

# Mixtec City-States and Mixtec City-State Culture

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Models approximate reality as closely as possible and serve to advance our understanding of complex phenomena. As knowledge of cultural phenomena progresses, models are refined to approximate reality more closely and further enhance our understanding of these complex phenomena. During the last half of the 19th century, Lewis H. Morgan's (1877) model of Savagery, Barbarism, and Civilization guided much of the early research regarding the classification of cultures. The major problems with this early evolutionary model, apart from its ethnocentric bias, were that the criteria used to classify different cultures into the categories were too narrowly conceived and the dynamic interactions among neighboring cultures were not taken into account as processes of culture change.

In the first half of the 20th century, this model was replaced by the culture area model (Boas [1896]; [1920]; Kroeber [1939]) which classified neighboring cultures together on the basis of shared cultural attributes and focused on the dynamic interactions among neighboring cultures as agents of culture change. This model led to the definition of Mesoamerica as a culture area (Kirchhoff [1943]). While the model clearly advanced our understanding of cultural phenomena, it largely ignored classifications based on cultural complexity and left ancient Mesoamerican civilizations vaguely conceived as another group of Indian "tribes." Recently, the culture area model has been recast as "world systems theory" with a new interpretive framework (Kepecs, Feinman, and Boucher [1994] 141-2).

Over the past half-century, the now classic studies of Steward (1955), Sahlins and Service (1960), Service (1962; 1975) and Fried (1967) and their neo-evolutionary model of bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states as levels of sociocultural integration have by and large guided research into the evolution of ancient Mesoamerican civilizations (Sanders and Price [1968]). One major problem that arose was that most Mesoamerican civilizations did not fit the model's definition of either chiefdoms or states, although they manifested the basic characteristics of the state level

of sociocultural integration – social classes and a political elite. Furthermore, the concept of cities as large urban centers characteristic of states was too narrowly defined and again resulted in many Mesoamerican states being "city-less" even though they were characterized by internally complex settlements. Finally, the model as applied to Mesoamerica treated different civilizations as homogeneous isolates to be compared and classified into one or another of the levels of sociocultural integration and largely failed to take into account the dynamic interactions among these neighboring civilizations. Obviously this model required some revision since it did not adequately approximate the reality of the cultural data for most Mesoamerican, or indeed, many other world civilizations.

Hansen's model of the city-state and city-state culture (*supra* 16-19) deals with the problems generated by evolutionary models based on levels of cultural complexity, and the culture area and world systems models based on the dynamic interactions among neighboring cultures. Hansen's model includes a large sample of city-states and city-state cultures from different time periods and from different areas throughout the world. Hansen reviews the conceptions of the "city" from Weber through Childe and Sjöberg, and arrives at a judiciously reasoned concept of the nature of a city. Likewise, a carefully considered review of the conception of the "state" from the Westphalia declaration through Service and Fried is presented and concludes with a revised concept of the nature of the state.

From this basis a model of the city-state is derived. The city-state, however, is not left as a homogeneous isolate into which cultures may be pigeon-holed. Instead, the dynamic interactions among neighboring city-states leads to a model of the city-state culture. Furthermore, the model includes an evolutionary perspective which investigates the conditions which lead to the development and demise of city-state cultures. Hansen's model of the city-state and city-state culture represents a closer approximation to the reality of the cultural data and constitutes a major advance which

will help guide research in the 21st century. This paper explores the nature of city-states and the city-state culture of the Mixteca of ancient Mesoamerica during the Postclassic period from *ca.* A.D. 900 to *ca.* A.D. 1521.

## The Mixteca

To the southeast of the Aztecs and to the northwest of the Maya lies the Mixteca. At the time of the Spanish Conquest the ancient Mixteca included numerous city-states which were clearly distinct both culturally and linguistically from the Aztec Nahuatl, who were recent arrivals to the Central Highlands of Mesoamerica (Smith, *infra* 584), and from the Postclassic Maya of Yucatán and Highland Guatemala.

The Mixteca includes the Baja (*ñuiñe*), a hot dry mountainous region in northern Oaxaca and southern Puebla with elevations generally below 1800m; the Alta (*ñudzauvi ñuhu*), a cool temperate mountainous region in western Oaxaca with elevations above 1800m; and the Costa (*ñundaa* or *ñundevi*), a narrow tropical strip bordered by rugged mountains along the Pacific coast of Oaxaca. The Mixtecs also distinguished the canyons of the Putla river drainage from the Alta southwestward to the Costa as the *ñuñuma*. John Monaghan ([1994] 144) has referred to this area as the transitional zone or “nudo mixteco” (Mixtec knot) and has noted its pivotal ecological role in the economy of the Mixteca Alta.

Modern research into the ancient history of the Mixteca began with the pioneering work of Alfonso Caso. Caso (1938) initiated the first archaeological project in the Mixteca and, through an analysis of Spanish colonial documents and colonial indigenous style *lienzos* and *mapas*, deciphered the names of a number of city-states and the names, dates, and histories of their rulers as recorded in their Prehispanic screenfold manuscripts known as the Mixtec codices (Caso [1949]; [1960]; [1961]; [1964]; [1966]; [1977]). A new generation of scholars, Troike (1974; 1978; 1987), Smith (1973; 1991; 1998), Furst (1978), Rabin (1979, 1982, 1998), Pohl (1994ab), and Jansen (1982; 1994) and his colleagues (Anders, Jansen, and Pérez 1992ab) have built upon and revised the work of Caso and have presented new interpretations of the codices. These studies have provided a unique insight into the history of Mixtec city-states and city-state culture as recorded by the Mixtecs themselves. Research into Prehispanic and colonial codices, *lienzos*, and *mapas* has become a highly specialized area of Mixtec studies.

While the codices have provided information on Mixtec city-states and city-state culture which is not obtainable from other sources and have produced the most precise chronology (Rabin [1998]) of the Postclassic for any area of Mesoamerica, the extant codices are few in number and represent regional perspectives of elite history (Smith [1983]). They do not mention the Aztec conquests in the Mixteca nor even the Spanish Conquest. Furthermore, many place “glyphs” identifying city-states have not yet been deciphered and no information is provided on population sizes or many aspects of Mixtec social, political, and economic organization. To obtain a more complete view of the nature of Mixtec city-states and city-state culture, other scholars, such as Dahlgren (1954) and Spores (1967; 1984), have analyzed Spanish colonial documents and, more recently, Terraciano (1994) has analyzed colonial documents written in Mixtec by literate Mixtecs who learned to use the Latin alphabet shortly after the Conquest. Spores (1974a), in particular, has pioneered an anthropological approach to the colonial documents and has developed a sound ethno-historic model which provides a clear insight into the organization of Mixtec city-states.

Archaeological research into Postclassic (A.D. 900-1521) Mixtec city-states has lagged behind historical research. Following Caso’s pioneering excavations, Bernal (1949) excavated at Coixtlahuaca, a large Mixteca Alta city-state capital, and Paddock (1966) presented a synthesis of the archaeology of the Mixteca. Spores (1972; 1974b) initiated the first systematic surface survey in the Nochixtlán Valley, the largest and most densely populated region of the Mixteca Alta, which also included the first regional chronology based on stratigraphic excavations and, additionally, some block excavations at Postclassic city-state sites (Lind [1979]; [1987]). Byland (1980) conducted a surface survey of the neighboring Tamazulapan Valley of the Mixteca Alta. Byland and Pohl (1994) also surveyed the Tilantongo region and conducted excavations at Tilantongo. Brockington and his colleagues (Brockington, Jorin, and Long [1974a-b] carried out a surface survey of the Mixteca de la Costa. More recently, Winter (1996) has conducted the first full-scale excavations in the Mixteca Baja, and Joyce, Winter, and Mueller (1998) have carried out the first large-scale excavations in the Mixteca de la Costa in the lower Río Verde region. Both of these latter projects have focused on time periods preceding the development of Postclassic Mixtec city-states and have provided important information on these earlier time periods in the Mixteca.

Fig. 1. The Mixteca.



A recent major impetus to Mixtec studies is the Mixtec Gateway, organized by Dr. Nancy Troike and sponsored by the Mixtec Foundation and the Braunstein Foundation of Las Vegas, which, since 1994, has provided an annual forum where linguists, ethnographers, ethnohistorians, art historians, archaeologists, and specialists in the Prehispanic and colonial codices can meet, share, and discuss recent research on Mixtec culture. Much of what follows owes its origins to the productive exchanges of information at the Mixtec Gateway meetings.

### Mixtec City-States

The Hispanicized Arawakan term *cacicazgo* was applied by the Spaniards to Mixtec city-states (Chance [1997] 167). Therefore, Mixtec city-states are often referred to in the literature as *cacicazgos*. Spores (1974a) and Lind (1977) have also referred to Mixtec city-states as kingdoms to distinguish them from Service's chiefdoms and states, neither of which fit the Mixtec city-state data. The Mixtecs referred to

their city-states as *sina yya* or *satonine yya*, according to Spores ([1984] 74), or *yuhuitayu*, according to Terraciano ([1994] 537) who notes their similarity to the Aztec *altepetl* (Chance [1997] 165).

Mixtec city-states were composed of either a single community or, more commonly, several communities in which one was the capital and the others subject communities (Spores [1967] 100-1). The city-state was named after its capital city and these names were recorded in place signs in Mixtec codices, lienzos, and mapas (Smith [1973]). According to Spores ([1984] 231, note 30), subject communities were referred to in Mixtec as *tay ñuu*, *tayndahi*, or *nandahi*. Although more than 100 city-states probably occur within the Mixteca, Spores (1983abc) has specifically identified some 40 city-states, most of which have not yet been studied in detail. More than 30 of those identified by Spores are listed in the A.D. 1547-50 *Suma de Visitas*, a detailed census carried out by the Spaniards a generation after the Conquest, which provides important information on these and other Mixtec city-states distributed throughout the Alta, Baja, and Costa (Table 1).

## Population and Territory

The census lists the total population of the city-state and sometimes the population of the capital city (*cabecera*), the number of districts or neighborhoods (*barrios*) within the capital city, and even the number of houses. Likewise, the census lists any communities which were subject to the capital city. The subject communities are identified as either *sujetos* or *estancias*. *Sujeto* appears to refer to a nucleated settlement where houses are near one another. *Estancia* probably refers to a dispersed settlement composed of a group of scattered homesteads. Sometimes the census gives the population of each community subject to the capital city.

William O. Autry (1997) has made a detailed analysis of the census data from the *Suma de Visitas* and his analysis has been followed here. The census lists city-states with populations as small as 400 persons and as large as about 18,000 persons but most range between 1000 and 3000 persons (Table 1). In each city-state for which data are available, the capital city is considerably larger than any of the subject communities. For example, Jaltepec (pop. 4819) was the capital of a city-state with six *sujetos* (ranging in size from 475 to 741 persons) and with a total population of 8308 persons. Mitlatongo (pop. 1406) was the capital of a city-state with five *estancias* (ranging in size from 59 to 242 persons) and with a total population of 2083 persons. The capital city was by far the largest, and sometimes the only, community within the city-state and served as the city-state's primary economic, political, and religious center (Spores [1967] 94).

Although ample data are available from Colonial documents and indigenous style *lienzos* and *mapas*, few studies of the territorial sizes of Mixtec city-states have been done. Autry (1997), using data from the *Suma de Visitas* which also provides some information on the territorial size of city-states, cites an average size of about 310 km<sup>2</sup> for city-states in the fertile and densely populated Mixteca Alta and an average size of about 800 km<sup>2</sup> for the less densely populated Mixteca Baja and Costa. Likewise, Autry estimates that city-states had an average population density of about 24 persons per km<sup>2</sup> for the Alta, 4.5 persons per km<sup>2</sup> for the Baja, and only about 1.5 persons per km<sup>2</sup> for the Costa.

An excellent study of the Mixteca de la Costa city-state of Zacatepec based on an analysis of the *Lienzos de Zacatepec* has been carried out by Mary Elizabeth Smith ([1973] Chap. VII). Zacatepec was the capital of a city-state with 12-13 *estancias* and a total population of 2,178 persons. The A.D. 1540-60 *Lienzo de*

*Zacatepec* delineates the boundaries of the city-state and identifies its *estancias*. Smith's ([1973] 91, Map 6) map of the area delineated by the *lienzo* as the boundaries of the city-state indicate that its territory covered about 1740 km<sup>2</sup>, which is over twice as large as the average for the Mixteca de la Costa. However, the population density of about 1.25 persons per km<sup>2</sup> is close to Autry's average of 1.5 persons per km<sup>2</sup> for city-states in the Mixteca de la Costa.

Byland ([1980] 159-60), following a method developed by Sanders for the Valley of Mexico, used archaeological data to reconstruct the sizes of the populations and territories of two Mixteca Alta city-states which shared borders and occupied a single valley. He estimates that the population of the city-state of Tejuapan was about 10,870 persons, the size of its territory was about 93 km<sup>2</sup>, and its population density about 117 persons per km<sup>2</sup>. His population estimate for the neighboring city-state of Tamazulapan is about 6,615 persons, the territorial size about 140 km<sup>2</sup>, and the population density about 44 persons per km<sup>2</sup>. These population figures are much higher than those provided by the *Suma de Visitas* which lists Tejuapan at 1,355 persons and Tamazulapan at 4,442 persons. Clearly reasons for these discrepancies are something that need to be resolved by archaeologists and ethnohistorians (Spores [1983a] 235-6).

## Sociopolitical Organization

From an analysis of scores of documents pertaining primarily to the large Mixteca Alta city-state of Yanhuitlán in the Nochixtlán Valley, but also to other city-states in the Nochixtlán Valley and surrounding areas of the Mixteca Alta, Baja, and Costa, Spores (1967; 1974a; 1984) has developed an ethnohistoric model of the sociopolitical organization of Mixtec city-states. Spores characterizes Mixtec city-states as: "small, socially stratified states, each controlled by a privileged ruling aristocracy and consisting of a territory normally traversable by foot in a day; one or more agricultural settlements with adjacent farm plots and resource areas; and a resident population differentiated into a ruling lineage, a nobility, a class of commoners, and, in some cases, a group of tenant farmers subject to the direct control of the ruler" (Spores [1983c] 255).

Mixtec city-states included four social classes: royalty (*yya tnuhu*), nobility (*tay toho*), commoner (*nanday tayñuu*, *tay yucu*, or *tay sicaquai*), and tenant farmers or "serfs" (*tay situndayu*). Slaves included war captives (*tay nicuvuinduu*), purchased slaves (*da-*

Table 1. Mixtec City-States identified by Spores (1983abc). (Population figures after Autry [1997]).

Capital (Pop.)	Location	Barrios	Subjects*	Total pop.
Tlaxiaco (5353)	Alta	–	8/31*	17,892
Yanhuitlán	Alta	–	16	16,260
Teposcolula (12,503)	Alta	6	–	12,503
Coixtlahuaca	Alta	–	–	12,000**
Jaltepec (4819)	Alta	6	6	8,308
Teozacoalco (2408)	Alta	7	23*	7,093
Tamazulapan	Alta	–	6	4,442
Tututepec (3564)	Costa	–	–	3,564
Acatlán	Baja	–	1*	3,233
Achiutla (3205)	Alta	4	–	3,205
Tilantongo	Alta	–	5	3,152
Apoala	Alta	–	10	3,023
Tamazola	Alta	–	14*	2,396
Putla	Costa	–	3*	2,376
Zacatepec	Costa	–	12*	2,178
Sosola (1592)	Alta	–	1*	2,150
Mitlatongo (1406)	Alta	5	5*	2,083
Huajuapán	Baja	–	–	2,000**
Tezoatlán	Baja	–	8	1,638
Xicayán de Tovar	Costa	–	10*	1,584
Pinotepa Chica	Costa	–	7*	1,584
Juxtlahuaca (1415)	Baja	–	–	1,415
Nochixtlán	Alta	–	4	1,372
Soyaltepec (1361)	Alta	6	–	1,361
Tejupan (1355)	Alta	6	–	1,355
Amuzgos	Costa	–	4*	950
Etlatongo	Alta	–	8	855
Jamiltepec	Costa	–	3*	792
Chachoapan (719)	Alta	–	–	719
Chazumba (594)	Baja	–	–	594
Tiltepec (486)	Alta	–	–	486
Petlalcingo (412)	Baja	–	–	412

\* Dependencies are listed in the *Suma de Visitas* as *sujetos* and/or *estancias*. The *estancias*\* are marked with an asterisk.

\*\* Not listed in the *Suma de Visitas*; population estimated from A.D. 1570 census (Dahlgren [1954] 36-7).

*hasaha* or *tay noho yahui*), and slaves born of slave parents in the households of their Mixtec masters (*dzayadzana*). Slaves did not constitute a social class but were used by the elite as household servants, concubines, sacrificial victims, and field workers (Spores [1983a] 228).

Each Mixtec city-state was ruled by a hereditary king (*yya*) or queen (*yya dzehe*) who resided in a large palace in the capital (Spores [1967] 94; [1984] 70). To record the genealogies of their rulers, the Mixtecs kept codices in the capital of each city-state which

depicted the history of the ruler's royal ancestors for a time period extending back over half a millennium (Spores [1967] 94-6; Rabin [1998]). Beyond recorded history the rulers traced their mythico-historical descent from divine ancestors who were born supernaturally from trees, rivers, or mountains. Rabin cites 11 divine couples, which codex experts refer to as lineage ancestors, who occur in the extant codices and who through intermarriages among their descendants form the basis of the historical Mixtec dynasties. Spores ([1984] 70) has noted that these "lineages" were simply ancestral lines and not formal corporate lineages, since there is no evidence for lineages or clans among the Mixtecs.

The ruler was assisted in the overall governance of the city-state by a council of four advisers, one of whom was chief adviser (Spores [1984] 77). Pohl has suggested that these noble advisers were close relatives of the ruler who are depicted as priests in the codices. They were in charge of the sacred bundles of the city-state and the chief adviser was also in charge of military affairs (Pohl [1994a] 37-9, 117). Pohl ([1994a] Chap. III) has also suggested that, apart from the four royal advisers, *yaha-yahui* (eagle-fire serpent) priests depicted in the codices were in charge of the royal treasury, led public ceremonies, and performed human sacrifices.

The barrios (*siqui*), neighborhoods or districts within the capital city, and the subject communities within the city-state were governed by nobles appointed by the ruler (Spores [1967] 92). These nobles were close relatives of the ruler and resided in the barrios and subject communities which they governed (Dahlgren [1954] 171). The *Lienzo de Zacatepec* depicts the noble administrators together with their calendrical and personal names next to the place signs identifying the subject *estancia* they ruled (Smith [1973] 112). Likewise, the place signs identifying some of the *sujetos* and the calendrical and personal names of their noble administrators are shown in the *Códice de Yanhuitlán* (Sepúlveda y Herrera [1994] 100, Lám. III; 115, Lám. XVIII).

The larger capitals, such as Yanhuitlán, were divided into "barrios" or neighborhoods occupied by commoners. According to Spores ([1984] 70), these "barrios" were residential neighborhoods and there is no evidence that they were organized along kinship lines. However, there were two distinct types of barrios: those occupied by free commoners and those occupied by tenant farmers or "serfs" who worked the ruler's fields. Free commoners in barrios and in subject communities were required to pay tribute and pro-

vide labor services for the ruler. Although the ruler and nobles owned the best farmlands, free commoners held usufruct rights to less productive communal lands (Spores [1983a] 229).

The “serfs” (*tay situndayu*) worked the lands of the king and queen and were otherwise exempt from tribute. Spores ([1983a] 229-30) reports that the king of Yanhuítlán had about 2000 serfs to work his lands, while the king of Tecomaxtlahuaca, a smaller city-state in the Mixteca Baja, had about 800 serfs. The *tay situndayu* appear to have been mainly outsiders who were migrants, displaced foreigners, slaves, war captives, or former free commoners who entered into the service of the ruler either through choice or by force.

Spores ([1984] 77) has characterized the political system of the Mixtec city-state as one in which the ruler communicated directly with a small group of advisers and noble administrators. It lacked the large and cumbersome bureaucracy characteristic of macro-states where edicts from the ruler filter down through many bureaucratic levels. This direct communication is clearly illustrated in the *Códice de Yanhuítlán* where the ruler of Yanhuítlán, one of the largest city-states in the Mixteca, is shown in a courtyard of his palace with at least four advisers discussing affairs of the city-state with a group of more than 50 noble administrators (Sepúlveda y Herrera [1994] 99, Lám. II). The Mixtec date for this meeting corresponds to A.D. 1532, shortly after the Conquest, and no Spaniards are shown.

## Defense

The limited territory and relatively small population size of Mixtec city-states meant that “they could be maintained without complex administrative hierarchies, standing armies, or police forces” (Spores [1984] 77). Mixtec “armies” were led by the ruler and nobles who headed groups of commoners recruited from the barrios and subject communities they governed (Dahlgren [1954] 192). While Mixtec cities were not protected by defensive walls, the mountain tops near the cities were fortified and served as fortresses to which the populace could retreat and from where they could defend themselves against attacking armies. At times, however, squadrons, each of which was headed by a noble and composed of the recruits from his barrio or subject community, would engage in battle on open fields. Documents report that in these battles nobles fought against nobles and commoners fought against commoners (Dahlgren [1954] 208).

## Urbanization

Typically Mixtec cities were located in the piedmont zone below steep mountain peaks yet well above valley floors. The core of the capital, composed of the ruler’s palace and one or more temples along the sides of a plaza, was often situated in the highest part of the city, frequently on a relatively flat “acropolis-like” ridge. The houses of commoners were situated on small terraces extending down the slopes. This pattern occurs not only in much of the Mixteca Alta at Coixtlahuaca (Bernal [1949] 6) and in the Nochixtlán Valley (Spores [1972] 165-8), for example, but also at Tututepec in the Mixteca de la Costa where mountains extend down to the narrow Pacific coastal plain (O’Mack [1990] 22-4; Joyce, Winter, and Mueller [1998] 7). Subject communities also appear to have followed a similar pattern with the palaces of noble administrators in the highest part of the town and the houses of commoners extending down the lower slopes (Lind [1979] 15).

The focal point of the capital city was the ruler’s palace. The Spaniards’ first encounters with the Mixtecs make this clear. In his Second *Carta de Relación*, written on October 30, 1520, Cortés ([1963] 46) reports that his soldiers had seen a palace at Tamazulapan in the Mixteca Alta that was larger and better built than the Castillo de Burgos. In his Third *Carta de Relación*, written on May 15, 1522, Cortés ([1963] 142) reports that Pedro de Alvarado, 240 Spanish soldiers, and 40 horses were all offered housing in the large palace of the ruler of Tututepec in the Mixteca de la Costa.

While these might seem exaggerations, Byland ([1980] 424) has located the remains of the Tamazulapan palace which cover 5000 m<sup>2</sup>. Remains of the large early Colonial palaces of the ruler of Teposcolula, Doña Lucía, and the ruler of Yanhuítlán, Don Gabriel, are still standing. Spores ([1972] 96) reports that the palace of the ruler of Yanhuítlán includes rooms built around nine interior courtyards and covers an area of about 6500 m<sup>2</sup>. The codices frequently illustrate rulers in their palaces. They indicate that the palaces were built on raised platforms and faced with cut stone covered by plaster and decorated with painted, plastered, or carved stone friezes. The tops of the palace walls frequently had decorative merlons.

In contrast to the palaces of rulers, Mixtec temples elicited no special comment from Spanish Conquistadores nor are the archaeological remains of these temples much in evidence (Spores [1983b] 247). Many temples were probably demolished and served as bases upon which to build churches. Bernal ([1949]

10-11) excavated parts of two temples at Coixtlahuaca. One was a large temple (Mont. B) facing west on a plaza, which had a probable palace complex (Mont. C) adjacent to it on the north side of the plaza. On the west side of the plaza a temple complex, composed of two smaller temples (Mont. D and E), occupied the east and west sides of a patio enclosed on the other two sides by platforms. The large temple (Mont. B) probably served as the main focus of public ceremonies, while the small temple complex (Monts. D and E) may have functioned as the locus of elite ceremonial activity involving the lineage ancestors and the sacred bundles. Directly west of the first plaza was a large walled plaza which may have served as the marketplace (Bernal [1949] 18-19). One of the Aztecs' most important conquests was Coixtlahuaca which was a major market center for long-distance trade and, following its conquest, served as the collection center for the Aztec tributary province which bore its name and included most of the major city-states of the Mixteca Alta (Berdan and Anawalt in *Codex Mendoza* [1992] Vol. II, 102-5).

### Economic Organization

The economy of Mixtec city-states was based on farming with digging sticks or *coas*. Maize, *chia*, beans, squash, chiles, tomatoes, and maguey were cultivated in most city-states. Additionally, a variety of fruits including nopal, avocados, *zapotes*, cherries (*capulín*), and *ciruela* were grown (Smith [1976] 33-39). Turkeys and dogs were the only domestic animals and both were used as food. Bees were kept for honey. These foodstuffs were supplemented by wild plants and animals, especially deer, rabbits, and hares. Interestingly, the documents refer to hunters – full- or part-time specialists who provided the ruler and nobility with the meat of animals such as deer, rabbits, and hares (Dahlgren [1954] 97) and probably also with the furs of these animals, including those of mountain lions.

Mixtec city-states were not entirely self-sufficient and needed to import different items which were distributed to the populace through the marketplace. The ruler and nobility maintained monopolistic control over many imported goods such as salt, obsidian, fine textiles, cacao, and precious feathers, stones, and metals (Spores [1984] 84). While each city-state maintained a daily or periodic market in its capital city for the exchange of local products and the distribution of imports, there is little evidence for full-time specialists in the Mixtec economy (Spores [1984] 81).

Most products were made by part-time specialists who produced pottery, *manos* and *metates*, baskets, *petates*, and other items needed by every Mixtec household. However, in at least one city-state, Nochixtlán, much of the population was composed of traders who traveled from market to market exchanging locally produced goods for luxury items (Spores [1984] 82; Dahlgren [1954] 246-7). Nochixtlán was famous as a center for the production of cochineal, a highly prized red dye used in textiles (Dahlgren [1954] 142).

Evidence from the codices and colonial documents suggest that royal and noble family members were themselves specialists who produced the fine gold, silver, and copper works; crafted the precious stones and mosaics; painted the elaborately decorated polychrome ceramics; and wove the elegant textiles and fine feather capes which were used in gift exchanges at the weddings and funerals of nobles, at feasts celebrating alliances, and at important religious celebrations (Pohl [1994c]). Much of this production was probably carried out in palace workshops. In the city-state of Jaltepec, for example, it was reported that any commoner finding gold nuggets or dust was required to turn the gold over to the ruler. The ruler rewarded the commoner with a few cloth capes and had the gold smelted and made into fine jewelry which became part of the royal treasury (Dahlgren [1954] 139). Nobles trained by priests from childhood were also the scribes who produced the codices (Burgoa [1934] I, 210).

### Religion

Each Mixtec city-state maintained one or more temples in its capital but ceremonies were also carried out on mountaintops, in caves, and even in reutilized abandoned ancient ruins (Spores [1984] 92). Mixtec priests (*naha niñe*, *tay saque*) were selected from among the nobles and in some cases from among the commoners (Spores [1983d] 343; Dahlgren [1954] 262). They underwent four years of training as novitiates assisting the priests in ritual activities and learning the ceremonies. Afterwards, they entered the service of the ruler, who had himself undergone a year of religious training. Priests were required to remain celibate during their tenure as priests and could rise in rank every four years if the ruler named them to higher positions in the priesthood. Following their tenure as priests, they were free to leave the priesthood and marry (Dahlgren [1954] 309).

Each city-state had its own particular patron deity

which differed from those of other city-states (Dahlgren [1954] 261) and its own state-sponsored rituals (Spores [1984] 88-92). However, many Mixtec supernaturals, such as *Dzahui*, were widely venerated throughout the Mixteca. *Dzahui*, the rain deity, was especially important for the general populace (Dahlgren [1954] 299). When the rains failed, priests dressed as *Dzahui* would plead for rain before the precious stone figure of the deity, burning incense and making offerings of fine feathers and blood from autosacrificial blood-letting. Then birds were sacrificed and a rubber ball was burned and the liquid residue smeared on the image. Finally, the precious stone figure of the deity, carefully wrapped in a cloth bundle, was carried to a mountaintop where a child was sacrificed and his heart offered to the deity. The ruler provided the priest with the materials for offerings and kept a supply of children for sacrifice (Dahlgren [1954] 278-9).

### Mixtec City-State Culture

Although each Mixtec city-state was a separate polity, a long history of systemic interactions among them produced a Mixtec city-state culture. The Mixtec codices give us a good idea of just how far back in time and just how extensive the relationships were among Mixtec city-states in the Alta, the Baja, and the Costa. The oldest historically recorded dynasty in the Mixteca began in A.D. 990 with the first dynasty of Tilantongo, whose ruler was born in A.D. 942 (Rabin [1998]). This is at the beginning of the Postclassic Natividad phase, nearly 600 years before the Conquest. Documents report that a codex listing 24 generations of rulers from Yanhuatlán was kept in the community strong box in A.D. 1582 (Spores [1967] 94-6). This would also take us back about 600 years (at 25 years a generation) to approximately the same time period, *ca.* A.D. 982. Language, royal marital alliances, commerce, and religion were all important factors integrating Mixtec city-states into a common culture over a period of 600 years.

### The Mixtec Language

Mixtec was the common language spoken throughout the Mixteca. All three regions of the Mixteca were occupied by Mixtec speakers at the time of the Conquest but also included linguistically related minority populations – Popolocas, Chochos, Ixcatecs, Triquis, and Amuzgos. Fray Antonio de los Reyes has provided the Mixtec name for the area of the Mixteca

Alta around Coixtlahuaca which was occupied by Chocho speakers. This, he says, was called the *tocuij-ñuhu* or Chocho-Mixteca (cited in Sepúlveda y Herrera [1994] 21). He goes on to say that the Mixtecs had kinship ties and a close and friendly relationship with the Chochos. Archaeological comparisons between Coixtlahuaca and the Nochixtlán Valley indicate an extremely close relationship in terms of material culture (Lind [1977]; [1979]; [1987]) and it is clear that Chochos and other minorities were full participants in the Mixtec city-state culture.

Mixtecs clearly constituted the majority of the population at the time of the Conquest and continued to be the dominant population into recent times. An ethnographic survey conducted by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in the 1930s and 1940s provides the number of Mixtecs versus other language groups (Rojas, Barragán, and De La Cerda [1957]). The total indigenous population of the Mixteca in the 1940s was about 194,000 persons. Mixtecs made up nearly 90% of the total population. Roughly 9 out of every 10 people in the Mixteca, then, were Mixtec speakers; other minorities accounted for only about 10% of the total population. In a 1970 census, a total of 233,235 persons were listed as native Mixtec speakers. The Mixtec are the fourth largest linguistic community in Mexico after the Nahuatl, Maya, and Zapotec, and rank second with regard to the number of monolingual speakers (Ayre [1977] 1).

With a large population of Mixtec speakers spread over a wide and diverse geographical region such as the Mixteca, one would expect the development of different dialects of Mixtec, especially since Mixtec speakers had inhabited the region for a long time and were not recent arrivals. Kathy Josserand, Maarten Jansen, and María de los Angeles Romero (1984) have studied colonial documents written in Mixtec in different areas of the Mixteca. In their preliminary survey of these documents, they were able to identify five major dialects of Mixtec: two in the Alta, two in the Baja, and one in the Costa. They note that their sample for the Northern Baja dialect is inadequate since it included only a single town. They point out that the towns around Acatlán will probably be found to have a dialect distinct from those around Huajuapán de León (Josserand, Jansen, and Romero [1984] 154). Throughout the Mixteca Alta, Baja, and Costa, then, despite separation by rugged mountainous terrain and deep narrow canyons, Mixtec city-states maintained a common language over hundreds of years which helped to integrate them into a common Mixtec city-state culture.

## The Mixtec Marital Alliances

Another important factor that bound Mixtec city-states into a Mixtec city-state culture was royal marriages. For example, the Mixtec dynasty at Tututepec in the Mixteca de la Costa was tied into the Mixtec dynasty of Tilantongo in the Mixteca Alta over 130 km away in a straight line and considerably farther on foot given the tortuous nature of the terrain. The Mixtec dynasty at Acatlán in Puebla in the northernmost reaches of the Mixteca Baja was tied into the dynasty of Tezacoalco in southernmost reaches of the Mixteca Alta, over 160 km away in a straight line and, again, considerably farther on foot (Rabin [1998]). Throughout the Mixteca Alta, Baja, and Costa, then, Mixtec city-states were tied together through royal marriages.

Marriage ties among royal families from different city-states continued generation after generation from the time of their founding until well after the Spanish Conquest (Spores [1974a]). The heirs to Mixtec kingdoms were only allowed to marry a royal spouse. Therefore, a male heir to the throne had to marry a princess, the daughter of a king and queen; and a female heiress to the throne had to marry a prince, the son of a king and queen. Of course the most advantageous marriage was between a prince and princess who were both heirs to one or more city-states.

At the time of a royal marriage it was decided which of their children would inherit the rulership, or if both were rulers, which child would inherit the father's city-state and which would inherit the mother's city-state. It was even possible to combine inheritance so that a child might inherit both the city-states of the mother and father. In the Mixteca Alta, it is reported that the betrothed heirs-apparent together with their royal parents would consult with the nobility of the city-state or city-states involved and would also go to the religious center of Achiutla to consult the high priest on the manner of succession (Spores [1967] 146).

## Commerce

Another factor which contributed to the maintenance of Mixtec city-state culture over hundreds of years was an active intercity-state commerce. Despite the fact that Mixtec city-states produced the same staples, the difference in elevations meant that the same crops had different growing seasons. As Monaghan ([1994] 153-4) points out, the *ñuñuma* region provided maize for adjoining areas of the Mixteca Alta during the "months of starvation" and equal amounts of maize

were later reciprocated from the Alta to the *ñuñuma* region. This type of exchange of subsistence goods probably took place in border markets existing in neutral zones on the frontiers of neighboring, and often mutually hostile, city-states (Pohl, Monaghan, and Stiver [1997]).

No Mixtec city-state was entirely self-sufficient with regard to basic staples and none was totally self-sufficient with regard to supplying all the basic needs of each of its households (Spores [1984] 82). Many items had to be imported and passed through periodic markets in each city-state to its component households (Spores [1967] 5-7; [1984] 81). There was an active trade in salt, obsidian, baskets, sleeping mats (*petates*), cotton, cacao, feathers, shell, fish and other commodities. Special markets for inter-regional trade occurred at Coixtlahuaca, which drew products from the Gulf Coast, and Putla, which supplied products from the Pacific Coast. These inter-regional markets served as conduits channeling products to large regional markets at Tlaxiaco, Teposcolula, Yanhuitlán, Huajuapán, and Acatlán from whence they entered the markets of smaller city-states.

## Religion

Common religious beliefs and practices constitute another important factor that integrated Mixtec city-state culture. Mixtec supernaturals were often identified, like the Mixtecs themselves, by a calendrical name. Lord 9 Wind, a Mixtec avatar of Quetzalcóatl, was considered a divine culture hero (Furst [1978] Chap. 4). Lord 1 Death was a solar deity, Lady 9 Grass was an Earth-Fertility deity, and Lord 7 Flower was a patron of the nobility (Pohl [1994a]; [1994c] 10). These supernaturals were especially venerated by the nobility throughout the Mixteca. The general populace throughout the Mixteca were particularly dedicated to *Dzahui*, the rain deity. The general populace also venerated earth spirits called *ñuhu*, which appear to be unique to Mixtec city-state culture. *Ñuhu* (*nu ñu'un*) still constitute an important part of the Mixtec cosmos today (Monaghan [1995] 98-114).

Certain city-states within the Mixteca were famous as religious centers. The most prominent of these was Achiutla, center of the solar deity Lord 1 Death. Peoples from throughout the Mixteca would make pilgrimages to Achiutla and, for those who were too old or infirm to ascend the rugged mountains, a second shrine was maintained in a cave at Yucuita, a subject community of Yanhuitlán, in the Nochixtlán Valley (Spores [1983d] 343). The high priest of Achiutla was

renowned as an oracle (Dahlgren [1954] 264). Chalcatongo, the center for the Earth-Fertility deity Lady 9 Grass, was famous for having a great cave where Mixtec royalty were buried (Dahlgren [1954] 271-272). Lady 9 Grass was also an oracle (Pohl [1994a] Chap. IV). Pilgrimages to religious centers, such as Achiutla and Chalcatongo, were important factors integrating Mixtec city-state culture. The famous Mixtec polychrome pottery, which was widely distributed throughout the Mixteca, is decorated with Mixtec-specific religious themes which are distinct from other Central Mexican polychromes such as those from Cholula (Lind [1994] 97).

### Warfare and Conquest

Both the Mixtec codices and colonial documents make it clear that Mixtec city-states frequently engaged in warfare with one another. Most battles were fought over land boundaries between neighboring city-states (Dahlgren [1954] 189-91). There is evidence, however, of attempts by Mixtec rulers to establish hegemony over other city-states through carefully planned marital alliances. These could involve polygyny in which a king married several royal spouses who were heirs to different city-states. For example, the great Mixtec conqueror 8 Deer, (1063-1115 A.D.) (Rabin [1998]), gained title to six city-states through inheritance, conquest, and polygynous marital alliances (Spores [1984] 79). He was even known to kill a rival king, who was his own brother-in-law. His control over the city-states, however, did not live beyond him. He was assassinated by 4 Wind in A.D. 1115 and the city-states he controlled continued on as independent polities, a few ruled by some of his ten children from his five wives.

One of the city-states ruled by 8 Deer was Tututepec in the rich Río Verde region of the Mixteca de la Costa. The Mixteca de la Costa was probably occupied principally by Chatinos, and not Mixtecs, at the time 8 Deer acceded to the throne of Tututepec in A.D. 1083 (Rabin [1998]). From Tututepec 8 Deer carried out a campaign of warfare that led to the conquest and subjugation of a large number of Chatino city-states. 8 Deer was later aided in his conquests by 4 Jaguar, who was probably from Cholula in the Valley of Puebla (Jansen [1996] 26). 4 Jaguar provided 8 Deer with a nose ornament signifying that Quetzalcóatl had accorded him the divine right to rule. Jansen ([1996]; [1997ab]) has suggested that 4 Jaguar may have been the historical Quetzalcóatl.

Following the conquests of 8 Deer, later Mixtec

rulers of Tututepec were able to create a multi-ethnic macro-state which included Chatinos, Zapotecs, and Chontales who occupied city-states along the Pacific coast (Fig. 1). The Tututepec Empire covered over 25,000 km<sup>2</sup> at the time of the Spanish Conquest (Spores [1993] 167). The rulers of Tututepec imposed imperial governors, tribute collectors, and security forces on the subjugated populations. Tututepec rulers maintained a well-organized army and were developing an administrative bureaucracy which was more centralized than the Aztecs. Tututepec is the only case in which a Mixtec city-state developed into a macro-state (Spores [1984] 78; [1993]). Other large city-states in the Mixtec Alta and Baja established short-lived hegemonies but were unable to develop into longlasting macro-states.

While the Mixtec macro-state of Tututepec in the Mixteca de la Costa remained independent from the Aztecs (Davies [1968] Chap. 4), most Mixtec city-states in the Mixteca Baja and Alta were conquered by the Aztecs during the last half of the 15th century. However, with few exceptions, the Aztecs, unlike the Mixtec rulers of Tututepec, did not disrupt the self-government of these city-states. The Mixtecs were required to pay tribute to the Aztecs but retained their own local rulers, ruling nobility, and right to self-government. One exception was the Mixteca Alta center of Coixtlahuaca, which had defeated the Aztec emperor, Moctezuma I, on his first attempt at conquest. Therefore, when the Aztecs finally defeated Coixtlahuaca, its ruler, Atonal, was garroted and Aztec rulers and an Aztec military garrison were installed at Coixtlahuaca (Dahlgren [1954] 66-73).

### Antecedents of Mixtec City-State Culture

State-level societies with writing and calendrical systems existed in the Mixteca over 1000 years before the rise of Mixtec city-states (Table 2). However, for the time period directly preceding the development of Postclassic Mixtec city-state culture, archaeological excavations in the Mixteca Alta, Baja, and Costa have uncovered the remains of large Classic centers which existed from about A.D. 300-900. During the Classic period the Mixteca appears to have been occupied by regional states which controlled whole valleys from large centers. These centers were different both in location and lay-out from later Mixtec cities. They were frequently located on the tops of high mountains and included large temples facing on very large rectangular plazas lined with smaller temples, palaces, and ballcourts in a pattern reminiscent of Monte Albán.

Table 2. General Chronology of the Mixteca\*

DATES IN YEARS		MIXTECA ALTA	MIXTECA BAJA	MIXTECA DE LA COSTA	HIGHLIGHTS
A.D.	1600	CONVENTO	CONVENTO	CONVENTO	SPANISH CONQUEST MIXTEC CITY-STATE CULTURE Oldest polychrome dated at A.D. 1340
	1500				
	1400	Late	Late		
	1300				
	1200	NATIVIDAD	NUYOO	YUCUDZAA	
	1100				
	1000	Early	Early		
	900				
	800	Late	Late		
	700				
	600	LAS FLORES	NUINE	YUTA TIYOO	CLASSIC STATES Nuine writing system
	500				
	400	Early	Early	COYUCHE	
	300	LATE RAMOS			
	200	B		CHACAHUA	
	100	LATE RAMOS			EARLY STATES Oldest dated writing/calendar at Huamelulpan
A.D./B.C.	0	A	NUDEE	MINIYUA	
	- 100	EARLY RAMOS			
	- 200	B		MINIZUNDO	
	- 300	EARLY RAMOS			
	- 400	A	Santa Teresa	CHARCO	
	- 500		OLDEST DATED OCCUPATION OF THE BAJA AND COSTA		
	- 600	LATE CRUZ B			
	- 700				
	- 800	LATE CRUZ A			
	- 900				
	- 1000	MIDDLE CRUZ	»OLMEC STYLE BABY DOLL FIGURES« AT ETLATONGO		
	- 1100				
	- 1200				
	- 1300	EARLY CRUZ	OLDEST DATED CERAMICS IN THE MIXTECA AT YUCUITA ESTABLISHMENT OF TRIBAL FARMING VILLAGES		
	- 1400				
	- 1500				
	- 1600				
	- 1700				
	- 1800				
	- 1900				
	- 2000	YUZANUU	OLDEST DATED OCCUPATION OF THE MIXTECA		
B.C.	- 2100				

\* Based on Winter (1997) for Mixteca Alta, Winter ([1996] 13, Figura 3) for Mixteca Baja, and Joyce ([1993] 69, Figura 2) for the Mixteca de la Costa.

Only a few of these centers have been extensively excavated. The center of Yucuñudahui in the Mixteca Alta dominated the Nochixtlán Valley and probably also smaller regions around it like the Tilantongo area (Caso [1938]; Spores [1984] 30; Plunket [1990] 364-7). The center of Cerro de las Minas in the Mixteca Baja dominated the Huajuapán Valley (Winter [1996]). The lower Río Verde Valley in the Coastal Mixtec region was dominated by the center of Río Viejo (Joyce and Winter [1989] 259). Interestingly,

this Mixteca de la Costa center was probably occupied by Chatinos, and not Mixtecs, during the Classic period (Urcid [1993] 162).

From an archaeological perspective there appears to be very little continuity between the Classic period and the Postclassic when Mixtec city-states first appear. A few architectural and epigraphic elements found in Postclassic Mixtec city-state culture may have been derived from the Classic period. However, this discontinuity or cultural disjuncture cannot be

attributed to migrations of new groups into the Mixteca during the Postclassic. Indeed, a number of Mixtec Postclassic city-states are located on the slopes of mountains whose tops support large Classic centers, and ritual activities were carried out in the renovated parts of the ruins of these ancient centers during the Postclassic (Spores [1984] 92). Furthermore, there is no evidence of mass migrations into or out of the Mixteca. The changes which led to the development of Postclassic Mixtec city-state culture need to be viewed in a broader perspective within the Mesoamerican world system.

### The Postclassic World System

The changes from the Classic to Postclassic in the Mixteca are part of a major transformation that took place throughout Mesoamerica. These changes are well documented but poorly understood. They include a break-down from large centralized regional polities to smaller localized polities, an increase in warfare and alliance formation, more efficient exploitation of local microenvironments, a surge in regional and interregional commerce, a decrease in monumental temple building, a shift from regional art styles and writing systems to more standardized interregional art styles and writing systems, and the spread of the religious cult of Quetzalcóatl. All of these changes are conducive to the development of city-state cultures. It was within the context of these changes in the Mesoamerican world system that Mixtec city-state culture arose. Indeed, the development of city-state cultures and clusters of city-state cultures (Aztec, Mixtec, Zapotec) is what comes to characterize much of the Central Highlands and probably many other areas of Postclassic Mesoamerica. Hansen's model represents an important research strategy for identifying these Postclassic Mesoamerican city-state cultures and investigating the processes that lead to their development and eventual demise.

### The Demise of Mixtec City-State Culture

The Spanish conquest initiated a process which eventually brought about the end of Mixtec city-state culture. In the absence of specific references to battles in the Mixteca, other than some confrontations with the ruler of Tututepec, it appears that the conquest of Mixtec city-states by the Spaniards was either by peaceful negotiation or without remarkable incident (Chance [1997]). As early as A.D. 1519-20, Cortés sent Gonzalo de Umbría on an exploratory mission

into the Mixteca with maps and guides provided by Moctezuma. In A.D. 1522-3, Cortés sent Pedro de Alvarado with a sizable force to pacify Tututepec, and Spanish dominion of the region was successfully established (Spores [1967] 68-70).

Throughout the sixteenth century, Mixtec royalty continued to be recognized by the Spaniards as natural lords (*señores naturales*) of city-states and were still accorded tribute and labor services from barrios and subject communities. Marital alliances among the royalty of different city-states continued and principles of succession still prevailed. Likewise, native rulers continued to control the best farmlands which Spaniards regarded as *mayorazgos* or entailed estates (Chance [1997]). Capacity to conduct warfare, however, was eliminated and disputes underwent litigation in Spanish courts. The Spaniards also instituted the Indian town council (*cabildo*) composed of a governor, two *alcaldes*, four *regidores*, and a group of lesser officials (Spores [1967] 121). Spaniards exercised more direct control through the Spanish institutions of *encomiendas*, *alcaldías mayores*, and *corregimientos* (Chance [1997]). Certainly the most pervasive force of Spaniards to enter the Mixteca were the Dominicans, whose work to actively combat and eradicate Mixtec religion led to the evangelization of the region (Spores [1967] 87).

While these factors brought about the end of traditional Mixtec city-state culture, the Colonial culture which emerged was by no means purely Spanish. Mixtec rulers were quick to adapt to many aspects of Spanish culture. They embraced the Catholic church, were baptized and took Spanish names; adopted Spanish dress; learned to speak, read, and write Spanish; and became adept at using the written law and entering into the mercantile economy (Chance [1997] 167-8). Don Gabriel de Guzmán, the Mixtec ruler of Yanhuitlán in A.D. 1558, was described by the Spaniards as a man who ". . . was an exemplary Christian, spoke Spanish, wore the clothing of a Spaniard, was known 'throughout New Spain', and was said to be as honest, righteous, and intelligent a man as any Spaniard" (Spores [1967] 136).

Mixtec rulers, however, were bicultural. "They brought Indian and Spanish worlds together, using their contacts in one to strengthen their position in the other" (Chance [1997] 162). As late as A.D. 1764, through the ancient strategy of marital alliances, the *caciques* of Tlaxiaco, Don Martín Villagómez and his wife, who were fluent in Spanish and Mixtec, jointly held title to 31 *cacicazgos* or former city-states; and, in A.D. 1804 a Villagómez grandson and his wife still

jointly controlled 10 titles (Chance [1997] 173-4). Indeed, as Monaghan ([1997] 271) notes, “. . . some of the same ideological forms that supported cacique power in the colonial and pre-columbian period were extant in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.” Mixtec city-state culture, although gone, has left its distinctively Mixtec pattern on the region to this day (Chance [1997] 174).

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