth of current archaeological research focused on craft production (e.g., Costin 2020; Schortman and Urban 2004), related to many different materials and goods, it may surprise that the implementation of archaeological investigations with a focus on economic specialization began only six to seven decades ago. With that timing, the history of craft production studies in archaeology is tightly intertwined with the advent of neoevolutionary theories and neo-Marxist thought in the discipline (Wailes 1996), often linked with sociopolitical change. Early efforts to tease production information from the archaeological record began with the seminal writings of V. Gordon Childe (e.g., 1949, 1950), who viewed craft specialization as a categorical attribute of the Urban Revolution, an outgrowth of agrarian surplus and tied to elite economic control. Childe (1949) pointed the way toward drawing 'social facts' from 'material things,' and the studies that followed both built on and shadow-boxed with his seminal writings (Wright 1996). Although Childe's perspective was tied empirically to ancient Mesopotamia and metallurgy (Wailes 1996), implications from his (and related) conceptual framings were extended much more widely.

Mid-twentieth-century neoevolutionary framing saw economic specialization as a nominal or categorical variable, either present or not, and, if present, presumed to be full-time. In this unilinear view of change (Costin 2020; Fargher 2009), craft specialization was seen to emerge with urbanism, whereas pre-urban households and settlements generally were presumed self-sufficient (Sahlins 1972). In contexts with urban centers, craft specialization was largely