

were better suited for making the earlier G-12s, G-35s, and other coarse-ware jars and bowls and ceramic figurines that were abundant at Ejutla, both gris and café; they did not require as high a temperature, and the greater porosity provided mechanical strength to withstand firing and knocking against other vessels. These technical analyses add support for the use of pit kilns at Ejutla to fire gris and café pottery, adjusting the mud plaster covering as needed to provide or cut off oxygen.

### 7.6. Comparing the Pit Kilns and Their Contents

The ceramic assemblages in the pit kilns are similar to the pottery found in other contexts at the site, both in and around the house and throughout the middens; together

with the petrographic analyses discussed above, they tie the firing features to the house and the domestic trash of its residents. Although the pit kilns varied in size, depth, and state of preservation, they were similar in most key respects. All were asymmetrical depressions dug in the bedrock, with a narrowing of the bedrock depression into a stoke pit, or mouth, visible in the three pit kilns that were excavated completely. The bedrock surfaces of the pit kilns were blackened from repeated firings. All the pit kilns had high densities of ash and charcoal, with basal layers of almost pure ash. In addition to large potsherds that served as kiln furniture, they all contained café and gris wasters mostly of bowls and jars, figurine wasters, concentrations of certain vessel forms, clay concretions, and other remnants of ceramic production (Table 7.8). In

Table 7.8. Principal contents of the Ejutla pit kilns.

	Pit kiln 1	Pit kiln 2	Pit kiln 3	Pit kiln 4	Pit kiln 5	Total
<b>Vessel forms and other categories</b>						
Café comals	13	201	408	336	164	1122
Café jars	390	126	323	281	136	1256
Café bowls	45	110	94	162	87	498
Café sahumadors	3	116	213	480	61	873
Gris bowls	162	449	1444	1072	446	3573
Gris jars	37	134	350	254	101	876
Amarillo bowls	84	21	59	59	21	244
Amarillo jars	14	4	6	2	2	28
Concretions	22	51	51	6	46	176
Figurines	12	54	144	72	19	301
Total	782	1266	3092	2724	1083	
<b>Waster form by paste</b>						
<b>Amarillo</b>						
bowl	–	–	–	–	1	1
jar	–	–	1	–	–	1
<b>Café</b>						
bowl	2	4	3	1	1	11
comal	–	1	1	–	–	2
figurine	4	3	21	16	4	48
jar	4	6	8	6	6	30
sahumador	–	2	4	3	2	11
support	–	–	1	–	–	1
unknown	1	3	4	2	5	15
urn	–	–	1	–	–	1
<b>Gris</b>						
bowl	2	7	13	8	3	33
figurine	–	–	3	–	–	3
jar	2	5	3	9	3	22
sahumador	–	–	1	–	–	1
support	–	–	1	–	4	5
tecomate	–	–	–	1	–	1
unknown	5	2	5	2	6	20
urn	–	–	2	–	–	2

most cases these distributions do not tie any one ceramic form or ware to only one pit kiln. Clay concretions were recovered, albeit in varying amounts, from all the pit kilns (see Figure 7.28), indicating that temporary roofing was applied at least occasionally in all the kilns to help control the firing and provide a reducing atmosphere when the desired product was a gris vessel. Yet there is variation among the pit kiln assemblages to indicate that certain ones may have been used to fire specific forms more often than others.

The ceramic assemblage in the pit kiln under the house (pit kiln 1, 2n34e) is the most different, largely because the pottery is from the earliest occupation of the area (see Table 4.3). The pit kiln contains several early amarillo and café forms that also are abundant in the fill below the house. Although much of the material in the fill appears to have been brought in to create a level surface on which to construct the house, some of the ceramics came from the upper levels of the firing feature that was destroyed in the process of preparing the surface to construct the residence. Among the pottery recovered in the pit kiln are early grayware vessels (G-12s) that date from the Late Formative (Monte Albán Late I), including a defective G-12 bowl rim that had exploded on the exterior (see Figure 7.8 top left). Café jars, especially raked ollas that date early in the Ejutla sequence, also are abundant in the pit kiln under the house, including several café jar wasters. Both vessel forms are prevalent in the collections from the fill under the house. Although we did not recover many figurines from pit kiln 1, several of them are wasters. There also were hundreds of figurines and dozens of wasters in fill under the house floor, so Ejutla artisans were making figurines from early in the occupation of the eastern barrio of the site.

The assemblages in the other four pit kilns include very low numbers of the same early ceramics present in pit kiln 1 (see Table 4.3), so we cannot rule out that some of those features were at least partially contemporaneous with pit kiln 1 and that firing activities also occurred in several of those pit kilns prior to the construction of the house. The evidence is best for pit kiln 5 (14n36e), which contained somewhat more early pottery than the other three (see Table 7.8). Two other data points also are strongest for pit kiln 5 and indicate that it may have come into use sometime after pit kiln 1 but before the house was built: <sup>14</sup>C dates from pit kiln 5 are slightly earlier than for pit kilns 2–4 (see chapter 4), and pit kiln 5 was impacted by the construction of pit kiln 3.

But, overall, the four other pit kilns had much higher quantities of later pottery than pit kiln 1, including G-35 vessels that date broadly to the Classic period. All four later pit kilns contained a range of Classic period gris jars and bowls, especially pit kilns 3 and 4. Wasters of some ceramic forms also were more frequently found in one pit kiln than in the others. For example, the highest quantities of gris bowl wasters were in pit kiln 3, whereas the highest

number of gris jar wasters were in pit kiln 4 (see Table 7.8). And most of the G-35 bowl and G-1 storage jar wasters that we collected were associated with pit kiln 4. These distributions are more likely to represent different firing events rather than sequential use of the features.

Clay concretions were recovered in and around all the pit kilns and were abundant in the midden deposits above the four later kilns. Yet there were fewer of them in pit kiln 4 (18n24e), especially given its size (see Table 7.8), and the midden directly above it compared to the others (see Figure 7.28). It is possible that the last firing activities occurred in that pit kiln, so that more of its temporary roofing was scattered around the feature. That pit kiln also may have been used more often to fire vessels in an oxidizing atmosphere with a less substantial temporary roof, more like the open, aboveground firing in the modern village of San Marcos Tlapazola, where potters still make a range of café vessels, including comals. Indeed, we recovered more café *sahumadors* from pit kiln 4 than from any other firing feature, although these incense burners were recovered from all kilns. In addition, pit kiln 4 had a smaller proportion of gris vessels (see Table 7.8), which would have required a more substantial roof to fire in a reducing atmosphere. Only pit kiln 1 had more café jars than pit kiln 4. The high number of café comals that we recovered from pit kiln 3 indicates that feature was often used to make the tortilla griddles, but there also were high numbers of comals in pit kiln 4. In addition, figurine fragments and wasters were recovered from all the kilns, but the most wasters came from pit kilns 3 and 4. Based on the ceramic assemblages in each feature, all the pit kilns were used to make both reduced gris and oxidized café vessels.

In sum, a range of vessel forms, both reduced graywares and oxidized cafés, were fired in each pit kiln. The earliest feature, pit kiln 1, was covered over by the residence, while the others continued in use (possibly pit kiln 5) or were constructed in association with the residence. The later kilns do not appear to have been used sequentially, but rather were in use at the same time, often used for firing different vessel forms.

## 7.7. Classic Period Figurines and the Ejutla Assemblage

The Ejutla figurine assemblage is very large compared to the other domestic contexts that we excavated in the Valley of Oaxaca. The 2005 figurines and fragments from one house and surrounding middens and kilns greatly surpass the quantities at El Palmillo (total of 1168 figurines divided among eight houses and other public areas) and the Mitla Fortress (562 divided among three houses). At Lambityeco we recovered 3870 figurines and whistles associated with a residence, temple, plaza area, and ballcourt. This large assemblage is less comparable for several reasons; the figurines were mostly recovered from a civic-ceremonial area instead of just domestic contexts. More than half of the ceramic figurines at Lambityeco are large whistles that