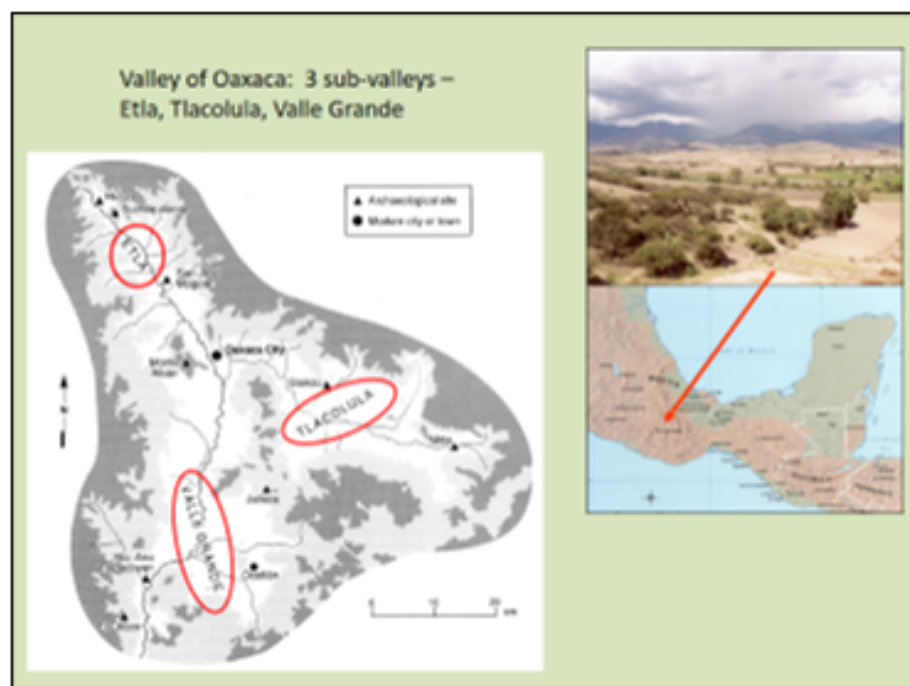




Another early urban society developed around the time of Teotihuacan in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca. The earliest city in Oaxaca is called Monte Alban, and archaeologists know a lot about the history leading to the founding of this city and eventual state.



Early farming villages of the Oaxaca Valley are found in three sub-valleys. What would become the largest pre-urban village is in the Etla valley, and is named San Jose Mogote.

Pre-chieftdoms and pre-State


Early Village at San Jose Mogote

- First occupied ca. 3,400 ya
- First pottery-using village in the Valley of Oaxaca

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Early Village at San Jose Mogote



Early San Jose Mogote period (3400 – 3150 ya)

- Permanent wattle-and-daub houses
- Evidence for household maize storage



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Early Village at San Jose Mogote

Early San Jose Mogote period (3400 – 3150 ya)

- Unique among nearby villages, San Jose Mogote had public, non-residential architecture ("sodality house")

- Unique orientation
- More posts and multiple coats of lime plaster on walls and floor
- Built on platforms
- Included central lime plastered storage pits – use of hallucinogenic plants



Here at San Jose Mogote, it distinguished itself early on from other villages by having a larger population and building the first "non-residential" building seen here. It was also built in a style different than residential houses, and had unique features and remains, including remains of hallucinogenic plants like Morning Glory. Archaeologists can show through time the elaboration of buildings like this into a "temple" built on stone foundations and raised above the surface. This is not unlike the early temples of Mesopotamia perhaps. Archaeologists think that these early specialized buildings (like the one first seen at San Jose Mogote, would have served new "sodality" institutions that started to cross-cut family groups (i.e., certain members of numerous family groups could be initiated and attend events in these special buildings).

Early Village at San Jose Mogote

Early San Jose Mogote period (3400 – 3150 ya)

- This building only had one room measuring 4x6 meters – could only fit a small part of the total community.
- Swept clean, not likely to have been lived in
- Likely used by a group of initiates drawn from multiple families – a sodality







Elman Service (1915-1996)
Ethnologist/Cultural Anthropologist

- Defined types of societies (based on documented ethnographic evidence), which include more emphasis on political organization:

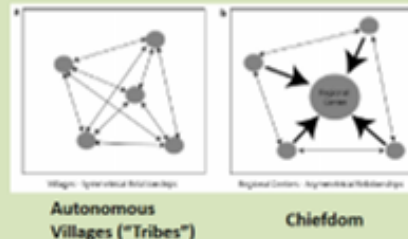
band tribe chieftom state



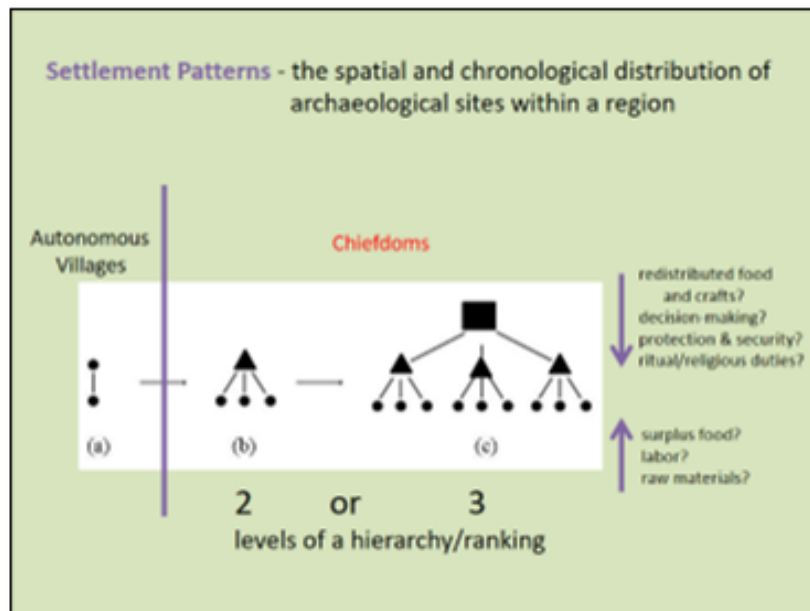
Remember that we briefly talked about one type of typology that ethnologists created to help think about society change through time. The band-tribe-chieftom-state is one way to think about change through time, with specific interest in how politics are organized.

Chieftdoms

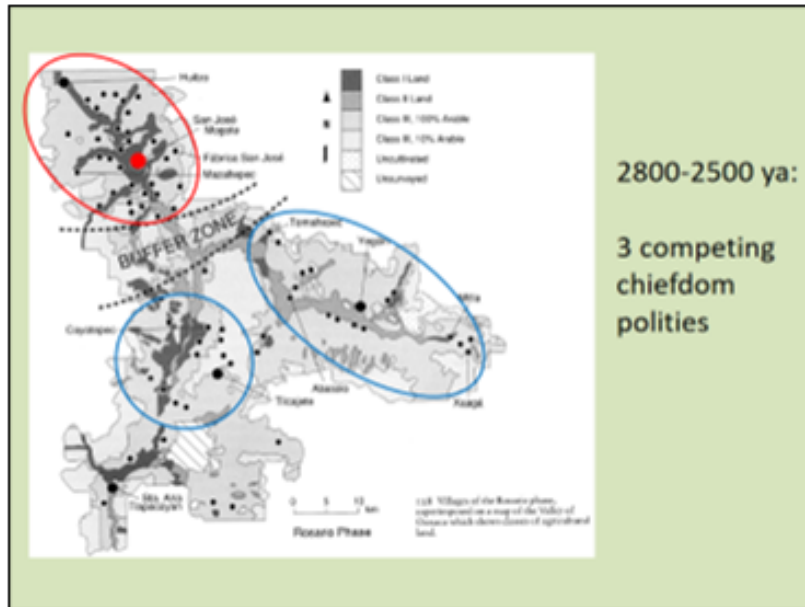
- **Chieftdoms:** multi-village territorial units with a centralized decision-making chief or elite group
 - “loss of village autonomy”
 - Kinship still important: usually ranked (higher status) kin groups that form chieftdom, sometimes hereditary power (i.e., status handed down through birth group).



One way to think about “chieftdoms” is when one village/town is able to gain some type of prominence in its local region, through various means. Eventually, in chieftdoms, some villages lose political authority and falls into the political system that has a high-ranking kin group as hereditary leaders. This type of political organization is fragile, because there can be many high-status kin groups in the region that can pool resources from large number of lineage or clan members of their own.



In some areas of the world archaeologists have been able to show periods of time when one or a few villages grew much larger, or had a few very elaborate burials, or more non-local wealth items, etc. This might be telling us something about a political system evolving that approximates a “chieftdom.”



In Oaxaca, San Jose Mogote (shown in red here) grew to be the largest and “wealthiest” village in the entire region. At this time there was one large village in the other two sub-valleys, and each of these three sub-valleys had many small villages. In between these three valleys there was a “no-man’s land” that had no villages at all. Archaeologists think this might be a sign that there were three chiefly polities evolving at this time, and there are growing signs of competition between them.

Late San Jose Mogote period (2800 – 2500 ya)

- Temple complex at San Jose Mogote built of limestone (from 5km away), lime-covered abode platform, wattle-and-daub temple building, dedicatory offerings



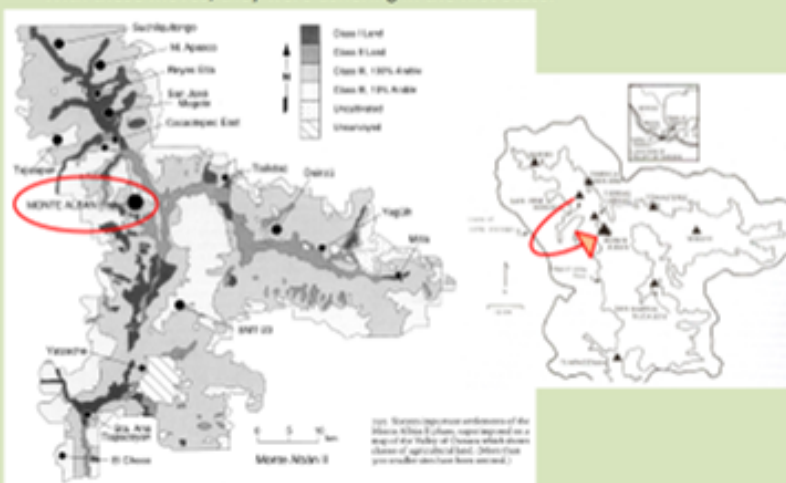
Late San Jose Mogote period

San Jose Mogote's temple complex burned down around 2500 ya

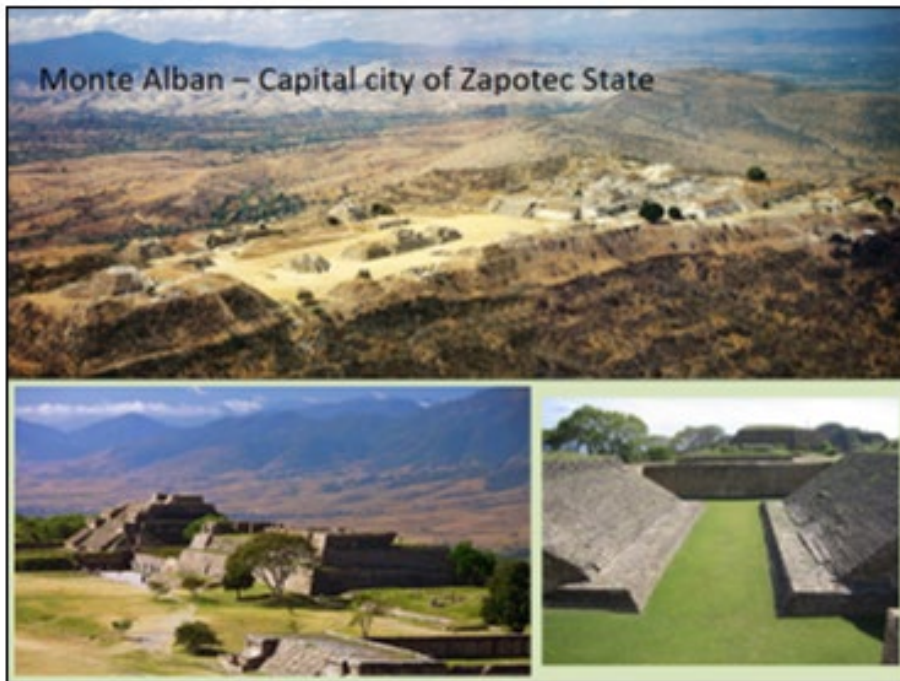


The elaborated temple (by this time) at San Jose Mogote was burned down in what is identified as a raid and attack by an outside group. But it was quickly rebuilt.

San Jose Mogote villagers rebuilt their destroyed temple, but soon migrated with neighbors to the former buffer zone ("No Man's Land"). Quickly built a city on top of a defensible mountain – **Monte Alban** (ca. 2400 ya). With these moves, they were ushering in the first State.

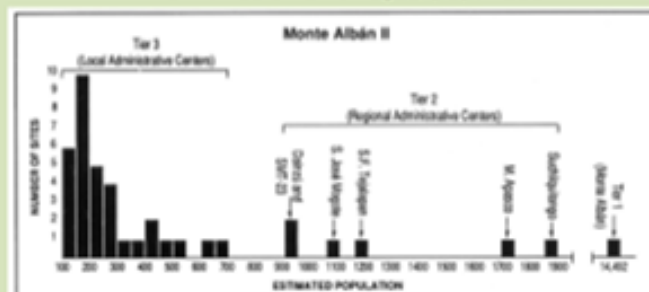


But eventually the population of San Jose Mogote dwindled and several farming villages around it was abandoned. In archaeological scales of time, a city was built in the former "no-man's land" and several small villages packed in around it. This city was built on top of a mountain and defensive walls built around it. This is Monte Alban, the first urban city in Oaxaca.



Zapotec State: 4-tiered Settlement Hierarchy

- Tier 1: **Monte Alban**, pop. ~14,500
- Tier 2: 6 towns, pop. 1000-2000
- Tier 3: 30 large villages, pop. 200-700
- Tier 4: 400 small villages, pop. <200



From regional survey and excavations, we can see that Monte Alban (population eventually around ~15,000) was larger than a cluster of “Tier 2” towns around it. And there were even more, smaller “Tier 3” villages. Not shown on this graph is even more small residential farming “hamlets” (i.e. smaller than villages, hamlets were occupied by just one or a few small families). Archaeologists understand that this represents a political system more complex (more kinds of parts and more parts) than even the earlier “chiefdoms” in the region. Archaeologists call this political organization the Zapotec State, with Monte Alban as its capital.

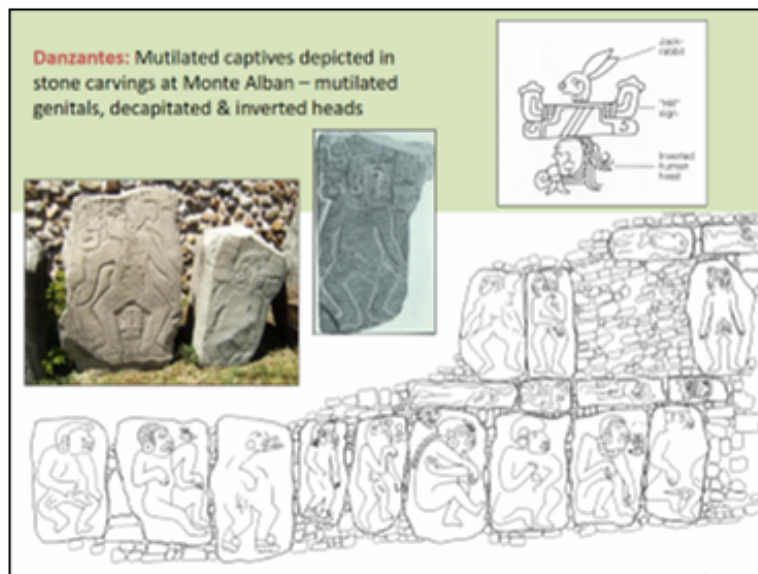
Zapotec State: Imperial Expansion (Empire)

New settlements were incorporated into this hierarchy as Monte Alban pursued expansionistic military strategies.

We find evidence for Monte Alban's conquest in state propaganda – stone carvings lining the base of its palace.



At this time at some of the largest villages in the other two sub-valleys, other chiefly centers were attacked, temples burned, etc. This is argued to have been part of the creation of the Zapotec State, i.e., expanding political authority over other rival chiefdoms and village societies. Many villages show no sign of attack, but were likely incorporated through other means into the state.



Epigraphers can read many of the glyphs in the Zapotec iconography repertoire. At some public spaces at Monte Alban, carvings of mutilated individuals (some with names carved) are displayed to the public. Seen here in these carvings, many of the post-mortem bodies have blood streams and mutilated genitalia. Here and elsewhere, carvings are displayed showing inverted heads underneath a “hill” sign (at this time many towns were built on hills for defense) with the names of specific hills and the names of rulers. This is assumed to be a record of places that Monte Alban conquered during its period of statehood and possibly brief episode of empire.

International Relations



Stone stela in Monte Albán's royal South Platform, depicting noble ambassadors from the city of Teotihuacan visiting a ruler of the Zapotec State, Oaxaca, Mexico. Carved circa 3rd century A.D.

Other states were present in Mesoamerica by this time (like the Maya to the east). To the north in the Basin of Mexico, Teotihuacan was even larger and more powerful. Monte Alban has lots of iconography showing ambassadors from Teotihuacan visiting Monte Alban. There is also the Zapotec barrio (neighborhood) seen at Teotihuacan. Thus, this shows the development of "peaceful" relations between some states. Eventually the Zapotec state lost its political power and the state institution fell apart. Later in pre-contact times, the living Zapotec societies in Oaxaca were claimed by the later Aztec to the north and forced to pay tribute. Today there are more than 300,000 speakers of the Zapotec language in the Mexican state of Oaxaca.