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CHAPTER EIGHT

ALTAR EGOS

*Domestic Ritual and Social Identity
in Postclassic Cholula, Mexico*

GEOFFREY G. McCAFFERTY

INTRODUCTION

Domestic ritual is a defining practice in social reproduction. It can provide significant points of contrast for distinguishing social identities, such as ethnicity, gender, class, and religion—defining the “us” as opposed to the “them.” It can take different forms, including religious and secular celebrations, as well as mundane practices such as cooking, childcare, and yard work. Behavioral associations constitute fundamental elements in definitions of self, whereas shared rituals are primordial processes for the construction of group identity. Objects of domestic ritual frame these shared moments, serving as materializations of emotional ties. Christmas decorations and wedding rings are passed down through generations, adding time depth to these links. Foodways, including preparation as well as consumption practices, provide a multisensory mosaic of flavors, smells, and activities that orient at the same time that they organize. From

my own experience I think of the annual battles over Northern-style white bread stuffing as opposed to my wife's cornbread dressing, as the Civil War reignites every Thanksgiving. Does the altar-like placement of the television set—adorned with family photos (ancestor worship?), the *TV Guide* (an almanac for predicting the future?), and the remote control (a wand of power?)—constitute the ritual center of early twenty-first-century houses?

Archaeological evaluation of pre-Columbian domestic contexts can reveal similar patterns relating to ritual practices. This chapter will consider domestic remains from the site of Cholula, Puebla, Mexico, a Postclassic urban center famous for its religious and economic importance (Figures 0.1 and 0.2). Cholula is known from ethnohistorical and archaeological evidence as a city that has been continuously occupied for more than 3,000 years (G. McCafferty 1996a). It also offers potential for ethnographic studies of traditional practice and modern development (e.g., Bonfil Batalla 1973). Among other aspects of its culture history, Cholula was a multiethnic city subject to several ethnic invasions and consequent factionalism (G. McCafferty 2003). I will draw on ethnographic and ethnohistoric sources to inform interpretations of the archaeological evidence from an Early Postclassic house from the UA-1 locus on the campus of the Universidad de las Américas, Puebla.

Household archaeology offers an important contrast to traditional studies of ceremonial centers and the palaces of the rich and famous. As noted by Jon Lohse in Chapter 1, the *Dominant Ideology Thesis* has long been the paradigm that shaped Mesoamerican archaeology, with the implication that elites constructed society in their image and non-elites had no choice but to follow. This thesis ignores important alternatives developed in allied social sciences (Abercrombie et al. 1980; Scott 1985, 1990; Wolf 1999) and elaborated in Marxist archaeology (Miller and Tilley 1984; Paynter and McGuire 1991), in which dominant ideologies are juxtaposed against strategies of resistance. Resistance can take many guises, from outright rebellion to subtle twisting of cultural norms to archaisms that emphasize the past over a less palatable present (see Joyce and Weller, Chapter 6). In addition to resistance are concepts of cultural pluralism that can include social identities such as ethnicity, gender, status, and religion. Urban centers are defined by multiculturalism, and conceptualizations of Mesoamerican cities should incorporate this principle. The result of all of these alternatives is a postmodern cacophony of agency, as a multitude of social actors strategically manipulated their lives in dialectical relationship with their cultural surroundings. Instead of assuming static behav-

ioral norms, this approach assumes diversity and seeks to reveal patterns from the bottom up as more and more examples generate similarities as well as specialized outliers.

The use of household archaeology to generate patterns of past social behavior is still in relative infancy (but see contributions in MacEachern et al. 1989; Santley and Hirth 1993; and Wilk and Ashmore 1988), and therefore it is most tenuous to attempt generalizations from a handful of case studies (but see Olson 2001). The problem is even more acute in Cholula, where only one Postclassic house has been investigated in detail (McCafferty 1992). Yet even if generalizations are not possible, the explanation of the UA-1 Structure 1 house and its associated material culture is important because they can be compared with other Postclassic houses of Central Mexico and also with ethnohistorical and ethnographic data.

Was the UA-1 Structure 1 a “commoner” house? Because this structure is unique in Cholula’s archaeological record, this determination is still subject to speculation. The site locus was more than one kilometer from the Early Postclassic site center surrounding the Great Pyramid, presumably where elite residences would have been located. The four-room structure measured only about 60 square meters in area, at the low end of dwelling sizes from Aztec Cihuatecpan (Evans and Abrams 1988). The presence of architectural elements, such as painted plaster floors and walls, an altar, *temazcal*, and evidence of decorative façades, however, all points to investment above the level of the simplest of the Cihuatecpan houses. Thus, although this household might have had some wealth, it probably was not an elite household. It should serve, therefore, as a contrast to dominant ideologies of Cholula. Until more comparative examples have been adequately excavated, analyzed, and published, however, questions of the degree of representativeness will remain.

Although little is known of the commoners of Cholula, ethnohistorical sources provide a relatively vivid account of the dominant society of the Postclassic. This ideology revolved around the cult of Quetzalcoatl, with a prominent role played by the long-distance merchants who were also associated with the ritual center (Rojas 1927 [1581]). Cholula was a center for highly skilled artisans who produced ceramics and textiles in the Mixteca-Puebla style, and the Cholula market was noted for its fine metal- and feather-work (Durán 1971 [1576–1579]). As a pilgrimage center, nobles from many parts of Central Mexico maintained “vacation homes” for their visits during festivals. Because Cholula was the focus of several ethnic migrations, its population consisted of a complex mix of Olmeca-

Xicallanca, Tlalteca-Chichimeca, as well as other groups (Olivera and Reyes 1969). The conclusion of this chapter will examine how the UA-1 Structure 1 household compares with the norms of the dominant society.

HOUSEHOLD RITUAL IN ETHNOGRAPHIC AND ETHNOHISTORIC SOURCES

Pre-Columbian Cholula was noted as one of the major ceremonial centers of ancient Mesoamerica, featuring the largest and longest-used pyramid in the world (Marquina 1970; McCafferty 1996b, 2001a). During the Postclassic, Cholula was known as the center for the pan-Mesoamerican cult of Quetzalcoatl (Carrasco 1982; McCafferty 1999, 2001a; Ringle et al. 1998). People made long pilgrimages to the temples of the city, and these pilgrims included nobles who came to Cholula for confirmation of their semi-divine authority (Rojas 1927 [1581]). Abundant ethnohistorical records describe public ritual of the city. Unfortunately, but not uncharacteristically, domestic ritual received only minimal attention from Colonial period chroniclers. Since Cholula continued as a major center for religious pilgrimage and celebration, however, ethnographic and ethnohistoric sources provide useful information that may relate to prehispanic practices (e.g., Bonfil Batalla 1973; Olivera 1970).

Historical accounts of Cholula households indicate the importance of religious altars. Fredrick Starr (1908:110) recorded that one-room houses in late-nineteenth-century Cholula featured pictures of saints and the Virgin pinned to the wall with burned candles in front of them. Adolph Bandelier (1976 [1884]) found that indigenous houses in the mountains near Cholula featured a main room, or *teopantzinili*, with an altar consisting of a wooden shelf on which were a religious image, vases for flowers, and "little trinkets of clay or wood" (1976:143).

These historical accounts bear a strong resemblance to ethnohistorical descriptions of Aztec household organization based on Colonial legal documents found by Susan Kellogg (1993). Specific rooms were labelled *teopantzonca*, or "rooms with an altar." The Spanish *corregidor* of Cholula, Gabriel de Rojas, wrote in the late sixteenth century that "there is no house that does not have an altar with many images of saints" (1581:31; reprinted in Bonfil Batalla 1973:43, translation by author). Other shrines were described as being in courtyards. One of the first Catholic priests in New Spain, Fray Toribio de Benavente Motolinia, recorded this description of domestic ritual:

Each day women awoke early with a smiling heart and placed their offering to the gods on an altar in the courtyard of their house. On the altar was a round brazier [*braseiro*] with a burning coal and there the woman offered incense to the same fire kept in honor of the god, and/or in honor of the sun and the other gods. She also placed on the altar a clay vessel [*vaso*] with feet, filled it with clean water, and added flour of maize or *tlaulli* and also offered this to the gods. She then took some coals in a vessel like a frying pan but of clay, and holding this by the handle, threw incense onto the coals. And then she raised her hands with the brazier to the four directions. She also placed [on the altar] some vessels with food and later cleaned the vessels. To this offering they said, "Tlatlatchipahuachuatl," which means "the beautiful woman, the earth." It should be noted that with this offering to the sun, to fire, to the earth, and to the other gods, they believed that they would have a good day, and that the sun would follow its course well and illuminate the earth, and by this bear fruit and maintain life. (Motolinia 1996 [1540]:433 in Smith 2002:98)

Household rituals were probably the unifying symbol of the social group and incorporated a specific gender ideology in ritual practice. In addition to the above quotation, Diego Durán (Heyden 1994:164-165) noted that the maintenance of the household altar was one of the primary responsibilities for female members of the group. Elizabeth Brumfiel (1996) demonstrates the importance of female imagery in Aztec domestic ritual through a study of Postclassic figurines, concluding that in contrast to a male-centered state ideology, female figurines predominate in household contexts, perhaps in resistance to dominant ideologies. Female figurines are also abundant in Postclassic Morelos (Smith 2002:103; Olson, Chapter 9). This evidence supports the importance of female-centered domestic ritual.

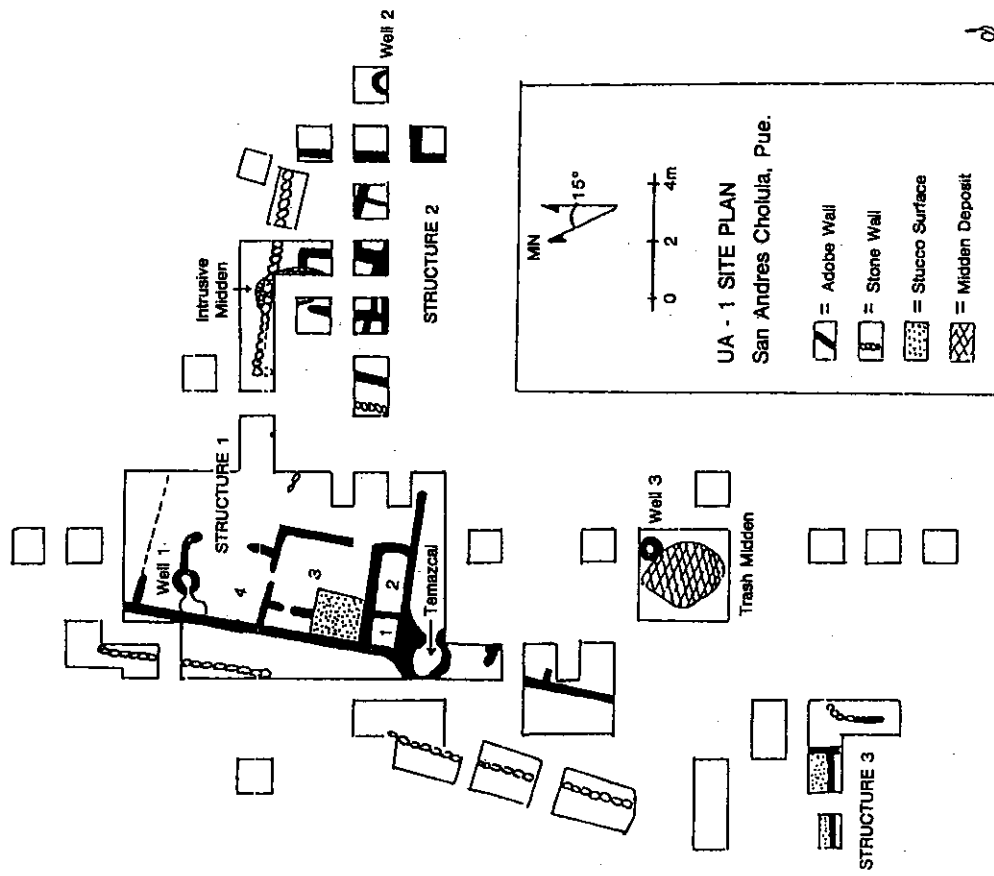
Susan Evans (1990) has identified ritual activities associated with *temazcales*, especially those relating to curing rituals accompanied by female figurines, and Durán (1971 [1576-1579]:270) reported idols and offerings placed within the sweatbath. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún's encyclopedic *Florentine Codex* provides a detailed description of midwifery practiced in the *temazcal* (1950-1982 [1547-1585], 6:149-160). The firebox was called the *xictli*, or "navel," in reference to the belief that the sweatbath was the womb of the Mother Goddess (Sullivan 1982:18), as further evidence for the important role of women in domestic ideology. The goddess of midwives and healers, known by the Aztecs as *Toci*, was closely associated with *temazcales* (*Codex Magliabechiano* 1983 [1903]:figure 65).

Finally, ethnohistoric sources indicate that burials were often part of domestic ritual. The Aztecs believed that different fates awaited the deceased depending on the cause of death. The most common burial practice was for individuals, along with their worldly possessions, to be cremated in preparation for the journey to Mictlan, the land of the dead located in the distant north. The bones were then placed in a pot, with a greenstone that represented the heart, and were buried in the home (Sahagún 1950–1982 [1547–1585], 3:43–45). If the deceased was a noble, then slaves were killed and cremated to accompany him or her. Diego Durán (Horcasitas and Heyden 1971:121–122) also described the variety of burial practices: “Some people were buried in the fields; others in the courtyards of their own homes; others were taken to shrines in the wood; others were cremated and their ashes were buried in temples.” Gabriel de Rojas (1927 [1581]:164, translation by author) described the indigenous burial practice at Cholula: “[W]hen they died they were buried in front of an idol, in a round hole, not lying extended but rather drawn up or squatting.”

The distinction between cremation among the Aztec and direct, primary interment at Cholula is one notable difference between the two Postclassic cultures. For example, numerous pots containing cremated remains and often accompanied by a single greenstone bead were found by Edward Sisson (1974:31–33) at Late Postclassic Coxcatlan Viejo, part of the Aztec empire to the south of Cholula. Otherwise, however, relatively few Aztec cremation burials have been found. Non-cremation burials have occasionally been found in Postclassic residential areas, as at Cihuateopan in the Valley of Mexico (Evans and Abrams 1988), Tetla-11 at Chalcatzingo (Norr 1987) and Cuexcomate and Capilco (Smith 2002) in the Valley of Morelos, Tula (Healan 1988), and Coxcatlan in the Tehuacan Valley (Sisson 1973, 1974). In part because of the scarcity of Postclassic burials and the relatively high percentage of adults in burial populations, Michael Smith (2002:108–109) suggests that there may have been cemeteries, perhaps associated with public buildings or with older parts of sites. In this sense, the hundreds of Postclassic burials found at Cholula’s Great Pyramid (López Alonso et al. 1976), largely abandoned during the Middle and Late Postclassic, may constitute a cemetery (discussed later).

THE UA-1 STRUCTURE 1 COMPLEX

This chapter draws on these historical and ethnohistorical insights to interpret material remains found at a Middle (A.D. 900–1050) to Late (A.D.



8.1. Plan of UA-1, Cholula, Mexico.

1050–1200) Tlachihualtepetl period house from the eastern edge of prehispanic Cholula. The UA-1 project was conducted as a field school in 1968 under the direction of the late Daniel Wolfman (1968; McCafferty 1992). It completely exposed Structure 1 and sampled the Early Cholollan (A.D. 1200–1400) Structure 2 (Figure 8.1). Ceramics from discrete depositional contexts were seriated and linked to radiocarbon dates to redefine the Postclassic chronology (McCafferty 1996a, 2001b).

Structure 1 is notable because it seems to have been abandoned rapidly, probably as the result of fire and perhaps militarism (McCafferty 1992, 2003). A thick layer of ash covered the floor beneath the collapsed walls, the stucco floor was charred, and a high concentration of projectile points was found in the area (102 points or point fragments in just over 200 m² of excavated area). A nearly empty sub-floor cache box was found that contained a piece of carved bone with ash at the bottom, suggesting that it was open when the house burned, possibly evidence of looting or the hurried recovery of family heirlooms. Finally, a group burial was found in Room 4, where a mature woman and five children were placed in a hole dug through the plaster floor. Some of the skeletal remains projected above the floor level, indicating that interment occurred after the building was abandoned, but the burials were sealed beneath the collapsed adobe walls of the structure. A three-centimeter layer of ash was also found at the base of the burial pit.

Structure 1 featured four rooms, two porch areas, and a possible *temazcal* sweatbath. It backed up against a compound wall and faced onto a patio that included a trash pit; artifacts from the midden cross-mended with artifacts from the floor contact, indicating that they were part of the same systemic context at the time of abandonment (Schiffer 1972). Room 1 was very small, barely 1 x 1 m, and may have been connected to the adjacent sweatbath. Room 2 measured 1 x 2 m, with a variety of objects on the floor, including *comales*, *manos*, *metates*, and remains of a spinning and weaving kit with spindle whorls, bone awl, and a bowl with dye. Room 3 was the largest room; it featured a raised platform, a storage cubicle, a three-stone hearth, and the previously mentioned cache box. Room 4 was probably added after the original three, as indicated by a doorway connecting it to Room 3 that had apparently been made by breaking through an existing wall. It contained another hearth, as well as the multiple burial described previously and an intrusive well dating to the Late Cholollan phase (A.D. 1400–1520). The porch areas may have been partially covered by the roof, and a low curb would have diverted rainwater away from this area and the interior rooms. The entire structure was elevated above the natural ground surface by 50 cm of rubble fill, although it could not be determined if this platform had been intentionally filled or simply constructed over the remains of an earlier structure. It was not determined if this house was isolated or part of a patio group with other contemporary residential structures. Seriation of ceramics from the adjacent Structure 2 clearly indicated that it was from a separate ceramic phase, so this struc-

ture may represent a subsequent but not contemporary occupation of the area.

Based on the presence of multiple small rooms, hearths, domestic artifacts, remains relating to both male and female activities, and adult and child skeletons, it was concluded that

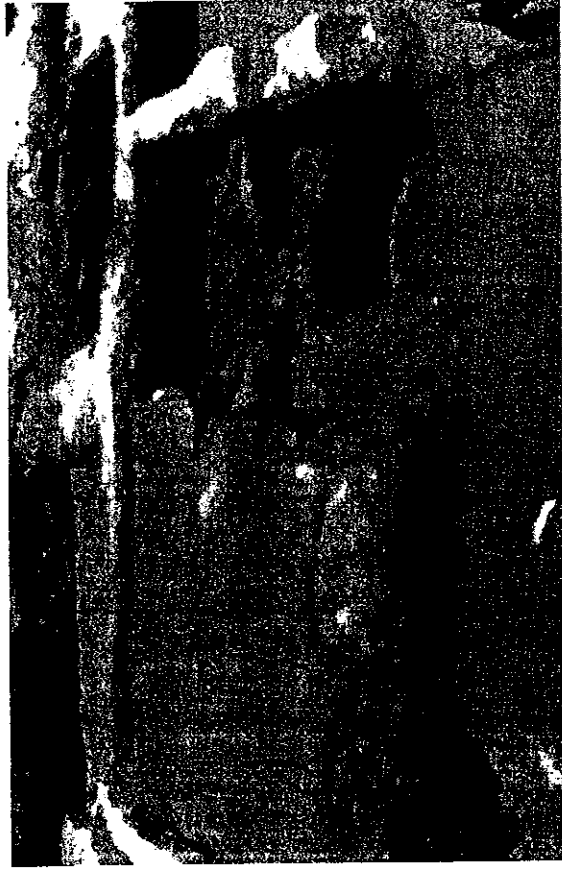
- (1) Structure 1 was a residential structure occupied between approximately A.D. 900 and 1200;
- (2) it was occupied for an extended period of time, resulting in modification of the structure (perhaps in relation to the domestic cycle as mature children married but continued to live in the same household);
- (3) the house was destroyed by fire and rapidly abandoned, leaving important artifacts in situ and thus providing valuable insights into the systemic context of domestic behavior; and
- (4) although the presence of some architectural elaboration (e.g., altar, sub-floor cache box, and painted stucco floors) suggests a degree of wealth, the small overall size of the house and distance from the urban center suggest that this structure was a non-elite, or commoner, household. (McCafferty 1992)

EARLY POSTCLASSIC DOMESTIC RITUAL

At Cholula, the UA-1 Structure 1 provides important information on domestic ritual and, through these data, insights into the construction of social identity in the Early Postclassic. Architectural elements and sub-floor features, as well as artifacts, relate to ritual practices that took place within the residential complex.

ARCHITECTURE

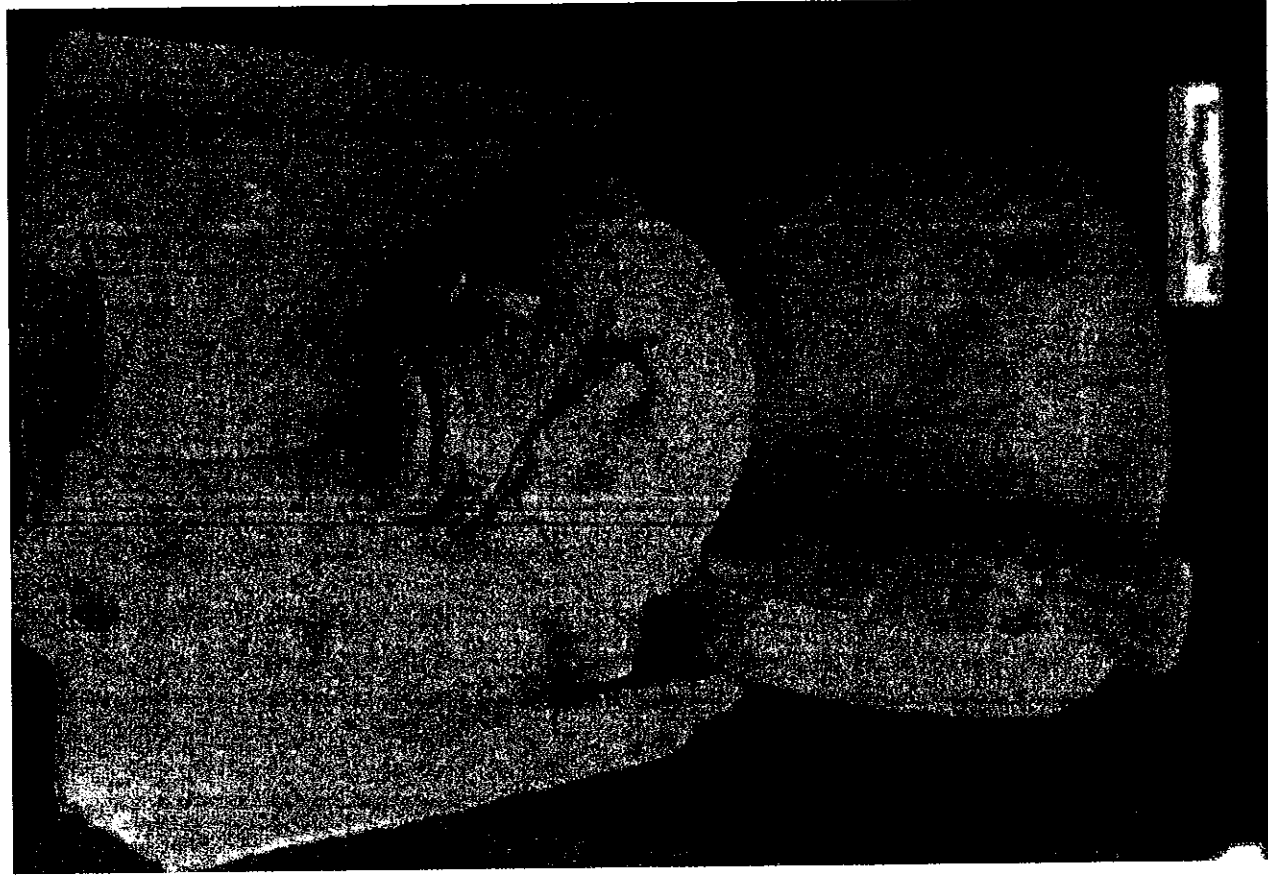
The most prominent architectural feature for inferring domestic ritual is the low platform from Room 3 (Figure 8.2). It is approximately square, measuring 1.34 x 1.38 m and 37 cm in height. The platform was made of adobe bricks covered by a thin layer of mud and then a layer of plaster. This structural form is similar to what Susan Evans and Elliot Abrams (1988) identified as a bench or sleeping platform from the Aztec site of Cihuateopan but also corresponds to what Sisson (1973) called "altars" from Postclassic Coxcatlan in the Tehuacan Valley. The UA-1 Structure 1 platform was found with two small bowls, a spindle whorl, ceramic ball, and bone on the surface, perhaps as offerings similar to the "little trinkets



8.2. Platform altar in Room 3, UJA-1, Cholula, Mexico.

of clay and wood" mentioned by Bandlerier (1976 [1884]:143). Adjacent to the adobe platform was a cubicle containing ceramic urns, and in front of the platform were sub-floor pits containing whole vessels, probably representing ritual interments. These features reinforce the interpretation that the platform functioned as an altar.

The cubicle measured only about 1 m in length by 30 cm in depth and opened off Room 3 near the platform/altar. Inside the cubicle were one fragmentary and two complete urns, which measured about 30 cm in height, were biconical in form, and featured appliqué decoration on the exterior in anthropomorphic form (Figure 8.3). Similar vessels from Cholula are illustrated in Florencia Müller (1978:204–205). Sisson (1991/92) found more examples of these vessel forms, which he called *xantiles*, in the Tehuacan Valley and inferred that the iconography represented deities. Similar urns are also known from Cacaxtla, where they are brightly painted and include "Maya" blue paint. The anthropomorphic appliqués resemble deities and warriors and may fulfill a role similar to that of the urns from the Zapotec religion that have been interpreted as representing semi-divine ancestors (Marcus 1983; Sellen 2002), although the Zapotec urns are characteristically found in burial contexts. Since no comparable form is known from Classic period Cholula, it is likely that the use of *xantiles* is a ritual practice introduced during the Epiclassic period, possibly



8.3. Anthropomorphic braziers, or *xantiles*, found in the niche next to the altar, UJA-1, Cholula, Mexico.

associated with the Olmeca-Xicallanca ethnic group (McCafferty 2000). It is uncertain how the *xanilles* may have functioned in the UA-1 Structure 1 context, but their proximity to the platform/altar suggests their placement on the altar during special ceremonies.

A three-stone hearth, dug about 12 cm into the stucco floor, was located to the northeast of the adobe platform/altar. A second hearth was found in Room 4; it was 24 cm in diameter and lined with potsherds. Much attention has been focused on the cosmic significance of the three-stone hearth in recent archaeological literature, particularly for the Maya for whom the hearthstones represented a world axis (Freidel et al. 1993; Headrick 2001; Schele and Mathews 1998). For the Aztec, the word for hearth (*xictli*) was the same as for navel, the center of the body and link to the womb (see also reference to the *temazcal* firebox). Thus, the three-stone hearth may be conceptualized as the axis mundi of the domestic sphere (e.g., Sahagún 1950-1982 [1547-1585], 6:131). That UA-1 Structure 1 had two hearths may further indicate that it was a multifamily dwelling, perhaps relating to developments in the domestic cycle.

In front of the platform/altar and beside the hearth were several small pits dug through the plaster floor, with complete vessels (bowls) placed at the bottom of the feature. In the northeast corner of the room a buried tripod bowl contained a greenstone celt. Sahagún (1950-1982 [1547-1585], 6:131) recorded the Aztec custom of burying the placentas of baby girls beside the family hearth as a means of ensuring that the girl would remain in the home until marriage and would be a "good wife." A similar practice was noted ethnographically by Eisie Clews Parsons (1936:76) from Mitla, Oaxaca, with the additional comment that the bowls were covered to prevent blindness (see Chapter 7); covered bowls were recovered from the Zapotec Tlailotlacan compound at Teotihuacan (Spence 2002:59). Although no organic materials were noted from the ceramic vessels at UA-1 Structure 1, it can be speculated that these bowls may have been part of a related practice of ritual interment specifically related to female ideology.

Adjacent to Structure 1 was an unusual structure that most closely corresponds to a *temazcal*, or sweatbath. It was circular in form, about 1 m in diameter, and with a narrow passageway opening onto the main chamber (Figure 8.4). The adobe walls were fire reddened. The overall form is similar to *temazcales* recorded ethnographically in the Cholula area by Gloria Castillo Rella (1970:206-209; Figure 8.4). These measure about 1 m in diameter and feature a firebox connected to the main chamber so that heat and herbal vapors could enter the occupied bathing area. As



8.4. *Temazcal*, or sweatbath, with circular seating area connected to tunnel to firebox, UA-1, Cholula, Mexico.

noted, sweatbaths were important arenas for ritual practice, as they were used in healing and also in preparation for and cleansing after childbirth (Sahagún 1950-1982 [1547-1585], 6:149-160). Notably, a figurine of a human face with closed eyes was found in the passageway from the firebox and may represent an object used in a curing ritual, as indicated by Durán (1971 [1576-1579]:270).

MORTUARY PRACTICES

Skeletal remains of nineteen individuals were found at UA-1, with eighteen associated with the Structure 1 house. Preliminary identification of the skeletons was prepared by Arturo Romano of the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico, and recorded in Wolfman's preliminary report (1968; also McCafferty 1992:143-157, 207-220). Information on location, orientation, burial position, age, and sex is presented in Table 8.1. Seventeen of the burials were primary interments, and only Burials #13 and #14 were secondary. The flexed, seated posture was the predominant burial position, and where orientation could be determined, all but one of the skeletons were facing in a northerly direction, toward Mictlan, the Nahua land of the dead.

Although most of the burials were found with Structure 1, only Burial #8 can be stratigraphically linked with the occupation phase of the house. (Seriation suggests that the S6/W3 burials may also have been contemporary with the occupation; see discussion later in this chapter.) Burial #8 was placed in a pit dug into the stucco floor of the southeast corner of Room 4 prior to the construction of the overlying wall. The skeleton was of a child, age four to six years, with evidence for tabular erect skull shaping. An obsidian blade was the only object associated with the burial.

The other seventeen burials from Structure 1 were associated with post-abandonment processes; although based on the relationship of the burials to collapsing adobe walls, it is likely that the interments took place soon after the house burned. The most complex of the burial contexts was a multiple burial involving six individuals (#4, #5, #6, #7, #11, and #12) who were placed in a pit dug through the floor of Room 4, just east of the main structural wall. Burials #4, #5, #6, and #7 were enclosed within a small adobe enclosure, whereas #11 and #12 were outside of the enclosure, suggesting that they may have been interred at a later time (Figure 8.5). Burial #4 was an adult female, and the other individuals were sub-adults (#12 was identified as an infant). Grave goods included beads (including one located in the mouth of Burial #7), a ceramic ball, a blue-green stone celt, shells (including a shell whistle), two obsidian eccentrics (including a red obsidian butterfly), a Cocoyotla Black on Natural bowl, and a concentration of red seeds. The greatest concentration of objects was associated with Burial #7, a child.

A second concentration of burials was located in unit S6/W3, south of the house, against an adobe wall aligned with the main north/south wall of Structure 1. The burials rested on a hard-packed surface and were

Table 8.1. Burial data for Structure UA-1, Cholula, Mexico (after Wolfman 1968:table 4)

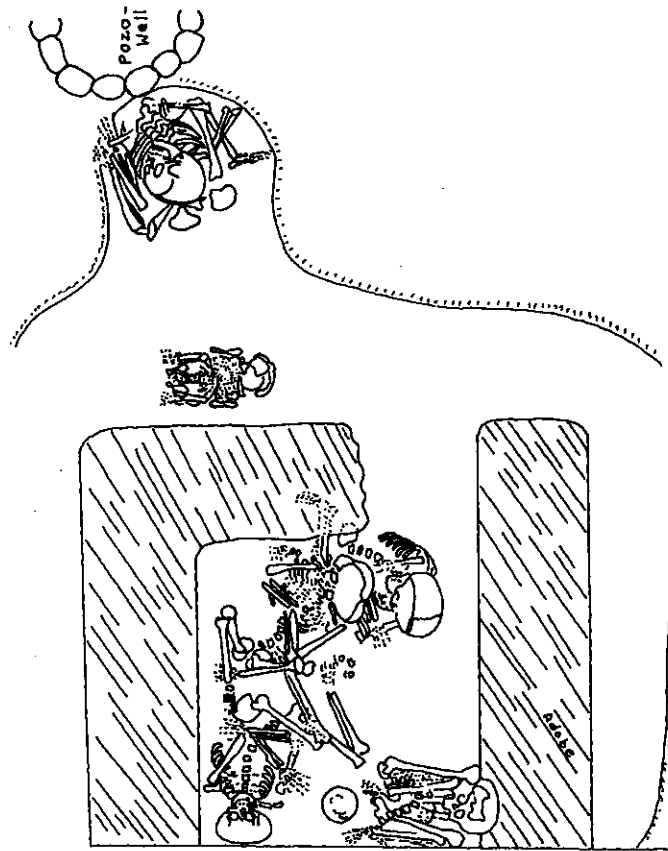
Burial #	Orientation	Position	Age	Grave Goods
1	—	—	fetus	none
2	—	—	fetus	none
3	north	seated flexed	infant	bowl rim, obsidian fragment, copper ring
4	north	seated flexed	adult	bowl, red seeds ¹
5	northwest	dorsal flexed	child	1
6	east	dorsal flexed	child	1
7	north	seated flexed	child	beads, a ceramic ball, greenstone celc, shell, shell whistle, obsidian eccentric "M," obsidian eccentric butterfly
8	north	seated flexed	child	obsidian blade
9	north	seated flexed	child	bowl?
10	north	dorsal flexed	infant	bowl
11	north	dorsal flexed	infant	1
12	northeast	ventral flexed	child	1
13	—	—	adult	none
14	north	seated flexed	infant	2 large sherds
15	—	—	fetus	none
16	north	seated flexed	infant	bowl
17	?	seated flexed	child	obsidian blade, large sherds
18	?	?	infant	obsidian blade, large sherds
19	north	seated flexed	child	carved bone, polishing stone, chert projectile point

Notes:

- Several objects were found in proximity to Burials #4, #5, #6, #7, #11, and #12 but could not be clearly associated with individual skeletons, nor are they clearly grave goods. These items included a chert point, an obsidian scraper, a spindle whorl, and a figurine head.
- Objects were also found with Burials #9, #10, #14, #16, #17, and #18 that could not be associated with any individual skeleton. These items included a high frequency of obsidian blades and scrapers, two projectile points, two figurines, a spindle whorl, and numerous ceramic balls.

covered by the collapsed wall. Based on the seriation of associated ceramics (McCafferty 2001b:109), this context may date to the occupation phase prior to the final abandonment of Structure 1. Burials #17 and #18 were interred together inside an *olla*, with an obsidian blade and several large potsherds. Bowls were also found with Burials #9, #10, and #16, and large sherds were found with Burial #14. Other objects included frequent obsidian blades and scrapers, two projectile points, two figurines, a spindle whorl, and numerous ceramic balls.

A single Torre Polychrome bowl contained three fetuses (Burials #1, #2, and #15). The bowl was found in the trash midden located in the house patio, but it is unclear if the burials were directly associated with the midden deposit or if the bowl was intrusive and therefore postdated the feature.



8.5. Multiple burial at Cholula, Mexico.

Torre Polychrome was a common ceramic type in the Trash Midden assemblage, totaling 8 percent of all rim sherds (McCafferty 2001b:93, table 5.2), so the bowl with the three fetus burials is not obviously anachronistic.

Two isolated burials were also found in Structure 1. Burial #3 was an infant buried in a flexed seated position, located in the porch area south of the house wall. It was badly disturbed, perhaps because of a wall collapse after interment. A large bowl rim was found beneath the burial, and a piece of obsidian and a copper ring with a filigree design of an anthropomorphic face were also associated with the burial. Burial #19 was a young child buried above the floor level near the intersection of two walls in Room 1. Objects found near the burial included a piece of carved bone, a polishing stone, and a white chert projectile point, although these could not be conclusively related to the burial as grave goods.

The mortuary remains found associated with Structure 1 represent primarily children, who were buried with modest grave goods and minimal formal preparation. They provide a contrast to the demographic profile of the burials found at the Great Pyramid of Cholula (Hayward 1986;

López Alonso et al. 1976; G. McCafferty and S. McCafferty 2002), where children made up only 42 percent of the 302 identifiable Postclassic burials. Life tables of the Postclassic burials from the ceremonial center indicate a low life expectancy, with most individuals in the 25–34-year age class (Hayward 1986:219–220). Although Hayward attempted to generalize from these data about the Postclassic Cholula population, it seems likely that the dramatically different pattern found at the UA-1 domestic context indicates a distinct burial strategy and therefore should be used to supplement and correct the Great Pyramid's burial population. The Postclassic burials at the Great Pyramid should be considered a specialized cemetery area, perhaps similar to the suggestion of Smith (2002) that adults and elites may have been buried in separate sectors of Postclassic sites, away from the residential zones. As such, the Great Pyramid "cemetery" is probably more representative of dominant ideological norms than is the UA-1 household context.

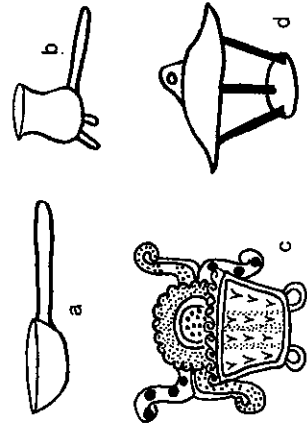
ARTIFACTS

In addition to the architectural and mortuary features, numerous artifacts relating to domestic ritual were recovered from Structure 1, including incense burners, musical instruments, and figurines.

Incense was burned in many different ritual practices, as the smoke represented a form of communication with the supernatural. Pre-Columbian pictorial manuscripts depict incensing ceremonies occurring in shrines and before ancestral bundles (e.g., *Codex Seiden* 1964:9-1). Spanish chroniclers commented that incense was a regular feature of religious rituals, including domestic ritual (Motolinía 1996 [1540]:433; Sahagún 1950–1982 [1547–1585]).

Four different *incensario* forms were found in the UA-1 excavations: long-handled *sahumadores*, tripod *incensarios* with carved lattice sides, pinched appliqué *braseros*, and lantern censers (Figure 8.6). The long-handled *sahumadores* were of the San Pedro Polished Red type and were often decorated with incised patterns filled with a gray graphite paint. No complete examples were found, but about 1 percent of the UA-1 Trash Midden ceramics were *sahumador* fragments (McCafferty 2001b:114, table 5.12), suggesting that their use was fairly common within the domestic context.

The carved lattice *incensarios* were rare at UA-1 but are notable because similar vessel forms have been found at Tula and in the Mixteca



8.6. Common forms of UA-1 incense burners, Cholula, Mexico: (a) long-handled sahumadores, (b) tripod incensarios, (c) pinched appliqué braseros, and (d) lantern censers.

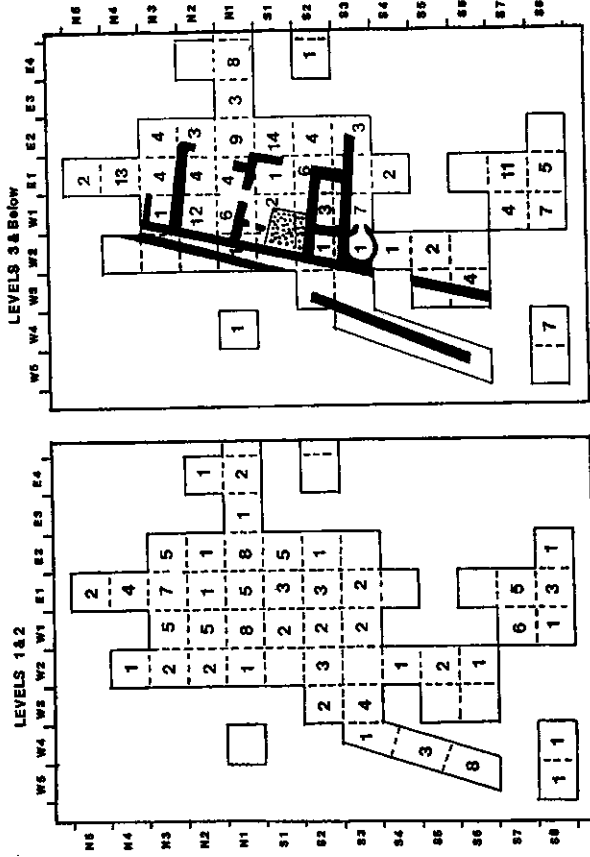
Alta, indicating a wide regional distribution of this particular form.

They were also of the San Pedro Polished Red type, with a well-burnished exterior surface treatment and occasional black painted decoration.

The pinched appliqué *braseros* have thick walls that are often striated and coated in white stucco and then occasionally painted in blue or black. They typically have pinched nubs on the exterior and occasionally include appliqué "cords" of clay on the rim. Vessels resembling this form appear in the *Codex Borgia* (e.g., 1963:folio 18), a pre-Columbian pictorial manuscript that was likely painted in the Cholula area (Nicholson 1966; Nicholson and Quiñones Keber 1994:xii). *Braseros* occur in the Cerro Zapotecas Sandy Plain type and again made up about 1 percent of the Trash Midden deposit (McCafferty 2001b:114, table 5.12).

The final form of incense burner is called a "lantern" censer. This form consists of a round base and three supports holding up a "roof" (Figure 8.6d; see Müller [1978:128–129] for a complete example, although it is unclear if the placement of the lantern censer within a tripod bowl is contextually accurate). The roof has a loop handle on top, where it could be suspended, and often a coating of soot on the interior ceiling. The interior of the roof is often rough, like the bottom of a *comal*, but can be distinguished by its smaller diameter, greater pitch, remains of the three support posts, and occasional incised decoration on the upper surface to resemble a thatched roof. Smith (2002:101) identifies these as "scored censers" and reports them from domestic middens in Morelos (also Séjourné 1970:figure 39; 1983:figure 119). They constituted about 0.5 percent of the UA-1 Trash Midden assemblage (McCafferty 2001b:114, table 5.12).

Another artifact class that probably had a ritual function was the ceramic flute. No complete examples were found, but numerous fragments of thin-walled, ceramic tubes about 2 cm in diameter were found, many of which had perforations that would have served as finger holes. The use of flutes is known from ethnohistorical accounts relating to public ritual,



8.7. Distribution of figurines at UA-1 Structure 1, Cholula, Mexico.

especially during the Feast of Toxcatl, dedicated to the god Tezcatlipoca (Olivier 2002). Traditional flutes are still played in Cholula to welcome the sunrise during ritual occasions. Their presence in the UA-1 household context may imply use in domestic rituals or, alternatively, that members of the UA-1 household performed in public rituals but discarded their broken instruments in their private trash midden.

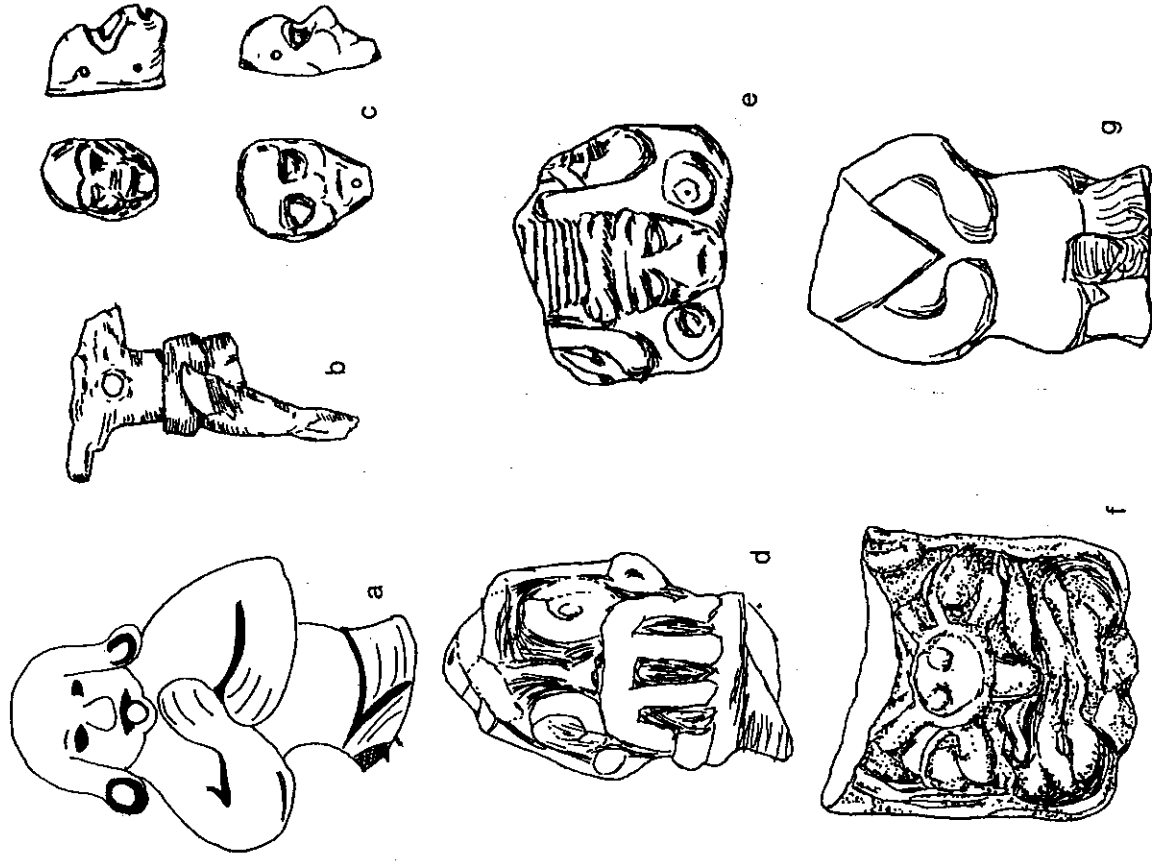
Small ceramic figurines had a somewhat ambiguous function, but that undoubtedly included domestic ritual (see Olson, Chapter 9, for a discussion of Postclassic figurines from Morelos, Mexico). Three hundred eighty-nine figurines were found in the UA-1 excavation, with 154 found in association with Structure 1 (Figure 8.7). Although figurine fragments were found in virtually every 2 x 2 m excavation unit, they clearly were concentrated in specific locations, usually in the porch areas just outside the house or in the Trash Midden. The only concentration within the house occurred in the northwest corner of Room 4, a possible kitchen. There was a relative absence of figurines in Room 3, which was associated with the platform/altar. Based on the spatial distribution, a more comfortable interpretation would be that most of these figurines were used in areas associated with children's play.

Of the figurine forms found associated with Structure 1, the great majority were anthropomorphic, with few bird and mammal (including monkey) figures. Only one of these objects was complete enough to include both a head and torso (Figure 8.8a), and it probably represented a woman with arms crossed against her chest as if holding something; she wore ear spools, a large lip plug, and a skirt. Interestingly, this figurine was not broken below the waist but ended in a bulb of clay as if it were intended to have a cloth wrapped around it, as seen in some historic dolls. A second figurine was headless but included a torso and one leg (Figure 8.8b). This figurine was of a male, based on lack of breasts and use of a *maxtlatl* loincloth. Notable about this figurine was a circular hole in the chest to represent heart sacrifice.

The majority of the other diagnostic figurines were heads broken from the torso. Some of these had ear spools or headdresses, but there was little diagnostic symbolism to identify these items with specific deities. Of the few figurines that included gender-related attributes, females outnumbered males. A curious feature of several of the faces was that they were concave on the back and featured perforations so that they could be tied onto other figurines, or perhaps onto fingers, as masks (Figure 8.8c).

The most common identifiable figurine form was of Tlaloc (Figure 8.8d), the Nahua storm god characterized by goggle eyes and a long *bigote*, or moustache, which covers the mouth. There was one probable female head with a headdress of draped cloth that may represent a member of an earth/fertility goddess complex, such as Tlazolteotl (Figure 8.8e). A large, flat figure with a nose bar, as well as some of the Tlaloc figures, featured a clay strap on the back, similar to "rings" used in the *Codex Borgia* as identified by Gabriela Uruñuela and colleagues (1996). The prominence of Tlaloc imagery is notable because Tlaloc is not present in the Morelos figurine corpus reported by Smith (2002; also Olson, Chapter 9) and therefore may constitute another difference in commoner ideology separating Cholula from the Aztecs.

Although not technically a figurine, another common deity image was that of the old god, Huehueotēotl, who often appeared as an anthropomorphic vessel support on polychrome bowls. Huehueotēotl was associated with fire, and sculptures of the old fire god with a vessel on his head were made during the Classic period at Teotihuacan (Cowgill 1997). The old god vessel supports may be conceptually related to these earlier sculptures.



8.8. (a) Complete head and torso (UA-1); (b) male sacrificial victim (UA-1); (c) miniature figurine masks; (d) Tlaloc head (UA-1); (e) possible figurine of Tlazolteotl (UA-1); (f) figurine of seated female from Well 3; (g) figurine of standing female from Well 1.

As discussed previously, a figurine was found in the *temazcal* and therefore may represent a ritual context relating to healing. Another context where figurines were found that may have ritual content is in the bottom of wells. Three wells were excavated in the UA-1 project and in two of the three, female figurines were found at the deepest level (the third, Well 2, dated to the historical period). In Well 3, located beneath the Trash Midden, a cross-legged female is seated against a vertical slab, possibly representing a throne back (Figure 8.8f). She is identified as female based on costume elements, including a long skirt and triangular *quechquemil*. She wears a large disk on her chest as a pendant with two circular ap-*pliqués* (similar disk pendants are found on female figures on *xantiles*). Traces of blue paint are found on the figurine. Two nearly identical figurines have been found: one that is illustrated in Noguera's (1954:161, figure b) book on Cholula ceramics and another found by the archaeologist Sergio Suárez Cruz at the bottom of an Early Postclassic well (Suárez C. 1995).

The second UA-1 figurine was found in Well 1, the Late Cholollan phase feature that passed through the floor of Room 4. This example was a slab figurine of a standing female wearing a long skirt and *quechquemil* (Figure 8.8g). All of these figurines were headless, perhaps relating to a ritual termination in which the "spirit" is released (e.g., Mock 1998). The practice of dropping a female figurine into a well may correspond to ethnohistoric accounts of fertility offerings made to the goddess Chalchihuitlicue in order to facilitate conception (Durán 1971 [1576-1579]:269).

In summary, the figurine evidence from Structure 1 does not support their exclusive use in religious ritual, as the greatest concentrations were in porch areas that would probably have been used for daily activities, such as child's play. Additionally, since identifiable deities are rare, most of the figurines are interpreted as representing mortals. Based on these data, I believe that the UA-1 figurines functioned primarily as "action figures" used by children in play and, concurrently, in the enculturation process. The presence of a figurine representing a heart sacrifice may relate to a "commoner ideology" of victimization, but this interpretation is clearly speculative. Those figurines that were found in more ritually significant contexts, such as the *temazcal* and the bottom of wells, may have been used as a means of interacting with supernatural forces to promote curing or fertility. When figurines could be identified with members of the Postclassic pantheon, Tlaloc was the most common deity representation.

FOODWAYS AS DOMESTIC RITUAL

As suggested in the opening commentary on the significance of Thanksgiving food rituals, foodways can carry important symbolic meanings relating to social identity. Learned from an early age, aromas and flavors carry multisensory meanings for self-identification. Special meals are prepared to mark rites of passage and ritual events. The early Colonial accounts provide rich descriptions of the feasts that accompanied different calendar periods (e.g., Durán 1971 [1576-1579]). Archaeological ceramics interpreted from the perspective of vessel form can provide a sensitive means for inferring changing foodways, including both the food items consumed and the rituals practiced in consumption (e.g., feasting).

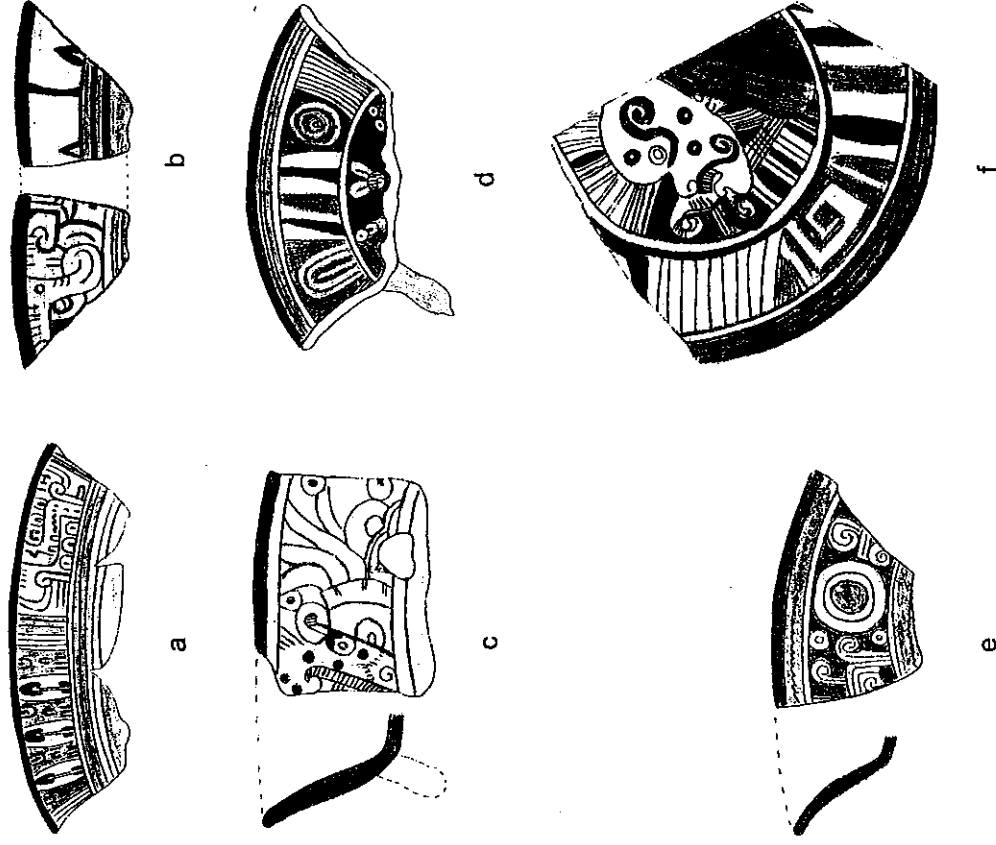
A major shift in Cholula foodways occurred during the Classic to Postclassic transition with the introduction of the comal, a wide, low-profile griddle used primarily for heating tortillas. In the Late Classic domestic context excavated at the Transitio site (McCafferty 1996a), no comal rims were found. An elite residence on the northeast platform of the Great Pyramid contained Early Tlachihualtepetl phase (A.D. 700-900) refuse in construction fill with about 9 percent of all rim sherds from *comales*. The UA-1 Structure 1 contexts correspond to the subsequent phases of the Early Postclassic, and comal rims are even more abundant, averaging about 20 percent and occurring in both Momoxpan Orange and San Andrés Red types (McCafferty 2001b). Similarly high frequencies occur in other Postclassic contexts from Cholula, indicating that tortilla consumption continued as an important component of domestic foodways.

The dramatic increase in tortilla use, as evidenced in the huge proportion of comal fragments in domestic refuse, implies a radical shift in food consumption as well as a significant reallocation of women's labor (Brumfiel 1991). Women were the major food producers in Mesoamerica, and grinding corn for tortillas was a cornerstone of female identity. Ethnographic studies indicate that the preparation of maize dough for tortillas is a physically demanding and labor-intensive practice that would have consumed a large part of the workday, while also keeping women planted in their domestic compound. In contrast, tortillas are a very portable food that may have been produced in part for men who worked relatively far from home (Brumfiel 1991:241). Feasts were noted for the consumption of vast quantities of tortillas, including specially made ritual tortillas with elaborate forms and exotic ingredients (e.g., Sahagún 1950-1982 [1547-1585], 1:19).

Other changes in the Early Postclassic ceramic assemblage at UA-1 further indicate significant changes in domestic foodways. Most apparent is the dramatic increase in decorated serving wares, including the beginnings of the famous Cholula polychrome tradition (McCafferty 1994). Late Classic serving wares were plain, gray/brown conical bowls (Teponitla Burnished Gray/Brown), almost completely lacking in decoration (McCafferty 1996a, 2001b). Changes began in the Epiclassic with a transition that introduced sloppily painted bichrome black-on-orange subhemispherical bowls (Cocoyotla Black on Natural). Beginning in the Middle Tlachuahualepetl phase, polychrome serving wares featured brilliant orange, red, white, and black painted decoration that often included codex-style motifs (Figure 8.9). Following Martin Wobst's (1977) perspectives on style as symbolic communication, the colorful and iconographically charged serving wares probably indicated an increased ritual significance for food consumption in which public display or the private reinforcement of group identity took on a more prominent role.

In addition to the bright colors of the polychrome pottery, many new types and vessel forms were found in the domestic assemblage. Whereas the Late Classic domestic context included only three major types (Teponitla, Acozoc, and Teotihuacan Thin Orange), the UA-1 Early Postclassic assemblage featured ten types that each made up at least 2 percent of the total rims (McCafferty 2001b:93-94). Added to this increase in types was a greatly increased variety of vessel forms (McCafferty 2001b:112). More research needs to be done, but the preliminary indication is that ritualized foodways may have contributed to the increased diversity of ceramic types and forms.

Early Postclassic foodways, as inferred from the UA-1 Structure 1 ceramic assemblage, mark a radical shift from the domestic patterns of the Late Classic and even Epiclassic. Greater diversity in forms suggests a greater diversity of foodstuffs, as tortillas became a staple of the diet. Both wet and dry foods were consumed (based on bowl as well as plate forms), and a variety of jar (olla) and pot (*cazuela*) forms suggest specialized cooking practices. The vibrant colors of the polychrome serving wares suggest that feasting may have played a role in group integration. The large Trash Midden associated with the Structure 1 Patio had a relatively high frequency of cup (*copa*) forms (McCafferty 2001b:116), which may have been used for consuming pulque (the fermented juice of the maguey) during ritual gatherings. Iconography on polychrome vessels may relate to mythical events associated with religious or ethnic affiliation. Within the



8.9. Polychrome pottery from UA-1 Structure 1, Cholula, Mexico.

multicultural city of Cholula, foodways may have been a significant factor in the ritual practice of group identity.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The UA-1 Structure 1 excavation produced a rich artifact assemblage in primary contexts associated with the architectural remains of a residential dwelling from the Early Postclassic period. Evidence of burning, among

other clues, suggests that the site was abandoned rapidly with de facto refuse left in situ. Consequently these data are useful for a range of interpretations about Early Postclassic domestic practice, including ritual activities, of a non-elite household.

The major locus of ritual practice was Room 3, where a platform altar, three-stone hearth, sub-floor caches, and a niche containing three *xantiles* were all found. These features are consistent with ethnohistorical and ethnographic descriptions of *teopantzonca*, "rooms with altars," which were important arenas of domestic ritual. Other activities that would have been practiced in association with these areas probably included burning incense as a form of communication with the supernatural, perhaps including semi-divine ancestors represented as biconical *xantiles*, and playing music to attract the attention of supernatural forces. A variety of incense burners and flute fragments support the idea that these activities were practiced in and around Structure 1.

Figurines, an artifact class often associated with ritual practice, were rare in Room 3 but were found in most other parts of the residential area, with concentrations on the porches, areas more typically associated with child's play. This contextual argument, plus the fact that few of the figurines could be readily identified with specific deities of the Mesoamerican pantheon, suggests that figurines were more in the realm of children's toys. This interpretation does not ignore the significance of toys as an important means of enculturation but suggests a more secular than religious tone to that process.

Finally, some deity figures identifiable from the figurine assemblage include the storm god Tlaloc, a member of the female earth/fertility cult (perhaps Tlazolteotl), and the old god Huehuetotl as tripod vessel supports. Headless female figurines in Wells 1 and 3 suggest a practice analogous to that documented for the deity Chalchihuitlicue, involving offerings to influence female reproduction. Although sparse because of the small sample of identifiable deity figures at UA-1, this assemblage can be used to generate a local pantheon, at least for commoner religious practice. Notable from the UA-1 pattern is the absence of Ehecatl/Quetzalcoatl, despite the fact that Quetzalcoatl is widely noted as the patron deity of Cholula during the Postclassic (McCafferty 1999), and the prominence of Tlaloc, in contrast to the figurine assemblage from Morelos (Olson, Chapter 9).

Another important aspect of domestic ritual documented at UA-1 Structure 1 was the high number of burials. Although only one of the in-

dividuals could be clearly linked to the occupation of the house, many others seem to have been buried shortly after the house was burned and abandoned. Of the eighteen burials from Structure 1, only one was an adult. This pattern contrasts dramatically with the demographics of burials from around Cholula's Great Pyramid, which featured a majority of adult burials (Hayward 1986; López Alonso et al. 1976; G. McCafferty and S. McCafferty 2002). Most of the UA-1 burials were in a flexed, seated position facing north. This pattern corresponds well with the Postclassic burial pattern from the ceremonial center and with the description of a "squatting" position as noted by Rojas (1927 [1581]:164). The northerly orientation of the burials corresponds with the direction of Mictlan.

A final observation on commoner ritual at Postclassic Cholula relates to food rituals, as inferred from the ceramic inventory. In contrast to earlier Classic and Epiclassic assemblages, the Early Postclassic ceramics from Structure 1 featured brightly decorated polychromes using codex-style motifs. There was a significant increase in the numbers of both ceramic types and vessel forms, suggesting that ceramics may have become a much more meaningful category of symbolic communication. The most dramatic change in the kitchen "tool-kit" was in the introduction and preponderance of *comales*, linked to tortilla production. Since tortilla production in particular and foodways in general were ideologically linked to female practice, the ceramic assemblage indicates a possible redefinition of female roles within the household.

The engendering of the UA-1 Structure 1 household as female space reappears in a variety of aspects: the prominence of the three-stone hearth, ritually interred pots around the hearth, the altar (ethnohistorically linked to female practice), the *temazcal* used in healing and midwifery, the high number of female figurines, the many child burials along with an adult female burial, and the increased importance of food rituals. The UA-1 site also produced a high number of spindle whorls (S. McCafferty and G. McCafferty 2000) to go with the spinning and weaving kit found in Room 2. Spinning and weaving were another cornerstone of female ideology (Brumfiel 1991; S. McCafferty and G. McCafferty 1991). The UA-1 data strongly suggest that the Postclassic house was a nexus of female activities and ritual practice, in contrast to more public or state-level religious practices (e.g., Brumfiel 1996).

The dominant ideology of the Early Postclassic, inferred from ethnohistoric accounts and archaeological remains from the ceremonial center surrounding the Great Pyramid, indicates the major importance of the

cult of Ehecatl/Quetzalcoatl, god of the wind, planet Venus, and priestly knowledge. Archaeological support for this theme has been found in the final occupation of the Great Pyramid (McCafferty 2001a), where carved stone monuments feature serpent imagery and a mural (now missing) depicted a polychrome feathered serpent (Acosta 1970:66). Numerous stamped bottom bowls found at the Great Pyramid, dating to the Epiclassic and Early Postclassic, have representations of Ehecatl's diagnostic shell motif, while another has a representation of Venus as evening star (McCafferty and Suárez C. 2001).

As the major religious center of Central Mexico, however, Cholula was also associated with other gods and goddesses, including Xochiquetzal and Centeotl. During the Late Postclassic, after the ceremonial center was moved from the area surrounding the Great Pyramid to the area of the modern civic center of San Pedro Cholula (where a "new" Pyramid of Quetzalcoatl was erected), a rain god called Chiconauquiuhuitl was worshipped on top of the partially abandoned Great Pyramid (McCafferty 2001a; Rojas 1927 [1581]). Representations of the shrine in the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* (e.g., 1976 [1547-1560]:folio 7) depict a large frog, and an altar stone that may have been rolled down from the summit also represents a frog (McCafferty 2001a; see Gonlin, Chapter 4, for a discussion of frog iconology in Mesoamerica).

In contrast to these aspects of the "dominant" religious ideology, the UA-1 household lacked iconography relating to Quetzalcoatl. Tlaloc, the major rain god who was included in the domestic context, cannot be confused with the frog-like Chiconauquiuhuitl of the Great Pyramid. These discrepancies further suggest a difference in religious ideology between the dominant culture and household-level practices.

Other decorative elements from the ceremonial center represent Cholula as a multicultural city, with iconographic references to Teotihuacan, the Gulf Coast, the Maya, and the Mixteca of Oaxaca (McCafferty 2000, 2001a). This multiculturalism may relate to the role of Cholula as a pilgrimage center of the Quetzalcoatl cult (Ringle et al. 1998). The *pochteca* merchants were affiliated with Yiacatecuhtli, an avatar of Quetzalcoatl, and their prominence must have added to the internationalism of the city. The Mixteca-Puebla stylistic tradition (McCafferty 1994; Nicholson 1982; Smith and Heath-Smith 1980), also known as the International Postclassic style (Robertson 1985), facilitated symbolic discourse that crossed linguistic and cultural boundaries, much as did the Zuyuan culture described by Alfredo López Austin and Leonardo López Luján (2000).

The UA-1 Structure 1 household did have some items obtained through long-distance trade, particularly marine shells and obsidian. Ceramics decorated in the Mixteca-Puebla style were prominent in the ceramic assemblage, although a more detailed iconographic analysis would be useful in differentiating between domestic and "dominant" themes. Michael Lind (1994) found that images of sacrifice were an important theme in Late Postclassic polychromes from Cholula, in vessels of the elite Coapan Laca ("Catalina" in Lind's terminology) type. In contrast to the Coapan Laca designs involving hearts, skulls, and bloodletting tools, the UA-1 household assemblage lacked such images but rather featured symbols relating to possible mythological scenes. This difference suggests not just a distinction in iconography but also a different set of ideological themes.

Burials are another element of ritual practice that provides a contrast between "commoner" and "dominant" ideologies. From the Postclassic burial population recovered by the Proyecto Cholula around the Great Pyramid (G. McCafferty and S. McCafferty 2002; López Alonso et al. 1976), there were 176 adults (99 males and 77 females) compared with 126 sub-adults (12 infants, 103 children, 11 juveniles). In contrast, of the 18 individuals associated with UA-1, 17 were sub-adults (3 fetuses, 6 infants, 8 children) with only 1 adult (female). This pattern indicates a strong difference in burial practices, with a much greater association between sub-adults and household contexts. The predominant burial position and orientation at both the Great Pyramid and UA-1 were flexed, seated burials facing north, indicating an overarching religious structure relating to mortuary ritual. Yet, there was a greater variation in the amount of grave goods associated with burials found in the Great Pyramid cemetery, with some individuals accompanied by great wealth, whereas the majority lacked grave goods altogether. In contrast, all individuals buried at UA-1 Structure 1, other than the fetuses, had relatively modest grave goods. The comparison between these two data sets therefore indicates shared beliefs relating to position and orientation between the public burials of the Great Pyramid and the household-level mortuary rituals of UA-1 Structure 1. Distinctions occur in decisions of who was selected for public burial in the possible cemetery and the degree of wealth interred with an individual.

The study of domestic ritual provides important insights into a key element of household organization, as religion and associated practices are used as defining elements of social identity. Through the outstanding systemic context provided by the UA-1 Structure 1, a richly textured reconstruction of Early Postclassic life can be achieved, albeit for this single

case. These patterned behaviors, in turn, can be compared with earlier, later, and spatially distinct patterns to begin to chart culture change and continuity and can even be contrasted with more public-level ritual to infer the degree to which state-level ideologies were adopted or resisted at the household level. Through this kind of high-resolution study, archaeology can realize its potential for studying diachronic processes as well as multidimensional social identities.

A final caveat, however, must be restated regarding the UA-1 assemblage. Cholula was a complex, multicultural center for at least 3,000 years. So few domestic contexts have been properly excavated, analyzed, and published that comparative interpretations are virtually impossible. To use this one context to characterize "commoner" practice in the Early Postclassic is therefore premature. It is also ingenuous, in my opinion, to assume that there will ever be one identifiable "commoner ideology" in a plural society such as urban Cholula. As such, this case study is presented as the first of what will hopefully become many examples of Postclassic identity strategies representing a diversity of commoner rituals and commoner ideologies.

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CHAPTER NINE

A SOCIOECONOMIC INTERPRETATION OF FIGURINE ASSEMBLAGES FROM LATE POSTCLASSIC MORELOS, MEXICO

JAN OLSON

INTRODUCTION

The tradition of producing, trading, and consuming ceramic figurines was of great significance in the religion of Central Mexican Postclassic cultures. Figurines with images depicting women, men, plants, animals, temples, and deities have been found in public arenas (e.g., temples) but more notably in domestic contexts (e.g., middens). Unfortunately, although early Spanish chroniclers described the public religion as including processions, offerings, and sacrifices, they neglected to mention domestic activities and rituals (cf. Durán 1971:272; Ruiz de Alarcón 1984:49-63). Thus, they left almost no ethnohistoric information on the use or significance of small ceramic figurines commonly found in the domestic contexts of commoners and elites.

All segments of society, however, did not participate equally (qualitatively or quantitatively) in these domestic rituals (see Lohse, Chapter 1).