PEOPLE OF THE *CERRO* TWO

Landscape, Settlement, and Art at Middle Formative Period Chalcatzingo

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THE DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH Mesoamerican cities of the Classic and Postclassic periods situated themselves in their natural and built landscapes and represented themselves in architectural, iconographic, and cosmological terms were unquestionably based on conditions inherited from the past. A small glimpse of the more venerable legacies can be obtained in the archaeological records of the Early and Middle Formative periods (1700–500 B.C.), the time of the earliest evidence of village- or town-sized settlements, some of them with public art, architecture, and anthropogenic transformations to the natural landscape. This chapter discusses some of those legacies manifest at the central Mexican site of Chalcatzingo, Morelos.

Chalcatzingo was founded in the Early Formative and apparently became a regional center during that period. The site reached its zenith during the late Middle Formative (Cantera phase, 700–500 B.C.), at which time Olmec-like stone carvings were created and displayed there (e.g., Grove 1984, 1987; Grove and Angulo 1987). Some of that art took the form of carved stone stelae erected adjacent to precocious stone-faced rectangular platform mounds in the village. In addition, the community was situated at the base of two dramatic mountains (Figure 1), one of which has Cantera phase bas-reliefs executed directly on its exposed rock faces. Chalcatzingo thus provides an excellent early example of the integration of art and architecture in two contiguous but distinct contexts: the settlement and the surrounding natural landscape.

This chapter discusses the integration of mountains, as natural landscape features, with the built environment of the village in the coalescence of a sense of place, as a means to examine "the ways in which citizens of the earth constitute their landscapes and take themselves to be connected to them" (Basso 1996: 54). We consider how the people of Chalcatzingo

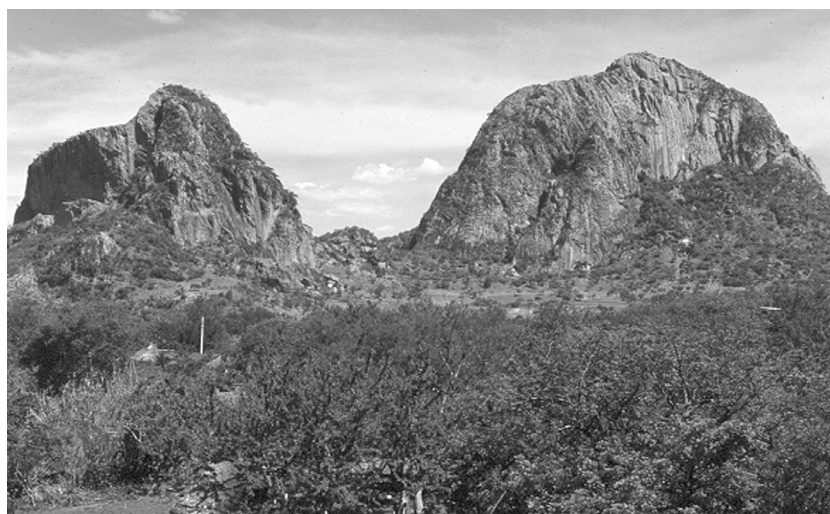

FIGURE 1. The twin *cerros* of Chalcatzingo: Cerro Delgado (left) and Cerro Chalcatzingo (right). View is to the east. Photo by David C. Grove.

viewed their relationships to mountains in general and to the twin *cerros* in particular, and how they represented this identification of their community in such media as monumental architecture and stone art.

LEGACIES

It is not our intention here to seek out the origins of Classic and Postclassic symbolic motifs or architectural forms in the Formative period. As Moore (1995: 51) has observed, archaeologists are frequently motivated to construct narratives of "origins," but such narratives are misleading because they are determined "not by their beginnings but by their endings." For example, even if such icons as "Coatepetl" or "Tollan" are identified at widespread Mesoamerican cities in the Postclassic or even Classic periods, it would nevertheless be presumptuous for us to assume that they are all the same phenomenon and that their origins must lie in some homogenous shared belief system deep in the Formative period. To make such an assumption would be to ignore other avenues of investigation, and variability in the Formative period would be played down by seeking only the origins of forms recognizable by their similarities to much later manifestations.

An example of this potential problem is the symbolic relationship claimed between man-made pyramids and sacred mountains. "Architectural mimicry" equating mounds with mountains is a common phenomenon worldwide (Knapp and Ashmore 1999: 2–3). The idea that "Mesoamerican pyramids were universally understood to replicate mountains" (Reilly 1999: 18) may have been the case for the later periods, but there is less basis for this symbolic reading further back in time, especially back to the Formative period when the earliest mounds were erected. In particular, as Joyce (2004: 8, emphasis in original) notes, "it is difficult to be comfortable with the

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assumption that *from the beginning* Mesoamerican monumental architecture was fully realized as an intentional effigy of sacred mountains." Using evidence from Formative Honduras, Joyce argues, on the contrary, that the intentions of the builders of the earliest platforms were likely quite different, perhaps no more than simply to elevate a space for certain activities. The probable unintended consequences of such building would have been to spatially segregate some actions in highly visible and ultimately more restricted places. However, once it came into existence, such monumental architecture became "irrevocably a part of the traditional knowledge" of Mesoamerican peoples (Joyce 2004: 23).

Rather than look for familiar categories of architectural or landscape features, we seek to examine the specific media and contexts by which the inhabitants of Chalcatzingo represented themselves and their sense of place. These media were material manifestations of their cosmology, the ordering principles that provide "a classification of the world and a set of prescriptions for correct action towards the world in both its human and non-human elements" (Gosden 1999: 77). Although we have argued for temporal and spatial diversity in the forms and expressions of cosmologies across Mesoamerica (e.g., Gillespie 1993; Grove 1999, 2000), we nevertheless recognize the existence of foundational concepts that characterize cosmologies on a virtually pan-Mesoamerican scale (see, e.g., Gossen 1986; Hunt 1977; Monaghan 2000). They helped to shape a *longue durée*, a structural history that is distinctively Mesoamerican, as the products of countless generations of intentional actions, transformations, historical contingencies, and unintended consequences. The cosmology of Chalcatzingo's inhabitants was influenced by their particular setting; however, they engaged in various activities to modify that setting, resulting in a dynamic series of historical processes whereby their sense of place, and their relationships to one another and to that place, changed over time.

TWO FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS IN MESOAMERICAN LANDSCAPES

We begin by considering two very basic concepts of Mesoamerican worldview, drawing especially from ethnography. The first is that features of the natural landscape had sacred qualities (monism and pantheism). The second is that the most fundamental sociospatial distinction was that between center and periphery (concentricity). Our intention in discussing these concepts is not simply to project their existence back into Formative period central Mexico, but to use them as a starting point to investigate how Chalcatzingo's inhabitants conceived, lived, and represented their place in the world.

Monism and Pantheism

Mesoamerican religion (or metaphysics more generally) is characterized as "monistic," in the sense that "reality is a unified whole, with a single divine principle responsible for the nature of the cosmos" (Monaghan 2000: 26). Put more simply, the universe is God, and everything within the universe partakes of the sacred (Monaghan 2000: 27; Sandstrom 2003: 56). The concept of deity is therefore pantheistic (Hunt 1977: 55; Monaghan 2000: 27; Sandstrom and Sandstrom 1986: 275–280), with "multiple manifestations of a single unity of being" (Hunt 1977: 55). All of the world is infused with this spirit or power, making animate that which modern Westerners consider inanimate (see, e.g., Hanks 1990: 86–87; López Austin 1993: 114, 135; Marcus 1983: 345; Monaghan 1995: 127–128; Spores 1983: 342; Vogt 1969: 369–371, 1981: 133). Spirit is not diffuse but assumes the form of individual, if fluid, entities—deities, ancestors, souls, winds, guardian spirits, mischievous beings (e.g., *chaneques*), and so forth. These animates are typically anchored in particular places, although they can move from place to place and can accumulate in both places and objects (Gillespie and Joyce 1998: 291).

As Sandstrom (1991: 241) described for the conceived landscape of a contemporary Nahua village in Veracruz:

> The landscape surrounding the village . . . is literally alive with aspects of spirit. Every hill, valley, spring, lake, stream, section of river, boulder, plain, grove, gorge, and cave has its proper name and associated spirit. . . . The features that figure most prominently in Nahua religion are the hills and mountains that are abundant in the region. Called *santo tepemej,* a mixed Spanish-Nahuatl phrase meaning "sacred hills," they are living entities that are the dwelling places of the seed and rain spirits associated with crop growth, and of the powerful spirits that guard over humans. . . . The hills are ranked according to size and importance, and each has a special place in village mythology.

It seems probable that Mesoamerican peoples of the Paleo-Indian and Archaic periods would have viewed their physical surroundings in the same way that Sandstrom describes. However, the Formative period witnessed the earliest compelling archaeological evidence for the treatment of prominent natural features as sites for ritual activity, as sacralized places where one could commune with the divine. For example, the wooden busts, rubber balls, and green stone celts placed in the waters of the spring at the base of the Cerro Manatí (e.g., Ortiz and Rodríguez 1994, 1999) near San Lorenzo, Veracruz, suggest that both the spring and the hill were venerated by Olmec peoples. Another Olmec example is the "Señor

de San Martín Pajapan," a large basalt anthropomorphic statue that had been laboriously hauled to the summit of the San Martín Pajapan volcano (Blom and LaFarge 1926: 44–46, figs. 41–43; Medellín Zenil 1968). A third example is the Middle Formative period bas-relief carvings on the Cerro Chalcatzingo that are described below.

A monistic orientation to the universe renders moot such common Western distinctions as natural/supernatural (Monaghan 2000: 27) or sacred/profane. It similarly calls into question the analytical division typically made between nature/culture or natural/built environments. Even man-made structures, including mundane domestic architecture, and portable objects are dwelling places or surficial forms of animate spirit entities (e.g., Grove and Gillespie 2002). A more useful distinction would be that between the visible and invisible worlds (following Dwyer 1996). This terminology is not meant to privilege sight above other senses; "invisible" could include that which is intangible or imperceptible (to most persons) except perhaps as a wind, a smell, a feeling of awe or dread, or a luminous presence. Invisible beings are immaterial, but they can be manifest in materials ways: "they assume the forms, or inhabit the bodies, of particular physical entities such as individual rocks, plants, animals, or persons" (Dwyer 1996: 163).

Dwyer's (1996) study of the spatial relationships of the invisible and visible worlds of three New Guinea societies demonstrated that in those societies with more intensified agricultural production and greater modification of the landscape, the "invisible world" had been moved to specific circumscribed places. Social differentiation, such as gendered division of labor, was also more pronounced in such societies. This situation presented a contrast with the coextensive existence of the invisible with the visible world in the case of simple horticulturalists, among whom spirits permeated all of the landscape and were regularly encountered in daily activities. Similar actions intended to mark—or even bound—the anchorage points of certain portions of the spirit world (deities, ancestors, or souls) seem to have occurred with the rise of complex society in Mesoamerica, alongside the development of new kinds of social status differences. Our analysis of Chalcatzingo's landscape takes into account the marking of certain places as associated with greater access to the invisible spirit world.

Concentricity

Dualism of a specific form—complementary opposition—is often highlighted as a fundamental axiom of Mesoamerican cosmologies (e.g., Gossen 1986: 6). Manifest on the spatial plane, given the egocentric orientation typical of Mesoamerican cosmography, such dualism is expressed in the division between center and periphery as the most basic sociospatial

distinction (Gillespie and Joyce 1998: 282). Center and periphery, whose relationship is sometimes verbally expressed as town versus forest, implicate each other in concentric or nested scales of reference (see Vogt 1993: 11 on scaling). One's center is one's house, neighborhood, community, even polity, whereas the periphery could range in scale from the house yard to the untamed wilderness beyond the ken of most village inhabitants. The center is the place of inhabited space, daily activities, moral and physical order, and harmony, whereas the periphery is amoral, disorderly, and even chaotic and dangerous. On the temporal plane, the center is the time of the everyday and mundane, but the periphery may represent timelessness, past (including the mythological past), or future (see, e.g., Gossen 1974: 29–30; Hanks 1990: 306–307; Sandstrom 1996: 163; Taggart 1983: 55–56; Watanabe 1992: 62–63).[1]

Complementary opposition is based on the same holistic principle of monism—both aspects of the duality are parts of an encompassing whole—but as such it also has the potential for hierarchy. Not only will the two aspects be of unequal value (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 139), although both are needed for the whole to exist, but one of them may also encompass the other (its contrary) and therefore be hierarchically superior (following Dumont 1980: 240). More specifically, in certain respects or contexts the center may encompass its periphery. This dualistic encompassing quality has been best described regarding the most important inhabitant of any center—its ruler (chief or king). Persons of "power" (power in the nonsecular sense described above) are able to "concentrate opposites" in their person, notably as male and female, or mother and father (Anderson 1972: 14). More particularly, someone who claims sovereign power has to be both "above and beyond society and thus counterposed to it" while simultaneously incorporating the society (Sahlins 1985: 91). They must represent and encompass both center and periphery.

The proper place of such a person is a center in a political (not necessarily geographical) sense. Although we cannot argue that Chalcatzingo was a city or urban settlement, it was certainly a center, and it marked itself as such, as shown below. Centers have been broadly defined as loci "in a society where its leading ideas come together with its leading institutions to create an arena in which the events that most vitally affect its members' lives take place" (Geertz 1977: 151). In the Javanese case described by Geertz (1977: 157–159), which has a similar concentric worldview, the court was a copy of the cosmos and the larger realm a copy of the court, with the king at the center thereby summing up the whole in his person—court, realm, and cosmos. In Mesoamerica there is similar evidence that landscape features from the periphery (geographical and/or temporal) were replicated in centers, for example, in the form of pyramids named as mountains. An exemplar is the Aztec Templo Mayor (see the chapters by Eduardo Matos

Moctezuma, and Leonardo López Lujan and Alfredo López Austin). This pyramid was explicitly named and adorned as Coatepetl (Serpent-Hill), a reference to a mountain known from myth, distant in both space and time from the original builders of that pyramid, which formed the center of Tenochtitlan and was said to be its first edifice. In this and parallel cases, the center encompasses both its spatial and temporal peripheries at the locus of the concentration of power in the form of tutelary deities in their temples and divine kings in their palaces. The king may also undertake activities to draw the periphery into his center (Geertz 1977) or interact with categories of persons (warriors, merchants, or vassals) who operate on the periphery on his behalf (Gillespie and Joyce 1998).

With these fundamental principles in mind, we now turn more specifically to consider how the inhabitants of Chalcatzingo materialized their sense of place and community self-identity in architecture and artworks.

CHALCATZINGO: LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT, AND ART

The Larger Landscape of Eastern Morelos

Rather than examine Chalcatzingo in isolation, we begin with its positioning in the Amatzinac valley in eastern Morelos. Three tall hills rise abruptly and dramatically from the broad flat floor at the center of the Amatzinac valley and dominate the surrounding landscape. Two of those hills, Cerro Chalcatzingo and Cerro Delgado (see Figure 1), tower above the settlement of Chalcatzingo at their western base. An equally imposing hill, Cerro Jantetelco, lies a few kilometers to the north, and at the north end of the Amatzinac valley is one of Mexico's tallest and most magnificent volcanos, Popocatepetl (Figure 2). Of this still smoking volcano, sixteenth-century chronicler Fray Diego Durán (1971: 255) said, "[i]n olden times this mountain was hallowed by the natives as the most important among the mountains, especially by those who lived in its vicinity or on its slopes." He went on to describe in some detail the special ceremonies and offerings made to this and other mountains in the central Mexican highlands. Similar ceremonies are still carried out today to venerate mountains (e.g., Albores and Broda 1997; Monaghan 1995: 107–109; Sandstrom 2003; Vogt 1999).

Durán (1971: 257–258) also mentioned other important mountain shrines near Popocatepetl, including one called Teocuicani:

> On the southern side of the volcano, in the region of Tetelan, Ocuituco, Temoac, Tzacualpan, and other towns, there is a hill to which the entire country journeyed with its offerings, sacrifices, and prayers. This [hill] was called Teocuicani, which means Divine Singer. . . . On this mountain stood the best-constructed building

FIGURE 2.
The Amatzinac valley looking north from the top of Cerro Chalcatzingo. Cerro Delgado is in the foreground, Cerro Jantetelco is in the upper center, and Popocatepetl volcano is in the background. Photo by David C. Grove.

> in the entire area. This was called Ayauhcalli [sic], which means Mansion of Rest and Shade of the Gods. Heyden and Horcasitas (in Durán 1971: 258 footnote) have noted that "Ayauhcalli" [sic] more literally means house of mist or Mist House.

The towns of Tetela, Ocuituco, Temoac, and Zacualpan are all situated in the northern Amatzinac valley. It is therefore possible that Teocuicani could have been Cerro Chalcatzingo, and Ayauhcalli (Mist House) the modest Postclassic shrine unearthed there in 1972 (Arana 1987: 395, Fig. 24.14; Grove and Angulo 1973: 25–26). Perhaps Mist House could even have been a Postclassic reference to the famed Middle Formative period El Rey image carved high on Cerro Chalcatzingo, which includes scroll motifs that are often interpreted as mist (see below). However, it seems more likely that the hill mentioned by Durán's informants as Teocuicani (Divine Singer) is Cerro Jantetelco, because that mountain has a natural hole near its summit that whistles or "sings" in the wind (Grove 1972: 36).

The Twin Cerros of Chalcatzingo

From an ecofunctional perspective, it is difficult to explain why the Amatzinac valley saw the development of a major regional center. The vast majority of the population of Formative period Morelos was situated in the agriculturally rich and well-watered river valleys in the west and center of the state. In contrast, eastern Morelos and the Amatzinac valley are far

less fertile and verdant. For much of its course the valley's lone river runs in a deep *barranca,* where access to its waters is restricted and arable river bottomlands are lacking (Angulo 1987: 157; Grove 1987: 420, 431; Grove et al. 1987: 8–9). Although the foothill slopes occupied by the Formative period settlement of Chalcatzingo were perhaps somewhat better for agriculture than many areas elsewhere in the Amatzinac valley (Grove 1987: 420), the setting pales in comparison to the richness of central and western Morelos.

We suggest, as have others before (e.g., Angulo 1987: 155–156; Cook de Leonard 1967: 63–66; Grove 1987: 431–432), that the special character of the two hills that dominate the valley and are visible from great distances in all directions—Cerro Chalcatzingo and Cerro Delgado—may have been a factor in both the decision to settle there and in the site's rather early fluorescence as a center. Not only are the hills visually compelling, but also these two granodiorite masses stand side-by-side as if conjoined, separated only by a large V-shaped cleft (see Figure 1). In Mesoamerican worldview, clefts or similar openings into the earth were considered portals to the other world of invisible spirits that exists on the spatiotemporal periphery of everyday existence in the center (Vogt 1981). In later creation myths split mountains were the source of the first corn or the first humans (e.g., Freidel et al. 1993: 111, 138–139).

However, we cannot assume a specific meaning of the cleft cerros as the "Split Hill" of later mythology. As Barnes (1999: 101) observed:

> any particular landscape feature may be attributed with different meanings by different viewers, or indeed by a single viewer at different moments. . . . Nevertheless, some landscape features may be intentionally and explicitly "marked" as to what their intended meaning is in specific systems of thought. . . . Explicit "marking" of landscape attributes is a method of extending meaning among inhabitants and contributes to the development of a shared acknowledgment of such meanings even if not all inhabitants adopt them as their own.

In the case of Chalcatzingo, there is compelling archaeological evidence for such marking or inscribing of both natural and human-made features in the landscape. More than 36 stone monuments and bas-relief carvings have been recorded there, a quantity exceeded in the Early and Middle Formative periods only at the Gulf Coast Olmec centers of San Lorenzo and La Venta.

The carved stone art at Chalcatzingo occurs in spatially and thematically distinct groups on Cerro Chalcatzingo and in the village (Figure 3). Interestingly, no such bas-relief art occurs on Cerro Delgado. Instead, simple painted pictographs are abundant in the niches of that smaller hill (Apostolides 1987). Although most of those paintings are of uncertain age,

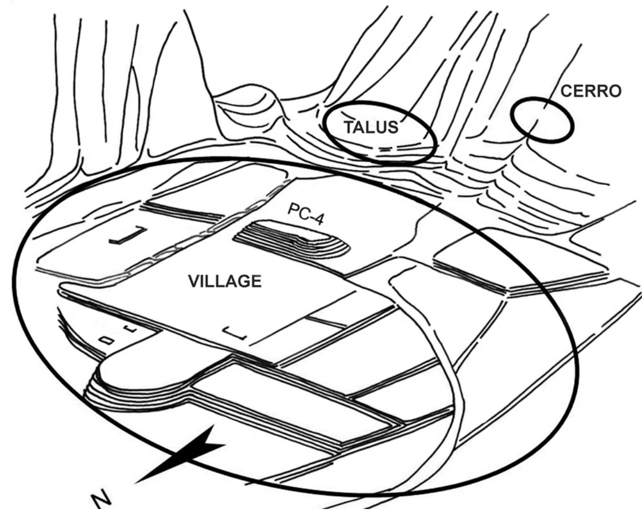

FIGURE 3. Schematic view of the site of Chalcatzingo showing the three areas of stone artworks (circled) and the location of Middle Formative period mound PC-Structure 4. The 70-m-long PC-4 mound provides approximate scale. Drawing by David C. Grove

this situation poses an interesting dichotomy, suggesting that the two mountains were perceived differently. As for the sculptures, they form three groupings: the Cerro Chalcatzingo carvings, the talus carvings, and the village carvings. The first two are both within view of the village area. Significantly, each group has a different iconographic theme (Grove 1984: 49–68, 109–122, 1999: 258–263). Although their specific iconographic readings remain speculative, those general themes evoke the dichotomy of center and periphery and the conception of a living landscape.

Cerro Chalcatzingo Carvings

This group of six bas-reliefs occurs on exposed rock faces high on the mountainside (Figure 3), where the images are positioned on both sides of the mountain's natural rainwater drainage channel. The first report on these reliefs (Guzmán 1934) called attention to their general theme of rain and agricultural fertility, and that interpretation has since been reiterated by many scholars. Five of the reliefs (Monuments 6/7, 8, 11, 14, 15) are small (about 0.3–0.6 m^2) and depict the same basic scene: a small lizardlike animal crouched atop a recumbant S-shaped scroll and beneath a rain cloud with falling raindrops (Angulo 1987: figs. 10.1–10.6; Grove and Angulo 1987: 117–119; Figure 4). Squash plants are carved below three of the small animals.

Immediately adjacent to those smallish reliefs is the famous El Rey (Monument 1), a very large bas-relief carving covering an area of about 8.5 m^2 and depicting a personage seated in a large recumbent U-shaped niche (Figure 5). That niche, a vertically sectioned quatrefoil, represents a cave (Angulo 1987: 135–141; Cook de Leonard 1967: 66; Gay 1972: 38–45; Guzmán 1934: 238–243; Grove 1968: 486–487, 2000: 279–283; Grove and

FIGURE 4. Monument 14, a small lizardlike animal beneath a rain cloud with falling raindrops. A squash plant is depicted at the base of the scene. Photo by David C. Grove.

Angulo 1987: 115–117; Figure 6a). Rain clouds with falling raindrops hang over the cave-niche, and scrolls emanate from the niche's opening, suggesting the mist that naturally emanates from caves (see the above comments on Mist House). The niche's quatrefoil form also creates a Oaxaca-like mountain glyph (Grove 2000: 279–283; Reilly 1994: fig. 15.18; Figure 6b,c). The U-shaped niche thus seems to signify a cave in a mountain, a portal to the invisible world.

In addition, the presence of an eye and outcurved fang motifs on the quatrefoil niche show it to also be the profile face of a zoomorphic entity. Because outcurved fangs denote the sky realm in Mesoamerican iconography (incurved fangs mark the earth or underworld; see Grove [2000: 281–282] for a complete iconographic argument), the combined motifs indicate that the El Rey personage sits in a "sky-mountain cave" or in the interior of a mountain, a reading that is reiterated by the actual elevated mountainside location of the carving. The zoomorphic sky-mountain cave is identifiable as a serpent (Grove 2000: 279–281), and it may be enticing to interpret that symbolism as indicating that Cerro Chalcatzingo was conceived as a "Serpent-Hill"—an early "Coatepetl." However, serpent imagery is common in Mesoamerican depictions of the various portals to the otherworld, especially caves, mountains, and trees (Gillespie 1993). Thus there is not

FIGURE 5. El Rey (Monument 1), depicting a personage seated in a cave. Rain clouds with falling raindrops appear above the cave, and mistlike scrolls emanate from the cave mouth. Photo by David C. Grove.

sufficient reason to suggest that the serpent face signifies the hill rather than the cave as an opening.

Plant motifs sprout from the exterior corners of the mountain/cave glyph and appear elsewhere in the scene. Given the later mythological association of primeval maize with "Split Hill," it might be assumed that these plants are maize. However, Angulo (1987: 139–140) has convincingly argued that the plants resemble the bromeliads that abound on the rock faces of Cerro Chalcatzingo and flourish with the first rains. The presence of bromeliads in the El Rey image indicates to us that the U-shaped sky-mountain cave is not a generic representation of a mythological place but is more likely Cerro Chalcatzingo itself.

The El Rey personage is an elaborately dressed human figure with no mask or apparent supernatural characteristics (Grove 1987: 427). Triple raindrop motifs adorn his kilt, and similar triple raindrop groups, paired quetzal birds, and two bromeliad representations occur with the headdress.[2] The last motif apparently reiterates the person's association with Cerro Chalcatzingo.

The basic rain and fertility aspects of the scene are almost universally accepted, but there have been several different interpretations of the type

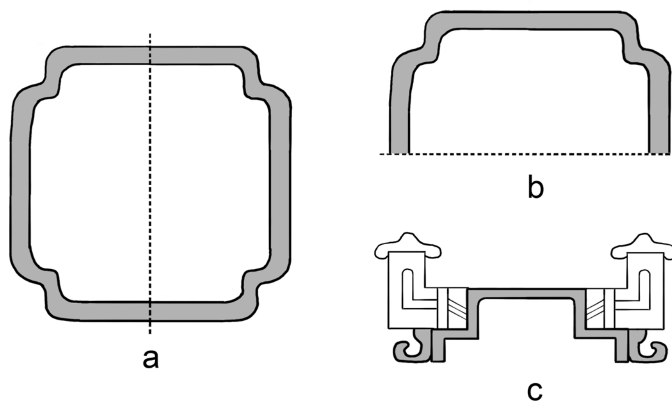

FIGURE 6. Quatrefoil motif: (a) a vertically sectioned quatrefoil (compare left half to Monument 1); (b) half-quatrefoil, horizontally sectioned; (c) Oaxaca mountain glyph (Building J, Monte Albán). Drawing by David C. Grove.

of character represented by the personage. Bernal (1969: 139) and more recently Brady and Ashmore (1999: 129–130) have interpreted the personage in the cave-niche as depicting a living ruler. The latter authors suggest that through the relief the ruler associated himself directly with water control, rainmaking, and fertility. They propose that water gushing down the mountainside next to this relief, channeled through the human-modified terraces below, would have served as a "hierophany, a manifestation of the sacred," linking the mountain, rainfall, agricultural fertility, and rulership in a predictable fashion following the rhythms of nature (Brady and Ashmore 1999: 129). In their interpretation, the portrait as a representation is integrated with the natural environment.

Based on the setting of the personage in the sky-mountain cave, making him a denizen of the invisible world, others have identified him as a rain deity (Gay 1972: 38), or have compared him to Postclassic deities such as Tlaloc—who was associated with earth, caves, and rain—and Tepeyollotl (Heart of the Mountain; e.g., Angulo 1987: 140–141). Those Postclassic deity concepts reiterate the Mesoamerican worldview that a mountain is a living thing, animated by its resident spirits. Although this fundamental concept was shared from at least the Formative onward, the notion of deity need not have been constant. We believe it may be more appropriate to consider the personage as an ancestral spirit. Many indigenous peoples today, as in Pre-Hispanic times, believe that ancestors live in mountains (e.g., Vogt 1969). Those spirits, as Sandstrom observed (see quote above), are associated with rain and plant growth, and they guard over humans. Perhaps the El Rey personage was such an ancestral spirit, a guardian of Cerro Chalcatzingo and the benefactor of the Formative period community situated at the base of that sacred mountain. It is conceivable that even as a communal ancestral spirit, El Rey may have been more personally claimed as ancestor by one of Chalcatzingo's chiefly houses (following Gillespie 1999).

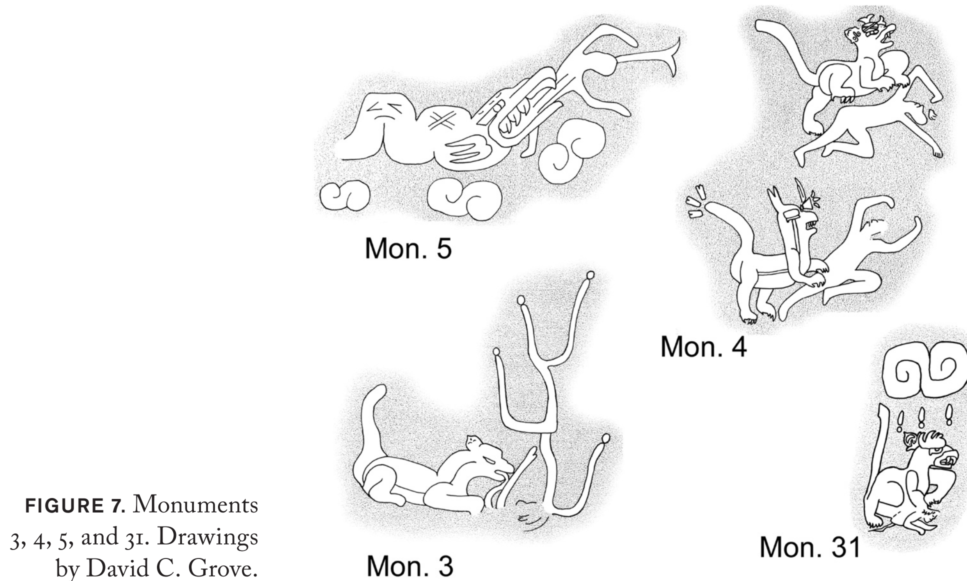

FIGURE 7. Monuments 3, 4, 5, and 31. Drawings by David C. Grove.

In summary, the carvings high on Cerro Chalcatzingo identify the mountain and its ancestral spirit, and relate that spirit and the mountain to rain, water, and fertility. Thematically they are carvings of the periphery, and significantly, they are situated on the periphery of the village.

Talus Carvings

A second and distinctly different group of five carvings is executed on boulders and stone slabs on the talus slope at the foot of the mountain (see Figure 3). They are all relatively large carvings (up to 4.5 m^2) and are arranged across the talus in a general east-west line. Four of the five reliefs depict supernatural zoomorphic creatures dominating generalized human figures (Figure 7). The easternmost of the group is Monument 5, a large reptilian-like creature partially grasping a human figure in its mouth. Monument 4 depicts two felines with extraordinary features pouncing with claws extended onto two prone humans. Monument 3 is a recumbent feline (puma) beside a cactus-like symbol. In a damaged area of the bas-relief Angulo (1987: 144, fig. 10.15) identified what seems to be a human figure in a pose suggesting that the puma is dominating the human. Nearby is Monument 31 showing a snarling feline atop a prone human figure. Monument 2, the westernmost relief of the five, is different and is best described as depicting a ritual involving four human actors (Figure 8), three standing or walking and one seated. The standing figures are masked and wear tall headdresses. One figure's headdress incorporates symbols adorning the head of the upper feline of Monument 4 (Figure 7). That correspondence suggests that the ritual scene

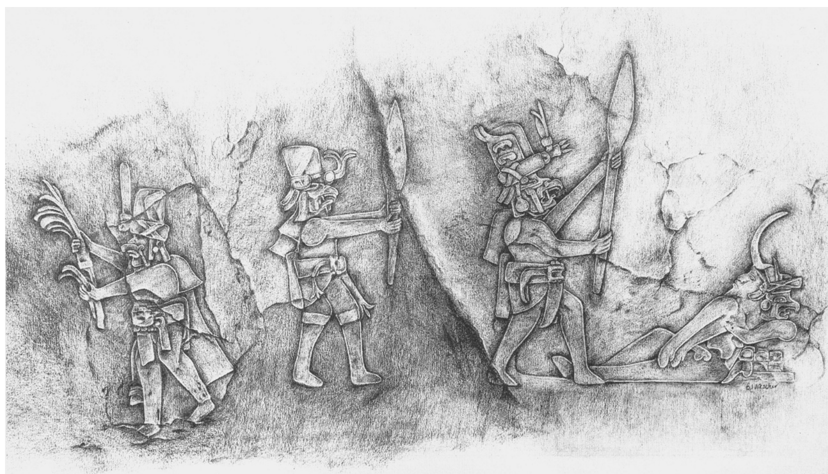

FIGURE 8. Talus Monument 2, a ritual scene with three standing masked figures and a seated figure. The headdress of the second person from the right contains symbols also adorning the head of the upper feline in Monument 4 (see Figure 7). Drawing by Barbara W. Fash.

in Monument 2 was related in some manner to the mythological events displayed by the other monuments in the sequence.

These carvings at the foot of the *cerro* show mythical scenes that would have been significant to the cosmogony and religious life of the people of Chalcatzingo. They are thematically comparable to mythologies of other societies and of later Mesoamerican peoples that relate the domination of humans by supernatural animal beings in primordial times. They are also themes outside of the norm of everyday life and moral order, themes of a peripheral state of being, and they occur on the periphery of the site.

Village Carvings

The third area with monumental stone artworks is the Formative period village area (see Figure 3). Monuments in this zone include a tabletop altar-throne (Monument 22), a decapitated seated statue (Monument 16), and nearly a dozen stelae (Grove 2005; Grove and Angulo 1987).[3] That is the largest number of carved stelae known for any Middle Formative Mesoamerican site, including the Olmec centers of San Lorenzo and La Venta. As noted above, many of those stelae were spatially associated with stone-faced platform structures, and almost all of them depict an individual dressed personage, male or female. The stelae and other carvings from the village area manifest concepts associated with rulership (Grove 1984: 49–68), a theme appropriate for the center—the place of moral, social, and cosmic order.

Also situated in the settlement area is a large earthen platform mound, designated Plaza Central Structure 4 (PC-4; see Figure 3). Measuring approximately 70 m long, 29 m wide (upper surface) and about 8 m tall, PC-4 is the largest known Middle Formative mound in the Morelos–Basin

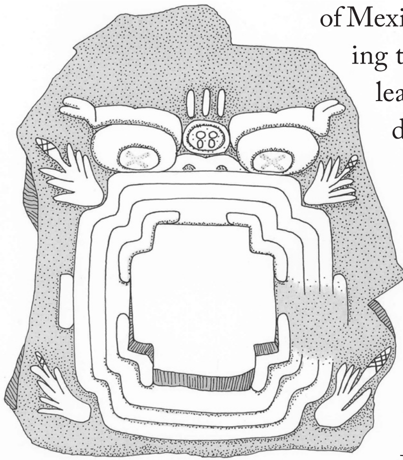

FIGURE 9. Monument 9, a quatrefoil-shaped serpent face with a hollow mouth. The stone is 1.8 m tall and 1.5 m wide. Drawing by David C. Grove and David Hixson.

of Mexico region. It is significant that the richest elite burials recovered during the Chalcatzingo Project excavations, perhaps those of the village's leaders, were found buried beneath the mound's upper surface (Merry de Morales 1987: 100). In addition, Monument 9, a large stone slab carved with a bas-relief image, had apparently been erected and displayed on top of the platform mound (Grove 1984: 49–50, 1999: 262, 2000: 285; Grove and Angulo 1987: 124; Figure 9).

The bas-relief carving of Monument 9 depicts a full frontal view of the quatrefoil supernatural serpent face, with sprouting bromeliads, that in profile view forms the cave motif of El Rey (Monument 1) high on the mountainside (Grove 2000: 289–291; Reilly 1994: fig. 15.18). Based on the carving's close similarities to Monument 1, Grove (1999: 264, 2000: 289–291) has suggested that Monument 9 was erected atop the massive PC-4 mound to identify the mound as a sacred mountain. The bromeliad motifs on Monument 9 would further indicate that the mound represents Cerro Chalcatzingo. Significantly, the inner mouth area of the monument's large serpent face was hollowed out, creating a quatrefoil-shaped hole that passes through the entire stone slab (Angulo 1987: 141; Grove 1984: 50). Thus the serpent's mouth on this artwork is an actual opening, which suggests that people and objects could have passed through that open mouth and so entered the realm of the invisible, associated with the past and with access to primordial power (Gillespie 1993: 75). Such persons or objects would therefore have been positioned in the same sacred location as that of the El Rey personage high on the mountainside.

Because of its similarities to Monument 1, Monument 9 is highly significant for understanding the mediation of center and periphery, the role of mountains as access to the sacred—the world of invisible spirits and power—and the encompassment of the periphery by the center. The placement of Monument 9 on the massive PC-4 mound in the village center may have marked this structure as sharing in the meanings ascribed to Cerro Chalcatzingo, a landscape feature of the periphery. In other words, the periphery was replicated, in miniature, in the center, as represented by PC-4 and Monument 9. Beyond these material representations, it is not hard to imagine practices that would have actively mediated between center and periphery. For example, ritual processions likely occurred from the village center to Cerro Chalcatzingo and the talus slope carvings, thereby transcending the division between the visible and invisible worlds, past and present, the quotidian and the extraordinary. These processions were channeled by the placement of the carvings on the hillside, the talus slope, and the center (see Grove1999: 260, 2005). Access to the invisible world was thereby becoming circumscribed.

PEOPLE OF THE *CERRO*

In presenting this case for the use of mounds and sculptures to represent Chalcatzingo to its inhabitants as a center, it is important to reiterate the historical context of these media. Although the artworks and their spatial arrangement—integrating the mountains with the settlement—can be shown to manifest fundamental axioms of Mesoamerican cosmology—pantheism and concentricity—they were created at a specific historical juncture.

The Middle Formative (starting in 900 B.C.) was a time of great change in Mesoamerica. Modifications to the landscape were becoming more common and intensive. This was the time of the earliest mound architecture, which within a few hundred years had become an essential feature of Mesoamerican centers. At Chalcatzingo the major anthropogenic changes to the landscape included the Barranca phase (900–700 B.C.) terracing of the slopes at the base of the twin *cerros* (Grove 1987: 421). That dramatically changed landscape would have transformed the referential frames for peoples' daily interactions and activities, and the increased categorization of space would have produced in tandem increasing social differentiation (Love 1999: 144). Not surprisingly, the Middle Formative also witnessed increasing sociopolitical complexity and the material marking of certain persons as having special status, including greater access to the invisible world (e.g., Grove and Gillespie 1992a, 1992b).

Although it is possible that the Cantera phase carvings merely made more explicit, in graphic form, concepts that were already being activated in more ephemeral media, we consider the likelihood that these sociopolitical changes were part of the motivation for new forms of expression. In particular, there is no evidence that in the Early Formative period, when PC-4 was erected, it was intended to symbolize a mountain. This platform was rebuilt and enlarged several times over 500 years (Prindiville and Grove 1987: 63, fig. 6.2). Its low height, flat top, and rectangular shape do not resemble a mountain. Nevertheless, sometime after 700 B.C. that signification was materially marked, minimally in the form of Monument 9. It was also during that time (the Cantera phase) that chiefly individuals were buried in PC-4, positioning their bodies in the same kind of sacred space as that of El Rey, the ancestral figure depicted in the Monument 1 relief.

Once the carvings were made, they changed the visible landscape to an anthropogenic one now inscribed with specific symbolic content, promulgating certain meanings and silencing potential others (see Barnes 1999:102). As with the change in land forms and architecture, the system of material references that the community members used to guide their daily interactions had been transformed. The delineation of certain sacred

places would have been coordinated with the delineation of social units (following Vogt 1981: 133). The claim to encompassing cosmic hierarchy in the center associated with PC-4 (a claim likely made specifically by chiefly houses) would have been paralleled by claims to the apex of sociopolitical hierarchy.

Significantly, these kinds of changes were happening elsewhere in Mesoamerica (e.g., Love 1999). At least one other Middle Formative mound was apparently intentionally marked as a mountain: the 30-m-tall earthen mound (C-1) at the Olmec center of La Venta. Heizer (1968: 1520, figs. 2–9) had argued that C-1 was built to replicate the volcanic cones in the Tuxtla Mountains, the source of the basalt used for many of La Venta's stone carvings. However, he made that hypothesis based on the appearance of the mound after millennia of erosion. Nevertheless, whatever its ultimate form (González Lauck 1988; Graham and Johnson 1979), this pyramid had probably been built in stages over a long period of time and thus it is impossible to assert the intent of its original builders. However, four large Middle Formative period stelae (Monuments 25/26, 27, 88, 89) were erected in a line in front of the pyramid's southern base (Drucker et al. 1959: 204–209, figs. 59, 60; González Lauck 1996: 76). The bas-relief carving on each stela is identical: a large frontal face with outcurved sky fangs. Grove (1999: 264, 286, 2000: 289–292) has suggested that those are sky-mountain faces that marked La Venta's Mound C-1 as a mountain.

The relationships evident between La Venta and Chalcatzingo based on the similarities in their respective carvings (Grove 1987: 427–429, 1989: 130–139) further demonstrate the important role of historical contexts in interpreting evidence of a materialized cosmology. As we stated at the start of this chapter, it is too simple to assume that a homogeneous corpus of symbols existed in Mesoamerica from the Formative period on; instead, the likelihood of multiple and changing meanings must be investigated. Thus it is possible that elite residents of both Chalcatzingo and La Venta took a preexisting mound, within a preexisting frame of reference, and gave it a new or embellished signification. With the erection of Monument 9 on the massive mound at Chalcatzingo, the villagers formally represented themselves, in the media of art and architecture, as the People of the *Cerro*.

NOTES

1. In a previous article, Grove (1999) discussed the basic center/peripheral thematic distributions and differences at Chalcatzingo, La Venta, and San Lorenzo. In this chapter we focus more specifically on details at Chalcatzingo.

2. Similar triple-raindrop motifs occur on the headdress of the seated personage in the niche on La Venta's Altar 5, and paired quetzal birds also occur on La Venta Monument 19 (Grove 1989: 133–137, figs. 7.7–7.9).

3. Consolidation work by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia in 2005 on the site's Classic period ballcourt and plaza area adjacent to the PC-4 mound revealed three Cantera phase monuments buried in Classic period fill, including two stelae sections (Monuments 35 and 37; Córdova Tello and Meza Rodríguez 2007:64–65). In addition, over the years Grove has recorded several probable in situ stela bases at the site; thus the total number of stelae certainly exceeded a dozen.

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