

(Chapter 2) focus on the administrative ambitions of Monte Albán in the Valley of Oaxaca ca. 300–100 B.C. Specifically, they contrast the autonomy maintained by the nearby Tilcajete polity with Monte Albán's conquest of the distant Cuicatlan Cañada polity. Various resistance strategies supposedly implemented by Tilcajete are discussed (e.g., population increase and nucleation), but the interpretations are largely unconvincing. Moreover, alternative explanations are not considered. For example, the authors suggest that active resistance by local polities like Tilcajete encouraged Monte Albán's conquest of less populous, although more distant polities like Cuicatlan. However, perhaps Cuicatlan was incorporated first because it provided agricultural products not available in the Valley of Oaxaca, a motivation analogous to early Aztec conquest of Morelos where cotton was available. This important ecological detail comes to light only well into the following chapter by Christina Elson (Chapter 3). Elson uses archaeological data and sixteenth-century ethnohistoric information to discuss varying strategies used by Monte Albán after 100 B.C. to integrate local elites at three secondary centers in the Valley of Oaxaca. A general suggestion is made that the Monte Albán rulers influenced their intermediate counterparts by controlling access to the material trappings associated with noble status. This suggestion is reasonable, but many specific arguments are supported by limited or incomplete data, which in some cases are not clearly qualified (e.g., why are obsidian implements necessarily considered "elite goods"?).

Tung and Cook (Chapter 4) discuss the expansion of the elite class at Conchopata, a subject of the Wari Empire. Using burial data, they demonstrate that over time the number of elite strata increased dramatically. There are many interesting points made by this study, especially the interpretations regarding local ritual practices. These merits notwithstanding, the burial data need to be better contextualized in relation to the site in general; why exactly are these burials interpreted as elite? This question required more attention given the high level of physical stress reflected by the skeletal material, a condition acknowledged by the authors.

Conlee and Schreiber (Chapter 5) examine sociopolitical change in the Nasca region during and after the Wari Empire, beginning with a wonderful overview of the Nazca chronology (I recommend that readers unfamiliar with this sequence read this chapter before Chapter 4). Based on settlement pattern data, the inferences regarding social factions both for and against the Wari Empire are well supported. The discussion for the period following the Wari collapse, however, is somewhat unclear. Apparently, during this time elites dispersed to many settlements, diversifying their power bases by taking control over a wider range of activities (e.g., ceramic production). At one point the authors argue that this

process created multiple elite strata, yet they conclude by suggesting that during this period the elites became less internally diverse.

One minor general criticism of the volume is that some of the maps were inadequate, hard to read, or not labeled well enough to complement the narration. This point is unfortunate because it may frustrate a clear understanding of the arguments for readers unfamiliar with the local geographies. Nevertheless, this volume allowed me to clarify my understanding of "elites" as a category and the infinite variation characterizing elite behavior. An important and unresolved question highlighted throughout the chapters was whether persistent local elite traditions reflect active resistance to central authority or the calculated tolerance of ruling overlords. This debate is especially difficult to resolve with archaeological data alone, but it certainly represents a challenge worthy of future research on this captivating topic.

*The Postclassic to Spanish-Era Transition in Mesoamerica: Archaeological Perspectives.* SUSAN KEPECS and RANI T. ALEXANDER, editors. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 2005. xii + 260 pp., figures, tables, bibliography, index. \$59.95 (cloth).

*Reviewed by* Michael E. Smith, Arizona State University.

In his foreword, ethnohistorian Matthew Restall calls this book "the single most significant intellectual assault on the Great Wall that has divided 'Postclassic Mesoamerica' of archaeologists and the 'colonial Mexico' of historians." While I agree with this assessment of the importance of the book, the chapters demonstrate some of the obstacles yet to be overcome before we can begin to claim any kind of adequate understanding of the social effects of the Spanish conquest as reflected in the archaeological record.

Chapter 1, an informative introduction by the editors, places the volume within wider empirical and theoretical contexts. Kepecs and Alexander note that a major contribution of the chapters is documentation of the great variability in the nature, operation, and results of Spanish colonialism within greater Mesoamerica. Susan Evans follows with a systematic analysis of images of indigenous-style palaces in a Spanish map from 1550. Enrique Rodríguez-Alegría describes consumption patterns of ceramic serving wares at three early colonial houses in Mexico City. Thomas Charlton, Cynthia Otis Charlton, and Patricia Fournier present an informative synthesis of demography, settlement, and ceramics at rural and urban contexts in the Basin of Mexico before and after the Spanish conquest. Helen Pollard summarizes documentary data on the fate of the Tarascan Empire under Spanish domination. Janine

Gasco presents documentary and archaeological data on pre- and post-conquest periods at five communities in Chiapas.

Mark Lycett discusses a seventeenth-century mission in New Mexico. Although it does not deal with "Mesoamerica," this chapter provides a nice contrast with the others in terms of archaeological remains and social dynamics. It makes one wonder whether Mesoamerica is a useful scale of analysis for research on the social expressions of Spanish imperialism. Moving to the Maya realm, Susan Kepecs applies world system theory to the Late Postclassic and Early Colonial periods in northern Yucatan. Don Rice and Prudence Rice describe documentary data and limited architectural data on Postclassic and Colonial sites in the Peten. Rani Alexander compares a detailed archaeological study of a Postclassic site (Isla Cilvituk) to documentary data (supplemented by one day of archaeological survey) at a Colonial site (Sahcabchén) in Campeche. Finally, Joel Palka analyzes archaeological remains from nineteenth-century Lacandon Maya sites. There is no synthesis or concluding chapter.

Several chapters present little or no archaeological data, and in most of the remaining chapters the archaeological coverage of the Colonial period is rudimentary and spotty. Where are the basic data on Colonial period settlement patterns, demography, trade, production, urbanism, and household consumption, topics that are staples of Mesoamerican archaeology? Although there are special problems of post-conquest archaeological data that hinder the analysis of some of these topics, I am disappointed at the "Great Wall" between Postclassic and Colonial archaeology that runs through many of the chapters in the book. It is not clear to what extent the minimal discussion of Colonial archaeological data in the book is compensated for by more extensive presentations of data in other publications.

For some chapters, the "archaeological perspectives" of the book's subtitle refer to archaeologists interpreting Colonial documentary data (usually from secondary sources and transcriptions of documents). Yet few Mesoamericanist archaeologists have sufficient training or experience in Colonial historiography to produce credible analyses. Archaeologists need to work harder to collaborate with historians (and ethnohistorians) who have much to offer but may avoid interaction with archaeologists. Only one research project described in the book (the Rice's "Proyecto Maya-Colonial") has a historian as a major collaborator—Grant Jones—although he is not a coauthor on the chapter. Archaeologists should either improve their historiographic skills or else collaborate actively with professional historians; otherwise it will be hard to take their interpretations of Colonial-period archaeological sites seriously.

Much of the research described in *The Postclassic*

*to Spanish-Era Transition in Mesoamerica* would benefit from a more explicit use of theory and comparative studies of imperialism and colonialism. Two chapters show a very effective use of social theory: Kepecs applies a world system perspective to explore the wider connections of northern Yucatecan salt producers and others, and Alexander uses household ecology theory to compare agrarian patterns in the Postclassic and Colonial periods. Two authors (Lycett and Rodríguez-Alegría) devote space to postmodern posturing, which leads them to some rather unremarkable conclusions (e.g., that Spanish colonial processes and outcomes were not identical throughout the New World). There is a real need in Spanish Colonial studies for social theory that is less polemic and less speculative in tone.

In their introductory chapter, Kepecs and Alexander suggest that archaeologists "are in an excellent position to contribute to theories of culture contact, resistance, changing ethnic identity, and the progress of colonialism and globalization" (p. 12). The chapters in this book, for the most part, bear out their optimism, although most of these contributions remain in the realm of the potential rather than the actual. The chapters that provide the most balanced and rigorous comparisons of Postclassic and Colonial archaeological remains are those of Charlton et al., Gasco, Kepecs, and the Rices. These chapters most faithfully adhere to the goals and themes of the volume, and they suggest something of the potential for continuing research in this area.

The situation in Mesoamerican archaeology has certainly come a long way since my undergraduate days, when I recall being told to ignore glazed pottery because it was modern garbage of little interest to archaeologists. At that time, Tom Charlton was one of the only Mesoamericanist archaeologists taking Colonial period archaeology seriously. In *The Postclassic to Spanish-Era Transition in Mesoamerica*, he is joined by 12 like-minded colleagues, and this book should help assure that their numbers continue to increase in the future.

*Janaab' Pakal of Palenque: Reconstructing the Life and Death of a Maya Ruler.* VERA TIESLER and ANDREA CUCINA, editors, 2006. University of Arizona Press, Tucson. xiii + 209 pp. \$50.00 (cloth), ISBN-13 978-0-8165-2510-2.

*Reviewed by* John Dudgeon, Idaho State University.

Archaeologists have for some time enjoyed the specificity and theoretical groundedness of biological anthropology's contribution to explaining the context of human remains in the prehistoric record. Far from being a disconnected and idiosyncratic science with regard to the study of the past, biological anthropology has taken up