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# The Social Life of Pre-Sunrise Things

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## Indigenous Mesoamerican Archaeology<sup>1</sup>

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by Byron Hamann

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Centuries before the creation of archaeology as a scientific discipline in the modern West, indigenous people in Mesoamerica developed their own interpretations for the physical remains of their past. This study draws on archaeological, ethnographic, and historical sources to explore a tradition of indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology. By resorting to the culture-area concept of Mesoamerica, an interpretive structure of the long term is outlined. This framework is used to explore the social life of objects and places from "the past" in three paired locations: the Classic site of Teotihuacan and the 16th-century Mexica Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán; the Classic site of Yucuñudahui and the 16th-century Mixtec community of Chachoapan; and the Postclassic site of Chichen Itza and the 20th-century Yucatec Maya community of Chan Kom. Shifting between wide and narrow perspectives in time and space, this study considers archaeology as a social practice, inventions and revisions of tradition, and the productivity of regional generalizations and structures of the long term.

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1. My interest in pan-Mesoamerican interpretations of the remains of the past was first sparked by John Pohl, who in a July 1996 interview pointed out that Postclassic Aztec and Mixtec ideas about the origins of their societies involved literal emergences out of the ruins of the Classic period; I thank him as a catalyst for this study (see Bakewell and Hamann 2001: Debates/History and Propaganda/John Pohl). Further thanks are offered to Chris Beekman, Elizabeth Hill Boone, Edward Fischer, Arthur Joyce, Michael Lind, Geoffrey McCafferty, John Monaghan, and Scott R. Hutson for their comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this study; to Tom Cummins, Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, Carmen Maria Fernandez, Patrick Hajovsky, Tamar Herzog, Matt Hunter, Claudio Lomnitz, and Kathleen Morrison for comments on its manifestation as a University of Chicago M.A. thesis; and to Ron Spores for answering questions about the excavations at Chachoapan and Yucuñudahui. A version of this article was presented at the 1998 Mixtec Gateway

*And Tolteca potsherds are there to be seen. And Tolteca bowls, Tolteca ollas are taken from the earth. And many times Tolteca jewels—arm bands, es-teemed green stones, fine turquoise, emerald-green jade—are taken from the earth.*

—BERNARDINO DE SAHAGÚN, *General History of the Things of New Spain*

For over 3,000 years, detritus from complex societies has sedimented Mesoamerica's landscapes. These material remains from "the past" have been utilized and interpreted in a number of different "presents." Consider the social lives of Olmec artifacts, and consider the afterlife of antiquities in Aztec society. Formative Olmec jades (1500-300 B.C.) were disinterred and recarved by the Classic Maya (A.D. 250-900). They were depicted in the murals of Classic Teotihuacan (A.D. 150-650), and they were one of many types of ancient artifacts collected and cached by the Late Postclassic Aztec (A.D. 1350-1520). As illustrated in the opening quotation, the Aztecs also gathered ceramics and ornaments (and even noted the potsherds!) from Early Postclassic Toltec ruins (A.D. 1000-1300). They collected stone masks and ceramics from Classic Teotihuacan, and they traveled to Teotihuacan itself for religious observances. According to one 16th-century source, the ruler of Tenochtitlan performed sacrifices at Teotihuacan every 20 days. Dozens of analogous reutilizations are known.<sup>2</sup>

In some cases—the renovation of Olmec sites by Postclassic settlers, the preservation of Postclassic knives by 1950s Cuicatecs—the meanings of these reused objects and places are not documented, but many other resurrections *are* accompanied by explanations. These tell us why such detritus exists and why it is significant "now." Such ruined sites and unearthed artifacts are not simply

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conference organized by Nancy Troike in Las Vegas, Nevada; I thank Lloyd Anderson, Monica Bellas, Bruce Byland, Maarten Jansen, Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez, Lisa Sousa, and Kevin Terraciano for their comments and critiques. The current text has benefited greatly from the advice of Benjamin S. Orlove and four anonymous referees. Finally, this project was initially developed through discussions on power, resistance, and Oaxacan archaeology with Arthur Joyce and Scott R. Hutson. I am indebted to them both. [Supplementary material appears in the electronic edition of this issue on the journal's web page (<http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/CA/home.html>).]

2. Umberger (1987:62-62) provides an overview of Mesoamerican reuses of the past, in addition to focused discussions of Aztec reuses of the material remains of Teotihuacan, Tula, and Xochicalco. Reuses of Olmec artifacts are discussed in Proskouriakoff (1968), Schele and Miller (1986:150-51), and Miller (1973:154-55). Aztec archaeology is discussed in Matos Moctezuma (1990:100-105); Aztec visits to Teotihuacan are discussed in Paso y Troncoso (1905-6: 221-22) and critiqued in Boone (2000:391). Oaxacan archaeologies are discussed in Caso, Bernal, and Acosta (1967:447-71), Spores (1983:155), Pohl, Monaghan, and Stiver (1997:212, 225), and Orr (1997:115-17). For Cuicatec reuse of Postclassic knives, see Holland and Weitlaner (1960). For Lacandon visits to Classic Maya sites, see Tozzer (1907:83), McGee (1990:57), and Boremanse (1993:326-28). For Tepehuanec performances in Late Formative-to-Classic ruins, see Mason (1912).

reused: they are also reinterpreted. The following pages explore this tradition of “indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology.”

For the purposes of this study, I consider archaeology as a practice in which the physical remains of “the past” are reused and reinterpreted by later societies. Such a definition is more focused than a Foucauldian “archaeology” of discourse: I follow Abu El-Haj (1998) in distinguishing archaeologies that produce “new material culture” and thus transform the physical and social spaces of their present. Such materially grounded archaeology is an extremely common human practice. Its various incarnations are the subjects of dozens of studies. Most considerations of the “anthropology of archaeology” focus on the legitimating strategies of nation-states (Abu El-Haj 1998, Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1995, Gathercole and Layton 1990, Kohl and Fawcett 1995, Schmidt and Patterson 1995, Trigger 1980). Other studies, however, consider subaltern discourses of archaeology within nation-states (Dietler 1994, Fischer and Brown 1996, Smith 2000, Williams 1991), and still others disinter archaeological traditions not linked to those of the modern West (Alcock 2001; Allen 1988:54–59; Baines 1989; Barkan 1999; Cummins 1988:84–122; Davis 1997; Mayor 2000; Necessian 1983). It is to this final category of archaeological inquiry that I hope to contribute.

After a brief review of theoretical assumptions, this study approaches indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology from two perspectives. I begin with the wide screen of a “structure of the long term.” Discussion ranges freely across time and space: from the 15th to the 20th century and from Mexico to Honduras (the 1943 culture-area construction of “Mesoamerica”). Within this temporal-spatial construct, I trace continuities in indigenous beliefs that link artifacts from “the past” to social life in “the present.” Ancient artifacts are repeatedly interpreted as relics from a previous age of creation, a flawed era subsequently destroyed to make way for the properly ordered “present.” Of course, the definition of a “proper” social order changes over time and space, and so the second part of the study narrows its gauge to consider the way in which this general structure of the long term was instantiated in three specific contexts: the 16th-century Mexica Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan, the 16th-century Mixtec community of Chachoapan, and the early 20th-century Maya community of Chan Kom (fig. 1). Although unified by the theme of indigenous archaeology, these three discussions vary in source material and argument focus: from pictorial books to alphabetic texts, from social reification to social transformation. Finally, I conclude with a wide screen once again, surveying broad questions of invention and tradition. Discussion returns to the community of Chan Kom and then shifts to uncover a second structure of the long term: the indigenous archaeology of the West.

## Theoretical Orientations

This study is premised on the spatial-temporal framework of “Mesoamerica.” In one sense, this concept was

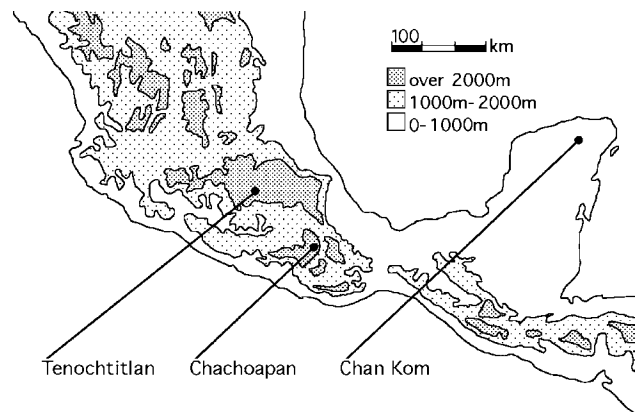


FIG. 1. Mesoamerica and the locations of Tenochtitlan, Chachoapan, and Chan Kom.

invented in 1943, in the twilight of the trait-based culture-area approach in anthropology (Kirchhoff 1943; cf. Graham 1993; Joyce 1998:147). But that “Mesoamerica” is a 20th-century neologism does not mean—as Bartlett notes for the analogous category of “Europe”—that it is “a purely metaphorical creation” (1993:269). “Mesoamerica” foregrounds the legacies of pre-European exchanges and intellectual traditions; it undermines nationalist histories and boundaries (Monaghan 2000b: 2–3). True, reference to this category can essentialize (Graham 1981:viii) and exclude (Graham 1993), but it can also historicize and incorporate: the framework of Mesoamerica requires that particularist interpretations be grounded in a broad temporal and spatial context. It is thus similar in many ways to the aforementioned category of “Europe” (and its counterpart, “the West”). Like “Mesoamerica,” these are generalizing spatial-temporal categories; like “Mesoamerica,” they have come under recent critique. But they remain productive—even essential—for understanding the genealogies of the contemporary world.<sup>3</sup> The following pages demonstrate the continued productiveness of the category of Mesoamerica. In particular, I focus on the capacity of this framework to interconnect and illuminate practices and images that might otherwise appear insignificant, isolated, incomprehensible.

My second theoretical assumption—closely related to the first—is the significance of structures of the long term. Spatial-temporal generalizations like Mesoamerica and Europe do not gain their interpretive strength from lists of recurrent cultural traits. Rather, they become useful when they focus on enduring structures of social meanings, structures that order social life in fundamen-

3. Chakrabarty emphasizes that a critical understanding of Europe as a construct does not mean that this category can therefore be ignored: “Analysis does not make it go away” (2000:28). Ginzburg (1986) and Trouillot (1991) demonstrate—in discussions of Freud and anthropology, respectively—the lacunae that arise when broad temporal and spatial frameworks are not central to analysis of practices in “the West.” See also Bartlett (1993), Sahlins (1996).

tal ways (cf. Trouillot 1991). The analytic productiveness of structures of the long term is revealed in Marshall Sahlins's 1996 essay on the West, "The Sadness of Sweetness." Sahlins considers the enduring centrality of Adamic original sin across 2,000 years of Western social thought. His arguments both generalize and specify. He surveys a temporal and geographic scope far broader than my 500-year treatment of Mesoamerica, but at the same time he details the transformations of original sin as it shapes Christian theology, Renaissance humanism, Enlightenment political economy, and 20th-century anthropology. The persistence—and productiveness—of original sin is linked to its status as a condition of possibility for a "cultural scheme of universal dimensions." Original sin is placed at the foundations of Christian-Western social orders (Sahlins 1996:424). I argue that indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology is part of an analogous "cultural scheme of universal dimensions." Where Sahlins focuses on Western elaborations of "original sin," I focus on Mesoamerican elaborations of "original destruction" and "original debt." These concepts provide the conditions of possibility for basic Mesoamerican understandings of time and space, human social life, and the ties linking humans to natural and supernatural worlds.

These themes—the relations of time, space, humans, the supernatural—point to a third theoretical model: the social life of things. The social life of material objects, as discussed by Appadurai (1986), Kopytoff (1986), and Davis (1997), has two basic aspects. First, as objects (and buildings, as Davis shows) are used and reused and finally destroyed, their forms and meanings are transformed. Entire classes of objects may be reused and reinterpreted in similar ways during the course of their social life: "A particular relic may have a specific biography, but whole types of relic, and indeed the class of thing called 'relic' itself, may have a larger historical ebb and flow, in the course of which its meaning may shift significantly" (Appadurai 1986:34; cf. Kopytoff 1986:64–68). My discussion of the social life of archaeological remains focuses on only one (if widespread) meaning shift in a class of "relics from the past": their interpretation as survivals from a previous age of creation. And this "survival" needs to be considered beyond merely material endurance. A second valence of the concept of "social life" is that material things may be alive, may have the power to act in the world as humans do (Appadurai 1986:4; Davis 1997). Such a conceptualization of the animate nature of objects and locations—including archaeological remains—is found throughout Mesoamerica.<sup>4</sup> I argue below that the animate nature of ancient things may help explain why

4. Mesoamerican images may be extensions of the "selves" of humans (Stuart 1996, Houston and Stuart 1998). Objects, buildings, and topographic features may have desires and souls (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:173–256; Monaghan 1995:99–104; 1998b; Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:147; Stuart 1995:242–49; Watanabe 1992:74–96). Archaeological artifacts may come to life—even artifacts from a previous creation may be animate (Basauri 1930:24; Byland and Pohl 1994:114–18; Gann 1925:99–100; Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:120–21; Tedlock 1993:37–39).

they were incorporated into the *daily life* of Mesoamerican communities; it may help explain the conceptual potency of the *cohabitation* of people in the present with materials from the past.<sup>5</sup>

This cohabitation leads to my final theoretical frame. The social lives of objects and places cannot be separated from the social lives of humans, and one aspect of this cohabitation is the role of objects and places in human pedagogy. Following Bourdieu (1977:94–95), I distinguish two forms of pedagogic action: *explicit* and *implicit*. In *explicit* pedagogy, objects and places are used as "mnemonic pegs," prompts for telling stories that explain the relevance of the past for present social life. Members of a society are directly taught the meanings of specific places and things (Tilley 1994:33; cf. Bourdieu 1977:94).<sup>6</sup> For example, the Mesoamerican analyses that follow are possible because explicit discourses about objects and locations from the past were produced and recorded. But such moments of explication are relatively infrequent in the flow of daily life. Meaning-coded things also impact human cognition as *implicit*, silent (if physically structuring) backgrounds for day-to-day existence. Bourdieu's discussion of habitus is perhaps the best-known treatment of the role of places and objects in shaping human consciousness—or, in Bourdieu's terms, of the link between a "whole symbolically structured environment" and "anonymous, pervasive pedagogic action" (Bourdieu 1977:87–89; see also Alcock 2001, Basso 1996). Bourdieu repeatedly emphasizes the importance of the spaces of daily life—such as houses and apartments—in implicit pedagogy (Bourdieu 1979:77–90, 133–53). Significantly, these are the very spaces in which the material past was embedded at all three of the communities I will discuss in detail: Tenochtitlan, Chachoapan, and Chan Kom.

Mesoamerica, structures of the long term, the social life of things, pedagogy: these are conceptual categories from the modern West. But, in concluding this theoretical overview, it is important to point out that indigenous people in Mesoamerica have themselves been very much aware of the relations between the social lives of things, the social lives of humans, and physical-spatial pedagogy.

5. I am thinking of day-to-day temporality not in a routinized capitalist sense (De Certeau 1984) but from a Mesoamerican perspective in which solar cycling is interconnected with notions of place and production, self and community (Hanks 1990:352–99; Tedlock 1992:88–131; Watanabe 1992:26–53, 62; Monaghan 1998a).

6. Maurice Halbwachs, Susan Alcock, and Keith Basso all provide rich discussions of the intersections between consciousness, sociality, and space. Halbwachs's concept of collective memory argues that "material traces, texts, and traditions" (and even cities, as in his study of Jerusalem) may be mobilized as present-serving sources for narrativized recollection—including the "recollection" of past events which did not occur at all (Halbwachs 1992:119). Alcock draws on Halbwachs in writing about the creation of "memory theaters" in Roman-occupied Greece, spaces in which ancient objects, buildings, and texts were brought together in order "to remind communities at large of just who they were by drawing on who they had been" (Alcock 2001). And Basso's ethnography of the Western Apache "moralized landscape" illustrates how walking through a landscape can evoke the ancient events which took place within it, how simply naming a place can remind listeners of its associated narratives (Basso 1996).

Watanabe's discussion of "existential sovereignty"—the formation of Chimalteco Maya sociality as rooted in and emergent from actions and interactions in a specific *place*—finds parallels throughout Mesoamerica (Watanabe 1992:12, 20; Carlsen 1997:50–57; Carrasco 1987; Tax 1937; cf. Basso 1996:34–35). Such place-based identity formation involves more than simply the link to a physical-geographic location "on the ground." Communities often define themselves through participation in the social lives of localized, physicalized supernaturals. These include the forces that animate regional topography, the deities that inhabit community-owned religious images, and the spirits of locally buried ancestors (McAnany 1995; Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:107–8). Thus Watanabe discusses the role of images of saints (housed in the local church) and *witz* (local mountain deities) in the formation of a "spatially exclusive" Chimalteco identity (Watanabe 1992:79). Along similar lines, Monaghan (1995:9) suggests that, given the importance of local supernaturals for creating Mesoamerican community identity, such "communities" may be more accurately considered as "congregations." Indeed, as a community changes over time, its patron deities change as well: physical images of new gods appear during periods of social transformation (Monaghan 1995:307–55; Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:109). In Mesoamerican social theory, then, the social lives of objects and locations, the supernatural forces they house, and the social identity of communities are all closely linked—and this is an association that can be traced back centuries (Houston and Stuart 1996). One implication of these ideas is that the objects and locations mobilized in indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology may have been more than mere physical propaganda for elite-supporting narratives about the past. Humans and ancient objects did not simply co-occur in the same space. They cohabited the same space; they were both part of daily *life*. In light of Mesoamerican beliefs about location-based socialization, the cohabitations of the past with the present may have been understood as actively shaping community identity and social existence.

### Before the First Sunrise: A Structure of the Long Term

The deep history of complex societies in Mesoamerica has produced a landscape filled with the physical remains of previous inhabitants—their monumental architecture, their carved stones, their potsherds, their jewelry. It is therefore not surprising that the interpretation of the past and its physical remains has an extensive intellectual history in Mesoamerica. A central concern in these interpretations has been the nature of the differences between past and present. What were the inhabitants of the past like? How did they build such gigantic monuments? Why are these beings no longer alive? Why are their works in ruins? What is the cosmological relationship between "their" past and "our"

present, and what caused the transition from one to the other?

Mesoamericans have offered a number of basic responses to these questions. First, there are many differences—physical, social, and spiritual—between the inhabitants of the past and the people of the present. For 16th-century Aztecs, Cholulans, Tlaxcalans, and Yucatec Maya and for 20th-century Nuyooteco Mixtecs, Tarascans, and Huastec and Yucatec Maya, the inhabitants of the past were giants (Durán 1994[1581]:8–9; Díaz del Castillo 1956[1580]:158; Tozzer 1941:172; Monaghan 1995:32; Carrasco 1957:39; Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:331; Alcorn 1984:60). Elsewhere—as in several parts of 20th-century Yucatán—the inhabitants of the past were dwarfs with magical powers (Tozzer 1907:153; Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:330–31). Perhaps the most extreme example of primordial bodily difference occurs in the beliefs of Nuyooteco Mixtecs, for whom the inhabitants of the past did not die (Monaghan 1995:32; cf. Graulich 1997:57–58).

In addition to gross differences in bodies and their nature, the inhabitants of the past often lived in "uncivilized" ways. According to 20th-century Chinantecs and Nuyooteco Mixtecs, the inhabitants of the previous creation ate their food raw; more specifically, Nuyooteco Mixtecs say that they did not even practice agriculture (Rupp and Rupp 1994:18; Monaghan 1995:32). For the Aztecs, the inhabitants of the four previous ages of creation each lived on a different staple crop—acorns, piñon nuts, aquatic seeds, and teocintli. Only with the arrival of humans and the present age of creation did maize become the central staple (Gardner 1986:23–24). According to 20th-century Huastec Maya, the inhabitants of the past did not even eat food: they merely smelled it and then wastefully threw it away (Alcorn 1984:60). According to contemporary Chinantecs, the inhabitants of the past had no clothes (Rupp and Rupp 1994:14). Nuyooteco Mixtecs say that the inhabitants of the past did not live in communities and practiced incest (Monaghan 1995:32, 49–50). For the Chinantla Maya, the inhabitants of the past had no government (Reina 1966:1). Finally, according to 16th-century Quiché Maya and 20th-century Chinantla Maya and Nuyooteco Mixtecs, the inhabitants of the past did not know how to honor the gods (Tedlock 1996:66–74; Reina 1966:1; Monaghan 1995:33).

These strange nonhuman beings no longer exist because of another difference between the past and the present: the nature of the primordial sky. For 20th-century Mixtecs, Chinantecs, Mitleño Zapotecs, and Yucatec Maya, the past was a time of darkness in which no sun shone (Dyk 1959:3; Monaghan 1995:32; Rupp and Rupp 1994:13; Parsons 1936:1, 216, 220; Tozzer 1907:153; Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:331). For 16th-century Aztecs, Mixtecs, and Quiché Maya, the sun of the previous age was different from the sun that now shines in the sky of the present (Gardner 1986; Tedlock 1996:77–88; and see below). But whether absent or present in a different form, the nature of the sun in the previous age was a crucial difference between past and present and played a crucial role in the transition between the

two. The dawning of the sun of the “current” age destroyed the previous creation and its inhabitants, often petrifying them in the light of a First Sunrise (Tozzer 1907:153; Parsons 1936:216; Dyk 1949:4; Carrasco 1957:39; Monaghan 1995:32; see also Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:331; but see Taube 1986). This petrification and mass destruction left behind traces in the ground, and these traces have been used in indigenous Mesoamerican archaeologies to provide tangible support for narratives of ancient cataclysm.

Petrified body parts provide one source of evidence. The fossilized bones of Pleistocene megafauna have been interpreted as the remains of primordial giants by 16th-century Aztecs, 20th-century Nuyooteco Mixtecs, and possibly 16th-century Yucatec Maya and Tlaxcalans as well (Durán 1994[1581]:17; Monaghan 1995:32; Tozzer 1941:110, 172; Díaz del Castillo 1956[1580]:158).<sup>7</sup> Whole body parts of these pre-Sunrise beings have also survived. In the Valley of Oaxaca, the carved Danzante stones at the Classic site of Monte Albán have been interpreted as the petrified bodies of giants by 20th-century Zapotecs (Orr 1997:116). Twentieth-century Mixtecs have offered similar interpretations for pre-Columbian carved stone heads (Byland and Pohl 1994:114–18; Monaghan 1995:32).

In addition to bodily remains, ruined buildings provide architectural evidence for the existence of a previous age. In some cases—as for Tarascans and Chinantla, Ixil, and Huastec Maya—the mere presence of ruins motivates their attribution to vanished architects (Carrasco 1957:39; Reina 1966:2; Shaw 1971:124–26; Alcorn 1984:60). In other traditions, however, it is not merely the existence of ruins but specific *features* of those ruins that prompt their attribution to ancient beings. Mesoamericans have often asked why ancient ruins were so massive in scale—seemingly too large for normal humans to have been able to build. In 16th-century central Mexico, the monumentality of the Classic pyramids at Teotihuacan and Cholula was explained by attributing their construction to the giants who lived before the dawn of the present age: although “it is unbelievable when it is said they were made by hands . . . giants still lived then. Also, it is very apparent from the artificial mountains at Cholollan [Cholula]” (Sahagún 1950–82[1547–85], vol. 10:191). Diego Durán also notes that the Classic-period constructions at Cholula were attributed to giants: “In

7. Some of these bones were even sent to Iberia. Francisco Hernandez (commissioned by the king to study the natural phenomena of the New World) determined that they belonged to beings over 5 m in height (Durán 1994[1581]:17). Early modern Europeans also had complex beliefs about ancient giants: perhaps this is why they were interested in Mesoamerican evidence (Bakhtin 1984[1965]:341–44; Stephens 1989; cf. Genesis 6:4; Mayor 2000:104–56). European discussions of Mesoamerican giants should *not*, however, be understood as interpretive impositions. Gigantism is not an isolated concept in Mesoamerican belief: it is part of an *interrelated series* of bodily and social differences that separated humans from pre-Sunrise beings. Instead of dismissing stories about giants as a colonial imposition we should consider them as yet another example of the surprising parallels between European and Mesoamerican worlds (cf. Lockhart 1985, Monaghan 1998a).

Cholula there was a man-made hill called Tlachihualtepetl. . . . It was called thus because it was said the Giants built it in order to climb up to heaven” (Durán 1977[1576–79], cited in McCafferty 1996:3). In 16th-century Yucatán, the Early Postclassic ruins at Izamal were also interpreted as giant-creations: “And on the said towers there were some figures of stucco which appeared to be giants armed with their shields and helmets and the natives say that those who erected the buildings were of greater stature than today” (Tozzer 1941:172). Bodily evidence for giants at Izamal was found in an urn burial there, which Landa describes as containing “some arm and leg bones of a marvelous size” (Tozzer 1941:19).

Alternatively, 20th-century Maya have attributed the massive Late Classic ruins at Coba and Chichen Itza to dwarfs who lived in the predawn darkness of a previous creation (Tozzer 1907:153; Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:330–31). Although these people were small in stature, they had enormous powers—they were able to cut stones as if they were wood and then built pyramids simply by whistling the stones into place (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:12, 330–31). Similarly, Mitleño Zapotecs attributed the construction of the Postclassic palaces at Mitla to beings that lived in the darkness before the sun of this age rose (Parsons 1936:1, 216, 220–21). This was a time when stones weighed no more than corn husks and so were easily compiled into the massive buildings now in ruins (Parsons 1936:289, 340, 455).

In sum, an interpretive structure of the long term has existed for Mesoamerican archaeology since at least the 16th century. Fossilized bones, ancient statues, and ruined buildings have repeatedly provided tangible evidence for beliefs about a previous age and its vanished inhabitants. The broad spatial-temporal distribution of these beliefs points to their conceptual importance: they should be considered among Mesoamerica’s foundational ideas (cf. Gossen 1986). However, such interpretations have not been significant in and of themselves. Knowledge about the previous creation has been important because it provides an image of contrast and preface: the strange, immoral past was destroyed to make way for the moral, properly ordered present. Most Mesoamerican discussions of the past do not end with descriptions of the previous age and its destruction; these narratives continue to recount the implications of this vanished era for social existence in the present. It is to these implications that I now turn. The following three sections particularize indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology by excavating the legacies of the past for the present in Aztec, Mixtec, and Maya archaeologies.

## Center and Periphery: Tenochtitlan and Teotihuacan

If Sahlins’s discussion of the “sadness of sweetness” ruminates on the implications of original sin for Western social theory, the following two case studies—of 16th-century Aztec and Mixtec archaeologies—uncover the

implications of a concept of “original debt” for social theory in Mesoamerica. In both cases, the emergence of the present from the past involved the creation of debts with the supernatural, debts that humans had continually to repay. This concept of “original debt” is found throughout Mesoamerica. Its pan-Mesoamerican corollary is that the repayment of the gods through sacrifice is a basic “existential proposition” of human existence (Monaghan 2000a, n.d.; Earle 1986:170–72). The importance of this idea of fundamental human indebtedness makes it an ideal resource for elite mobilization (Monaghan n.d., Joyce 2000). These case studies illustrate how social memories about the past were mortared to social hierarchies in the present by embedding original-debt-linked materialities in the matrix of day-to-day life.

According to their histories, the Mexica Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan was founded in 1345 on an island in Lake Texcoco, a divinely ordained site revealed by a sign (an eagle on a cactus) sent by the Mexica’s patron god (Durán 1994[1581]:42–44). The Mexica served as mercenaries for neighboring polities until the late 1420s, when the military victories of the ruler Itzcóatl made them the dominant political force in the Valley of Mexico. Their political ascendancy was accompanied by the physical expansion of their island city, which spread ever-outward from the central Great Temple. This structure—located on the site of the eagle-and-cactus revelation and continually rebuilt and enlarged throughout the 15th century—was surrounded by a temple- and palace-filled ceremonial precinct. Outside the walls of this precinct were houses, neighborhood temples, and floating fields. Canals permeated the island, linking its interiors to the lake, and roads and causeways radiated from the ceremonial center out across the lake to its shores (Carrasco 2000:148–67). These causeways and canals materialized the possibility of movement from the center to the periphery and from the periphery to the center—an important image in Mexica ideology. Carrasco (1987) argues that the Great Temple at the center of Tenochtitlan was a structure in which objects from throughout the empire were physically *and conceptually* incorporated into the Mexica community. The center was filled, augmented, with things from its peripheries; the material fabric of the Mexica capital became a microcosm of the Mexica empire. As evidenced in the epigraph, these incorporations also involved objects from the past. One of the most frequently referenced past traditions was that of Teotihuacan—and this brings us to the materialities and meanings of Aztec archaeology in the Mexica capital.

Implicit references to Teotihuacan within Tenochtitlan included original artifacts and stylistic reproductions, material things, and performed processions. According to one source, the ruler of Tenochtitlan (accompanied by a retinue of priests) traveled to Teotihuacan every 20 days to perform sacrifices (Paso y Troncoso 1905:6:221–22; Umberger 1987:83–84; but see Boone 2000:391). The basic grid layout of the island city paralleled that of Teotihuacan, and the double temple on the summit of the Great Temple may have been modeled after a similar structure on the main pyramid at Teoti-

huacan (Umberger 1987:83). Durán wrote that each of the four main temples in the ceremonial center of Tenochtitlan had four god-statues facing the cardinal directions—a reference to a moment of divine uncertainty just before the First Sunrise at Teotihuacan (see below; Durán 1977[1576–79]:78; cf. Florescano 1994:15–16). And Tenochtitlan was filled with statues and structures that referenced Teotihuacan through their style. The two Red Temples that flanked the Great Temple to the north and south featured Teotihuacan’s talud-tablero architecture; “pseudo-Teotihuacan paintings” have survived on one. Two more temples in the same style were found *outside* the ceremonial precinct (Umberger 1987:87–88). The Mexica collected stone masks and ceramics from Teotihuacan and even manufactured their own Teotihuacan-style sculptures; surviving examples include two death goddesses, a god of fire, and a ball-court marker (Umberger 1987:84–90). The point of these examples—processions, buildings, streets, statues—is that references to Teotihuacan were numerous and not limited to the Great Temple or even to the ceremonial precinct. Teotihuacan-referencing materials were embedded in the background fabric of daily life in the Mexica capital.

We can understand the meanings of these embedded references on both general and specific levels.<sup>8</sup> Teotihuacan materials were pre-Sunrise things, and their general interpretations reflect the long-term structure of indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology. First, the massive buildings at Teotihuacan were said to have been constructed by giants (Sahagún 1950–82[1547–85], vol. 10:192; but cf. vol. 7:4). Second, this construction took place during a previous era: Teotihuacan was the place where the sun of this age of creation first rose into the sky (Sahagún 1950–82[1547–85], vol. 7:3–9). But more specifically, if we consider Aztec narratives about that First Sunrise and other narratives that join Teotihuacan to the dawn of elite rulership, we can see how a general structure of archaeological interpretation was given meanings particular to the Aztec social order.

Teotihuacan was the place where divine sacrifices brought about the First Sunrise—sacrifices that had profound implications for the era they created. In order to bring about that first dawn, the Aztec deities gathered in darkness among Teotihuacan’s buildings. There, the god Nanahuatzin threw himself on a blazing fire; his immolation was followed by his reincarnation as the sun. But his transformation was fraught with complications. He did not immediately rise out of the east. Instead, the sky grew red in all directions. Uncertain where the new sun would appear, different gods looked in different directions in anticipation—a moment that,

8. It is important to repeat that Teotihuacan was only one of many past cultural traditions backgrounding daily life in Tenochtitlan. Indeed, the Mexica seem to have recognized the distinctions between these many temporal references (Umberger 1987:69). However, explicit Mexica discourses about the meanings of these differentiated past traditions have not always survived. The best-documented discourses are those for Toltec and Teotihuacano objects. In contrast to the latter, Toltec objects were linked to the prestige of a people who existed within this age of creation.

as mentioned above, was later depicted at four temples in the center of Tenochtitlan. And even when, finally, Nanahuatzin rose above the horizon, he was not able to move through the heavens. In order to initiate the solar cycle, in order to make the First Sunrise lead to a First Sunset, all of the remaining gods offered their own lives in sacrifice. Their blood set the sun in motion at the beginning of time (Sahagún 1950–82[1547–85], vol. 7: 3–9).<sup>9</sup>

This was an offering for which all humans who lived under that sun were fundamentally indebted. León-Portilla notes that the root of the Nahuatl word for human being, *macehualtin*, is *tlamacehua*, meaning “merit.” *Tlamacehua* appears frequently in Nahuatl religious texts, in contexts with two interrelated meanings: “to do penance” and “to be worthy of something.” The heroic acts of divine self-sacrifice at Teotihuacan were the first acts of *tlamacehua*. One of their implications was that humans must always strive to be worthy of these original sacrifices (León-Portilla 1993:42–44; Monaghan 2000a:37–39; Graulich 1997:113–15). Material references to Teotihuacan within Tenochtitlan were reminders to all of the city’s residents of their fundamental indebtedness to the gods who made their mortal—and moral—existence possible.

But this indebtedness was also linked to class inequality. Although the Aztec distinguished commoners (*macehualtin*) from elites (*pipiltin* or *tlacatl*), León-Portilla argues that the term *macehualtin* and the concept of indebtedness that it embodies was extended to all human beings, regardless of class (1993:43). All people were, ultimately, indebted to the gods for bringing about this age of creation. However, elite access to religious knowledge made commoners depend on the elite to repay their debts to the supernatural. Building on León-Portilla’s discussion of *tlamacehua*, Graulich (1997:113–14) writes:

While Molina translates *macehualli* as “vassal,” the word usually designates an ordinary person, the term *tlacatl* being preferentially reserved for nobles. A commoner is anyone who is “deserved” by his lord. The rulers “deserve” the ones they rule. They have conquered them, they do penance in their name at the festivals and have fought for them. Since they have been merited, the governed are debtors, and that is the reason why they pay tribute.

Elites repaid human debts to the supernatural from a variety of social roles. As was common for rulers throughout pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, the duties of the Aztec *tlatoani* included taking captives in warfare and sacrificing them to the gods. More generally, Aztec

priests were drawn from elite schools (Durán 1977[1576–79]:112). And, most broadly, elites as a class were viewed as sacrificers: they were *teuitzio*, “one’s spine,” and *teauaio*, “one’s thorn”—metaphorical references to the paraphernalia of bloodletting (Sahagún 1950–82[1547–85], vol. 10:20–21). From nobles to priests to the *tlatoani* himself, Aztec ideology justified elite privilege by claiming that elites were specially skilled in their ability to repay the original debts established at Teotihuacan, debts which all humans, elite or commoner, owed to the gods.

This importance of elites in fulfilling human debts to the gods was amplified by another Aztec belief about Teotihuacan. According to Sahagún, Teotihuacan was more than the place of origin of the sun and of human indebtedness. It was also the place of origin for the institution of rulership—an institution whose officials were drawn from the elite class. Early in one migration account, the Mexica were abandoned by all but four of the wise men who have traveled with them from across the sea. In the growing predawn light, the four remaining wise men worried about the future of their people: “The sun will shine, it will dawn. How will the common people live, how will they dwell? What will govern? What will rule?” (Sahagún 1950–82[1547–85], vol. 10:191). The immediate answer to the question “What will govern?” was provided by the creation of sacred books; soon after, the Mexica arrived at Teotihuacan, and further provisions were made for the governance of the common people: “And there the leaders were elected, wherefore it is called Teotihuacan.” Indeed, the very etymology of “Teotihuacan” pointed to this event: *teutioacā* was said to derive from *vey tioacā*, “place where lords were made” (Sahagún 1950–82[1547–85], vol. 10:191; Boone 2000).

From the First Sunrise to the Place Where Lords Were Made: the explicit discourses of Aztec archaeology describe Teotihuacan as a place of origin for the “present” age of creation and its key social and cosmological hierarchies. Because of this, the many tangible references to Teotihuacan within the Mexica capital would have done more than simply “legitimate” the Mexica as a people by linking them to one of Central Mexico’s ancient civilizations (as, perhaps, one could claim for material references to the post-Sunrise Toltecs). Implicitly and explicitly, Teotihuacan-referencing remains would have reminded the inhabitants of Tenochtitlan of the place where their basic debts to the gods originated. Implicitly and explicitly, such materials would have reminded the *macehualtin* of their dependence on the elites who worked to repay those primordial debts, and whose elevated status itself was linked to Teotihuacan. Every day, Teotihuacano objects—twin temples, stone statues, painted frescoes—would have backgrounded human hierarchy in the Mexica capital.

Something similar was true for the Classic-period ruins that overshadowed daily life in the Postclassic Mixtec community of Chachoapan.

9. The interpretation of ruined buildings not simply as remains from a previous age of creation but as the actual place of origin for the “present” age is also found in Postclassic Zapotec and 20th-century Lacandon belief (Pohl 1998; Boremans 1993:348). The 16th-century Quiché Maya may have also associated a Classic-period city (shrouded in the darkness of the world before the First Sunrise) and the origin of human relations with the gods. The “great eastern city” in the *Popol Vuh* may be the Classic Maya center of Copan (Tedlock 1993:12–21).

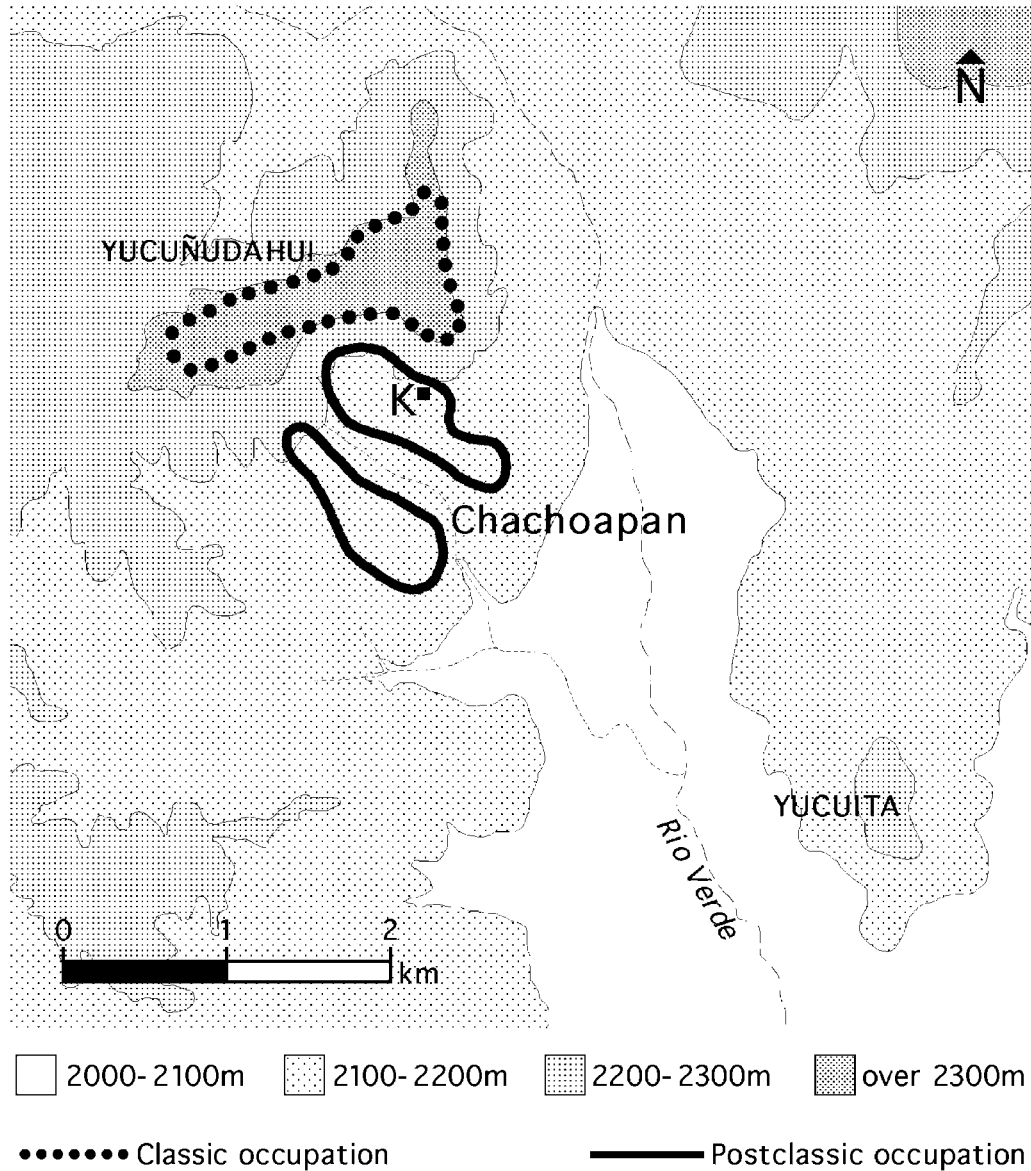


FIG. 2. Classic and Postclassic occupation at Chachoapan and Yucuñudahui; for simplicity, settlement patterns at Yucuita have not been indicated (adapted from Lind 1979:13). K, palace.

### Vertical Visuality: Chachoapan and Yucuñudahui

Compared with the extensive scrutiny to which Aztec traditions have been subjected, the contemporary Postclassic Mixtecs have received relatively little study. This is partially due to the nature of the documentary record. The main sources on Aztec society are postconquest alphabetic texts, relatively easy to read. In contrast, the main sources on Mixtec society are 15th- and 16th-century pictorial codices. The following interpretation of these difficult visual histories is made possible by con-

sidering both the structure of the long term of indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology and a more focused analogy to Aztec belief. As with Aztec archaeology, the Mixtecs linked sunrises and Classic ruins to elite rulership and original debt, but the specific nature of that indebtedness and the spatial contexts in which narratives about the past were situated reveal significant contrasts between Aztec and Mixtec archaeologies.

The Postclassic community of Chachoapan was located at the base of a mountain called Yucuñudahui, "Hill of the Rain God" (fig. 2). Divided in two by an arroyo, the community featured no spectacular temples



or ceremonial centers: its primary architectural form was the house. Social differentiation was expressed through the size of these houses and the materials used in their construction. Excavations at Chachoapan have uncovered the palace of the community's rulers. The palace is located on the northeastern edge of the community where it begins to ascend the flanks of Yucuñudahui. It stands on some of the highest ground in Chachoapan and looks down upon the houses of the rest of the community (Lind 1979:15). This site was occupied by the ruling family for centuries. A palace had been consistently situated there across five different phases of construction, spanning (at least) A.D. 1340 ± 90 to A.D. 1660 ± 80 (Lind 1979:37–38). This multiroom stone construction contrasted with the one-room adobe houses of the commoners who lived on the lower slopes of the mountain. Commoners living in Chachoapan therefore lived in a space of material and vertical hierarchy: whenever they looked to the north, they looked up at the palace of the ruling family.

This vertical hierarchy was further accentuated by the ruins located at the summit of Yucuñudahui, ruins that were the focus of indigenous archaeology in Chachoapan. An extensive Classic-period ceremonial center covers the summit of the Hill of the Rain God. Its remains include at least seven massive mounds and a ball court (Spores 1983). These ruins, towering over Chachoapan day after day, were occasionally visited by the men and women who lived in their shadow. Sacrifices were made among them: obsidian blades testify to offerings of blood; ceramic vessels testify to offerings of food (Spores 1983:155). And the summit may have seen more spectacular ritual performances as well: one of the Classic-period platforms was resurfaced with stone during the Postclassic (Spores 1972:125–26). We know that the contents of the Mixtec codices were performed to make their contents available to a wider audience (King 1990). Perhaps this platform was used to reenact the ancient events—discussed below—that the codical record shows taking place in the surrounding landscape.

As with Mexica interpretations of Teotihuacan, we can understand the meanings of Yucuñudahui on both general and specific levels. Generally, interpretations of its ruined buildings followed the contours of indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology. First, this detritus was associated with now-vanished beings, stone men who had been conquered by the first Mixtec elites—stone men linked to 20th-century beliefs about ancient giants petrified by a First Sunrise (Reyes 1976[1593]:ii; Byland and Pohl 1994:114–19; Monaghan 1987:392–93). Second, these stone men and stone ruins were tied to events that took place before the dawn of this age of creation. As with Aztec beliefs about Teotihuacan, these ancient events established the social and cosmological hierarchies of the Postclassic present. And as was the case for Aztec archaeology, an understanding of Mixtec archaeology must go beyond structural generalization to consider the specific features of Mixtec belief. The following paragraphs therefore pursue a detailed treatment of Mixtec codical history, recounting pre-Sunrise events and

discussing their implications for archaeology and social order in Postclassic Chachoapan.

The mountain of Yucuñudahui appears twice in the Mixtec Codex Nuttall as part of the landscape for events which take place at the beginning of time. On page 2, it appears next to a depiction of the monumental architecture at its summit (fig. 3, 2). On page 3, it appears next to a depiction of Yucuita (Hill of the Flower), a mountain located directly to the southeast of Chachoapan (compare fig. 2 and figure 3, 3). These representations appear during an epic battle that took place at the beginning of Mixtec recorded history—a battle that made the ruins on Yucuñudahui especially meaningful to the elites and commoners living in their shadow. This “War of Heaven”—or, more accurately, this “War with Earth, War with Rain”—appears three times in the Mixtec corpus: twice in the Codex Nuttall and once (briefly) in the Codex Bodley. In both of the Codex Nuttall versions, the battle involved two phases. In the first, the gods and Mixtec ancestors fought against rock-skinned stone men (fig. 3, 3 and 4, 20). In the second, the gods and Mixtec ancestors fought against rain-descending “cloud men” (fig. 3, 4, and 4, 21). Dated to around A.D. 960–80, this two-part battle is one of the first events in Mixtec codical history, and it had profound implications for the world that emerged afterward (Rabin 1979; Byland and Pohl 1994:109–19; Pohl 1994:116). It is out of this battle that the Postclassic Mixtec king-queendoms first emerged, that the sun first rose, and that cosmological debts to Earth and Rain were first incurred.<sup>10</sup> Each of these topics—foundation, sunrise, original debt—is important for understanding indigenous archaeology at Chachoapan.

Both Codex Nuttall accounts of the battles with Earth and Rain conclude with the foundations of important Postclassic Mixtec polities. The first Nuttall account begins before the battle commences. Its first two pages depict four emergences out of the earth—one amidst the ruins of Yucuñudahui itself—by a Mixtec ancestor, Lord 8 Wind (fig. 3, 2). After the battle, he and his wife founded the Postclassic dynasty of Suchixtlan, a site only 5 km from Chachoapan and Yucuñudahui. In turn, their children are involved with the first generations of rulers at the important Postclassic king-queendoms of Jaltepec and Tilantongo. The foundation of Tilantongo itself is recorded in Codex Nuttall's second account of the War with Earth, War with Rain. In this version, the battles are part of a longer narrative (pages 14–22) about the marriage of a woman named Lady 3 Flint to a sky-descended Lord 12 Wind (fig. 4, 20). After the battles, Lord 12 Wind carries two temples across the Mixteca. One is

10. The most recent interpretation of this battle has been offered by Byland and Pohl (1994). They argue that it depicts events involved in the political transition that took place between the Classic and Postclassic periods. While it is possible that the association of this battle with Classic centers has a historical basis in violent events which took place during the Classic-to-Postclassic transition, I will be less interested in the actual historicity of these battles and more in their relation to the appropriation of Classic ruins by Postclassic elites.

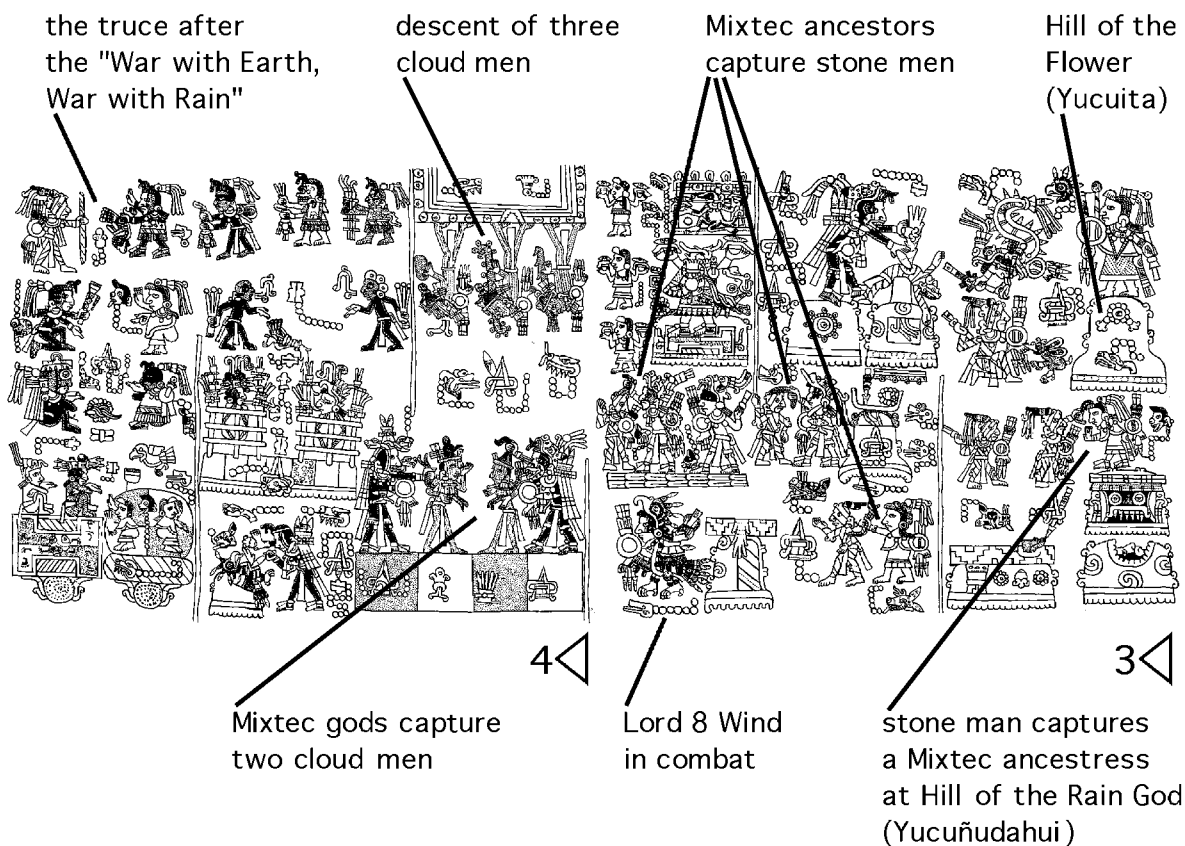
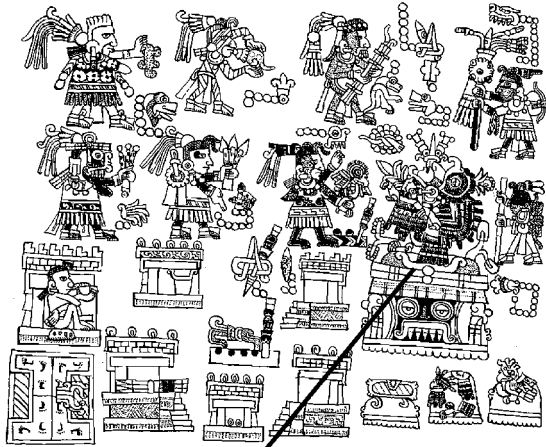


FIG. 3. *The emergence of Lord 8 Wind and the War with Earth, War with Rain* (from Codex Zouche-Nuttall [1987:2–4], reproduced courtesy of Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt).

brought to the first rulers of the Postclassic king-queendom of Achiutla (fig. 4, 21). The other is brought to the Postclassic king-queendom of Tilantongo. Suchixtlan, Achiutla, Tilantongo: at the very least, one of the political implications of the War with Earth, War with Rain would have been the reification of the Postclassic present. These battle narratives naturalize elite power by showing that Mixtec king-queendoms have existed since the beginning of recorded history (cf. Graulich 1997: 207–9).

But these narratives also involve a sunless sky and a First Sunrise. These details allow us to understand the broader cosmological significance of these battles, to situate them within a wider tradition of indigenous archaeology. Both of the Codex Nuttall accounts place the battles *before* the First Sunrise of this age of creation. In the first version, the War with Earth, War with Rain takes place beneath a skyband in which no sun shines (fig. 3, 3). Comparably, the second version clearly shows the War with Earth, War with Rain taking place under the light of a *different* sun. As mentioned above, pages 14–22 of the Codex Nuttall combine to form the self-contained story of Lady 3 Flint and Lord 12 Wind. Four skybands

are depicted on these pages: one on page 18, one on page 19a, and two on page 21. The first three skybands all feature sun disks infixed with a “motion” sign. The sun in the final skyband on page 21, however, is different. It is infixed with a skull and in addition has brilliant starry bands of red and yellow light streaming out from beneath it. I argue that this skull-sun image depicts the dawning of the sun of the “current” (Postclassic) age of creation. A number of lines of evidence support this interpretation. The artist is clearly depicting a change in the sun at this point—all three previous occurrences of the sun in this narrative were marked with a motion sign. This parallels Aztec accounts of previous creations in which each age had its own, individually named sun—apparently Postclassic Mixtecs believed that the Motion Sun of the previous age of creation was replaced by the Skull Sun of the present age of creation. Indeed, the 16th-century Mixtec name for the sun was *yya caa maa*—Lord 1 Skull (King 1994:122–23). Infixing a skull within the fourth sun may label it as the “1 Skull Sun” of the present age. Another suggestive detail is the band of light streaming from below the Skull Sun on page 21. This convention is unusual in Mixtec art, but it also appears



Lord 8 Wind  
emerges from  
Hill of the Rain God  
(Yucuñudahui)



with the First Sunrise on page 23 of the Codex Vienna. Finally, a date is recorded below the rising Skull Sun: Year 1 Reed, Day 1 Crocodile (fig. 4, 21). This is the first day of the 52-year ritual cycle; this date literally and metaphorically indicates the beginning of time (Furst 1978, King 1990).

By placing the War with Earth, War with Rain before the First Sunrise and presenting the foundation of the first Postclassic king-queendoms immediately after it, these narratives chronologically linked the origins of social inequality (elite rulership of Postclassic king-queendoms) with the origins of natural cycles (the first rising of the Skull Sun). This is comparable to Aztec beliefs that linked the origins of both sun and rulership to Teotihuacan. But there was a third aspect to Aztec beliefs about Teotihuacan: it was the place where human debts to the supernatural were first established. The same association can be demonstrated for Mixtec understandings of the ruins of Yucuñudahui. The battles that took place around these ruins established debt-based “Covenants with Earth and Rain.” Discussed by contemporary Nuyooteco Mixtecs and depicted in the Postclassic Codex Vienna, these Covenants enabled humans to practice agriculture by making them “originally indebted” to

Earth and Rain. Earth and Rain agreed to allow humans to eat their plant children provided that humans “fed” them with sacrifices in return (Monaghan 1990, 1995; fig. 5, 27). Bellas (1997:88) has independently suggested that the so-called War of Heaven may depict a Covenants narrative. The following three paragraphs present further evidence supporting that interpretation. Argument will focus on three points of comparison linking the events of the War with Earth, War with Rain to other Covenants narratives: cast and chronology, militarism, and an image of truce.

First, and most elementarily, these battle scenes include three types of actors—human ancestors, the Earth (stone men), and the Rain (cloud men). The same cast of characters appears in the Covenants stories told in 20th-century Nuyoo and depicted in the Codex Vienna. All three narratives share a primordial temporal setting. As was argued above, the Nuttall battles take place beneath the skies of a previous era of creation. The Nuyoo account takes place at the beginning of this age of creation, after the First Sunrise has destroyed the asocial giants of the previous age and the first humans have emerged from a cave (Monaghan 1995:32–33, 209–10). And the Codex Vienna account takes place two pages before the First Sunrise.

Second, the Nuttall scenes of combat and sacrifice depict the Covenants emerging out of violence. This is in keeping with other Covenants narratives from the Mixteca—as well as from regions to the north and south—in which violence is a crucial feature of human relations with agriculture, Earth, and Sky (cf. Taube 1995:100; Headrick 1996:85–86). Belligerent imagery appears in the Codex Vienna immediately after its account of the Covenants on page 27 (fig. 5, 27). A procession of eight gods in militaristic posture and costume marches toward cob-laden maize stalks (fig. 5, 26). With one hand, each holds a shield; with the other, each holds a maize cob as if it were a spear. All wear Rain goggles—a standard military ornament throughout Mesoamerica (Furst 1977:199–201; Schele and Freidel 1990:159–64; Headrick 1996:82–85). Indeed, this Covenants militarism itself has echoes throughout the region. Combat and violence are central to Covenants stories told elsewhere in 16th-century Mesoamerica. To the north, the Aztec *Histoyre du Mexique* describes how the earth monster is forced to bring forth crops from her body—but only after her body is ripped in two and only after the gods agree to her demand for human blood in return (Thévet 1905:29). To the south, the Quiché Popol Vuh describes how the Hero Twins battle a False Sun and the Lords of the Underworld as they seek to plant crops and resurrect their father the Maize God. And—as with Aztec and Mixtec Covenants stories—the Quiché narrative includes a First Sunrise: the victorious brothers end their adventures by rising into the sky as the sun and moon of a new age of creation (Tedlock 1996:139–41; Taube 1985:175–78; Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:65–66; Graulich 1997:135–38).<sup>11</sup>

11. Another parallel between the War with Earth, War with Rain and the *Popol Vuh* is that the first account in the Codex Nuttall

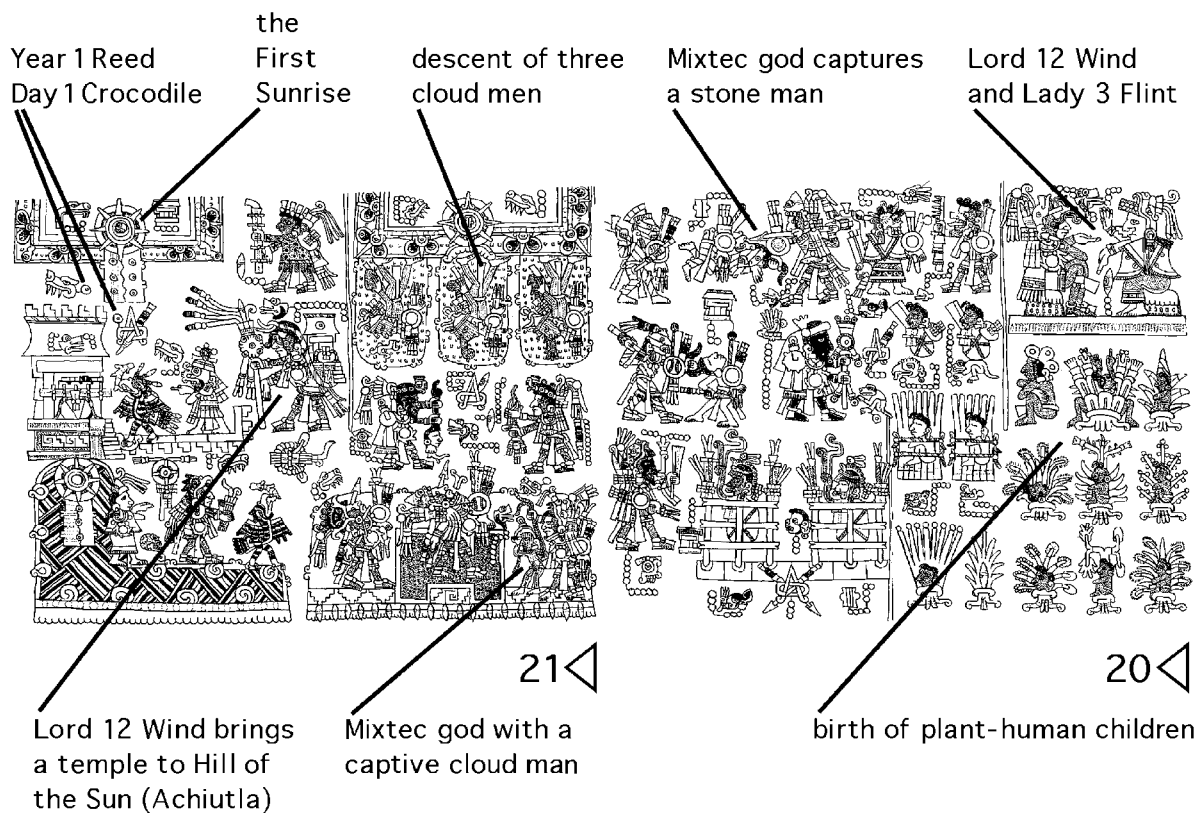


FIG. 4. *The War with Earth, War with Rain and the First Sunrise* (from Codex Zouche-Nuttall [1987:20–21], reproduced courtesy of Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt).

A final point supporting a Covenants interpretation of the Codex Nuttall battles is that the first War with Earth, War with Rain concludes with what may be the actual “truce” in which the Covenants are established. Three pairs of individuals descend the left-hand side of page 4: a stone man and a human male (Lord 5 Flower and Lord 1 Wind), leading a procession of priests), a human male and a human female (Lord 10 Skull and Lady 8 Monkey), and an unnamed personification of Rain and a human god-ancestor (Lord 2 Dog) (fig. 3, 4). This postbattle pairing of humans with personifications of Earth and Rain may depict the negotiation of an end to conflict, a truce in which humans, Earth, and Sky agree to sustain each other throughout the age of creation that is about to dawn. The first pair makes the agricultural symbolism of this meeting explicit: the stone man (Lord 5 Flower)

holds out a digging stick to Lord 1 Wind.<sup>12</sup> Three lines of evidence—cast and chronology, militarism, and an image of truce—support an interpretation of these battles as Covenants narratives, events that created relations of “original debt” between humans and supernatural forces at the beginning of time.

In sum, the codex-recorded discourses of Mixtec archaeology describe the landscape around Yucuñudahui as a place where the “present” age of creation and its key social and cosmological hierarchies had their origins.

12. The human male/human female pairing of Lord 10 Skull and Lady 8 Monkey is also appropriate if these three pairings chronicle the foundations of the Covenants. In both 16th- and 20th-century Mixtec cosmology, male-female sexual fertility parallels the fertility of the union of Earth and Sky through Rain (Monaghan 1995: 110–17). In addition, Lady 8 Monkey fought against the Earth Men on page 3, where she was taken prisoner (see fig. 3, 3). Her reappearance on page 4 may indicate an exchange of prisoners (or household members) as another feature of the postbattle truce. Similar exchanges of personnel will mark human existence as long as the Covenants are kept. Just as the Earth and Sky give their plant children to sustain human lives and households, so too do humans arrive in their “final household” only when they are buried in (and thus feed) the Earth—an “exchange” in death analogous to marriage in both Nuyooteco and Aztec thought (Monaghan 1987:278–82; Graulich 1997:57).

features the resurrection of two males (Lord 4 Motion and Lord 7 Flower) in a ball court—the same location in which the Hero Twins resurrect their father and attempt to resurrect their uncle (Tedlock 1996:140–41).

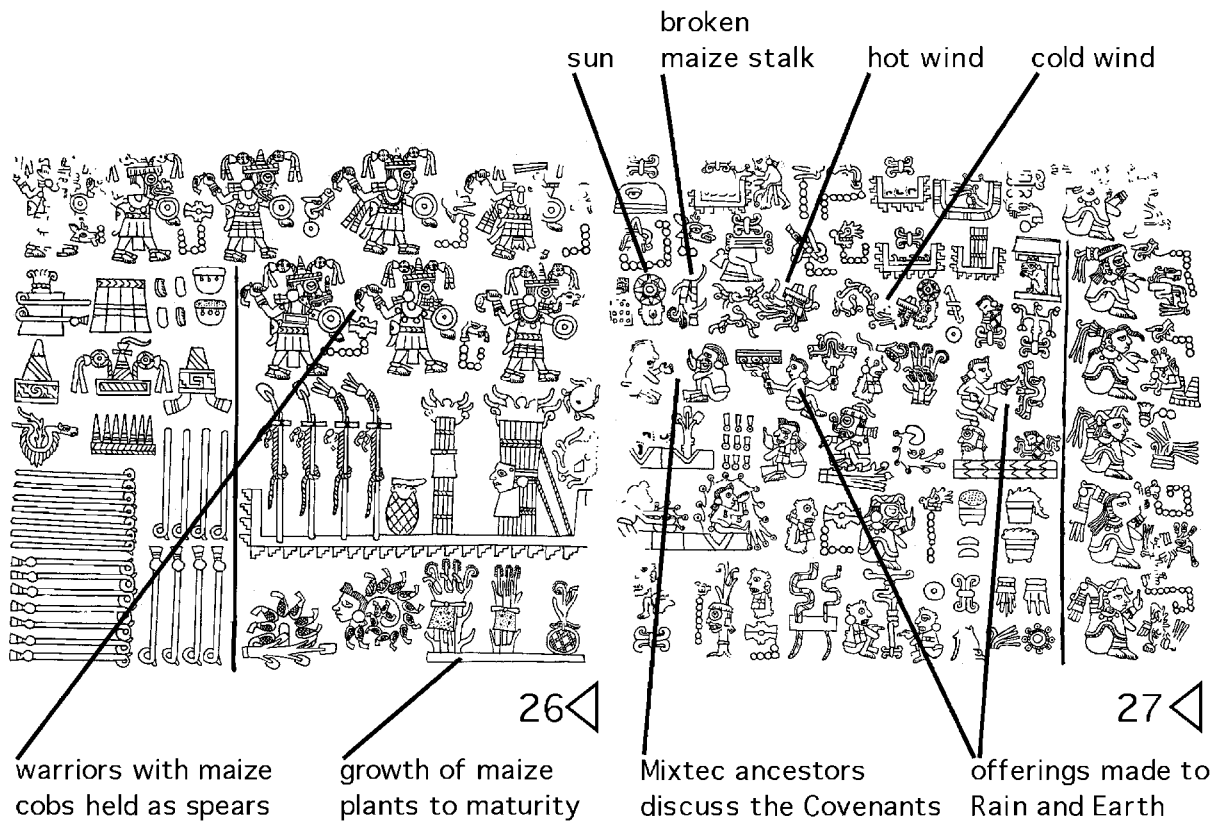


FIG. 5. *The Covenants narratives in the Codex Vienna* (from *Codex Vindobonensis Mexicanus I* [1974:27–26], reproduced courtesy of Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt).

The ruins on the summit of Yucuñudahui would have provided the inhabitants of Chachoapan with enduring material traces from the emergence of the present age. Every day, the Mixtecs living under the ruins of Yucuñudahui would have been physically reminded of what the past had been like: a world of darkness or of a different sun, a world without agriculture, a world inhabited not by humans but by stone men. Every day, they would have been spatially reminded of their debt to the ancestors of the ruling class: ancient heroes and heroines whose actions and agreements made human existence possible. Every day, ancient ruins and royal palace would have backgrounded human hierarchy in Chachoapan.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, the uncovering of this tradition of Mixtec archaeology from incompletely understood pictorial records was made possible through analogies generated from a Mesoamerican structure of the long term. The case study which follows is similar: it uses that generalizing structure to illuminate practices which, because of their fragmentary description, might otherwise appear insignificant or incomprehensible. In this case, a tradition of Yucatec archaeology is excavated from ethnographic records, records compiled by an ethnographer who published his skepticism that these ideas about the past could be used to

study the continuity and transformation of indigenous beliefs (Redfield 1932:305–8).<sup>13</sup>

### Transformation and Contestation: Chan Kom and Chichen Itza

To segue from Chachoapan to Chan Kom involves a leap forward in time to the 20th century. This leap reveals a transformed set of ideas about the implications of the past in the present. As in Mixtec archaeology, there is evidence from Chan Kom that the gods of Earth and Rain were associated with—indeed inhabited—pre-Columbian sites and objects (Redfield 1932:301; Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:120–21, 341, 349, 356). And, as with both Aztec and Mixtec archaeologies, notions of debt and reciprocity characterized Chan Komian beliefs about human relations to the supernatural world (Redfield and

13. The following discussion, although drawing from Redfield and Villa Rojas's data, contradicts Redfield's claims about the unimportance of the material past in Maya life (e.g., Redfield 1932:301). My analysis thus follows in the tradition of Oscar Lewis and Victor Goldkind: I draw on Redfield's rich ethnographic data to produce an alternative interpretation of what he observed (Lewis 1951; Goldkind 1965, 1966).

Villa Rojas 1934:127, 134). But “original debt” was not the focus for interpretations of ancient objects and places in Chan Kom, nor were such objects and places primarily referenced as explanations for human social order in the present. Indeed, ethnographers Redfield and Villa Rojas did not record any narratives about the origins of human social institutions. Rather, ancient objects and places were referenced as models for a millenarian future in which the strange beings of the past would return to assist the residents of Chan Kom. The implications of the past in Chan Kom were therefore very different from the implications of the past in Aztec and Mixtec archaeologies. This is, of course, not surprising and can probably be linked to the influence of colonialist and internal-colonialist teleologies of Christianity and modernization theory. But Yucatec Maya archaeology in Chan Kom was, I argue, genealogically linked to intellectual traditions of pre-Columbian origin. I conclude with Chan Kom in order to consider the historical transformation of indigenous archaeology, as well as to consider the resistance of a community to the introduction of elite-supporting ideologies of the past.

Chan Kom was founded in the 1880s by Maya settlers from the nearby community of Ebtun. A statue of San Diego was promptly discovered on the site, and the image became Chan Kom’s patron saint (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:108–9). The spatial organization of Chan Kom as it existed in the 1930s owed much to efforts by the community in the 1920s to receive official status as a *pueblo* from the government (granted in 1926). The ground around the cenote (limestone well) in the center of the village was cleared of trees. A square plaza was laid out around that cenote. A grid-plan of streets was marked off. Houses were moved and reoriented, and the town’s first masonry buildings—a school, the houses of leading families—were built around the edges of the plaza (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:28).

The autochthonous nature of community identity has already been suggested by the foundation discovery of San Diego; Chichen Itza and other pre-Columbian ruins also served to localize social life and social commentary. As with Tenochtitlan and Chachoapan, references to the material remains of the past were physically and visually incorporated into the daily spaces of Chan Kom. When town mason Don Nas finished building a stone house (prominently located on the main plaza) for Don Anal in 1930, he decorated its exterior with designs “imitating the buildings at Chichen Itza” (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:257). More ties to Chichen were materialized in 1931 with the construction of a “Road of Light” linking the two sites (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:30, 285–90). A tower was built in Chan Kom to lay out this road. Tall enough to allow a view of the Castillo pyramid at Chichen, it visually dominated Chan Kom as an indexical reminder of the archaeological site (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:288). The construction of the 5-m-wide, 13-km-long road involved community members in another type of physical interaction with Chichen. During the month it took to complete the road, dozens of workers bridged the two locations with time and labor, stones

and bodies. The completed road, entering Chan Kom from the northwest, provided all residents with yet another on-the-ground reminder of Chichen. The very form of the Road of Light made reference to pre-Columbian ruins: the road was perfectly straight. This linearity contrasted sharply with the region’s winding paths, laid down over time by foot traffic, but it paralleled the elevated *sacbe* roads that linked pre-Columbian cities (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:286–90). And even before this neo-*sacbe* was completed, other pathways connected the two locales. Community members traveled to Chichen on a regular basis for a number of reasons. Sacrifices were performed there occasionally (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:335), and hunting expeditions took place there (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:290). But the most frequent form of interaction with Chichen—at least since 1924—was trips made by men and women to get medicines from or to sell food and handicrafts to the participants in the Carnegie Institution’s archaeological project at the site (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:59, 231–32, 240, 251–53, 277, 288, 292, 296–99, 325). In a number of ways, then, Chichen Itza was physically incorporated into daily life in Chan Kom.

At one level, these visits to and interests in Chichen can be explained by material motivations: access to the American capital being invested in the archaeological site.<sup>14</sup> But, as with the other archaeological ruins discussed in this study, Chichen was also the subject of explicit discourses about pre-Sunrise beings, discourses that gave the site a significance independent of American presence there. As with Aztec and Mixtec archaeologies, these discourses can be understood in both general and specific terms. Generally, these discourses share the contours of indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology. First, the massive constructions at Chichen (as well as Coba and other sites) were linked to now-vanished architects. Referred to, in variously conflicting stories, as “little people,” “very tall men,” “ant people,” or “night people,” these beings could move stones with little effort and thus constructed the massive buildings now in ruin. Furthermore, the “night people” went into hiding, their constructions interrupted, with the coming of the dawn (Redfield and Villa-Rojas 1934:331). But, for yet a third time, it is critical to look beyond these basic structural conformities in order to consider the specific meanings and uses that archaeological ruins were given by the residents of Chan Kom. In contrast to Aztec and Mixtec archaeologies, in which pre-Sunrise beings had perished with the coming of this age of creation, here the vanished

14. Although this study focuses on the “meaningful” aspects of reuses of the past, I do not want to ignore the importance of “practical” reuses of this detritus. Consider the range of activities performed at Classic sites by Postclassic Oaxacans. A ridge branching off from the Classic-period ceremonial center at Yucuñudahui was the site of large-scale flint production in the Postclassic (Spores 1972:124). Evidence for a possible defensive wall and a single house dating to the Postclassic have been uncovered at Monte Albán, another Classic site reused for religious purposes in the Postclassic (Winter 1996). Pohl, Monaghan, and Stiver discuss the multiple uses of abandoned Classic sites in the Mixteca, including their possible role as locations for markets (1997:212, 225).

architects of Chichen still survived beneath the surface of the earth (Redfield 1932:304). And where Aztec and Mixtec archaeologies focused on the flaws of the previous age, Chan Komian discourses about Chichen focused on the incredible powers of the vanished beings. It was hoped that these beings would return to the surface of the earth to share their powers with the humans who had replaced them (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:331).

Verbal evocations of these vanished beings, their ruined constructions, and their possible future return were incorporated into daily life at Chan Kom in a number of ways. Religious specialists referenced Chichen and other archaeological ruins in their prayers: four examples are included in the appendices to *Chan Kom: A Maya Village*. The same appendices include ten stories about pre-Sunrise events and their material traces, stories that were integrated into daily discourse. For example, the collapse of the new school building on August 6, 1931, was “more than once” compared to a narrative about the destruction of Chichen (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:329). Another architectural event—the seemingly interminable construction of Don Nas’s plaza-bordering house (begun October 12, 1930, and still unfinished over a year later)—was compared to the constructions of the “night people” at Chichen, which were prematurely halted by the sunrise. Indeed, this narrative of incompleteness was even condensed into an adage. “It has become morning for him” indicated that some project had been going on for a long period of time with no hope of completion in sight (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:268, 331).

Yet perhaps the most interesting verbal evocations of Chichen in 1930s Chan Kom were those made by an ambitious would-be cacique, Don Eustacio. Don Eus took advantage of community familiarity with Chichen in his attempts to “modernize” Chan Kom—and at the same time to elevate his family to a dominant social, political, and economic position (Goldkind 1965, 1966). His rhetoric highlighted the ruins of the Maya past as an inspiration for the future. It was his idea to construct the Road of Light. He even fantasized that Americans would drive down that road in cars to visit his soon-to-be-prosperous community (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:30, 285–90). He made explicit references to the ancient builders of Chichen in his exhortations mobilizing communal labor: “The presence of this legend, in the mind of the speaker [Don Eus], weighted with emotional significance, and its presence in the minds of the hearers, similarly conditioned, made it a mechanism in the control of his conduct and theirs” (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:328). He even suggested that the return of vanished beings had already taken place, claiming that the American archaeologists were the “ant men” of ancient Chichen (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:328; see also 213–14). Overall, then, Don Eus’s mobilization of extant Yucatec archaeology combined physical constructions of towers and roads with verbal evocations of vanished beings and ancient powers.

The previous studies of Tenochtitlan and Chachoapan were only able to consider how a general structure of the long term had been appropriated and particularized in

support of an unequal social order. In contrast, descriptions of Chan Kom reveal the tensions that resulted when broadly held beliefs about archaeological ruins were appropriated in an attempt to bring about social change. Don Eus’s archaeology-referencing projects of “modernization” and self-aggrandizement were, and were not, successful. After a 1964 restudy of Chan Kom, Victor Goldkind reported that Don Eus was referred to as the town’s cacique—a term that “has the connotation of tyrant”—and that he “dominates the economic, social, and political life of Chan Kom” (1966:333, 325). In addition, his family monopolized local leadership positions, wells, and agricultural lands. Don Eus and his family, then, had clearly “progressed” since the 1930s.

But not without conflict. Don Eus’s millennial rhetoric and his reliance on communal labor to achieve “modernizing” ends were not universally appreciated or supported by the men and women of Chan Kom. Indeed, his status as cacique was achieved despite extensive resistance. Foot-dragging and “voting with the feet” are common strategies of popular protest, and they were used extensively against Don Eus. *Chan Kom: A Maya Village* is filled with constant, if downplayed, references to community members’ refusing to participate in Don Eus’s communal labor demands (which took people away from their fields and devoured one-sixth to one-quarter of a male conscript’s time [Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:79, 81, 290]). The building of the Road of Light is one context where refusals took place—so clearly not everyone in the community was convinced by Don Eus’s claims that Americans were mythical “ant men” or that a millennial future was dawning (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:292). Residents even moved out of Chan Kom because of these demands and continued to do so throughout the following decades as Don Eus consolidated his power (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:14, 80, 318–19; Goldkind 1966). An interview with one Chan Kom expatriate in 1964 produced this commentary on the modernization project: “Is that what they say in books, that Don Eus worked for the progress of Chan Kom? That’s not true—he worked only for his own interest” (Goldkind 1966:333).

Admittedly, Don Eus worked for his own interest by pursuing a number of strategies, not just the mobilization of the past—but the same can be said of the strategies of domination pursued by Aztec and Mixtec elites. Even without his mobilizations, the remains of Chichen Itza were multiply incorporated into the daily life of 1930s Chan Kom. As we have seen, Chichen was evoked in prayers and adages, was visited for hunting and medicine, and was made tangible through revival architecture. Because of this general community familiarity with Chichen, its remains provided an ideal resource for mobilization by Don Eus. And because of the ethnographic detail with which this mobilization has been recorded, events in Chan Kom raise issues not revealed by the Aztec and Mixtec materials. Events in Chan Kom reveal the successes—and failures—of an attempted appropriation of the past. They reveal that resurrections of the past are not always accepted. They point out that al-

though indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology has been mobilized to reify the existing “present,” it has also been mobilized to transform that present into a different future.

The social life of the Road of Light embodies these themes of partial success, partial failure, and social transformation. Robert Redfield returned to Chan Kom for a six-week restudy in 1948. The road linking Chan Kom to Chichen was still being used but not, as Don Eus had hoped, by car-driving Americans. In 1934 (the year in which *Chan Kom: A Maya Village* was published in Washington), the Mexican government built a new road between Chichen and the state capital of Mérida. The travel time between Chan Kom and Mérida (via Chichen) was thereby reduced from 24 hours to 10. As a result, the residents of Chan Kom gained access to an expanded market for their agricultural produce (Redfield 1950:19). The Road of Light was used more than ever. However, with the expansion of its practical use, its physical form was transformed. I mentioned above that, unlike most trails in the area, the original Road of Light was laid out in a perfectly straight line. This linearity ignored the variations in local topography, and so some parts of the road passed over terrain too rough to traverse on foot (let alone by car!). But when the Road of Light became the community's main link to Mérida, its straightness was altered, appended by its users with surface-sensitive detours (Redfield 1950:16–17):

The road was laid, “straight as the roads of the leaf-cutter ants”; and the people called it “the road to the light.” It proved impossible to use this road in its entirety, for it ran over very rough terrain; but soon another trail, using in part the straight road and more direct than the old one, was cut to Chichen and became the road chiefly used by Chan Kom people from that time on.

## Conclusions

This study has attempted to bridge temporal and spatial generalizations with focused localizations. Using the concept of “Mesoamerica” as a frame, I gathered scattered references about interpretations of the physical remains of the past from a number of sources over a broad span of time and integrated these to propose a general structure of the long term for indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology. This structure was then used to interpret three pairs of sites: Tenochtitlan and Teotihuacan, Chachoapan and Yucuñudahui, Chan Kom and Chichen Itza. Through these examples, two contemporaneous archaeological traditions were compared and contrasted (Aztec and Mixtec), and then further comparisons and contrasts joined those 16th-century archaeologies with a 20th-century descendant. But claiming such long-term continuities is problematic, given what we know of disjunctures and given current academic interests in short-term situations. I therefore want to conclude with ques-

tions of invention and tradition. This study began with evocations of Europe, the West, and modern nation-states; these conclusions return to the same topics. First, I consider the ways in which my interpretations of indigenous archaeology of Chan Kom might be critiqued through reference to European colonization and the nation-state. Second, I point out that archaeological structures of the long term are not limited to the so-called cold societies of the not-West. I argue that the West itself has a structure of the long term organizing its own tradition of “indigenous European archaeology.”

One obvious critique of assumptions of structural continuity in Mesoamerica would highlight the European invasion and the five subsequent centuries of (internal) colonization. Clearly, these have had a profound impact on indigenous worldviews. But it is important not to overemphasize the arrival of the West in the Western Hemisphere, to aggrandize its rupturing power, to celebrate “despondency theory” (Sahlins 1991a:401–4). As an example—and although the historiographic denial of an event may not indicate its unimportance—note that Mesoamerican histories from both the 16th and the 20th century often ignore the European invasion, an invasion which might be assumed to have involved the dawn of a radically new era (Codex Selden 1964[1560]; Laughlin 1988:181–204; Lockhart 1993:12; Monaghan 1995:32–33, 42–50; Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:328–37; Schroeder 2000; Watanabe 1992:42; cf. Connerton 1989:13–21; but see Parsons 1936:327; Bricker 1981).

Another critique of continuities would privilege only the immediate historical motivations that shape uses of past. Lomnitz-Adler, in his work on Tepoztlán (another Mexican community studied by Redfield), discusses an elite-led process of “re-Indianization” in the latter half of the 19th century. He shows that the social value of indigenous identity changes over time; this particular mobilization of indigenous heritage is connected to the nationalizing ideologies of Mexico's central government (Lomnitz-Adler 1979:460–71). Castañeda makes a similarly nation-focused argument for the early 20th century when he posits that Chan Komian interpretations of Chichen were motivated by the ethnic-revival politics of Yucatan's governor as well as by American archaeological interest in and investment at the site (Castañeda 1996:53; see also Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:329). Admittedly, the strategies of local elites in Tepoztlán and Don Eus's attempts to establish himself as a local elite in Chan Kom evoke the past in a political landscape (nationalistic, centralized) that is radically different from that of elites in Tenochtitlan and Chachoapan. A fundamental contrast is the changed foundation of elite legitimacy: elite privilege in Tepoztlán and Chan Kom is not based, as in Tenochtitlan and Chachoapan, on a cosmology linking rulership to the origins and maintenance of natural cycles. Rather, elite privilege is situated in the governmental hierarchies of the nation-state.

And yet despite these significant differences in context, a basic interpretive narrative about the material remains of the past is shared at Tenochtitlan, Chachoapan, and Chan Kom—a narrative about vanished



nonhumans and archaeological artifacts, a narrative contrastively deployed to shape social behavior in “the present.” I do not deny the importance of proximate temporal contexts, and I do not claim that structures of the long term are unchanging and static. As I suggested above, the millenarian focus of indigenous archaeology in Chan Kom can probably be linked to the teleologies of post-Conquest Christianity and post-Independence modernization theory (cf. Florescano 1994:183). But I do argue that both long- and short-term historical frameworks are needed for understanding the uses of the past. Once again I turn to Sahlins, now for his position on “the invention of tradition.” Sahlins observes that traditions are not invented *ex nihilo*, with no connection to previous history or practice. Rather, “traditions are invented in the specific terms of the people who construct them” (1999a:409; cf. Halbwachs 1992[1925]:125). Don Eus’s rhetorical use and spatial evocations of Chichen were, as Castañeda argues, influenced by national and international contexts, but they also drew on a local interpretive tradition. As Sahlins would appreciate, evocations of Chichen by Don Eus were a powerful resource for revitalization precisely because Chichen was already embedded in local archaeological discourse.<sup>15</sup> To place the interpretation of ancient Maya sites solely within a Mexican or American-focused context in the early 20th century is to ignore the possibility that the inhabitants of Chan Kom could pursue meaningful action and interpretation distinct from the modern West and its cosmologies and capital.

Indeed, it is just as important to consider the tension between short- and long-term contexts when interpreting the uses of past materialities by Western nation-states. A common problem with studies of modern “inventions of tradition” is that they fail to consider the long-term contexts in which their supposed “inventions” take place. Sahlins’s critiques of invented-tradition interpretations of hula dancing (1993), sumo wrestling (1999a), and culture (2000) reveal the lacunae that emerge when exposés of so-called invented traditions survey only brief periods of time. Analogously, Trevor-Roper’s (1983) invented-tradition attack on Scottish nationalism focuses on the actions of particular individuals in the 19th century—and yet at the same time presents data that reveal how particular “inventions” of cloth and costume are part of a tradition that can be traced back for centuries.

A similar short-term focus is found in most studies of the anthropology of archaeology. The majority consider relatively narrow segments of time, from decades (Abu El-Haj 1998) to one or two centuries (Trigger 1980, Dietler 1994). One reason for these short-term views is a scarcity of documentary materials on archaeological traditions. I was able to explore indigenous Mesoamer-

ican archaeology over a 500-year span of time because the regional archive is so rich. Other archaeological traditions do not always have such an archive, and even when one exists it is seldom deployed to its full potential. Andean materials reveal that references to the material remains of the past have been made for over a millennium, but these materials are discussed in separate studies of uneven richness (Allen 1988, Berger 1976, Cummins 1988, Lyon 1966). A recent book on Greek and Roman paleontology does consider a time span of nearly 1,000 years, but it is generalizing and static, focused on the tensions between “popular” and “scientific” archaeologies at the expense of a nuanced consideration of shifting political and religious contexts (Mayor 2000). However, there is at least one archaeological tradition which has been treated with sufficient richness over a sufficient span of time to provide a useful justification-through-analogy to this study of indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology. This other tradition is the indigenous archaeology of the West.

In a number of ways, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte” can be viewed as a foundational text on the invention of tradition in Western social science discourse. Marx begins his essay by lamenting that revolutionary social movements have repeatedly turned to images of the past for legitimation. “Epochs of revolutionary crisis . . . anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle slogans and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honored disguise and borrowed language” (Marx 1972[1852]:437). But even as he laments these inventions of tradition, Marx suggests that there is something about this necromantic conjuration that defies individualized agency and conscious manipulation (traits that most studies of the invention of tradition emphasize [e.g., Trevor-Roper 1983]). In contrast to images of controlled and wakeful choosings of the past, Marx writes that tradition “hangs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.” Humans do not make their history “just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past” (Marx 1972[1852]:437). I mentioned above that the historiographic denial of an event may not indicate its unimportance: this is the problem of the “nightmare” of history. The past can haunt the present independently of the present’s necromantic desires. The past can challenge the present’s dreams of agency and autonomy (cf. Chakrabarty 2000:244–49). The past can shape the present in ways that the present cannot control and may not even recognize, especially when the present is conscious of only a short segment of its past.

Marx devotes the remainder of his essay to a structure of double repetition: the evocations of ancient Rome by the revolutionaries of 1789 to 1814 and the diluted evocations of those earlier revolutionaries by Napoleon III and his followers. “Thus . . . the Revolution of 1789 to 1814 draped itself alternately as the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire, and the Revolution of 1848 knew nothing better to do than to parody, in turn, 1789 and

15. Redfield suggests something similar in a passing reference to repeated evocations of “myths” of vanished beings: “they aided Felipe Carillo Puerto at the time of the Revolution; they helped to organize Chan Kom in very recent years; and they will be ready to support the collective will tomorrow” (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:329).

the revolutionary tradition of 1793 to 1795." In both cases—although Marx does not discuss this in detail—these drappings of the Roman past involved evocations of material remains. The initial revolutionaries revived togas and the hairstyles of Roman slaves; they financed excavations in Rome (Connerton 1989:6–13; Dietler 1994:588). In turn, Napoleon III commissioned a Roman galley and sailed it up the Seine, funded archaeological excavations at the sites of famous battles between Gauls and Romans, and even wrote a biography of Julius Caesar (Dietler 1994:588–90; Baguley 2000:80).

But to view this repeated evocation of Rome as a mere binary in a Hegelian framework in which "all world-historical facts and personages occur, as it were, twice" is to ignore an ancient relationship between indigenous Western archaeology and the Greco-Roman past. And it is to ignore the nightmare of tradition: the ways the inertia of the past can shape contemporary life even when we are not aware of its persistence. It is a commonplace to trace the creation of the West, its modern institutions, and its claims of a Greco-Roman ancestry to the "Renaissance." This supposed rebirth, as both Sahlins (1999b: 7–8) and Trouillot (1995:74) have noted, was an "invented tradition" premised on the mobilization of objects and ideas from and about a (re)claimed Classical origin (cf. Barkan 1999). But these Renaissance evocations do not mark the first time in which those objects and ideas were revived by "Westerners" in a project of self-definition. The "Renaissance" itself is an invented disjuncture created by 16th-century humanists. Their rhetoric on their "rediscovery" of the Greco-Roman past and of the profound transformations in social life that this rediscovery triggered obscured an earlier rediscovery of that same past, and it obscured the profound legacies of that earlier rediscovery in the 15th- and 16th-century "present." The 12th century also saw a renaissance of the texts and monuments of antiquity. As in the 15th century, this involved "a revival of the Latin classics, of Latin prose, and of Latin verse," of "the Roman and canon law, the new Aristotle, the new Euclid and Ptolemy, and the Greek and Arabic physicians," and of Classical forms and themes in architecture and sculpture (Haskins 1927:6–7; see also Benson, Constable, and Lanham 1982; Necessian 1983). It also saw the creation of key institutions that would shape the West (despite later claims of Renaissance ruptures) for 1,000 years: a Roman-inspired legal system, a network of universities, the statelike structure of the pan-European Church, techniques of colonization, and an idea of regional unity (Bartlett 1993, Berman 1983, Moore 2000).

In other words, for nearly a millennium "the West" has repeatedly reclaimed "Greece" and "Rome" as ancestors who built its foundations and provided models for its social order. True, these appeals to the Greco-Roman past took very different forms in different times and places (Panofsky 1969). And yet the same basic texts, images, and spatial-temporal focus appear again and again. From the 12th century to the 20th, the structure of the long term of indigenous European archaeology has repeatedly evoked a binary contrast between "ancients"

and "moderns" (Berman 1983:112; LeGoff 1992:21–50; Rowland 1998). Exactly who the "moderns" are changes over time, but the "ancients," again and again, are the Greeks and the Romans.

The social life of things may help to explain why people who define themselves as "European" have repeatedly returned to a Greco-Roman past. Greek and Roman colonization sedimented the European landscape with the material traces of antiquity, with monumental constructions and portable possessions. For over two millennia, the Greek and Roman past has been available to "Europeans" for observation, reuse, and reinterpretation. So perhaps the physical matrix of the European landscape can help explain why the structure of the long term of indigenous European archaeology returns, again and again, to contrasts between ancients and moderns. Perhaps (as Abu El-Haj would appreciate) it is because of a persistent *materiality* that indigenous European archaeology keeps reexcavating Greco-Roman remains—remains resurrected in attempts to transform the physical and social landscapes of variously modern presents.

For both Europe and Mesoamerica, for century after century, archaeological interpretations reveal the persistence of basic structures of the long term. Two points of comparison between these two traditions deserve concluding emphasis. First, in both cases the material remains of "the past" are used to explain the literal origins of social life in "the present." Tangible things are used to concretize claims about less tangible influences. Just as ancient objects continue to survive "now," just as ancient things impact the physical fabric of "contemporary" social life, so too do ancient events and ideas persist, endure, and shape the present. Second, both European and Mesoamerican archaeologies are elaborated from a fairly simple structure of archaeological interpretation: sunrises and vanished beings, ancients and moderns. But the very simplicity of these structures of interpretation may be what makes them so productive, so enduring. A similar base simplicity, richly developed and redeveloped across different contexts, is found in Sahlins's discussions of original sin and in Bourdieu's discussions of the formulae of habitus (Sahlins 1996; Bourdieu 1977:16, 92; 1979:143). From the point of view of analysis, the base simplicity of these structures of the long term enables them to illuminate cultural practices without overshadowing the particularities of those practices.

This has been the aim of this study. I began by surveying the broad spatial and temporal contours of Mesoamerican archaeological interpretations. I then assembled these contours into a generalizing structure of the long term and used that generalization to guide focused interpretations of the archaeological traditions of three different times and places. In turn, each of those three discussions began by showing how particular views of the past shared in a common tradition of archaeological interpretation (of sunrises and vanished ages, of an incorporation of ancient things into the spaces of daily life). Discussion then continued to consider the differing ways in which pre-Sunrise things contrastively shaped social

behavior in three different presents. My disinterments and assemblages will have been productive if the strategy of constantly shifting analysis has avoided essentializing stasis and has taken advantage of the interconnections and illuminations offered by structures of the long term and strategies of broad comparison.

Finally, it is important to point out that strategies of broad temporal and spatial comparison were used by Mesoamericans themselves to understand their own history. Actions in the present reflected ancient deeds in other places; future eventualities would resurrect the present, sometime, somewhere (Florescano 1994, Carrasco 2000)—or, as phrased by an Aztec adage (Sahagún 1950–82[1547–85], vol. 6: 235):

Once again it will be:  
once again it will be customary,  
sometime,  
somewhere.

What was done in very old times, is no longer done,  
but once again it will be done, once again it will  
thus be customary as it was customary in ancient  
times. Those who live now will live, will exist once  
again.

## Comments

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Hamann's article lays out a stimulating and innovative approach to Mesoamerican archaeology that I hope will gain adherents and attention. I appreciate it for the mode of analysis used as well as for bringing my attention to the work of Marshall Sahlins, a scholar in a field outside of my own. My comments offer a couple of fundamental avenues of research that, if pursued, would strengthen Hamann's arguments considerably.

Generally, Hamann's thesis is credible; although there were undoubtedly exceptions, much evidence does exist to support his generalizations. He finds that Mesoamerican peoples framed their "structure of the long term" as the destruction of a flawed era of creation to make way for a properly ordered present. They supported this universalizing scheme with "pre-Sunrise things," ancient objects with animate presence that occupied places and functions in the present. Serving as constant reminders of man's "original indebtedness" to the creator gods, these objects were used throughout Mesoamerica to structure social organization. He notes that the argument is somewhat tenuous for the example of the modern Maya of Chan Kom, but the evidence for the Mixtec and the Aztec is strong.

As I see it, there are two directions of research that might give further support to Hamann's thesis. First, any discussion of an indigenous Mesoamerican tradition is lacking if it does not consider the deep trajectory and continuity of data available for pre-Hispanic Maya civilization. Evidence is mounting that Maya rulers from the 3rd to the 16th century bore the responsibility for their communities' blood debt to the gods. Likewise, there is clear interest in and reuse of ancient objects; researchers have found strong evidence that past objects were used to shape community identity and social existence. The question is: Was this interest in ancient objects related to the concept of "original debt"? There are few if any hieroglyphic texts to prove this. There is, however, one pan-Mesoamerican phenomenon that supports this association, and this brings me to suggest a second direction of investigation: ancestor veneration.

One simply cannot consider an "indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology" without directly addressing the ancestor veneration (for lack of a better term) that existed throughout indigenous Mesoamerican time and space. For example, ancient Mayan hieroglyphic inscriptions and burial reentries indicate that ancestors (albeit from a post-Sunrise past) were conceived as actually being present in and having an effect upon daily life. Sacred bundles—often containing heirloom objects—were (and continue to be) venerated as powerful deities. Ancestors were powerful agents in social organization and community identity and played a role in archaeological practice. This subject deserves much more discussion than Hamann gives it. The Mesoamerican perspective of the "past" is more complex and more different from the Western notion of the past than scholars have yet imagined.

The social life of ancient things is important, Hamann notes, because of the raw materiality of objects in the present. He rightly points to Bourdieu's discussion of the object's role in human pedagogy. However, one aspect of this raw materiality, an object's visuality—its forms and materials—is often left out of consideration. Hamann mentions a few anthropologists who consider how an object's meaning changes with location and audience. He may be interested in the extended discourse among art historians on this very phenomenon; borrowing from linguistics, they call this type of analysis "semiotics." Whatever we call it, the complexities of the reception of ancient objects by indigenous Mesoamericans have yet to be fully explored.

As for Hamann's concluding comparison of Mesoamerican archaeological practice with that of the West, although stimulating, his use of one-to-one analogies raises a problem. If the Mesoamerican concept of "original debt" forms a universalizing "condition of possibility" for archaeological practice and social organization, how, if at all, does the Western concept of "original sin" shape archaeological practice and social organization in the West? More specifically, if, as he says, Western archaeology has always returned to things Greco-Roman (he equates this with the Mesoamerican focus on "pre-Sunrise things"), how is the social life of these objects

affected by the concept of "original sin"? He chooses to leave open this loop of the logic in his comparison of the two traditions.

A 2001 conference at Dumbarton Oaks posed the question: Given the trend toward specialized research on the short-term in New World archaeology, is there anything to be gained from considering the long-term and broader scope of the "pre-Columbian world"? On a smaller scale, Hamann's exercise in identifying an indigenous Mesoamerican archaeological tradition demonstrates the continued hermeneutic utility of the concept "Mesoamerica." I wonder, then, whether similar "structures of the long term" might be found to extend farther in the Columbian world. Whatever the answer, Hamann's attempt to summarize an indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology demonstrates the value of research that seeks to elucidate the broad cultural structures that are so difficult for us to see.

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Hamann's provocative, engaging, and useful essay gives focus and definition to the anthropology of archaeology and at the same time opens it up to greater depth in terms of issues and approaches. It succeeds in this by consciously operating in different registers. The following comments are limited to three such dimensions.

Hamann identifies three problems in this emergent field: the relationship of archaeology, in the narrow, Western sense, to projects of building/imagining nations (and larger entities such as empires and civilizations), the "subaltern discourses of archaeology within nation-states" (or, again, larger polities), and finally, non-Western archaeologies that for Hamann "are not linked to the modern West." Clearly, this marking of a field of inquiry is dependent upon a more inclusive or culturally relative and useful concept of archaeology. All three thematics concern the politics of identity formation, whether of nations, subnational groups, or non-Western sociocultural polities, all of which articulate their "present" at least in part through a materially tangible "past." Hamann's three themes provoke a question about what is not mentioned within the first: the study of archaeology as a science and within the framework of an "anthropology of science." Because of the disciplinary proximity of archaeology and sociocultural anthropology, historical tensions between the subfields, and the generally low-level technology used in archaeology, it has not fallen under the purview of the anthropology of science. Ethnographers concerned with studying archaeology are in short supply and often work relatively disconnected from each other. In turn, a growing number of archaeologists in the past ten-plus years have been somewhat haphazardly developing their own anthropology of archaeology to address concerns about roles, ethics, and impacts of archaeology in the diversity of its practices, institutions, knowledges, and communicative forms/media. The im-

portance of Hamann's essay is that it may help to generate more links between different kinds of ethnographers and archaeologists (as well as other social scientists) who are interested in the diverse thematics of an anthropology of archaeology.

Hamann lays out the assumptions that provide the analytical framing of an object of study and, thus, also the approach to it. We may or may not agree with these assumptions or with his formulation of them, but we are given a coherent vision of a problem. The essay, however, is less an analysis than the charting of an approach. The shifting hermeneutics corresponding to the three data sets (literal texts, iconographic texts, and second-hand reporting via ethnography) does not exhaustively analyze these materials (there is no space for this in an essay that has a different agenda!). Rather, Hamann gives a surface interpretation of what, following Trouillot, he calls the three archives with the aim, it seems to me, of creating questions and opening possibilities for investigation. What indicates this strategy is the level-headed caution with which he points out limitations imposed by documentary records. Further, at a certain point in the presentation of the Aztec and Mixtec "archaeologies" the question of the difference between his analysis and both older myth interpretation and more recent poststructuralist frames surfaces. Whereas some may find this to be a weakness, I view it as a positive element in that this "blurring" (to use a problematic phrase but one that is more accurate than "imprecision") identifies issues and problems for future investigation without constraining them in a monolithic conceptual framework.

Finally, Hamann anticipates a negative reaction regarding the problem of continuity. I applaud his dual treatment of generalized continuity and historical specificity. Clearly, in any given society/culture there will be ruptures and articulations—and, significantly, there are just as often conventional understandings that a rupture "exists" where there "is" continuity and continuity where there "is" profound change. By closing with the discussion of Chan Kom, in which the political machinations of the ethnographically famous Don Eus are highlighted, he is able to use a notion of continuity that is historical, nonessentializing, temporal, and grounded in the situational particulars of events or moments. The nuanced understanding of historical change/repetition and agency as situated within inherited structures that Marx offers in the "Eighteenth Brumaire" is precisely the antidote to the Manichean debates about historical agency versus essentialized continuity that pervaded Mayan studies in the 1990s and continue to reassert themselves in some sectors of Mesoamerican research even today. This provocative yet even-handed engagement with this issue goes a long way toward redirecting the conceptualization of research agendas and problems in these fields.

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Hamann usefully offers a conceptual framework for escaping from unproductive debates about the “unity” of Mesoamerican culture that pose a false “either/or”—either it was all of a piece or it was so fragmented that we can never extrapolate from one instance to others. He shows how we can think about enduring but not static general “structures of the long term” and see how these illuminate but do not determine specific interpretations and practices in different times and places. It is particularly instructive to see how differently and flexibly a shared fund of basic concepts and themes can be drawn upon to support quite different interests and purposes in different times and places and among different social sectors. As Hamann says, this applies as much to the West as to anywhere else.

Hamann’s analysis might be extended by considering indigenous “terminations” of material objects, as well as their construction and later uses, along the lines of chapters in the volume edited by Shirley Boteler Mock (1998). One important distinction is between “reverential” termination and “desecratory” termination or profanation (Freidel 1998:190; Sugiyama 1998:147). In the case of the collapse of the Teotihuacan state (in about the 600s), for example, it is likely that the principal monuments of the city were “killed” in order to put an end to the sociopolitical, as well as religious, institutions and practices that drew on these material objects as a source of legitimacy. The still poorly understood “Epiclassic” peoples of Central Mexico may have thought about the ruins of these monuments in something like the way many now view the relics of the Berlin Wall or toppled and shattered Stalinist statues, although with the important difference that Mesoamericans almost surely considered Teotihuacan objects intrinsically powerful, more than just symbols of power. By the 1400s enough time had elapsed that the Aztecs would have felt no need to mark a break with the Teotihuacan past and could instead emphasize connection and draw on surviving Teotihuacan objects in support of elite interests, as described by Hamann.

In his discussion of Aztec uses of Teotihuacan materials Hamann draws on Umberger’s (1987) excellent study, but he overlooks that by López Luján (1989). Aztec thought about Teotihuacan was complex and multi-stranded. Hamann appropriately emphasizes aspects most relevant for his purposes, but much more could usefully be said on this topic. One point is the much-debated meaning of the Nahuatl term *Teotihuacan*. Both López Luján (1989:44) and Robertson (2001) argue that it is best understood as something like “place of the becoming of divinity.” This seems better supported than any other reading and preferable to that adopted by Hamann (“place where lords were made”). This somewhat undermines the notion that the Aztecs connected Teotihuacan not only with creation of the present world and

“original debt” but also with the sacred legitimization of kingship. In Sahagún’s narrative, leaders were *elected* at Teotihuacan, not imposed by any deity. It seems likely that Aztec rulers looked more to marital connections with “Toltec” lineages than to Teotihuacan in using the past to bolster their legitimacy.

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Hamann is to be congratulated on an initial exploration of the badly neglected topic of indigenous peoples’ perspectives on their own prehistory. The topic has great contemporary relevance with the assertion of indigenous participation in governance and cultural patrimony in many areas of Mexico and Guatemala. Hamann’s essay includes important insights, but it overreaches in characterizing and generalizing indigenous perspectives on the past.

The explication of Mixtec history and perspectives on the past is the core of the article and the most convincing of the three analyses. The Mixtec evidence from codices and ethnography presents a vision of the previous age associated with ruins as a “pre-Sunrise” epoch from which divine forces created the current age. With this creation came the “indebtedness” of Mixtec peoples to their deities and to those deities’ elite representatives. This perspective on “archaeology” was one element in the general Mixtec emphasis on human and divine covenants (Monaghan 1995).

In generalizing from his Mixtec studies to the rest of Mesoamerica, however, Hamann risks creating an artificial and stereotyped view of the highly variable mythic histories and visions of the past of different Mesoamerican peoples. He initially admits the danger of reifying the Western concept of “Mesoamerica” as a culture area and of essentializing indigenous history. Nonetheless, he argues that the “Mesoamerica” concept can be used to characterize shared indigenous “archaeologies.” In his view, the Mesoamerican culture-area concept focuses on indigenous values, since it transcends and “undermines postcontact nationalist histories and boundaries.” Yet this very resistance was structured by contact, and the “Mesoamerica” concept has no reflexive significance to pre-Columbian traditions. Obviously such a concept cannot a priori be assumed to reflect any common vision of pre-Columbian indigenous prehistory.

Hamann’s other examples only serve to highlight this problem. The “indebtedness” referred to in Mexica Aztec sources and class terminology was reinforced, if not created, by the consciously constructed elite propaganda of the *Crónica X* sources. These refer to specific “historical” episodes in the Mexica conflict with the Tepanec in which indebtedness to the warrior elite was created by their leadership in the Tepanec revolt (e.g., Durán 1994[1581]: bk. 2, chap. 9). This specific evocation of mythic history and elite privilege is very different in

nature from the broader Mixtec concept of indebtedness and covenant with the gods. Hamann does not present a convincing case that the older myths of a creation at Teotihuacan were themselves connected to human-divine Aztec "covenants" comparable to the Mixtec concepts. Forcing a parallel here generates our own essentializing vision of a template for "Mesoamerican" prehistories that could obscure different and complex indigenous views of the past that warrant their own extended analyses. Future studies will need to differentiate between commonly held origin myths and more specific political structures of power and "indebtedness" that were legitimated by other mechanisms, including historical manipulation, state ritual, and art.

Hamann's Chan Kom example also seems to be forced into a parallel structure. The contemporary agendas and strategies of the ambitious Chan Kom cacique of the 1930s really drew little from indigenous Maya beliefs. There was no explicit evocation of long-held traditions, nor does it appear that Don Eus's "archaeological" metaphors resonated with the other villagers. In the Maya area we have become especially careful about generalizations regarding "Mayan" (let alone "Mesoamerican") views and uses of the past. The great variability of indigenous "archaeologies" has been made apparent as Maya groups have become, to an increasing degree, the custodians of their own past. Varying groups project very different views of their pasts with only limited structural parallels. The degree of specificity of "ethnic identification" with a particular set of ruins or regional remains is only one of many variables that we see in the creation of differing indigenous Maya "archaeologies."

The flaw of generalizing about a common structure for indigenous "Mesoamerican" archaeologies is, albeit inadvertently, underscored by Hamann in his closing discussion of the common evocations in "European archaeology" of a Classical and Roman heritage. Marx's observations on the "Eighteenth Brumaire" were insightful but are not a common template for European views of the past. A long tradition of evocation of Europe's "barbarism" or "Aryan" roots has been a powerful, at times tragic, force in Western history. This countercurrent was critical despite the fact that most of Europe *actually* was unified at one time under an all-too-real Roman Empire. No such historical unity ever existed in Mesoamerica. I conclude that we would be mistaken to impose the useful Western analytic concept "Mesoamerica" on a proposed common structure of indigenous reflexive history and archaeology.

Hamann's article reminds us of the rich possibilities of indigenous archaeology and history, but it also manifests the pitfalls that we must avoid in the problematic exploration of the complex and variable worldviews and historical identities of other societies.

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Hamann's paper is an important addition to the discussion on the diverse cultural biographies of material culture. I take its main thesis to be that the monumental landscape created by the presence of material traces of the past has inspired many social groups and actors to develop their own distinctive forms of historical narratives—to develop, in other words, their own "indigenous archaeologies." This thesis seems both valid and convincing, and its elegant illustration with the Mesoamerican example strengthens the argument.

It seems to me, however, that there is an implicit problem with the use of concepts and terminology. The author keeps referring to "indigenous archaeologies," implicitly assuming a sharp distinction between them and others, but these "other" archaeologies are never explicitly problematized or even discussed. I assume that he refers to "Western" archaeologies (at least in the Mesoamerican case), but then in his conclusion he uses the "indigenous archaeology of the West" (implying the deployment of the Greco-Roman past by certain social groups in Europe for the past millennium in the processes of formation, projection, and negotiation of identities) as his comparative example. This last case exposes one of the most serious weaknesses of the paper: How can we separate the deployment, reinterpretation, and recontextualization of the Greco-Roman classical tradition by modern European societies from the disciplinary processes of the production of antiquarian, historical, and archaeological knowledges? How can we ignore the key role of the various societies of antiquarians, the aristocratic travellers, artists, and photographers (cf. Tsigakou 1981, Hamilakis 2001), the early archaeologists and historians, and the more recently organized disciplines of classics, archaeology, and history (not to mention literature) that altered the monumental landscape of Europe and contributed to the creation of modern classical and neoclassical myths of identity? What is indigenous as opposed to non-indigenous in this case? Historical frames of understanding the world, myths of ancestry and collective identity linked to the past, are produced simultaneously from above and from below, by "official" and "unofficial" discourses, by "endogenous" as well as "exogenous" factors and processes (cf. Brown and Hamilakis 2002).

To give one brief example from a region central to Hamann's "European indigenous archaeology," oral popular traditions from 19th- and early 20th-century Greece (before the creation and establishment of the modern nation-state) have incorporated the plentiful and in many cases visible or even monumental traces from the past in constructing frames of historical understanding, much like the examples that Hamann cites for the Mesoamerican case (Kakridis 1989; cf. Hamilakis and Yalouri 1999). They, however, consider these traces and especially their monumental nature as the works of people

different from them ("the Hellenes"), non-Christians in faith (as opposed to the primarily Christian population of Greece at the time) and supernatural in physical properties and strength. So, rather than seeing an ancestral link between themselves and the creators of these monumental works, they often emphasize their otherness. Moreover, some of these stories state that the people who created these "stones" are the ancestors of the Europeans, hence the presence of so many European travellers in Greece at the time and hence their worship of these "stones" and their search for more traces of the "Hellenes." Some of these Europeans even figure in some local oral traditions. Undoubtedly, the material traces of the past would have figured in people's imagination and social memory even before the "rediscovery" of Classical Greece, but the Europeans' presence contributed to the elevation of ancient artefacts and sites to important material points of reference. What we are seeing here, then, is the construction of a frame of historical understanding as part of dialectical process between self and other to which indigenous and non-indigenous factors have contributed. The value of material traces of the past in this case derives not only from their material properties but also from external processes of valuation such as the desire of European travellers and antiquarians to locate, record, collect, and appropriate these monuments.

In conclusion, I am in sympathy with Hamann's main points, and I would concur with him in emphasizing the value of long-term analyses and the need to focus on alternative, "unofficial" frames of historical memory. More important, I would support his implicit political point that the official narratives should not be seen as exclusive or privileged stories about the past. But while we should recognize the capacity of all social groups to produce historical narratives, we should also be sensitive to the complexities of this process of production, in which self and other are often mutually constituted.

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I welcome Hamann's desire to return to the intractable topic of long-term structures. These have been discussed in archaeology over recent decades (e.g., Bintliff 1991, Knapp 1992, Hodder 1987a). In taking up this issue again Hamann seeks to move away from a vision of cultural meanings as simply constructed or invented to serve social and economic interests. As he recognizes, the trick in discussing such issues is to steer between essentialism and even idealism, on the one hand, and instrumentalism and materialism, on the other. A nuanced and dialectical position is often seen as needed. In my view, the notion of "long-term structure" does not advance such an agenda; rather, it inhibits any such integrated account.

The difficulty is clear in Hamann's definition of "long-

term structure." Rather than taking a dialectical or structurationist approach, he opts for something akin to Braudel's *mentalité*—that is, some set of concepts described as belief or foundational idea. Long-term structure is seen by Hamann as part of deep history in that it endures, structures social meanings, and orders social life. It provides the conditions of possibility for social existence in an area such as Mesoamerica over centuries. Despite revision of such a notion within the *Annales* school and extensive critique of its static and essentializing character, Hamann believes that there is something to be rescued. His main source of support for this rearguard action seems to be Sahlins's (1996) account of long-term continuities in the pleasure-pain principle in the Judeo-Christian tradition. That Sahlins's article on this topic is hardly a stable basis for reclaiming the long term is clear in Sahlins's own evaluation: "I flit over a vast continent of Western scholarship while making a most superficial inspection" (p. 395).

Skeptical but keen to be convinced (Hodder 1990), I eagerly looked to Hamann's case study of Mesoamerica. While there seemed to be some evidence of continuities, these seemed too limited to be able to argue for a specific Mesoamerican *mentalité* or for long-term structuring principles. Take, for example, the evidence that the builders of Mesoamerican monuments were seen as giants or dwarves. They were also in various ways unnatural or uncivilized. This "othering" of the past is also found in Europe, where "Giants' Graves" or "Giants' Tombs" are extremely common across the landscape as the names given to megalithic monuments. In Scandinavian and Norse legends and folk traditions there was a time of giants after the flood. These were the people that built large megalithic tombs and even threw boulders at churches. There were also midgets who produced microlithic stone tools and bearded women. Hamann recognizes the "surprising parallels between European and Mesoamerican worlds" (n. 7), but he still sees something essentially different. (For other parallels with the reuse and excavation of monuments in Europe, see Bradley 1998 and Schnapp 1996.) A fuller comparative analysis would be needed to identify whether anything specific can be identified behind the apparent similarities.

The same can be said for the claim that sacrifice and debt were essential components of a Mesoamerican long-term structure. Certainly superficially similar ideas are found in other religions. In Scandinavia again, Odin sacrificed himself, and in return humans offered sacrifices to him. Sacrifice and some form of return for that sacrifice are found in Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism. René Girard (Williams 1996) discusses notions of sacrifice and scapegoating cross-culturally and focuses on the complex ideas in Christianity regarding Jesus' crucifixion as sacrifice. I recognize that there are many subtle differences between the various conceptions of divine sacrifice and many different ways in which such ideas were used to support the power of elites, but a careful comparative study seems needed before we can be confident that anything very specific, foundational, and long-term existed in Mesoamerica.

The problem becomes stark if we ask how the long-term “structure” was passed down. Hamann refers to Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of habitus, but there are some important differences between Hamann’s and Bourdieu’s ideas of structure and habitus. In Bourdieu’s case the habitus is not produced by some long-term belief or concept. Rather, it is founded upon or constrained by the objective conditions of existence. For Bourdieu, the habitus changes with the objective conditions. Hamann’s structure has continued as an idea for centuries despite massive change in objective conditions. The daily practical routines of the habitus should change as wider economic and social changes occur. So why do the long-term structures or ideas or beliefs not change? How and why are they passed down? The problem remains unresolved.

In fact, when it comes to Hamann’s recent case study the “structures” are seen as changing in reaction to colonialism, Christianity, and modernization—they appear less foundational after all. We are led to an alternative in the account of Chan Kom. Here the ancients are seen as returning to help in present projects rather than as having disappeared in a cataclysm. This strategic, practical use of ideas, meanings, and monuments has an unintended result—the reproduction of transformed ideas/concepts. Looked at from a distance, there seem to be continuities in “foundational structures” when there is only strategic deployment—a pedagogy immersed in objective conditions. There is a genealogy but not a long-term structure.

As a final example, Hamann claims that there is a long-term structure in European references to the Classical past. True, there is an endless repetition of such references in Europe, but this is always a strategic use of the past in relation to the present. It is not just “the dead weight of tradition.” Rulers, elites, and social groups in Europe *choose* which past to emphasize. For example, many have chosen to claim legitimacy by reference to a non-Classical past. In particular, the Celts have long been a rallying point for nations, leaders, and groups that wished to emphasize resistance to external domination or links to some original pre-Classical identity (e.g., Merriman 1987). Childe looked to prehistoric Europe as the origin of European individualism. Archaeology in Europe developed as a discipline dealing with stratigraphy, typology, and context largely as a result of the growth of prehistoric archaeology.

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I would like to endorse two of the general points Hamann makes and suggest that his own evidence challenges his third main argument, with productive implications for his broader projects.

Hamann adds detailed contextual studies of specific practices in Postclassic Aztec and Mixtec societies to

discussions of the ways in which material traces of earlier societies were not only recognized by Central American peoples as evidence of deeds of past actors but actively pursued and incorporated in their world of objects and their discourses about history and memory. It is firmly established that the circulation of objects through time formed a significant part of the material fabric of continuity in what we today recognize as the Mesoamerican tradition. What is now necessary is more contextual studies like those offered here (see Joyce 1998, 2000a, 2000b for other examples). Hamann makes clear in his concluding discussion of “indigenous European archaeology,” grounded in a continual return to a Greco-Roman past, that archaeology, defined as “a practice in which the physical remains of ‘the past’ are reused and reinterpreted by later societies,” is a recurrent human endeavor. What needs further exploration is precisely why this should be so.

While providing examples of situated histories of things of the kind demanded by theoretical work on the cultural biography of objects, Hamann also seeks to argue for a generalized Mesoamerican sense of things that is the product of long-term structures and the medium for the constitution of those structures. In a Mesoamerican concept of “original debt” he locates an analogue to Sahlins’s identification of the centrality of original sin in the Western tradition, forming the basis for relations between humans and supernatural beings and between nobles and commoners. His demonstration of the centrality of this concept in the texts provided by noble informants in both pre-Hispanic cases is convincing. Clearly, “original debt” formed an important part of the Mesoamerican structure of the long term. In the historically linked complex societies we now call Mesoamerica, there were likely multiple understandings of the same materialities, with cleavages along lines of age, gender, class, faction, status, and role. Only selected discourses were inscribed in written texts. But nontextual media of “inscription” (Joyce 1998:157–59; Joyce and Hendon 2000:154–55) also survive in the form of the material things recovered and circulated both through the Western practice of archaeology and through indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology. The power of materiality is central to continuity in Mesoamerica, where highly conservative material practices were reproduced over three millennia (Joyce 1998; 2002:112–15). The historical reproduction of specifically Mesoamerican materiality promoted a division in the world of objects that created and reinforced a noble way of being in the world through use of a restricted set of goods, a “high culture” (Baines and Yoffee 1998) with a complex relationship to the material culture of the people as a whole (Joyce 2000b). Space here is too limited to do anything but point to the need for an archaeology of the long-term structures of materiality to complement the archaeology of discursive structures of the long term that Hamann contributes.

I wish to end by suggesting that the third case study, of the practice of indigenous archaeology in 20th-century Chan Kom, requires further reflection. Hamann offers it



as support for an argument for the continuity of a specifically Mesoamerican indigenous archaeology into the present despite five centuries of European colonization. His own arguments would seem to undercut his case. If “indigenous archaeology” is a widespread human practice, then the fact that a group of people recognizes traces of past human action and reinterprets them is not enough to demonstrate continuity of a specific tradition of archaeology. The continuity argued for in both the two pre-Hispanic examples and the European example is a continuity in the central structure of meanings: original debt, original sin; the First Sunrise, the ancients and the moderns. It is precisely the structures of meaning of the past that are distinctive in 20th-century Chan Kom, where the giants who built Chichen Itza are expected to return in the future. This is a novel structure of meaning, a hybrid product with roots in both pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica and Europe. I find the discussion of the historical development of civilizational orders and their forms of high culture by John Baines and Norman Yoffee (1998) useful in thinking about Mesoamerican materiality and continuity (Joyce 2000b). Civilizational orders are fragile: they wax and wane. New civilizational orders with roots in the old may develop, but we need to acknowledge such fundamental changes as may be indicated by a shift from a discourse of original debt as the basis for a relationship between present-day people and builders of ancient cities to a narrative of millenarian return by the giants who once walked the earth.

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Hamann’s article emphasizes long-term social structures and comparisons over time in different societies. This approach has the advantage of revealing Mesoamerican concepts that have persisted over the centuries and similar concepts in peoples of two different cultural traditions, Mesoamerican and Western. It ignores the process of change, however, and this oversight creates problems for the understanding of these societies.

It is true that the peoples of the Mesoamerican tradition conceived of the passage of time in terms of cycles of destruction and construction of new eras, periods of darkness followed by a new sun. More than an archaeological view of the past, this way of thinking was central in Mesoamerican philosophy for explaining change and the destruction of societies, at the same time linking these processes to a new power. These explanations did not disappear with the European conquest of 1521; rather, they served to explain it. The strange presence of the Spaniards, the destruction caused by the war and epidemics, the establishment of a new power and a new religion were interpreted by the Mesoamericans as one more cycle. This view is clear in some of the oral traditions collected in Oaxaca in the mid-20th century. The Zapotecs told Julio de la Fuente a story of giants,

sinners and idolaters who had to be punished. The giants worked stones under the ground to cover themselves when the sun and the cross appeared. Clearly, the sun and the cross in this story are seen as part of a new cycle, one that began with the Spanish conquest. From the colonial period there are numerous documents written in alphabetic script by indigenous scribes that record their view of history in their own languages. In these accounts the sun of the conquest is metaphorically represented by the year 1521. Called *títulos primordiales* (a 19th-century term), they are sometimes considered falsifications because of their lack of conformity to the norms of Western historiography, but they should be seen as the product of a Mesoamerican philosophy that survived the conquest.

The myth of epochs that explained change in the pre-Hispanic world served a totally different function in the colonial period and the 19th and 20th centuries. The myths collected since the beginning of the 16th century combine explanations created in pre-Hispanic times with those constructed later. In them we find giants, naked savages, and idolaters; the pre-Hispanic concept of giants, the colonial concepts of sinners and idolaters, and the 19th-century concept of savages are combined by the Indian mind in a single explanation. This notion, which in the pre-Hispanic past had served to justify dominant hierarchies, from the beginning of the 16th century served to justify first colonial and then national power and, in the context of colonialism and cultural subordination, was degraded and simplified. In the course of the consolidation of the nation, Mesoamerican thought experienced a loss of prestige with the imposition of a national identity based on the pre-Hispanic past and archaeological science. This latter assumed more legitimacy, the indigenous being considered lacking in veracity. The Mexican nation took pride in its pre-Hispanic past while the indigenes themselves thought of their past as belonging to savages and sinners. The sacralized explanation of the past remained hidden in the minds of the elders while in the cities and in books the new national identity gained strength. Thus while one philosophy was imposed as the dominant one, the other was preserved not as a coherent system but as fragmented, denigrated, and degraded. In recent decades, many young indigenes have been recalling fragments of the ancient myths while learning from books the versions constructed by archaeologists and have come to believe that their ancestors were always poor peasants incapable of cultural developments such as writing and urbanization.

Structural approaches enrich our knowledge of societies by identifying concepts that persist through the centuries and are similar in different cultural traditions, something that is very important in these days of ethnic fundamentalism, but if they do not take change into account they are likely to result in biased and incomplete interpretations.<sup>1</sup>

1. Translated by Sarah England.

## Reply

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I thank all of the commentators for their contributions. In my responses, I focus on four recurrent concerns: the question of structure in 20th-century Mesoamerica, the presence of a long-term structure in Chan Komian archaeology, the importance of considering the variety of interpretations of the past, and final technical points on my Aztec arguments.

Castañeda observes that I anticipated a negative reaction regarding the problem of continuity—and, as expected, many negative critiques of the essay question the 20th-century persistence of ideas first documented in the 16th. Most of these critiques focus on Chan Kom. Chan Kom is a complex case; that is one of the reasons I chose it as my final example. But before I once again return to Chan Kom, I want to remind readers that my argument for the existence of a long-term structure of Mesoamerican archaeology does not stand or fall with one Yucatec community. The “structure of the long term” I outlined in the “Before the First Sunrise” section is built up from dozens of 16th- and 20th-century sources. These sources vary in the detail of their ethnographic reporting. Most contain brief references to ruins and cataclysm, but others contain complex narratives that reveal my “long-term structure” more clearly. Readers who want claims about “structures” to be defined by a particular rigidity should turn to the 20th-century origin accounts of the Nuyooteco Mixtec, the Ixil Maya, and the Lacandón (Monaghan 1995; Colby and Colby 1981:40–43; Boremanse 1993:326–32), which seem remarkably “conservative” compared with 16th-century archaeologies. They link ancient ruins to nonhumans that vanished from the earth after a world-transforming cataclysm, a transformation accompanied by the creation of sacrificial original debts to the divine.

One of the reasons I found a structural account useful in thinking about the relations between 16th- and 20th-century archaeologies was that the same set of basic elements kept showing up, in interconnected association, in very different times and places in Mesoamerica. As Ahlfeldt suggests and as Hamilakis, Hodder, and my own n. 7 point out, similar elements can be found in other parts of the world, but what makes these situations different is the *structure* of ideas within which the Mesoamerican ideas are located. Mesoamerican accounts of original destruction combine material remains with vanished nonhumans and world-transforming cataclysms and emphasize (often, but not always, through ideas about original debt) the enduring implications of that destroyed age for life in the present. Hodder ignores—indeed, fragments, unbuilds—this interconnected structure of ideas when he talks about ruins and giants and then sacrifice and debts in Eurasian traditions. Yes, these ideas show up elsewhere in the world, but are

they interconnected ideas outside of Mesoamerica? Hodder indicates no such connections. Nor does he indicate any present social significance for narratives about ruins and vanished beings or the role of cataclysm in creating a new social order (indeed, Hodder’s Scandinavian and Norse traditions date giants and their monuments to a *post-diluvian* era). Similarly, if we turn to Hamilakis’s fascinating discussions of popular oral traditions in Greece, we see parallels to Mesoamerica in the attribution of archaeological remains to vanished ancients, but there is no indication of cataclysm or of the enduring importance of these vanished beings and remains for present social order and identity (indeed, they are seen as being more important to European travelers than to Greeks). Again, I argue that what is “specific, foundational, and long-term” about Mesoamerican archaeologies is precisely the way different ideas are bound up in a narrative core that recurs over time. And as a final point about structures, I need to counter Demarest’s claim that I am “generalizing from . . . Mixtec studies to the rest of Mesoamerica.” On the contrary, the process of research was quite the opposite. As I stated in the introduction to the “Visual Verticality” section, it was a consideration of a pan-Mesoamerican, centuries-spanning recurrence of interconnected archaeological narratives that made Postclassic Mixtec narratives explicable. In sum, my arguments about long-term structures are not dependent on single examples either from Chan Kom or from the Mixteca.

A second point of commentator concern was the legitimacy of thinking about Chan Komian archaeology within the framework of a long-term structure of interpretation. I did recognize and suggest modernization-theory and Christian explanations for the transformed nature of Chan Komian archaeology when compared with 16th- (and, as I have stressed above, with seemingly conservative 20th-) century archaeologies. I also wrote that what is crucial in indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology is not necessarily an idea of “original debt” but that narratives about vanished beings, ruins, and cataclysms are contrastively deployed to explain “current” social life; these narratives “recount the implications of this vanished era for social existence in the present.” This contrastive use of ruins and cataclysms as fundamental explanations for the “present” is what unites my three case studies. My aims with Chan Kom were to argue for the importance of a regional tradition in this particular archaeological case—to argue that there was more at work in this case than nationalist politics, American capital, and Don Eus’s particular political goals. Again, I do not deny these other proximate contexts; I do argue, however, that they offer an inadequate explanation for Chan Komian archaeology.

My attempts to understand the specific features of Chan Komian archaeology within *both* pre-Columbian and post-Conquest histories have met with varying reviewer acceptance. The most negative assessments come from Demarest, Hodder, and Romero Frizzi. In contrast to Joyce, who argues for a hybrid structure of archaeological interpretation at Chan Kom, these three com-

mentators all seem skeptical of any integrity of a long-term indigenous intellectual tradition. Demarest and Hodder focus on Don Eus's manipulations of discourse on Chichen. Both rely on the invented-tradition style of narrow temporal argument that I critiqued in my conclusions. Demarest claims that Don Eus's strategies "really drew little from indigenous Maya beliefs"—a claim that cannot be supported given the evidence I presented for a broad community familiarity with Chichen and its interpretations, a familiarity *out of which* Don Eus generated his own particular rhetoric. Hodder claims that what looks like long-term continuity is really only "strategic deployment" and goes on to argue for similarly conscious manipulation of the Greco-Roman past ("Rulers, elites, and social groups in Europe *choose* which past to emphasize"). The conceptual problem with Demarest's and Hodder's "manipulative-choice" approaches to the past is that they are based, as Hodder himself recognizes, on "a vision of cultural meanings as simply constructed or invented to serve social and economic interests." As emphasized in my "Conclusions," long-term structures allow us to think about the ways in which present actors may not recognize, may not be able to choose, how the past impinges on their present. Castañeda articulates this concern when he writes that "there are just as often conventional understandings that a rupture 'exists' where there 'is' continuity and continuity where there 'is' profound change." These are the concerns that Marx brings to an understanding of the past in the present. In contrast, Demarest and Hodder want to flatten the complexity of temporal interaction into a present-centered vision in which humans *can* make their history "just as they please."

Romero Frizzi also focuses on manipulationist perspectives of the present's use of the past as she discusses the goals and means of colonial and nationalist dismissals of indigenous intellectual traditions. But at the same time that she critiques nationalist denigrations of indigenous beliefs, she repeats those denigrations in a vision of "despondency theory." Indigenous philosophy was "simplified" and "preserved not as a coherent system but as fragmented, denigrated, and degraded." My emphasis on the long-term structure of indigenous archaeology presents, in contrast, evidence for coherence and persistence. Romero Frizzi misrepresents my discussion of the relations between stasis and transformation when she writes that it "ignores the process of change." It should be clear that issues of change and transformation *and* persistence are all central to my essay. I did enjoy her discussions of the ways in which the Conquest has been interpreted as a new age of creation—but this is an issue that I addressed at the beginning of my "Conclusions," where I cited comparable cases in which the Conquest is understood to be a new dawn (Parsons 1936:327; Bricker 1981). At the same time, I emphasized that other indigenous histories, both 16th- and 20th-century, ignore the Conquest, and I would add a third style of Conquest interaction to this discussion: a Jacalteca Maya origin narrative in which *Spaniards* are the ancient beings destroyed by a first sunrise (La Farge and Byers 1931:113).

In other words, the Conquest figures in indigenous accounts of the past in many different ways; Romero Frizzi considers only one approach.

This brings me to a third topic: the need to emphasize the many different ways in which different social actors understand the material remains of the past. I agree that this is crucial and repeat Castañeda and Joyce's observations that elite discourse allows only a very limited perspective on the interpretation of the past. Indeed, this is a point I emphasized at the beginning of "Transformation and Contestation." One of the appeals of the Chan Kom archive is that it allows us to view the tensions that emerge when a would-be elite tries to develop self-serving readings of Chichen from within a broader community tradition of interpretation. Even though there was no radical difference between the general community understandings of Chichen and Don Eus's particular mobilizations of those understandings, the struggle for power in Chan Kom showed how even similar understandings of the past can be divergent and generate social conflict.

Hamilakis's comment on the diversity of interpretations of the past asks me to clarify my distinction between "indigenous" and "non-indigenous" archaeologies and in particular the difference between "indigenous" archaeologies and "the disciplinary processes of the production of antiquarian, historical, and archaeological knowledges." On one level, my goal was precisely to expand the boundaries of what can be considered "archaeological" knowledge—to argue, as Castañeda phrases it, for "a more inclusive or culturally relative and useful concept of archaeology" (see also the comments of Cowgill and Joyce). In addition, my intention in referring to "indigenous" European archaeology was to stress that Europeans have traditions of interpreting the past that predate by many centuries the more recent development of archaeology as a scientific discourse (the 18th- and 19th-century arrival of Hamilakis's antiquarians and photographers). As I note in my introduction and conclusion, most explorations of "the anthropology of archaeology" already focus on the past two centuries and on archaeology as a scientific discipline. My intent in discussing "indigenous archaeologies" was not to claim a lack of importance for these recent scientific-disciplinary knowledges. Rather, I wanted to place them in a broader temporal and special context. I agree with Hamilakis that we need to consider archaeological interpretation from above and below and "be sensitive to the complexities of this process of production." It was an interest in such complexities that motivated my discussion of Chichen, as I highlighted interactions between long-term structures of interpretation, community understandings, Don Eus's goals. Mexican nationalism, and American disciplinary archaeology (see also Castañeda 1996).

Two of Ahlfeldt's points also relate to the issue of multiple registers of historical understandings—her emphasis on ancestors as another feature of Mesoamerican historical consciousness and her questioning of how Sahlins's ideas about "original sin" relate to my con-

cluding arguments about Greco-Roman ancestry. As far as I am aware, the traditions of original sin and Greco-Roman revivals are not directly connected. Rather, just as there are multiple historical frames in the Mesoamerican tradition (cataclysms by sunrise but also by flood, the ancestors that Ahlfeldt stresses, Cowgill's de-secratory versus reverential terminations), so too are there multiple and not necessarily connected understandings of the past in the European tradition. This is a point Demarest and Hodder also raise when they mention Celtic and Aryan "ancestries." In focusing on Greco-Roman revivals, I was not arguing that European self-definitions have never drawn on other traditions. Rather, my goal was to show that Greco-Roman revivals revealed the existence of a millennia-long structure of archaeological interpretation in Europe. In contrast, the glorified appropriation of Celtic and Aryan ancestries by Europeans is an extremely recent phenomenon, dating to the 18th century—as Hodder himself is aware (1987b:111; cf. Merriman 1987:114; Dietler 1994:587–88; Poliakov 1974:183–214). Demarest's and Hodder's references to Celts and Aryans are therefore beside the point. European claims about Greco-Roman ancestry provide significant parallels to Mesoamerica because of their millennial temporal span.

Finally, I want to answer Demarest's and Cowgill's challenges to my use of Aztec data. As I clearly indicated in the "Center and Periphery" section, my arguments about the interconnections of class inequality, divine sacrifice, original debt, and Teotihuacan are taken directly from the work of León-Portilla and Graulich, who in turn built their models of original debt from the Nahuatl-language sources in the *Leyenda de los Soles* and in the writings of Sahagún and Molina (Graulich 1997: 113–17; León-Portilla 1993; cf. Monaghan 2000a:38–39). Demarest's reference to the Spanish-language *Crónica X* sources is therefore tangential; it has no impact on the basis of my argument. I agree with Cowgill that the linguistically correct etymology to Teotihuacan is something like "place of the becoming of divinity." However, as Saussure pointed out, socially significant etymologies can be very different from the understandings revealed by technical linguistic analysis (1959[1915]:173–76). My discussion of Teotihuacan's etymology as "place where lords are made" is quoted from Sahagún's Nahuatl informants. "Place where lords were made" was *their* explicitly articulated understanding of what "Teotihuacan" meant. Their explanation provides an additional insight into 16th-century Nahuatl conceptualizations linking sunrises, Teotihuacan, rulership, debt, and class inequality.

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