

Preface

The study that we conducted in contemporary fields and house lots on the east side of the modern community of Ejutla de Crespo began as an investigation to contextualize an anomalous quantity of marine shell that we had recovered on the surface during the Ejutla Valley Settlement Pattern Project. At the most basic level, that context was straightforward to discover. The shell came from the Pacific Coast and was worked into ornaments during the Classic period in a domestic setting. But, as often happens with research endeavors, the details associated with those answers opened many new questions and investigatory foci, many of which we continue to pursue to the present.

This monograph is a compilation, update, and expansion of previous publications that we have authored on our investigations at the Ejutla site since we began the excavations in 1990. These articles reported on specific aspects of our findings (craft specialization in domestic contexts, ceramic production, shell ornament manufacture, domestic tombs, and pit kilns or firing features), but none of these earlier works covered the full suite of information that is presented here. So, this volume is both a compilation and a synthesis. In our earlier published articles and chapters, we also often were constrained by space, especially in regard to the number of illustrations we could include and the depth of the descriptions that we could provide. Here we cite relevant earlier publications in which we first put forth specific arguments and confirming data. We also provide expanded discussions of the physical and material remains at Ejutla and include many more illustrations. Readers should be aware that a small number of the illustrations include human remains and burial contexts.

In archaeology, a project, such as the one described here, could not be implemented without the heads, hands, and hearts of many contributors. We express our deep gratitude to all of the colleagues, specialists, field crew members, and officials who facilitated this study. We could not have achieved the results we have without their help. Dozens of community members from Ejutla de Crespo assisted in the fieldwork over four seasons. Fausto Olivera Mendoza and Everardo Olivera Díaz from Xaaga, Mitla, Oaxaca, served as vital crew leaders who facilitated the field studies in innumerable ways. We are grateful to Scott Fedick, Christopher Fisher, Andrew Balkansky, William D. Middleton, Jennifer Blitz, J. Michael Elam, Sherman Banker, Linda Gaertner, and Paula Schultz for their efforts in the field and the many contributions they made. Victoria Olivera Díaz was a vital contributor as our cook.

We are deeply thankful for the help and work that we received from illustrators and Field Museum volunteers. Jill Seagard deserves special recognition for everything

she did and the exceptional quality of her illustrative work. Lisanne Bartram was an essential volunteer assistant who aided the production of figures and illustrations over the last year. Paula Schulze and Eileen O'Donnell also contributed to the drawings at earlier stages of the study. We also recognize the contributions of Kristin Buskirk, Sara Hornbeck, and Sarah Howard as Field Museum volunteers.

Many colleagues and mentors assisted us, facilitated the project, and were sources of great support. Richard E. Blanton and Stephen A. Kowalewski introduced us to Oaxacan archaeology and gave us a rich foundation for fieldwork in the region for which we are eternally grateful. The senior author's interest in Mexico's Southern Highlands and its rich past was first piqued in undergraduate courses that he took with Kent V. Flannery at the University of Michigan, and Flannery and Joyce Marcus have provided invaluable guidance and support over the many subsequent years. Joaquín García Bárcena, David Carballo, Thomas Charlton, George Cowgill, Manuel Esparza, Ernesto González Licón, David C. Grove, Linda Manzanilla, John Paddock, Jeffrey R. Parsons, T. Douglas Price, Nelly Robles García, María de los Angeles Romero Frizzi, Ronald Spores, and Marcus Winter all provided key elements of advice, encouragement, and assistance over the course of this study and subsequent research.

Of course, the research could not have been conducted without the vital assistance and essential permissions that we received from the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, the Centro INAH Oaxaca, and the local civil and judicial authorities of Ejutla de Crespo. All of the collections and human remains reported on in this volume are housed in official facilities in Mexico under the auspices of these authorities. Support from the National Science Foundation (BNS 89-19164, BNS 91-05780, SBR-9304258), the National Geographic Society, the Heinz Foundation, the University of Wisconsin, and the Field Museum of Natural History also were critical for the implementation of this investigation.

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Abstract

Archaeological investigations at the prehispanic Ejutla site in Oaxaca, Mexico, have had a foundational role in reframing our perspectives on Mesoamerican economies, specifically craft specialization. This volume reports on the excavations of a residential complex located at the southern limits of the valley system, where we recovered evidence for multiple craft activities associated with a single non-elite domestic unit. The residential occupants crafted a variety of ornaments from marine shell, mostly sourced to the Pacific Coast, but few of them were consumed by the householders themselves. In addition, the Ejutla craftworkers produced a range of ceramic utilitarian vessels and figurines, as well as small lapidary objects. Many of the craft goods produced were destined for exchange, circulating in both local and longer-distance networks. These findings have laid a basis for new theorizing on prehispanic economic production and the revision of prior notions that presumed principally local economies, in which specialized production for exchange was centered in nondomestic workshops.