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We take a materialist view of power and authority in this chapter, recognizing, as Sarah Kurnick (this volume:3) insightfully states in her opening chapter, that “the exercise of power is an intensely physical process that operates through the built environment.” Our discussion focuses on the construction, experience, and ontology of landscapes as a component of rulership in Mesoamerica that emerges from daily experience. In particular, we are interested in the perimetric bounding of landscapes and the role of boundary creation and maintenance in the substantiation of rulership and the constitution of political communities in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. Mesoamerican sovereigns enacted their status and hierarchical positions in no small part through the performance of landscape boundaries, marking territories within which they participated as legitimate, moral monarchs of a political community. In such performances Mesoamerican rulers manifested their authority and power by acting in ways that were fundamentally grounded in and in accord with the greater population’s quotidian practice and knowledge of how spaces were delimited and transformed into places.

In framing our approach to borders in terms of landscapes, we emphasize political strategies as explicit social relationships with bounded places, not simply relationships *in* places that are spatially expressed. The development of modern European and American legal understandings of territoriality derives from

*Landscapes, Lordships, and
Sovereignty in Mesoamerica*

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DOI: 10.5876/9781607324164.c007

Renaissance and Enlightenment cartography and property law (Olwig 1996; Cosgrove 1999; Harley 1988), and archaeologists frequently express resistance, even antipathy, to the notion that control of territory was a significant concern of many pre-Columbian peoples in Mesoamerica. Even for the expansive Aztec state, Michael E. Smith suggests that polities “were defined not in terms of territory or space—as they are in the modern world—but in terms of personal obligations” (Smith 2012:158), a concept of state often formulated as “hegemonic” in contrast to “territorial” (Beekman 1996). Much the same argument has been made for the Classic Period Maya lowlands, where the performances of state and the need to reinforce and perform the kingdom are taken as indicative of a deeply interpersonal relationship between ruler and ruled (Demarest 1992; Houston 2006; Houston and Inomata 2009:150–62; Hull 2003; Inomata 2006a, 2006b;Looper 2001, 2003, 2009), typically without a clear connection drawn between these political relationships and the delimitation of landscape.

We suggest a role for boundary marking in Mesoamerican political practice that was predicated on exactly those interpersonal relations that so frequently form the contrast to territorial approaches. In turn, this highlights the emic ambiguity between political institutions and local identity and (potentially) removes the contradictions of similarity and difference inherent in authority from open negotiation. In this sense, rulers and polities co-constituted the political landscapes of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. However, as we have emphasized, territory in the abstract is not a useful category—the formation and operation of political landscapes and borders are historically contingent processes.

The central Mexican *altepetl*, the Yucatecan *cab* (municipal community), the *chinamit* of highland Guatemala, and the *ñuu* of the Mixteca Alta in Oaxaca are all indigenous terms that linked places to people. The construction of kinship, mutual interpersonal and political obligations, responsibility, and subjugation were deeply intertwined with places and the experience of a shared physical environment (Akkeren 2000:24; Braswell 2001:319–25, 2004:133–36; Carmack 1981:83; Hill 1996:64; Hare 2000:84; Hill and Monaghan 1987:74; Licate 1980; Restall 1997, 1998:46–50; Smith 1989, 2012). However, the political importance of landscape does not inherently lead to a political concern with demarcation of bounded territories; indeed, the literature on Mesoamerican polities tends to emphasize political centers rather than peripheries.

Maya capitals, with their clustered pyramids and houses, or the royal palaces and central temples of the *altepetl* in central Mexico, stand as iconic symbols of these political units in the academic literature. In part, this is

because, from indigenous perspectives, they served as the “heads” of political bodies, centers that metonymically evoked the bounded polity as a whole (Hanks 1990:393). Yet a research bias is also at work here because, from the perspective of archaeologists, they are eminently visible, even as ruins, and are thus attractive as sites for excavation. Such center-focused scholarship creates dichotomies between center and periphery, and by extension, between ruler and subject. These dyads inherently suggest dialectical contradictions between space and power, as conceived hierarchically around the seat of royal authority and heterarchically organized subordinate populations in the more dispersed world of commoners.

We argue instead that the ontology of space in Mesoamerica—the bringing into being of place through bodily movement and action—requires a greater emphasis on the edges as well as the center. The bounding of space, not just the centering of place, structured the relationships between rulers and subjects in Mesoamerica. The demarcation of bounded landscapes made manifest the power and authority of rulers not because of a center-periphery hierarchical relationship but rather because the delimitation of places from the microscale of the household and *milpa* up to the macroscale of the state were understood as essentially identical practices. Simply put, they differed in scale but not in kind.

To ground this discussion we draw on ethnohistoric, epigraphic, and archaeological case studies from the Mixteca Alta of Oaxaca, Mexico, and the Maya regions of Mexico and Central America (figures 7.1, 7.2). The comparison of regionally, culturally, and temporally distinct regions is intended as a preliminary and suggestive exploration of commonalities in Mesoamerican rulership. We are keenly aware that such a juxtaposition does not provide full coverage of Mesoamerica, nor does it fit more popular *pars pro toto* cultural combinations like Aztec and Maya or Maya and Teotihuacan (for a fruitful recent study, see Vail and Hernandez 2010). We select these cases because of the evidential strength from richly attested pre-Columbian epigraphic traditions, copious native language colonial documentation, and consequently, strong claims for employing direct historical methods linking ethnographic, historical, and archaeological data in both areas.

BOUNDING LANDSCAPES, EXPERIENCING BORDERS

We take a landscape perspective in this paper because doing so pulls together the threads of bodily movement across extensive spaces and the participation of social groups in formulating not just conceptions, beliefs, and

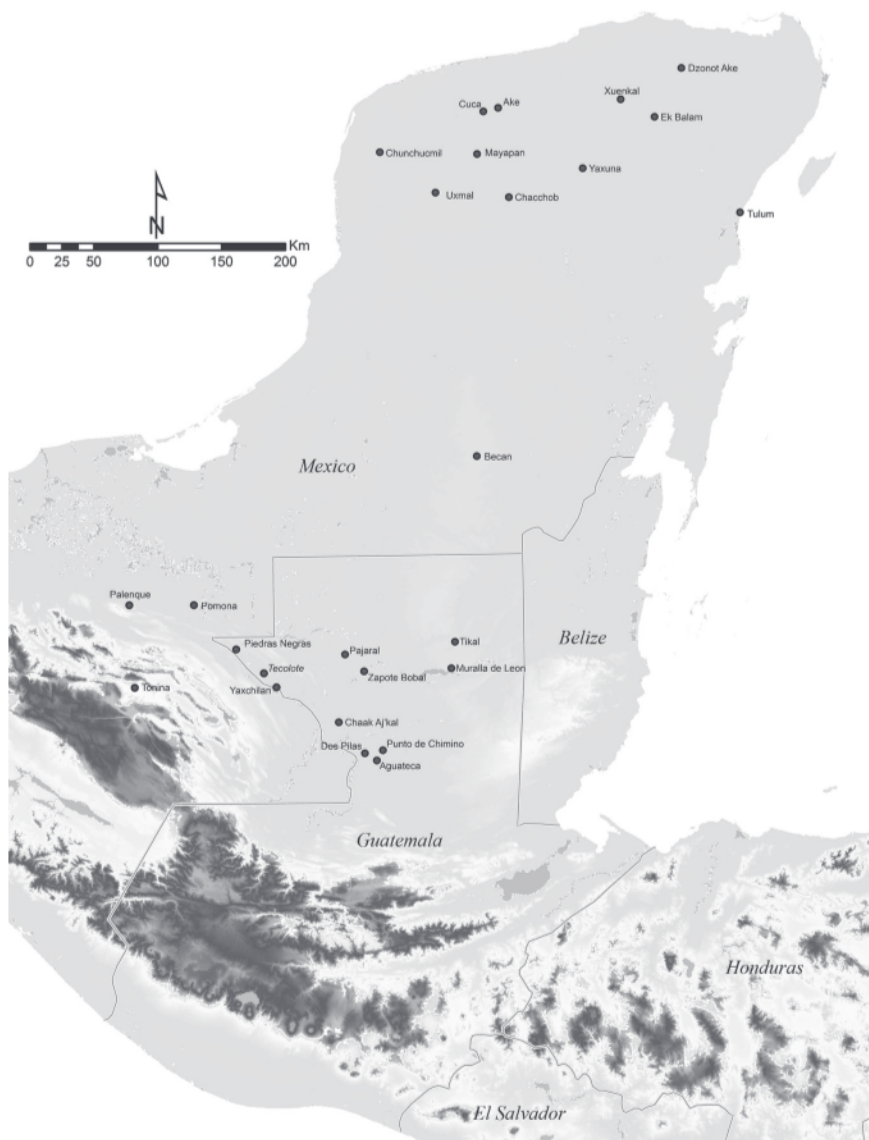


FIGURE 7.1. *Map of the Maya area.*

ideologies of place but the fundamental creation of place. The recursive constitution of place and landscape has a voluminous literature, and this is not a forum to offer an extensive review. In brief, rather than a “natural” setting,

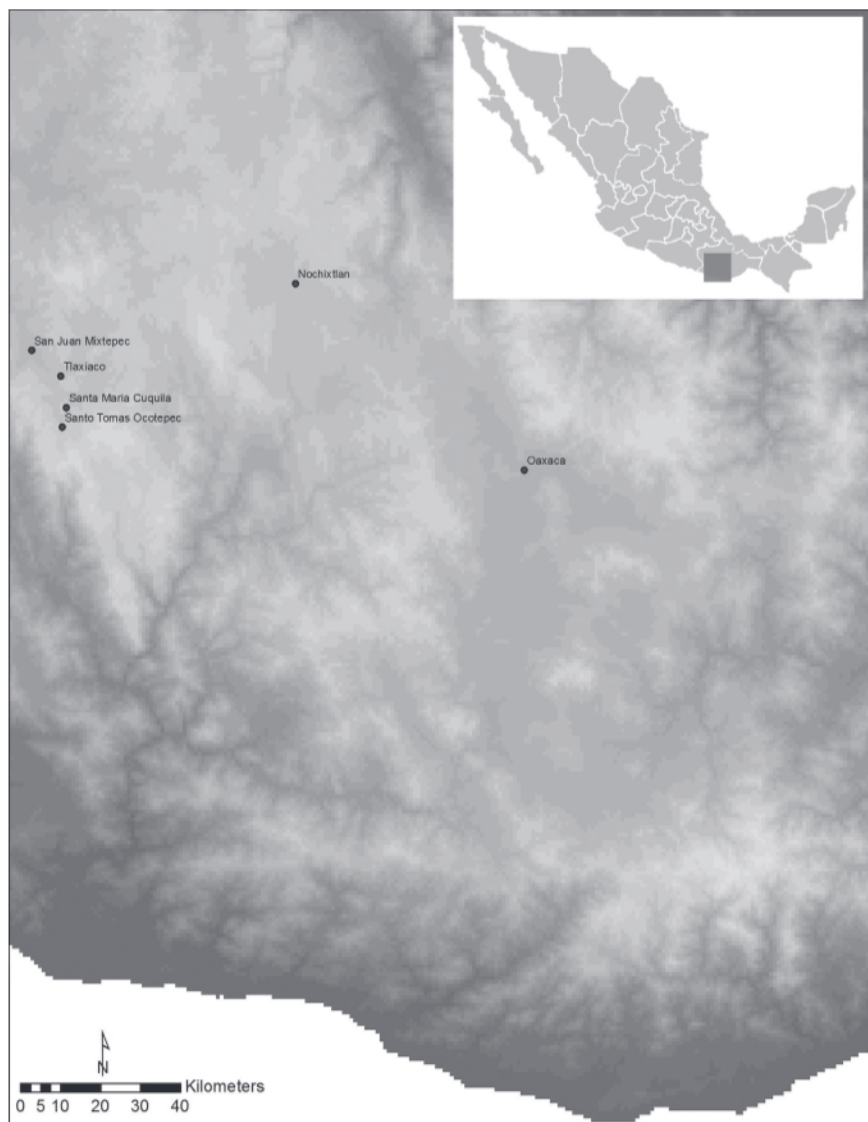


FIGURE 7.2. *Detail map of Oaxaca showing selected sites in the Mixteca Alta.*

landscapes are the spatial and temporal arrangement of social relationships, particularly as they relate to issues of power and authority (Knapp and Ashmore 1999). They require work to create, maintain, or transform. Human

activity takes place in space and time, and landscapes contour potential action, even as they are inscribed by previous activity (Cosgrove 1984; Ingold 1993; Lefebvre 1991; Smith 2003). These landscapes-as-palimpsests are not received by an agent viewing an external environment. They are the product of lived experience as humans engage with the concrete possibilities and limitations of her or his circumstances—everything from the placement of features such as roads, plots, and homes to questions of identity and inclusiveness that are predicated on them.

It is the movement, experience, and action of bodies upon, across, and through landscapes that gives much of the context of lived human experience. Bodily practice will, over time, alter the shape, meaning, and understanding of a landscape. We argue that this is not, as Pierre Bourdieu might suggest, the “misrecognition of the limits of cognition” or the “recognition of legitimacy through misrecognition of arbitrariness” (Bourdieu 1977:164, 168). Such a perspective implies a passive belief by community members in social structures created as an outcome of the production of landscapes. Rather, the performance of space and place, the enactment of landscape, actively creates an epistemologically complete and ontologically valid bodily experience across scales (Lefebvre 1991:38–46; Smith 2003:73). It is something that is real, not something that is misrecognized.

Landscapes have concrete impacts on societies and environments because they require constant maintenance, and part of that process is the establishment of limits. As with all components of landscape, bordered places and borderlands exist as experiential realities because they are maintained and reinforced by bodies that perform them. Moreover, the acts of bordering are performed as bodily experience from the level of the individual (“personal space”) to the household and house, from the village to the polity as a whole. The performance of boundaries becomes a primary prerogative and method of organizing governing institutions, not necessarily in contradiction to the actions of individuals but rather in emulation or co-option of individual and small group performance.

In modern states, the limits of a given political landscape are defined with regard to, and extend out from, a political, economic, or cultural center toward a space conceived of as the edge. The most extreme expression of this principle can be found in the ideal of the modern nation-state, where juridical, political, economic, and even moral prerogatives are explicitly linked to and profoundly defined by the control of what are legally defined as fixed borders (Anderson and O'Dowd 1999; Brunet-Jailly 2005; Cunningham and Heyman 2004; Hannerz 1997; Kearney 2004; Newman 2006; Rumford 2006; Van Houtum

and Struever 2002; Walters 2006). Although borders may structure the daily practice and behavior of people who live in border zones, political boundaries are impositions from the political center, often with no relation to local concerns. Tension and contradictions between centers of power and authority and their borders and frontiers are an inherent outcome of this construction of state landscapes.

A consideration of the bounding of territorial landscapes in modern states is therefore conceptually useful here primarily as a contrast to the construction of delimited landscapes in pre-Columbian societies such as those of the Mixteca and the Maya area. Critics are right to point out that a territorial approach to Mesoamerican civilizations may carry unwarranted assumptions of homogenous control, absolute space, and temporal stasis that are not appropriate in a pre-Columbian context (Chance 1996; Hoekstra 1990; Smith 2005; Tomaszewski and Smith 2010). Others have argued that even the most nuanced studies of territorially defined polities are based exclusively on ethnographic and ethnohistoric data and therefore reflect elements either transplanted by or in reaction to colonial encounters (Wolf 1957, 1986; Monaghan 1995).

Indeed, a common theme of colonial era land documents in Mesoamerica is the metric quality of boundaries based on European cartographic conventions for the measurement, occupation, and control of pre-social space (Cosgrove 1992; Harley 1992), leading to the abundance of primordial titles used in Spanish courts to substantiate claims to ownership and sometimes to justify new land grabs (Hamann 2012; Hanks 2010; Restall 1998; Terraciano 2001). We agree that such juridical notions of fixed landscapes in Mesoamerica were a product of the colonial administration and the economics of an *encomienda* system that assigned labor rights to Spanish settlers, *indios hidalgos*, indigenous communities, and individuals based on notions of fixed and (ideally) unchanging boundaries. Within the legal documents of the colonial period there are, however, strong indications of a pre-Columbian notion of bounding ownership and authority that extend back at least to the Classic Period (ca. 250–900 CE), if not earlier. There seems to be a deeply indigenous conception of bounded landscapes that are at once experienced as fixed and real, even as they are dynamic and performed places (Farriss 1978:202). Borders were, and often still are, performed through word and deed rather than encoded in legal documents, and the same processes at work in the house were extended to larger political structures. The emergence of polity borders from daily practice is critical to our arguments on the concomitant identification between ruler and territory.

DELIMITING SPACE, CREATING PLACE THROUGH SPEECH AND MOVEMENT

In Mesoamerica the delimitation of bounded spaces practiced at the political edge of modern towns or pre-Columbian polities traditionally finds its model in the home and the agricultural field, the milpa. Evon Vogt (1965) argues that for Zinacantecos of modern Chiapas, the political structure of the community at all scales replicates that of the house and takes the form of an “aggregate of aggregates . . . an orderly replication of increasing structural scale (Vogt 1962, 1965:344; see also Rosaldo 1968). Politics in practice is rarely so “orderly,” but we do suggest that a scalar understanding of bounded space and political practice is central to understanding Mesoamerican rulership.

As William F. Hanks suggests for Maya communities in Yucatan, all domestic organization is founded on the *haál*, the perimeter or outer boundary, which “divides the inner, private space from the outer, public one” (Hanks 1990:324). The perimeter with the center point forms the quincunx so central to Mesoamerican thought and imagery in all periods. Bounded space creates a whole place, a landscape that is complete, unsegmented, and defined by the edges. Indeed, the domestic landscape is a replica of the ordered universe. Hanks (1990:335–36) argues that this space extends from the laying out of the household altar up to the level of the entire domestic landholding and, by extension, to the community beyond. Movement of the body through space and time is paralleled in spoken and written language, which partakes in the work of boundary making. In highland and lowland Maya languages, couplets and other more expansive narrative parallelisms mark event boundaries in processions that move the listener through time and space (Gossen 1974a; Hofling 1993:178). In Mixtec examples, households are explicitly identified with activity before structure. Feeding and clothing define a corporate group, acts at once of cosmogenic importance and as basic tokens of affection (Monaghan 1995:356). In part, this is a feature of how little time is spent in the house itself, tying the agricultural activities in far-flung fields directly into the demarcation of social space and the production of social substance. The boundaries that are drawn by inclusion or exclusion in these domestic spheres are then reinforced by communal activities that play out across the broader landscape—building houses, working fields, and hosting fiestas as cargo. Outside the perimeter of the altar, the house, and the community is a space-time that is not unified, that is fractured and dangerous, animalistic, amoral, and inhuman (Hanks 1990:349; Taube 2003:464; Wisdom 1940:421–22).

This is a process of creating boundaries in space-time with physical movement of the body, and the linguistic evocation of movement is echoed in

understandings of how the world itself was created. In the K'iche Popul Vuh, the sky and earth are staked out at their corners and measured, just as a maize field traditionally was for cultivation (Christenson 2004:56; Tedlock 1996, 220). In Zinacantán, this replication of bounded space at different scales is recognized from the smallest to the largest order, since the universe as a whole is “like a house, like a table [altar]” (Vogt 1993:11; see also Taube 2003:462). This ontology is mirrored by other Maya language communities, including the Chortí, for whom the maize field, altars, and world are identified with one another (Wisdom 1940:430).

In delimiting boundaries, the concern ethnographically and ethnohistorically is not with the identification of distinct internal features of the landscape but rather in demarcating lines with no width that extend between points, delimiting the edges of the landscape (Carmack 1995:40–43; Hanks 2010:289–90). People gave life to these borders in writing and in performances. Hanks (2010) calls particular attention to what he calls “tour guide” perambulations of the features of boundary markers, in which officials, neighbors sharing the boundary, and others proceed in steps. The Yaxkukul surveys of Yucatan evoke the performance of territorial limits: “Southward I go counting stone markers; it goes all the way until it arrives at the foot of Mul Ac; there’s a marker there” (Hanks 2010:300).

Again, bounded places could be enacted through both bodily motion and the performative word that moves the speaker and audience through space and time (Gossen 1974a; Hofling 1993:178). Toponyms and personal names in Mixtec codices were brought into relief with the present through recitations and public display, a tradition that continued with oral litigation in the Spanish courts. Colonial documents on borders are thus better viewed not as static records of a past, but as repositories for spoken performances that were conceived of as perpetually in action and which recreated the borders even when they could not be walked (Hanks 2010:283–314). “Like the practices of prayer, land documents were world-making, even if that world was subject to contestation and revision” (Hanks 2010:289), a reality that is mirrored in pre-Columbian texts (Houston and Stuart 1998; Hull 2003:375–76; Stuart 1996, 1998). Visual and verbal metonymy also played a critical role in the performance of territory, making “objects of landowners and humanizing features of the land” (Restall 1997:199; see also Roys 1967:63–66). This is more than simple rhetoric—punning names and performs those locations, bringing them into being as places. The pieces that act to embody the whole are things of the highest ranking order (Hanks 1990:393).

Colonial period documents also make it patently clear, however, that boundaries were contestable and required reinscription and maintenance. People,

aware of this danger, sought multiple routes to literally solidify boundaries and make them material through perpetual performance. In some instances, durable stone features—walls, stones, cenotes, and more—marked boundaries. Villages evacuated during the colonial era reductions also retained social salience for the purposes of delimiting space for decades or centuries after their occupants departed (Hanks 2010:306; Kowaleski et al. 2009:310; Spores and Balkansky 2013:125). There was, however, also resistance to the placement of boundary stones for fear those stones might be moved or become the cause of disagreements over the “real” borders between location-based communities (*cah*) and demarcations of the edges of forests (Restall 1998:92–94; cf. Restall 1998:125–28). Thus, while physical markers could act as significant features of delimiting landscapes, performance, word, and ritual acts that often leave no enduring material sign were more important still (Farriss 1984:148; Stephens 1848:265–67; Hanks 2010:287).

The inscription of place and delimitation of landscapes was, and is, more than a claim of ownership in Mixtec and Maya communities. Bounded space is inextricably linked to moral behavior, authority, and legitimacy. For the Chamula of highland Chiapas, the internal boundaries and outer limits of the community are critically important for interpersonal interaction; beyond those boundaries the places are delimited not by precise notions of space but by the morality or amorality of the people outside of Chamula (Gossen 1974a:18). In Yucatan, the laying out of boundary lines is conjoined linguistically by the term *tob*, which means “straight” and “truth” and historically carries implications of virtue, justice, and correct moral behavior (Barrera Vasquez 1980:801; Hanks 1990:357; Taube 2003:465).

When forced to live outside of properly bounded places, humans become animal-like, amoral, and uncivilized (Taube 2003). Outside of the limits of the house, people are exposed, their behavior potentially dangerous, like the wilds of the forest (Haviland and Haviland 1982, 1983:353). In the Chilam Balam of Chumayel, when the Itza were forced out of Chichen Itza they lost their status as civilized people and “went beneath the trees, beneath the bushes, beneath the vines, to their misfortune” (Roys 1933:136). In the Mixteca, the mythical *tiumi*, or “people of the wilds,” are described as living without households as both cause and consequence of their primitiveness (Monaghan 1995:32).

The distinction between moral or immoral behavior, human versus inhuman behavior, need not be agential in the sense suggested by Anthony Giddens (1984). The inadvertent transgression of delimited boundaries may be considered immoral no matter the intent of the transgressor (Hanks 1990:324; Danziger 2010). In no small part because they are ignorant of boundaries,

wild animals wandering outside of human-forged spatial boundaries, and transgressing those boundaries, are improper and amoral (Burkhart 1986:113; Taube 2003:469).

Thus, a body or bodies able to actively delimit the landscape are inherently imbued with a significant authority: they have the power to move as moral beings along the perilous edges of controlled and controllable space and to define who is encompassed and who is excluded by these bounded places, to define who is human and who is other. To bring order to these spaces and bring places into being are “inherently good and ethically correct human acts” (Taube 2003:465).

BOUNDING PRE-COLUMBIAN MAYA KINGDOMS

We have discussed above the identity of power and authority across scales of bounded landscapes, beginning with the household altar, expanding to the house, the milpa, and the larger political community of which they are a part. At each scale, bounding creates a singular and coherent moral landscape that represents a world in proper order—one that requires work to maintain, but which only some bodies are empowered to delimit and create. As we focus now specifically on pre-Columbian Maya kingdoms, we are challenged by the same issues raised by Joanne Baron (this volume) in her discussion of commoner participation in patron deity veneration: we believe that similar processes were at work across all hierarchical status levels, but our most robust evidence comes from the noble and royal contexts that have yielded rich textual and iconographic data.

Yet, data from commoner households across the Maya area suggest that daily practice and ritual behavior guided delimitation of houses and houselots much as in historical and modern communities. Archaeological excavations have typically focused on place making rituals that center the house, making it a social and moral place, particularly through the interment of burials and caches beneath interior floors (e.g., McAnany 1995). Finding the limits of the domestic space outside the house structure itself can be more challenging simply because the material signs of such boundaries may not be so obvious.

However, in some Maya cities, such as Chunchucmil and Mayapan in Yucatan, the bounded limits of the household unit, or small groups of households and even neighborhoods, are conspicuously marked by stone walls and walkways (Hare and Masson 2012; Hutson et al. 2004; Hutson and Stanton 2007; Magnoni et al. 2012). Even where such boundaries are not obviously set in stone, it is possible to reconstruct the repeated movements of household

members in and around architectural spaces and look at discard patterns of artifacts to infer the delimited landscapes made real by these quotidian practices (e.g., Arnauld et al. 2012; Hutson et al. 2007; Hutson and Stanton 2007; Lemonnier 2012; Morton 2012; Robin 2002; Stockett 2005).

Scaling up the performance of delimiting houses to the more imposing spaces of royal residences, we can also see hints of household-level rituals from palatial inscriptions that record dedication ceremonies in which royal residences and other buildings were enlivened as social places through fire or censuring ritual (Stuart 1998). David Stuart (1998) suggests that, by analogy with modern and historically documented rituals, the censuring of these pre-Columbian royal buildings involved feeding not just the center but the four corners of the house. So, too, the working and bounding of the milpa finds its way into royal inscriptions as a trope of rulership. Sovereigns do not simply supervise ritual or political events; they work them and cultivate them as one would work and cultivate a milpa (Stuart 2011:2; 2005; Taube 2003:464). Even in the elite epicenters of Classic Period sites, however, not every structure bears such dedicatory inscriptions. Nonetheless, James A. Doyle (2013; see also Powell 2010) has demonstrated that the same logic and geometry applied to laying out the four corners of the commoner household and the milpa are writ large on the monumental buildings at the heart of Maya cities. Thus, just as commoners delimited their milpas, houses, and neighborhoods on one scale, so, too, kings and queens enacted and delimited their royal households, with their milpas being the courtly city and the polity writ large.

At this polity-level scale too, moral places had to be brought into being and bounded, formed out of amoral, asocial space to encompass the political community (Houston et al. 2003; Sharer and Golden 2004). Such moral authority implies a social contract between ruler and ruled that almost certainly mirrored obligations between humans and the vivified world of nonhuman beings (that which Euro-Americans tend to gloss as “supernatural”) in which substantive reciprocal obligations needed to be met to maintain a world in order (Houston et al. 2003; Monaghan 1995, 1998; Tokovinine 2008). Beyond the borders within which legitimate moral authority extended, power might still be expressed, but such expressions would not have involved the same social contract and instead required hegemonic relationships with other figures of power and authority, or the exercise of military power, to maintain (Golden and Scherer 2013).

We can see archaeological and epigraphic evidence for the creation and performance of large-scale political landscapes delimited by the performance of rulers and their courtiers. Boundary making varied from polity to polity

depending on the nature of the political hierarchy, relationships with neighboring polities, and underlying geography and environmental factors such as vegetation (cf. Beekman 1996:136). Some boundaries left profound material marks on the landscape, as with the walled borderland settlements and roadways that served as boundary markers in Yucatan (Kurjack and Andrews 1974), while others were more ephemeral. Indeed, even within the same polity, boundary marking took dramatically different forms along different territorial limits (Golden et al. 2008; Golden and Davenport 2013; Golden and Scherer 2013; Scherer and Golden 2009).

Perhaps the most famous, and enigmatic, of boundary features in the Maya lowlands is a system of earthworks that encompasses portions of the immediate hinterland surrounding epicentral Tikal (Webster et al. 2007). Soil and rock were scooped from the ground and piled alongside the trench that was formed. In some places the channel dips several meters below the original surface of the earth, and the adjacent berm rises similarly above the ground. In other sections the berm is barely visible and the ditch less than two meters deep.

Because the physical form of the earthworks does not completely encircle epicentral Tikal, Jay E. Silverstein, David Webster, and their colleagues (Silverstein et al. 2009; Webster et al. 2007) are divided over what, if any, function they may have served. Because they do not fully encircle the city, and in many locations are quite low, they do not make sense as defensive features. In some places they may have served to manage drainage, but this function does not make sense for all extant sections; and because they do not form a solid perimeter, there are doubts about their role as boundary markers delimiting a territory of some sort. Webster and colleagues (2007:60) also suggest that the earthworks may simply be incomplete, a labor abandoned mid-construction.

However, the earthworks need not have formed a complete durable and material perimeter for the purposes of engaging ruler and ruled in communal acts of boundary making. Even the labor required for occasional additions to the earthworks would be sufficient for such purposes (Golden and Scherer 2013:163). Further, it seems plausible that, as in the ethnohistoric cases discussed above, a stepwise progression of ruler, courtiers, and other community members could have inscribed the territory as much as the actual construction of the earthworks. Thus, although they may appear unfinished to modern archaeological eyes, for the political community of Tikal they were completed in word and motion, marking the edges of the moral community.

Much as at Tikal, research in the Usumacinta River region has revealed another mode of delimiting the kingdom: a boundary wall system along

the northern limits of the Yaxchilan kingdom (figure 7.3). Walls and hilltop redoubts cross from east to west, comprising part of an architectural landscape that includes the palaces of border lords at sites such as La Pasadita and Tecolote (Golden et al. 2008; Golden and Scherer 2013; Scherer and Golden 2009, 2014). The walls, defensive positions, and broken terrain constituted a formidable martial landscape and give the impression of permanence.

Whatever function the wall systems of the Yaxchilan kingdom had, it is not only their durable materiality that participated in the bounding of the moral landscape of the polity. The personal performance of the ruler, his courtiers, and the populace were required to constitute, activate, and perpetually maintain (or redefine) the limits of the kingdom. Like the earthworks of Tikal, participation by many members of the populace in building, maintaining, and manning the defensive positions of the Yaxchilan kingdom's wall engaged ruler and ruled in the creation of landscape.

For Yaxchilan, however, the walls were reinforced by the emplacement of palatial border sites with monuments depicting the ruler of Yaxchilan and his subordinates dancing, scattering offerings, dominating captives, and receiving them as tribute. The texts on such royal monuments are not necessarily or centrally concerned with the biographic history of the sovereign or other individuals depicted thereon. Such inscriptions are instead primarily concerned with "the placement, creation, and activation of ritual things and spaces" (Stuart 1998:375). They are devices that aided the body of the ruler in creating the moral space-time that centered the kingdom and created place from space (Monaghan 1998).

Such inscribed monuments were particularly potent because they united the image and self of the ruler in perpetual performance (Houston and Stuart 1998; Houston, Taube, and Stuart 2006:72–81; Stuart 1996). Like the colonial era documents, the texts on these royal monuments were performed. They were enacted by ritually charged actors who may have been the depicted ruler but may also have been a surrogate—perhaps a ritual specialist or royal descendant of the depicted monarch—competent to present a literate style of history (Gossen: 1974b: 398–99; Hull 2003:375–76). Because the actions depicted on these monuments are ongoing, and the people portrayed are perpetually present, the implication is that the ruler and his border lords perpetually enact the border (Houston and Stuart 1998; Hull 2003; Golden 2010; Golden and Scherer 2013; Scherer and Golden 2014; Stuart 1996).

The limits of the territory were danced and fought and performed into being by the ever-present, ever-living bodies of the ruler and his subordinate depicted as the epitome of controlled human behavior. The depicted captives

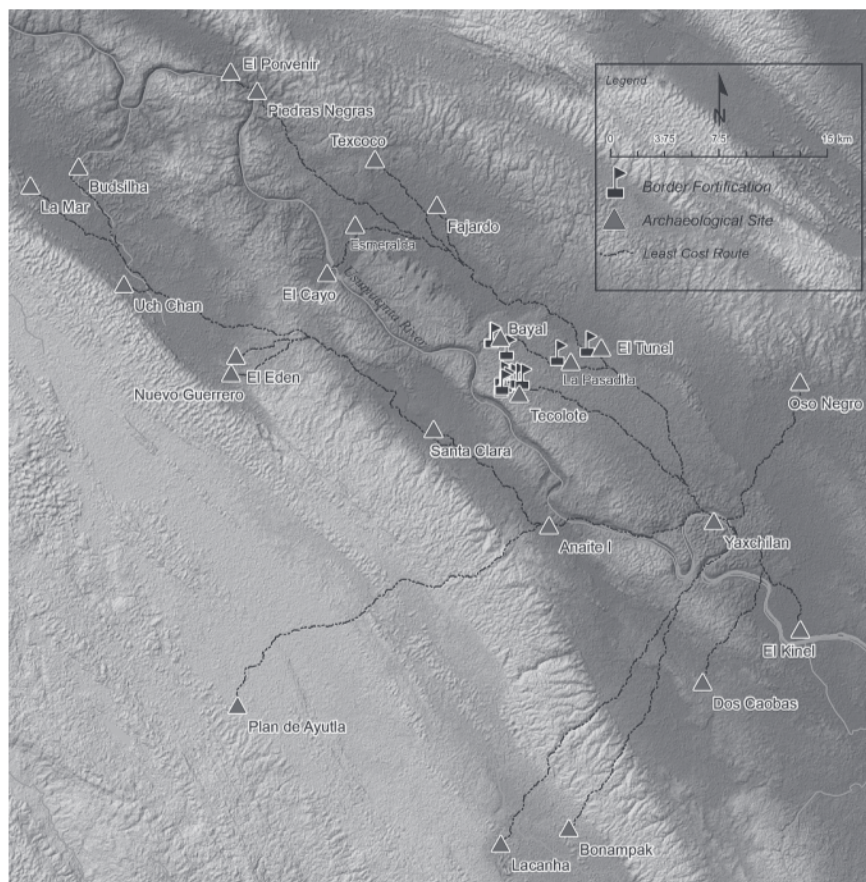


FIGURE 7.3. *Map of the region between Piedras Negras, Guatemala, and Yaxchilan, Mexico, showing border sites and fortifications along the northern border of the Yaxchilan kingdom, in what today is Guatemala, north of the sites of Tecolote, La Pasadita, and El Tunel. This system may continue to the west in Mexico, but field research is pending there (map by Charles Golden).*

are twisted and writhing, animalistic beings from outside the moral landscape of the kingdom (Houston, Taube, and Stuart 2006:202–26; Taube 2003), who stand as metonymic symbols of their places of origin outside the boundaries of the community. Thus, on these ever-present, ever-active sculptures, the limits of the kingdom were performed by kings, nobles, and captives, replicating the distinction between milpa and forest, and spaces in the house and outside the house at smaller scales. As at Tikal, the Yaxchilan kingdom is not entirely

encircled and delimited by obvious material signs like walls and monuments. However, it is a reasonable hypothesis to suggest that other material indices of the royal domain may be found in future research or, if not, that such territorial limits were nonetheless repeatedly performed and reinscribed in ways that simply left relatively little in the way of a durable record.

EMBODYING RULERS IN THE MIXTECA ALTA

In Oaxaca, the linkage between ruler and bounded landscape is even more overt than in examples from the Maya region, and, correspondingly, the complications of this political strategy are more clearly defined. Rulers maintained exclusive relations over and through the landscape; however, as in the Maya area, these relationships are not unique to rulers but rather a part of a common genre of political idiom. Postclassic codices and colonial documents alike depict marriage alliances, genealogies, and personal identity from across social strata in the Mixteca in terms of *ñuu*, glossed variously as anything from “city-state” to simply “settled place.” The word is pervasive in Mixtec, and the Alta region was known locally as *ñuu dzahui* or “the place of rain.” However, there is a clear tradition across sources of *ñuu* also referring specifically to sociopolitical units, and more recent research has clarified that *ñuu* in this sense are best understood as “potentially autonomous states” (Terraciano 2001:347–48). These coherent territories bound multiple local communities (*siqui*, broadly commensurate with the Nahuatl *calpolli* and Spanish *barrio*) through shared historical claims to land and governing institutions.

Ñuu were centered, both conceptually and pragmatically, on the royal household; today the defining feature of the smallest modern community in the region is still the municipal palace. The lords of these establishments—*yya* (male) or *yya dzehe* (female)—held hereditary rights to tracts of land, labor obligations, and tribute. Although some areas were also held in common by the *ñuu*, *siqui*, and individual households, across much of the Mixteca, the royal estate co-opted corporate systems of allocation as part of the *yya*’s prerogative (Terraciano 2001:206). The proliferation of land-tenure systems underscores the distinctions between political borders and property lines—however these plots were arranged, they still “belonged” to the *ñuu* and explicitly formed part of the ruler’s estate (Spores and Balkansky 2013:110).

This estate, the *añiñe*, was based on the same organizational template as any other Mixtec household, with structures abutting an open-air patio that was used for ritual performance as well as being the functional space for most activity. The household landscape was discontinuous, with the house structure

serving as the integrative nexus for working close terraces and far-flung fields and bringing together kin for marriage, important festivals, and resolving conflicts; these activities were scaled up to include greater segments of the population in the añiñe.

Houses in the Mixteca are said to be “cooked” during their construction to separate them from wild lands (Monaghan 1995:34), indicating not only physical transformation of the landscape but also the affective action that continually reconstitutes the household. The conceptual separation of the house from the world outside is replicated with the añiñe as premier household, establishing a focal point for the community and the locus of boundary making activities—reciting the glyphic toponyms of subject communities from codices, arbitrating disputes, and bringing together representative nobility from across the ñuu for feasts, marriages, and other integrative events. The performance of boundary activities within the royal house created the ñuu as the royal household, linking statecraft with smaller scale and everyday activity.

During the colonial period, añiñe were symbolically and legally the centers of their communities as the repositories for land documents such as title deeds and plot boundaries, and in pre-Columbian contexts, the image of the royal household, both structure and ruling couple, frequently represents the ñuu as a whole. Kevin Terraciano (2001:165) describes the *teccalli* as a close Nahuatl analogue of the añiñe, “as much to a lordly establishment . . . as a physical structure, a sociopolitical entity as an actual residence.” Households can be understood as landscape-oriented territorial strategies, a set of actions that mark inclusive and exclusive space; in turn, we can connect these practices to the production of community and state boundaries as distinct from our more familiar cartographic abstractions.

As discrete territories, ñuu were remarkably persistent through both time and political reorganization. Stephen A. Kowalewski and colleagues’ (2009) comprehensive survey of the Alta found that many of the major Postclassic and early colonial centers had roots stretching back to the Early Classic, despite a period of wide-scale abandonment at the end of the Late Classic. Ñuu also survived as distinct entities even while joined into *yuhuitayu*, a concept that describes both dynastic alliance through marriage and the polity formed by the communities so linked (Pohl, Monaghan, and Stiver 1997:206). The term *yuhuitayu* was a pun that invoked both the seat of rulership—a reed mat, or *yuhui*—and the royal couple, *tayū*, as metonymic devices for the domain as a whole (Terraciano 2001:158). The articulation of ñuu within *yuhuitayu* meant that governance was localized through both semantic naturalization and affinal relation. The marriage of rulers did not erase local identities but

appropriated their forms of representation to conflate *yya* and *yya dzehe* with the bounded landscapes they ruled.

Since Alfonso Caso's (1938a, 1960a) early explorations, many scholars have directed their efforts toward identifying archaeological sites with toponyms from the Mixtec codices. Place-names in this region were highly localized, at a scale smaller than seen in colonial Nahuatl documents such as the *Codex Mendoza* (Byland and Pohl 1994:36). The linguistic and visual representation of place in the Mixteca indelibly linked socially defined space to immediate physical geography—the hills, towns, rivers, and plains of this rugged terrain (Smith 1973a). *Ñuu* and *yuhuitayu* were concrete entities, correlated with specific features on the landscape, and their boundaries were likewise defined in terms of places rather than abstract boundary limits (figure 7.4). In colonial documents, toponyms are sometimes appended with alphabetic glosses or cross symbols to indicate this border status (Smith 1998:82). In contrast to the ethnographic evidence from Yucatan, noted above, boundary lines do not seem to have been a concern; whether this is a regional preference, a response to colonial legal requirements, or simply a practice for which we no longer have evidence in the Mixteca is unclear.

Archaeologically and ethnohistorically, we find outpost settlements, ballcourts, marketplaces, cave shrines, small cardinal mound groups, and defensive fortifications as some of the anthropogenic features that have been recognized as boundary markers for polities from the Early Classic Period onward (Kowalewski et al. 2009:310, 324; Pohl, Monaghan, and Stiver 1997). As in the examples of Tikal and Yaxchilan, the manifestation of these border activities was not uniform within or between polities, and oral histories surrounding unmodified geological features and the absence of settlement between centers can also appear as boundary strategies in some instances. Although we now have considerable insight into the glyphic identification of many major archaeological sites in the region, the possible correlations between modern municipal boundaries and pre-Columbian territories are much less secure.

To name a place in the Mixteca, either verbally or visually, was to integrate it into a system of governance that was fundamentally genealogical. Claims to *ñuu* and *yuhuitayu* were inherited, and the Mixtec codices have a particularly historical bent among the surviving manuscripts from across pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. These elite narratives legitimized the authority of the *yya* both over and through places. Bruce E. Byland and John M. D. Pohl (1994:39) argue that “one of the keys to interpreting the codices is to understand that persons associated with place signs also serve as symbols for their communities by virtue of the fact that they are the lords of these towns.” The reverse also

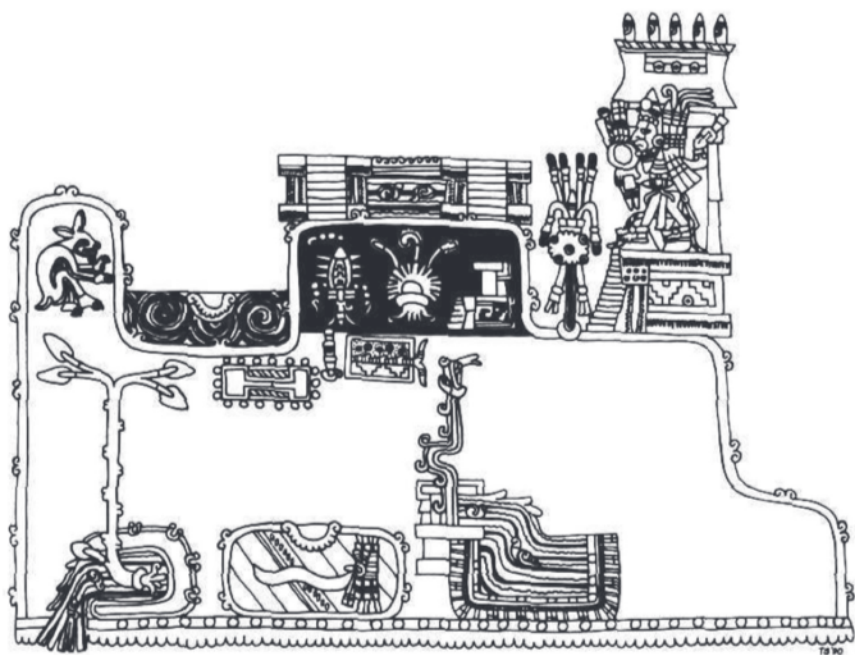


FIGURE 7.4. Detail from page 22 of the *Codex Zouche-Nuttall* showing the toponyms of subsidiary and border settlements inside of the glyph for the ñuu (drawing taken from Byland and Pohl 1994:figure 20, courtesy of University of Oklahoma Press).

may have been true, with minor nobles being named as places rather than persons in early colonial documents (Smith 1998:34). In this light, maps and genealogies in the Mixteca are one and the same, and rulers and territories co-constitute each other in the political life of the region.

The implications that conflating *yya* with *ñuu* as a bounded, performed place are illustrated through a historical case study of border negotiation in Santa María Cuquila, a community in the modern *municipio* of Tlaxiaco, known in Mixtec as Ñucuiñe, or “Town of the Tiger.” Mary Elizabeth Smith (1998) has traced Ñucuiñe’s glyphic toponym through both pre-Columbian and colonial sources (figure 7.5). A 1584 legal document describes the boundaries of Ñucuiñe with territories controlled by other *yuhuitayu*; these borders retained their integrity through several legal challenges and were recognized by a royal grant in 1707 (Ruiz Medrano 2010:323). However, in the early eighteenth century, the royal couple died and left an heir too young to rule. Nine-year-old Doña Teresa moved to Tepejillo in the Mixteca Baja with her uncle, taking

in the example of Cuquila, high levels of intercommunity conflict characterize Oaxaca, in contrast to other primarily indigenous areas in Latin America (Dennis 1987; Ruiz Medrano 2010; Spores and Balkansky 2013:215). Records of these events make it clear that above and beyond opportunities for political and economic development, challenges to territorial integrity are also challenges to identity by groups outside of the moral fabric of the community, paralleling the example of Chamula (Gossen 1974a; Monaghan 1995:27). While our archaeological knowledge of conflict in this region is relatively scarce in comparison to the rich legal record of the colonial and national periods, it is clear from the localized nature of both codices and fortifications that these are long-standing patterns.

In pre-Columbian and early colonial contexts, the royal household formed the institutional focus of many of the morally constitutive actions we find ethnographically—labor obligations, feasting, and maintaining boundaries. These practices outline the ways in which *ñuu* were conceived of and performed as bounded landscapes from the earliest colonial records, and the language, objects, and locations deployed all point to a continuation of pre-Hispanic systems of territoriality. The primary colonial context of border performance was litigation over these prerogatives in courts—an extension of the former oratory practice that signaled rulership across Mesoamerica. Raids, rituals, and markets continue to be important boundary activities today (Pohl, Monaghan, and Stiver 1997; Ruiz Medrano 2010), and are couched in the connection that modern communities have with their antecedents. In turn, *yya* are still recognized as fundamental to the landscape; modern accounts ascribe them generative powers over the terrain, and modern Cuquila uses the glyph for their ancestral *yuhuitayu* as the seal of the pueblo (Ruiz Medrano 2010:248). Significantly, in contrast to examples from Chiapas and Yucatan, the high levels of intercommunity conflict in the Mixteca, whether legal or armed, continue to be the foremost vector of boundary inscription—competing claims and transgressions cement the historical continuity of borders while prescribing appropriate actions at the edges between moral communities. Leadership, past and present, revolved around organizing border activity in a process that simultaneously defined the territory and the ruler.

This tight link between rulers and territories in the Mixteca allowed *yya* to present themselves as foundational to local identity, even while claiming fundamentally different origins from the populace. For *yuhuitayu*, this was necessarily the case: half of the emblematic couplet came from a nonlocal dynasty. The conceptual friction between being close enough to rule but far enough to be authoritative is elided, but not without generating a new set

of vulnerabilities. John K. Chance (2010; Menegus Bornemann 2005) evaluates the difference between pre-contact yuhuitayu and later colonial *cacicazgos* granted by the Spanish crown by noting that the suite of rights and responsibilities accorded to rulers became defined exclusively in terms of property ownership. Seignorial rights, and by extension the management of the ñuu, left the purview of the yya. In some communities, this opened up paths of resistance for commoners to repudiate hereditary labor obligations, while in others (such as Cuquila), absent owners were unable to defend their newly defined and diminished rights. While the Spanish legal system restricted the channels of negotiation and condensed the fluid political structure, it is clear that the boundaries of the landscape were the primary field of political contestation and underlay other claims to legitimacy throughout the Mixteca.

The new relationship to land as property disrupted the parallels between statecraft and household, and many rulers took to living in Spanish centers for access to the courts and colonial administration. This “absentee landlordism” provoked outrage from members of the ñuu—rulers were dwelling outside of their moral communities, quite literally, living immorally. Pre-Columbian and early colonial governance not only extended household patterns of boundary making, they relied on them for coherence. Reduplication of ordered, bounded, and hierarchically arranged places across scales gave these communities incredible resilience through time while also undercutting the institutions of broader governance, as new legal regimes and elite settlement patterns took hold.

SOME PROBLEMS OF CONTRADICTIONS IN BOUNDED LANDSCAPES

Despite our argument that the power and authority vested in rulers to delimit territories of the moral community was emergent from smaller scale practices of daily household life, there is obviously a glaring dichotomy that we have not delved into: many bodies in the populace at large were vested with the authority to delimit household altars, the house, and the milpa, but only a very few bodies were empowered to delimit the polity. This distinction between the power afforded to different bodies in setting limits at different scales was a point of potential contradiction. Indeed, such distinctions often became lines of political fracture along which Mesoamerican polities shattered.

One method found across Mesoamerica to distinguish these bodies is to ground hereditary claims in a primordial genesis, coeval with the territory itself. Scenes of birth from caves, trees, and rivers ensconced the ruling lineages as

landscape features, naturalizing their authority. In some instances, the places of origin appear to have been tropes more than geography. At the time of the Spanish arrival in Mesoamerica, for instance, the Nahuatl Chicomoztoc and Tollan, the “place of the seven caves” and “among the reeds” served as sources of legitimate origin (Gillespie 1989; Smith 2012). So, too, the K’iche lords of Q’umarkaj (Carmack 1981; Christenson 2007) came out of a vague “east,” with Tulan (Tollan) a later stop on their rise to power. In Yucatan, the Chilam Balam of Chumayel requires the performer to engage with the language of Zuyua, a place also mentioned in highland Maya documents with no known geographic specificity but a clear connection to rulership (Roys 1967; Stross 1983). In the Classic Period, the rulers of Palenque’s dynasty looked for their origin to a place called Toktahn, though whether this is an as yet unidentified physical place or an otherwise intangible place of origin like Chicomoztoc remains unclear (Stuart and Stuart 2008:113).

The genealogy of the Mixtecs was, instead, locally grounded and readily identifiable. The codices name an area called Yute Coo, “River of the Serpent,” in the Nochixtlan Valley as the place of origin for many of the original dynasties of major kingdoms (Byland and Pohl 1994:116). The sixteenth-century Chontal lords of Acalan-Tixchel similarly located their origins in a specific location, on the shrine island of Cozumel, an origin from which they claimed no small part of their authority (Restall 1998:58–59). Mixtec nobles distinguished themselves from commoners as having originated from sacred trees rather than the earth (Jansen 1982b). Unlike the lordly peregrinations claimed by the Nahuas of central Mexico, social stratification was also localized in the Mixteca, having taken place at a *ñuu* known as Apoala (Terraciano 2001:255). This distinct primordial genesis for rulers and ruled extended the hereditary claims of rulers back to a time when the landscape itself was being created, naturalizing their authority at the same time that it necessitated territorial control as a prerequisite for governance. For the K’iche lords of the Popul Vuh, the distinction from non-K’iche peoples and non-lordly classes was not based on the substance of creation—for all humans were formed from maize—but rather on descent from foundational ancestors and the distinct locations of communities in the aftermath of their dispersal across the landscape (Christenson 2007).

What unifies these examples is that they all speak to the creation of fundamentally different sorts of bodies for rulers. These were authoritative and powerful bodies modeled out of different substances emerging from different places, or generationally distinct and descended through closed lineages. Such different royal bodies were needed to delimit extensive political

territories and mark the landscapes internal and external to the moral community of the polity.

Yet, as our case studies have emphasized, such territoriality as a political strategy is a system of power and authority that arose out of complementarity with commoner practice, not from contradictions with it. Organizing the local community and state on the principles of the milpa and household made the structural positions of leaders not only appropriate but necessary for the definition of a coherent moral space and order. The contradictions of kind, rather than scale, that emerged out of these power relationships were thus inimical to the logic of extending household and local community space outward to the maximal edges of the polity and eventually participated in the cyclical breakdown of Mesoamerican political systems (Golden and Scherer 2013). Such systems typically did not disappear but returned to their basic organizational scale of the household and local community.

CONCLUSIONS

The editors of this volume have asked authors to engage and wrestle with the role of contradictions in the perception and practice of power and authority in Mesoamerican rulership. In focusing on the delimiting of landscapes as a central component of power and authority in Mesoamerica, however, we see more consistency than contradictions. In saying that the enactment of rulership and the expression of power and authority were in accord with the quotidian practice of the populace we are not claiming that there were not fundamental differences at work across social classes. However, in considering the role of human-landscape interactions as instruments of power and authority, these differences were not in kind but rather scalar in terms of economic input (the sorts of material and human power involved) and the number of bodies involved (whether a few members of a household or the entire populace of a kingdom).

Power and authority in Mesoamerica were not about “belief” in Max Weber’s (1978:213) sense (see Kurnick, this volume: chapter 1). Belief from such a perspective suggests, in a rather Marxist sense, ideology that can be penetrated to reveal an underlying truth. In Mesoamerican thought, however, there is only the basic truth of action: it is practice—not intent, not belief—that is central. Farmers in the milpa must “not only have faith but ‘show, express’ faith” (Hanks 1990:362). Rulers and subjects participated in the formation of bounded political spaces for which the ruler served as the metonymic head, an appropriate moral position, and one identical in terms of position and practice

(though on a much smaller scale) to that of the head of household who lays out the altar, the boundaries of the houselot, and the milpa.

In the logic of bounding space, the ontological foundations of the landscape and human relationships to landscape and to other humans were the same at every scale; heads of household, heads of community, and heads of kingdoms occupied necessarily replicated positions with regard to the template for ordered space. Crucial here is the notion that places are brought into a moral being through human intervention—boundary making is a fundamentally social activity. Consequently, we do not find grand contradictions as the basis for governance in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. Rather, while the contradictions we identify emerged from the scalar differences in bounding landscape, they were not instrumental in building or maintaining power but, over the long term, were inherent tensions that led to collapse (Golden and Scherer 2013).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to thank Sarah Kurnick and Joanne Baron for the invitation to participate in this volume and their guidance as editors. We also wish to thank the anonymous reviewers for their constructive criticism, which has helped us to hone our arguments, though any remaining failures of fact or logic are solely our own. Field research in Oaxaca was supported by a Sachar Award from Brandeis University and aided immensely by the generosity of Ethelia Ruiz Medrano, Marcus Winter, and the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia of Mexico. Field research providing archaeological data in the Yaxchilan border zone was conducted by the Sierra del Lacandón Regional Archaeology Project, directed by Charles Golden, Andrew Scherer, and Rosaura Vasquez, with support from the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc. (grants 02020, 05027, and 07043), the National Geographic Society (grants 7575-04 and 7636-04), the National Science Foundation (grants 0406472 and 0715463), Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, H. John Heinz III Charitable Trust Grants for Latin American Archeology, the J. M. Kaplan Fund through the World Monuments Fund, Wagner College, Baylor University, the Theodore and Jane Norman Fund and the Jane's Fund from the Latin American and Latino Studies program at Brandeis University, and Brown University. Golden and Scherer thank the Fundación Defensores de la Naturaleza for their ongoing support and assistance and the Instituto de Antropología e Historia of Guatemala for permission to conduct this research.

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