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INTRODUCTION TO PART II

Commemoration, Messages and Meanings: The Content of Ritual-Architectural Events at Monte Albán

> "A traditional monument, as the origin of the word indicates, is an object which is supposed to remind us of something important. That is to say it exists to put people in mind of some obligation they have incurred: a great public figure, a great public event, a great public declaration which the group had pledged itself to honor."
>
> J. B. Jackson, 1980[1]

> "Monumentality... always embodies and imposes a clearly intelligible message. It says what it wished to say—yet it hides a good deal more..."
>
> Henri Lefebvre, 1991[2]

> "In this way the ceremonial center [e.g., Monte Albán] can be read very much like a codex; the architecture can be interpreted as a series of events and experiences."
>
> Maarten Jansen and Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez, 2007[3]

The four chapters of Part II shift attention from the sorts of "strategies of ritual-architectural allurement," which initiate ceremonial occasions by encouraging audiences to engage monumental forms in active and dialogical interactions, to the range of content—that is, the meanings, messages and substantive information—that are broached and expressed in those dialogical exchanges. Appealing to "the twofold pattern of ritual-architectural events" to which I have constantly alluded, now I redirect the focus from the so-termed "front-half" of the ritual-

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[1] J. B. Jackson, *The Necessity of Ruins and Other Topics* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 91. In the same vein, J. G. Davis, "Architecture," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Eliade, 1: 383, notes that "the two terms [monument and memorial] are synonymous--the one from *moneo*, 'to remind,' and the other from *memor,* 'to remember.'"

[2] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 143.

[3] Maarten Jansen and Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez, *Encounter With the Plumed Serpent: Drama and Power in the Heart of Mesoamerica* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2007), 55.

architectural situation—that is, the means by which the designers of Monte Albán made their city and various elements of the Main Plaza impressive and inviting—to the "back-half," or means by which ritual-architectural choreographers challenged audiences to think, act and interact in largely unprecedented ways.[4]

Relying still on the notion that the experience or "mechanism" of architecture has the character of a two-way conversation, now I ask: *Once audiences are persuaded that the monuments of Monte Albán and their makers have something of consequence and importance to say, just what are the topics of conversation in those ritual proceedings? What sorts of things do the ritual participants learn from their participation in ritual-architectural events that they had not known before? How are participants and their worlds different after the event from before? In short, what commemorative, communicative possibilities do experiences of the sacred architecture of Monte Albán offer?*

I. Two General Points: Shifting Attention from (Front-half) Strategies of Allurement to (Back-Half) Matters of Content, Substance and Information

The next quartet of chapters engages that shift in focus and those questions under four broad headings: the ritual-architectural commemoration of divinity (priority II-A), of sacred history (priority II-B), of politics (priority II-C) and of the dead (priority II-D). Before addressing the more specific agenda of Part II, however, I make two broad points and then offer three cautionary notes: The general first point concerns ways in which the experience of ritual-architectural events is transformative and "productive," sometimes in excitingly mind-expanding ways, but, in other cases, via the imposition of very specific and onerous socio-political obligations. And the second point acknowledges the spectrum of ways in which architecture can

[4] See the three chapters in Lindsay Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), vol. I, that address what I term "The Mechanism of Architecture"—namely: chap. 4, "Order and Variation: The Twofold Pattern of Ritual-Architectural Events;" chap. 5, "Allurement and Coercion: The Front Half of the Ritual-Architectural Situation;" and chap. 6, "Transformation and Productivity: The Back Half of the Ritual-Architectural Situation."

communicate information from, variously, the bluntly pedantic to the highly nuanced and profound.

A. Transformation and Productivity in the Experience of Architecture: The Presentation of Highly Specific, Often Obligatory Messages

With respect to the first point, recall that the salient complementarity of the paired elements of "the twofold pattern of ritual-architectural events" depends upon the contrast between those two requisite components of meaning-making built forms. As I have argued at length, strategies of allurement, though sometimes issuing irrefusable commands to enter into the forthcoming ritual proceedings, are, by nature, invitations that are most often welcoming and reassuring. In the main, the alluring "front-halves" of ritual-architectural programs, Monte Albán's included, are impressive by their presentation of the traditional and conventional—"old news," if you will—insofar as that component of the ritual-architectural situation confronts people with little that is brand new or unfamiliar to them. The previous three chapters demonstrate that exercises of the homology (I-B), convention (I-B) and astronomy (I-C) orientational priorities—while highly elaborate and invariably responsible for the greatest share of designer-builders' energy and resources—largely conform to expectations, and thereby make relatively modest demands on audiences' preexistent mindsets. The forthcoming block of chapters, by contrast, addresses the "back-half" of the ritual-architectural situation, which is, also by nature, challenging, disruptive, unfamiliar, and, therefore, subverts expectations in ways that require serious consideration of eventualities not previously considered.

Granted, not all ritual-architectural events issue strong challenges. Many, probably most, of the public ceremonials choreographed in the Main Plaza left peoples' presuppositions and attitudes largely unchanged. But those rarer architectural events that are actually successful in communicating previously unfamiliar meanings and messages are transformative, even generative, insofar as they cause things and thoughts to be different than they previously had been. Successful architectural events modify both worldviews and the world. Though hermeneutical experiences of architecture at Monte Albán are initiated on the basis of confirming apprehensions of cosmic order and continuity with conventionalized expectations, the

"productivity" of those occasions, to borrow a term from Hans-Georg Gadamer, depends upon the sometimes exhilarating, often discomforting confrontation with "strangenesses" and unfamiliar possibilities.[5] Such occasions enable—and often force to recognition—insights and obligations that are, prior to that point, unknown, maybe inconceivable. Strategically choreographed experiences of architecture have, then, as I've noted, an exceptional capability (different but not less than that of written texts) for presenting new information, for retrieving forgotten meanings and for facilitating participation in otherwise inaccessible realms.[6]

Moreover, stressing the "ontological productivity" of such occasions, Gadamer reminds us that successful or "happy solutions" in architecture, even more than in the literary arts, are "genuinely productive" insofar as they "add something new to the spatial dimensions of a town or a landscape," something new that issues in transformations of human consciousness and even "increases of being."[7] For Gadamer, interactions with architecture, even more adeptly than the reading of texts, enable what was not, to come to be. Or, stressing the always-comparative aspect of such occasions, historian of religion Marilyn Waldman, not incompatibly, would remind us how architectural events can serve as forums not simply to recycle and dispense old ideas, but to produce *new* knowledge, to construct *new* meanings and to reconfigure prevailing religio-social alignments into *new* ones.[8] Yet, in either formulation, experiences of

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[5] On the "productivity" of hermeneutical reflection, especially those circumstance that entail dialogical encounters with works of art and architecture, see Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. W. Glen-Doepel (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 138; or see my summary of those issues in Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, vol. I, chap. 2, especially a sub-section entitled "Revealment and Concealment: The Otherness and Autonomy of Architecture."

[6] Again, see Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, vol. I, chap. 6, "Transformation and Productivity: The Back Half of the Ritual-Architectural Situation," which forms the theoretical basis for the four chapters of Part II.

[7] On Gadamer's exposition of the "ontological plenitude" or "excess of meaning" that is characteristic of all that is symbolic in life and, most especially, in art and architecture, see, for instance, Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful," in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. Nicholas Walker, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 31-34.

[8] Regarding Marilyn R. Waldman's astute observations regarding "comparison as a social act," see Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, vol. I, chap. 11, "Significant Alternatives:

architecture—via the strategic juxtaposition of old and new, the reassuring and the challenging, order and variation, similarity and difference—have a rare, maybe singular, appetency for facilitating changes of a most diverse and consequential sort.

Accordingly, as Gadamer suggests, experiences of architecture, not unlike rites of passage, can work as mechanisms of progressive growth, improvement or "world expansion."[9] Furthermore, not unlike other ritual occasions, architectural events can be liberating inasmuch as they play havoc with the neat succession of time and the boundedness of physical space by invoking—or "commemorating"—circumstances and personages from the primordial past and forthcoming future as well as the present. In apprehensions of the commemorative dimension of sacred architectures, mythical realms can be visited, dead ancestors revived, deities engaged in conversation, and impending epochs lived and tested. The salutary possibilities for expansion of horizons and emancipation from habitudes are enormous. But, I would accentuate too that ritual-architectural encounters of this sort can also be limiting and confining. These architecturally abetted space-time flights are not simply occasions for generalized adoration and wonderment; nor is compliance with the alternatives such occasions present an entirely voluntary matter.

Those two qualifications are perhaps especially apparent in the experience of what J. B. Jackson terms "traditional monuments," which, in his view, are "supposed to remind us of something important... to put people in the mind of some obligation that they have incurred."[10] Reaffirming the sensations of challenge and particularity that are characteristic of the "back-half" of the ritual-architectural situation, Jackson maintains that the potency of such explicitly commemorative monuments lies not in their generalized "aesthetic quality," but in the pointed challenges and demands that they issue: in their power "to recall something specific... to remind

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Modes, Contexts, and Sequences of Architectural Comparison," particularly a sub-section entitled "The Indigenous Experience of Architecture as a Comparative Act."

[9] See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 139-40.

[10] John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *The Necessity for Ruins, And Other Topics* (Amherst: M.I.T. Press, 1980), 91. Jackson, a student of "the history of American monumental art," contrasts "traditional monuments," which remind us of our obligations, as opposed to "modern or vernacular monuments," which simply try "to explain." Ibid., 91-93.

us of obligations, religious and political."[11] Such monuments, Jackson says, do not, in the end, please and console people; instead they alert people of what they *should* do and how they *should* act. In his apt phrase, "traditional monuments" have a "horatory" function insofar as they urge upon those who encounter them the acceptance of "an obligation to be discharged to avoid future trouble."[12] The successful, elite-choreographed architectural events in the Main Plaza, for instance, alerted non-elites to inescapable commitments and constraints of which they were, previously, not even aware.

In other words, then, where the "mute texts" of architecture are often derided for their vagueness as "vehicles of intelligibility," for their stuttering imprecision as modes of communication, that is, I think, an unfair and untoward assessment.[13] Alternatively, as innumerable specific illustrations will demonstrate, experiences of what I term loosely the "commemorative dimension" of sacred architecture lay before ritual participants and spectators information that is, often, both very specific and highly prescriptive (or sometimes proscriptive), information that compels people to change not only the way that they think, but also how they act and interact with others. The informational disclosures transacted in apprehensions of commemorative architecture include insights not only about deities, cosmology and mythology (which also carry obligations), but likewise about ancestral history, ethical standards, systems of religio-politics and apportionments of socio-economic power—all of which entail highly particularistic responsibilities. In short, socio-political work of many sorts is accomplished by capitalizing of especial communicative and transformative capabilities of architecture.

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[11] Jackson, *The Necessity for Ruins*, 91.

[12] Jackson, *The Necessity for Ruins*, 91-92.

[13] See Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, vol. I, chap. 8, "Architecture as 'Mute Text?': Literary and Alternative Vehicles of Intelligibility."

B. Diversity in the Means and Messages of Commemorative Architecture: From Propagandistic Pedantry to Nuanced Presentations of Profound Principles

A second general point, which will likewise prove germane to Monte Albán, concerns the variously straightforward and subtle topics that architecture presents. That is to say, the cross-cultural study of broadly religious architecture sometimes reveals the bluntly didactic communication of prosaic, often explicitly political, meanings and information (not so differently from advertising); and, in other cases, architecture facilitates the highly nuanced presentation of profound theological insights (not so differently from metaphysical treatises). Presentational ploys run the gamut from face-slapping directness to the subtly suggestive.

At the bluntly didactic end of the spectrum, the work of Bohemian architect Johann Blasius Santini Aichel (1677-1723), for instance, is the epitome of unsubtle, allegorical architecture: Synthesizing Gothic and Baroque modes, Santini Aichel worked to erase all ambiguity by designing, for example, a number of emblematically shaped constructions including monastic buildings in the form of the abbot's initials, a court in the shape of a lyre and a chapel to the Virgin at Obyetov that had a tortoise-shaped plan to betoken constancy.[14] Even more indelicately commemorative was the votive chapel that Santini Aichel designed to house the tongue of John Nepomul, a saint supposedly martyred for his refusal to utter the secrets of the confessional—that dedicatory plan featured five "tongue-shaped" altar niches.[15]

Equally transparent pedagogy via architecture was likewise employed by the Cholas of Tamil Nadu in their chariot-shaped *mandapa*, a Hindu temple designed complete with wheels and yoked horses and elephants to facilitate "the celestial ride;"[16] or in the boat-shaped Durga

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[14] For a discussion of the architecture of Santini Aichel, see Alastair Laing, "Bohemia and Franconia," in *Baroque and Rococo Architecture and Decoration, ed Anthony Blunt (*New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 265-67.

[15] Laing, "Bohemia and Franconia," 265-67.

[16] K. V. Soundara Rajan, *Invitation to Indian Architecture* (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1984), 41, describes several instances, beginning in the twelfth century, of chariot-type *mandapas* in India.

temples, which are similarly intended to "symbolically ferry [the pilgrim] away from this world to 'the other shore.'"[17] Often, in fact, architectural elements have an informational agenda that is essentially writing in stone: Consider, among countless instances, the memorial or "hero-stones" of India;[18] the annotated monuments of American Civil War battlefields;[19] the didactic stained glass of Christian Europe; or Maya stelae, which are cloaked with detailed epigraphic inscriptions that refer to specific deities, cosmologies, historical events and places.[20] In these cases, for which we will encounter many parallels in Monte Albán's monumental public displays, architecture is largely a backdrop designed to frame epigraphic signage and pictorial iconography. In these cases, "sacred architecture" has the pedantic, deliberately exortative quality of billboards, placards or, sometimes, political sloganeering.

Architecture can, then, be its most categorically informational, or maybe propagandistic, when constructed deliberately in the direct service of a specific ideology: The House of Successions, for instance, was built at the turn of this century in Vienna by a group of then-iconoclastic designers as a kind of revolutionary architectural manifesto, a self-proclaimed "template of art" to express their alternative aesthetic and moral principles, thus providing a caricature of the didactic potentialities of architectural form.[21] Only slightly less unabashed in

[17] See Nelson I. Wu, *Chinese and Indian Architecture: The City of Man, Mountain of God, and the Realm of Immortals* (New York: George Braziller, 1963), 22.

[18] See *Memorial Stones: A Study of their Origin, Significance and Variety*, eds. S. Settar and Gunther D. Sontheimer (Dharwad: Institute of Indian Art History, Karnatak University, 1982).

[19] See, for instance, Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press. 1991).

[20] Donald Robertson, *Pre-Columbian Architecture* (New York: George Braziller, 1963), 11, says of Maya stelae: "so directly do they adhere to their architectural role that they were, in the strict sense of the phrase, sculptural architecture rather than mere sculptural monuments."

[21] Tom Wolfe, *From Bauhaus to Our House* (New York: Pocket Books, 1981), 18, discusses the pedagogic design of the House of Successions. Other good examples of the contemporary architectural commemoration of ideology in the same book are Geritt Rievald's Schroder House, which commemorates the principle of "expressed structure;" the campus of the Illinois Institute of Technology, which commemorates the philosophy of Mies van der Rohe; and the Yale box and Barcelona chair, which were the icons of design for "the common man." Ibid., 25-27, 42, 53-55.

their presentation of commemorative information are those sculptural architectures—like Egyptian pyramids or classical Greek temples (discussed more fully next chapter)—that eschew almost entirely their function as sheltering spaces in favor "monumental" exterior volumes that few if any ritual participants are allowed to enter.[22] The impassable "simulated" or "fake temples" of the Río Bec and Chenes Maya area in Yucatan, for instance, sculpted into edifice-sized deity masks with impossibly steep stairways leading up the face-like facades to false doorways, are, presumably, designed first and foremost to display the attributes of the god.[23] Or, exemplifying the aggressive exploitation of architecture's teacherly potential in a totally different and much lighter vein is the oft-cited case of the little stand on Long Island that sells ducks and duck eggs and, accordingly, is itself shaped like a duck.[24]

Obviously then—from divinities to ducks—not only the means of architectural commemoration, but the range of issues that built forms can memorialize or commemorate is tremendously diversified, running the gamut from the decidedly mundane to the highly rarified. In the case of Monte Albán, especially in chapter 5 under the rubric of "sacred history," we will encounter the didactic end of the spectrum when I focus on iconographic public displays like the notorious Danzante reliefs and the Building J "conquest slabs," both of which are, by conventional (if debatable) assessments, explicitly designed to instill terror in visitors to the city by presenting unmistakably graphic images of the tortured victims of Monte Albán militarism.

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[22] In chapter 4, see the sub-section entitled "Architecture Conceived as a Built Expression of the Attributes of Divinity: Evoking 'Otherwise Hid' Qualities of God(s) and Ultimate Reality."

[23] Regarding the "simulated [Maya] temples" of the Río Bec and Chenes areas of Yucatan, see, for instance, H.E.D. Pollock, "Architecture of the Maya Lowlands," in *Handbook of Middle American Indians* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965), vol. 2: 427-28; or Kubler, "The Design of Space in Maya Architecture," in *Miscellanea Paul Rivet, octogenario dicata* (Mexico, 19580,515, who stresses particularly the priority of exterior volumes over interior spaces that is characteristic of much of Mesoamerican architecture; it is, in his phrasing, not "elaborate shelter" but "monumental form . . . [that] commemorates a valuable experience by distinguishing one space from others in an ample and durable edifice."

[24] Stanley Abercrombie, *Architecture as Art* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1984), 125-29, contribute this and a number of other instances of blatantly informational architecture. Robert Harbison, *The Built, the Unbuilt, and the Unbuildable:In Pursuit of Architectural Meaning* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1992), 172-73, comments on similar sorts of examples like Jean-Jaques Lequeu's stable that has the form of a giant cow.

This is (if we accept customary interpretations) "commemorative architecture" of the most plainly propagandistic sort. But at the rarified end of the spectrum, in chapter 4 under the rubric of "divinity," I will make the case that the seemingly unremarkable juxtaposition of temple-sanctuaries atop platform-bases, an architectural configuration that is repeated dozens of times at Monte Albán, actually makes a very nuanced argument about the compatibility of personalistic and impersonal conceptions of divinity."[25] These deceptively simple Zapotec temple forms provide, I will argue, built expressions of theological themes not less subtle than those expressed in Michelangelo's suitably revered Sistine Chapel, which, in John Dixon's view, provides a pictographic-architectural presentation of "the full range of human life."[26]

Additionally, while I stress continually the distinctively urban quality of the Zapotec capital, Monte Albán's integration of built forms with natural features likewise, it seems, gives voice to the Mesoamerica cosmovision's enduring concern for fertility, agricultural fecundity and a style of living that precedes that of city life. In that respect we can be informed by parallels to the Aegean palaces at Pylos, where the main axis of the human construction was aligned with a conical hill and the cleft peak of Mount Mathia (that is, with landscape features that symbolize the goddess), so that, according to J. G. Davies, "the sexual symbolism is undeniable."[27] In another viable cross-cultural parallel, the Incas' Coricancha or "Golden Enclosure" in the heart of pre-Columbian urban Cuzco—described by sixteenth-century chronicler Pedro de Cieza de León as a kind of artificial garden paradise where the stems of leaves, corn cobs, llamas and even clods of earth were reproduced in fine gold—seems to have been a kind of ritual-architectural acknowledgement of the agricultural, peasant foundations of

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[25] In chapter 4, see the "Closing Thoughts: Discovering, Embodying, Housing and/or Expressing the Attributes of Many and Mixed Supernaturals."

[26] See John W. Dixon, Jr., "The Christology of Michelangelo: The Sistine Chapel," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55 (Fall 1987): 503-533. For other ways in which architecture can reflect and explore exceedingly subtle Christian theological messages, see, for instance, Peter Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1960), 30; and Edward Snow, "The Language of Contradiction in Bruegel's *Tower of Babel*," *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 5 (Spring 1983), particularly pages 41, 43, 44, 46.

[27] J. G. Davies, *Temples, Churches and Mosques: A Guide to the Appreciation of Religious Architecture* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 37.

the Inca empire.[28] Or, in a similar vein, we may find parallels at Monte Albán to the much discussed representation of modest Maya houses in the super-elaborate stone friezes at the urban sites of Uxmal, Labna and Kabah—iconographic allusions that also seems to have been nostalgic architectural odes to a simpler, more pastoral lifestyle.[29]

In short, then, to prefigure the first of three cautionary notes to which I turn next, we need to "think large" about architecture's commemorative capabilities by being attentive both to the obvious, often explicitly political, messages that Monte Albán's built forms are sending, but also to the much more subtly symbolic ideas that are frequently embedded in those architectural configurations.

III. Three Cautionary Notes: Appreciating Other-Than-Political Messages, Non-Substantive Allurement and the Unanticipated Revalorization of Intended Meanings

Irrespective of the my persistent complaints about the presumption that buildings have once-and-for-all meanings that we scholars can retrieve, I am positively convinced of architecture's very well documented aptitude and versatility for communicating all sorts of meanings and information. Architecture conveys manifold matters in forceful and fulsome ways. Indeed, the next four chapters—which address that plenitude of messages and meanings under the respective headings of the commemoration of divinity (II-A), of sacred history (II-B), of politics (II-C) and of the dead (II-D)—should redouble the realization that architecture works differently, but not less effectively, than written texts in the transaction of religious ideas and obligations. Nonetheless, as I embark on this exploration of the substantive content of Monte Albán's architectural program, I issue cautionary notes about three sorts of methodological

[28] Victor W. Von Hagen, *Realm of the Incas* (New York: Mentor Books, 1957, 1961), 129-31, quotes Cieza de León's account. The murals of Tlaloc's paradise at Tepantitla, near Teotihuacan is a possible parallel to this architectural commemoration of the pristine, pre-urban life-style; see, for instance, George Kubler, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient America*. 3d ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 54, 66-67.

[29] Pál Kelemen, *Medieval American Art* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 75-76, is among many who have discussed this phenomenon.

errors, all exceptionally common in the history of ideas about the Zapotec capital, that can undermine our fundamental goal of ascertaining the empirical realities—"that which really happened" and "that which mattered most"—in the ancient Zapotec capital.

A. Avoiding Inordinate Preoccupations with the Political: Anti-Reductionism, Mixed Priorities and the Multivalence of Meanings

First, in order to appreciate the complex concatenation of forces that comingled to make ancient Zapotec capital run, as it were, we must resist that very common of version of reductionism that privileges the political over all other priorities. While it may be a fairly frequent misconception that historians of religions are devoted to making a case that it is broadly religious rather than political factors that are the real causative agents in shaping Monte Albán, I hope it is apparent by now that is not my aspiration. I am for "methodological clarity and self-consciousness" with respect to what scholars mean by "religion," but I have no vested interest in declaring either religion or politics winner in the contest of competing determinants. In fact, I deliberately position my discussion of the so-termed politics priority (II-C) as the third of four topical aspects of the content of Monte Albán's ritual-architectural program substantive content—that is, the sixth among eleven competing priorities—to avoid suggesting that political factors are, by nature, of first, last or greatest importance.

We need, in other words, to attend to the important matters of governmental and hierarchical control (matters that are never overlooked) without, however, succumbing too quickly to conclusions, which are nearly forgone since the 1970s, that in the scrum of sociological, cosmological and ecological factors, it is political motives and incentives that really drive the trajectory of the Zapotec capital. As noted repeatedly, the very influential (re)constructions of Monte Albán delivered by Richard Blanton, Kent Flannery and Joyce Marcus, for instance, are explicit in replacing otherworldly (religious) preoccupations of Zapotec elites to which Caso, Bernal and Paddock afforded greater import with pragmatic political concerns; and, as we'll see in chapter 5, Marcus goes so far as to argue that essentially all of Mesoamerican writing and iconography—and thus all of Monte Albán's monumental visual

displays—functioned, first and foremost, as "a propaganda tool of the state."[30] Even now, the seemingly most respectable and suitably skeptical outlook is to argue that Monte Albán's art and architecture, irrespective to many theological, mythical and cosmological allusions, is ultimately designed in the service of supporting elite temporal interests at the expense of those of non-elites.

In sum, then, as I move forward, I will concede there is good warrant for that anti-sentimentalist position; and, rhetorically speaking, it is at this point a safe and simple scholarly tactic to avoid any intimation that one has been, like gullible Zapotec commoners, seduced by the only ostensibly religio-cosmological messages that the ritual-architectural program of Monte Albán presents. But by my extensive pattern of questioning with respect divinity (II-A), sacred history (II-B) and the dead (II-D), I hope to shine light on the other-than-political content of Zapotec architecture and ceremony, which is now sometimes pushed into the shadows.

B. Disentangling Front-Half Components from Back-Half Components: Substantive Content Recycled as Non-Substantive Allurement

Second is the by-now-familiar warning that we need to be on guard against mistaking elements of Monte Albán's ritual-architectural program that are, in fact, working as largely non-substantive strategies of allurement for the actual informational component of those built configurations. In this respect, I repeatedly maintain that among greatest challenges, and thus most persistent errors, in the analysis of specific sacred architectures comes in differentiating between those elements that belong to, respectively, the "front-" and "back-halves" of that architectural situation; identifying which elements are working primarily in the service of instigating ritual-architectural events and which are working in the service of communicating specific information and obligations is not always easy. Moreover, the instances most liable to cause difficulty in this regard are those in which the architectural situation under consideration explicitly imitates and borrows elements from some earlier ritual-architectural program. As noted in chapter 2 relative to (one variation on) the convention priority (I-B), such cases of

[30] Joyce Marcus, *Mesoamerican Writing Systems: Propaganda, Myth, and History in Four Ancient Civilizations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 7, 11-12.

architectural "archaism," mimicry and appropriation are common in the extreme, but the motivations are neither obvious nor are they at all uniform.[31]

Two contrastive Maya cases that illustrate the problem.[32] In the first instance, Robert Fry explains how Postclassic Maya "revitalization movements" in Quintana Roo and in the northeast Peten region apparently went to great pains to refurbish and re-erect Classic-era monuments as a means of similarly retrieving those older and presumably "more pure" religious practices.[33] Here, architectural imitation seems to have proceeded as a concerted effort to revive intact the entire form-meaning, ritual-architectural package, as it were. In this case, then, substantive, informational elements were appropriated with the express intention of maintaining, or reviving, their substance. Architectural elements, say pictorial iconography of animals and deities, which had originally worked in the "back-half" of the Classic-era events, were re-situated so that they would work again in that substantive role in Postclassic ritual-architectural events.

By contrast—and this is by far the more common circumstance—the Maya designers of Chichén Itzá, for instance, fastidiously copied architectural elements from the distant site of Tula (and elsewhere) almost exclusively, it seems, in the interest of fashioning an eclectic, alluring aura of legitimacy.[34] In that case, therefore, pictographic representations of mythological figures

[31] See Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, vol. II, chap. 15 on conventionalized allurement, see especially the subsection on "Deliberate Archaisms and Mythico-Historic Precedents: Mesoamerican Examples."

[32] Regarding the complexity and diversity of motives for architectural imitation, recall the "principle of disjunction" explained by Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1969). For a concise summary of Panofsky's "principle of disjunction" as it applies to Mesoamerica, and admonishments against facile presumptions of continuity in meaning just because forms are replicated, see George Kubler, "Period, Style and Meaning in Ancient American Art," in *Ancient Mesoamerica: Selected Readings*, ed. John A. Graham (Palo Alto, California: Peek Publications, 1981), 22.

[33] See Robert E. Fry, "Revitalization Movements among the Postclassic Maya" in *The Lowland Maya Postclassic*, eds. Arlen F. Chase and Prudence M. Rice (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 129.

[34] An extended exposition of this interpretation regarding the motivations and means by which architectural elements from Tula were reproduced at Chichén Itzá appears in chapter 4 of

and military orders that had been integral to the shockingly novel message of Tula's ritual-architectural program were, at Chichén Itzá, in a sense, emptied of their informational content, and redeployed simply as constituent elements in a conventionalized program of allurement. At Chichén Itzá, elements that had originally served to communicate important messages were, in that way, demoted from the "back-half" of the architectural situation to the "front."

This latter version of recycling and repurposing old art forms is, as we will see in chapter 5, exceptionally common at Monte Albán. Indeed, among the most startling and consequential facts to emerge from Javier Urcid's intensive work on Monte Albán's writing and epigraphy is the realization that the very large majority of the site's hundreds of carved monoliths were, during the era of the working capital's prime, moved around and reused in visual displays other than those for which they were originally designed.[35] Very few of these inscribed orthostats were found in their primary (or first) architectural contexts. Most prominently, the infamous Danzante reliefs were originally (in the Danibaan phase, 500-300 BCE) positioned in six neat rows on the basal wall of Building sub-L where they, according to Urcid, expressed a load of highly specific information about the logic and structure of a hierarchical military brotherhood, which was a then-novel feature of the early capital.[36] In that primary context, the Danzantes are "back-half" components of content par excellence. But then, throughout later eras in the city's history, once that unified façade was dismantled, the very same Danzante reliefs were repositioned in a host of different building configurations, at which point they served not as the

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Lindsay Jones, *Twin City Tales; A Hermeneutical Reassessment of Tula and Chichén Itzá* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1995).

[35] See Javier Urcid, *Zapotec Hieroglyphic Writing*, Studies in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology, no. 34 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2001), 25.

[36] See Javier Urcid, "Los oráculos y la guerra: el papel de la narrativas pictóricas en el desarrollo tempano de Monte Albán (500 a.C.-200 d.C.)," in *Monte Albán en la encrucijada regional y disciplinaria, Memoria de la Quinta Mesa Redonda de Monte Albán*, eds. Nelly M. Robles Garciá y Angel Iván Rivera Guzmán (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2011), 163-237. Or see my extensive discussion of the topic in a chapter 5 sub-section entitled "The 'Danzantes' as Sacred History: Considering and Reconsidering Monte Albán's First, Foremost and Most Infamous Narrative Display."

carriers of specific information, but as alluring allusions to an earlier era.[37] That is to say, the reliefs were "demoted" to the status of non-substantive components of allurement. And because that happens so often, hermeneuts should be on guard against being seduced into imagining that all ostensibly, *seemingly* informational elements really are, in an empirical sense, the architectural bearers of important information.

C. Appreciating the Contingency of Intended Meanings: The Superabundance, Autonomy and the Unpredictability of Architectural Reception Histories

A third and closely related cautionary note, which arises even more directly from what I call "the superabundance and autonomy of sacred architecture," entails the inevitable discrepancies between the idealized meanings of Monte Albán's architectural works that are intended by their designers versus the diversified ways in which those works are actually perceived—that is, the endemic disparities between *messages sent* and *messages received*.[38] This also by-now familiar point bears particularly on the charting and composition of the "architectural reception histories" or unpredictable "life-histories" of specific works.[39] Here we should keep in mind that even where modern-day interpreters succeed in recovering the explicit motivations of pre-Columbian designers—the "intended meanings," so to speak—those idealized intentions constitute only one of several very different "protocols of architectural apprehension,"[40] which arise during the life-history of enduring built forms like those at Monte

[37] As we will see in chapter 5, sometimes the Danzante reliefs were strategically repurposed as what I term "components of allurement," though in many instances they were simply recycled as utilitarian construction materials.

[38] While one could look to any number of theoretical authorities to accentuate the inevitable disparities between ritual-architectural *meanings sent* versus *messages received*, in chapter 5, in a sub-section entitled "Bruce Lincoln on 'Evoking Sentiment' via Myth: Inevitable Discrepancies between Intended Meanings and Received Meanings," I will appeal to work of religionist and Marxist theorist Bruce Lincoln to make that case.

[39] See Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, vol. I, chap. 12, "Multifarious Revalorizations: The Composition of Ritual-Architectural Reception Histories."

[40] A sub-section of Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, vol. I, chap. 12, entitled "The Selectivity of Reception Histories: Protocols of Architectural Apprehension," enumerates five distinct sorts of apprehensions of architecture: (1) initial design intentions, which refers to

Albán. Never is the meaning and significance of a substantial work of architecture exhausted in the "intended meanings" of its builders. Moreover, the disparity between creators' expectations and the eventual, always diversified apprehensions of their creations is, in fact, most apparent in the realm of the content of architectural events.

Therefore, on the one hand, we need to appreciate that even buildings that are designed for the most utilitarian, seemingly informationless purposes—say, barns, warehouses, lean-tos or lighthouses—invariably transcend their strictly prosaic purposes to become, irrespective of overwhelmingly pragmatic design decisions, bearers of all sorts of substantive messages and meanings. It is not only tortoise-shaped chapels, mausoleums and war memorials that "commemorate" by carrying important and diverse information to indigenous users, and thus to curious scholars. The vernacular, "non-pedigreed architecture" on which Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, for instance, trains her attentions, especially domestic constructions and work places, do much more than simply shelter the activities of life and labor; the intimate relations that people develop with the vernacular constructions of their "everyday" lives enable those built forms to serve both as repositories of their old aspirations, dreams and values as swell as provocateurs of new ones. In Moholy-Nagy's assessment, "anonymous architecture... testifies to the aspirations of the group... Indigenous buildings speak the vernacular of the people."[41] Empirically oriented hermeneuts ought, then, to be cognizant and attentive to the estimable communicative potential of what are, in a sense, only inadvertently meaningful buildings.

Furthermore, we need, on the other hand, to keep in mind that even the most deliberately didactic and memorializing monuments have superabundant commemorative and informational potentials that far exceed, and occasionally undermine, the sign-posting presentation of pedagogically, politically or moralistically explicit agendas. As we'll see at Monte Albán and so

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the idealized expectations of architects and builders; (2) indigenous apprehensions, which would include non-elite Zapotec (mis)apprehensions of Monte Albán architecture; (3) non-indigenous apprehensions, which would include tourist impressions of Monte Albán; (4) academic interpretations; and (6) personal apprehensions.

[41] Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, *Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture in North* America (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 11.

many other contexts, while the propagandistic potential of monumental architecture is too grand for self-glorifying rulers to resist, even highly calculated public displays—for instance, the Danzante Wall or monumental narrative displays that Urcid will label Program A and Program B[42]—will, apparently without exception, evoke highly diversified and often unintended, even unwanted, meanings and messages. Consequently, as I stressed in numerous contexts, rigorously empirical hermeneuts (like myself) ought not express their disappointment at the uncooperative sloppiness with which people misconstrue the meanings of their own sacred architectures.[43] Nor, worse still, should interpreters perpetuate the tacit denial—that is, the despairingly common art historical fiction—that such idiosyncratic (mis)understandings are rare, when they are in fact the rule rather than the exception.

In short, it is predictable and appropriate that recovering the "intended meanings" of Monte Albán's built forms is the primary goal of most art historians, archaeologists and epigraphers (Urcid included).[44] But if empirical description remains our ultimate goal, we ought to fix our strongest interpretive attentions, not on those aspirational idealizations, but instead directly on "the creative and interested revalorizations of architecture," which those works invariably inspire. It is there, in those multifarious (mis)apprehensions, not in the Zapotec

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[42] On Monte Albán's Programs B and A, which Urcid sees as earlier uses of what come to be called the South Platform cornerstones, see Urcid, *Zapotec Hieroglyphic Writing*, chap. 5, "The Carved Monoliths from the South Platform at Monte Albán." Or see my summary of the issues in a chapter 5 sub-section entitled "Javier Urcid's Alternative Interpretation of the South Platform Cornerstones: Reconstructing the Life-Histories of the Monoliths."

[43] See, for instance, Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, vol. I, chap. 12, "Multifarious Revalorizations: The Composition of Ritual-Architectural Reception Histories."

[44] As I will explain more fully in a chapter 5 sub-section entitled "The South Platform Cornerstones as Sacred History: A Third Case Study and a Third Collection of Public Narrative Displays," Javier Urcid's work is again instructive insofar as, on the one hand, he provides a perfect model of the sort of "architectural reception history" that I have in mind when he traces or reassembles, for instance, the fascinatingly complex "life histories" of the South Platform cornerstones, carved orthostats that were reused in at least three very different architectural contexts. But, on the other hand, Urcid is also a kind of counter-model insofar as he remains invariably preoccupied with the "intended meanings" of Monte Albán's orthostats, while I will stress the variability in meaning of those same carved stones over time.

design studio, that we will gain the most direct insight into the workings of sacred architecture and into the people who are making it work.

V. Part II Agenda—
Four Long Chapters, Each with Dual Intentions:
Engaging High-Profile Debates, Followed by Expressly Hermeneutical Analyses

Each of the four chapters in Part II is long (on the order of 300 pages) largely because each serves a dual purpose. In each case, the expressly hermeneutical analysis concerning the four respective priorities—i.e., the commemoration of divinity (priority II-A), of sacred history (priority II-B), of politics (priority II-C) and of the dead (priority II-D)—is preceded by an extended set of background sections that address high-profile issues and debates with respect to that topic in relation to Monte Albán studies. That is to say, each of these chapters has two decidedly separate components, which are directed to the two different audiences of this work. The first, background component aims at comparative religionists whom are not well acquainted with the specific intellectual history and controversies that have driven Monte Albán studies; and the second, explicitly hermeneutical component is directed to more veteran Oaxacan specialists who are familiar with those timeworn debates, but for whom a pattern of questioning derived from comparative religion is unfamiliar and about which they are, likely, equivocal.

In other words, I fully concede that my remarks and interpretations in response to the patterns of questions that are laid out in Appendix B, "An Expanded Framework of Ritual-Architectural Priorities: Eleven Sets of Heuristic Leading Questions," raise concerns that may strike more mainstream scholars of Monte Albán as adventitious, even quirky or eccentric. These are, by design, questions not much discussed prior to this work. Consequently, I consider this comparison-inspired hermeneutical analysis—which comes in the latter portion of each chapter—to be the most important and original component of these four topical essays. At the same time, however, before pursuing my own novel lines of interpretation, my equally strong investments in the history of ideas about Monte Albán require me to address head-on, in a perhaps perhaps-overly-detailed fashion, some of the most heavily trafficked debates (1) about ancient Zapotec conceptions of divinity, (2) about the sort of mythic narratives and "sacred

history" that appear in the iconography of the capital, (3) about the capital's polity and governmental structures, and (4) about the diversity and historical development of the funerary architecture that has frequently been considered one of Monte Albán's signature features.

This is thoroughgoing but not, I concede, an expeditious way of organizing the material; I am more interested in providing a critical survey of the four topics than a tight argument about each of them. By this indirect, admittedly circumlocutory, mode of presentation, I first provide my own synopses of the several of the most prominent debates about ancient Zapotec religion; these are discussions of the notoriously well-worked issues that every serious student of Monte Albán is forced to confront. These long background sections are a kind of inventory of hot-button scholarly controversies that remain, as yet, unresolved. And then, secondly, I locate my own innovational ideas about the content of Monte Albán's ritual-architectural program in relation to the more widely circulated opinions of my Oaxacanist predecessors. Accordingly, here I forewarn readers as to the nature of these very wide background digressions by providing brief remarks on each of the subsequent four chapters.

A. Commemorations of Divinity (priority II-A): Engaging Incessant Debate about Zapotec Conceptions of Personal vs. Impersonal Supernatural Entities

Chapter 4, on the ritual-architectural expression and commemoration of divinity (priority II-A) addresses what is, without question, the most heavily debated topic in study of ancient Zapotec religion, namely, the identity, status, existence or non-existence of "gods" among indigenous Oaxacans. So often is the operative definition of "religion" something like "the belief in and/or worship of gods," that essentially all scholars directly or tangentially concerned with the religion of Monte Albán have no choice but to engage this difficult issue. Consequently, the opening half of this chapter is devoted to a very wide, three-part background arc that first inventories the snarl of competing claims that ancient Zapotec religion was variously polytheistic, monotheistic, monolatrous, monistic-pantheistic, animistic or

animatistic—all troubled terms for which there have been and are strong advocates.[45] A second background section surveys the quite different conceptions of Zapotec divinity that emerge respectively from archaeology (especially funerary urns), from ethnography and, most influentially, from the colonial-era writings of Dominican friars.[46] And a third background section provides a set of very general, but I think apropos, methodological recommendations for avoiding the so-termed fallacies of purity and typicality in ways that enable appreciation of what ethnographer Miguel Bartolomé terms the Zapotecs' affirmation of "multiple experiences of the sacred," a pliable and pragmatic religious outlook that operates without a fixed theology, let alone a secure "pantheon" of "gods."[47]

Via this in-depth, three-part discussion of scholarly debates and presumptions concerning the notoriously muddled matter of indigenous Oaxacan supernaturals, I dare say that I provide in the opening sections of chapter 4 a more comprehensive overview of the history of ideas about Zapotec conceptions of divinity than exists anywhere else in the scholarly literature. This seeming digression is, I would argue, a topic that urgently needed the critical perspective of a scholar of religion, which I have tried to provide. But, at the same time, I position this exercise in intellectual history as the background to my more original and properly hermeneutical discussion of four variations on the ancient Zapotec ritual-architectural commemorations of divinity: (1) the personification and/or divination of natural "architectural" features of the landscape, (2) built forms that are conceived as the body of a deity of divine presence, (3) built

[45] See in chapter 4, the four sub-sections under the broader heading "Competing and Complementary Conceptions of Ancient Zapotec Religion: Many Gods, One God and/or No Gods."

[46] See in chapter 4, the three sub-sections under the broader heading "Competing and Complementary Sources on Ancient Zapotec Conceptions of Divinity: Ethnography, Ethnohistory and Archaeology."

[47] See in chapter 4, the three sub-sections under the broader heading "Summary Thoughts and Methodological Cautions on the Study of Ancient Zapotec Divinity Conceptions: Idealization, Reification and False Systematization," where I make special use of very distinctive (re)definition of "polytheism" in Miguel Alberto Bartolomé, "Elogio del politeísmo: las cosmovisiones indígenas en Oaxaca," en *Bases de la complejidad social en Oaxaca: Memoria de la Cuarta Mesa Redonda de Monte Albán*, ed. Nelly M. Robles García (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2009).

forms conceived as divinity residences, and (4) architecture that, in rather more abstract ways, provides a built expression of the attributes of divinity. All these are very promising possibilities that are, nevertheless, little explored in the standard literature on Monte Albán.

B. Sacred History (priority II-B): Engaging Javier Urcid's Revisionist Ideas about Danzantes, "Conquest Slabs" and other Monumental Narrative Displays

Chapter 5 takes consideration of the ritual-architectural commemoration of mythic narratives or "sacred history" (priority II-B) as an occasion to engage a major body of evidence on which I have heretofore not drawn—namely, Zapotec epigraphy and writing. More specifically, all serious students on Monte Albán must come to terms with the radically revisionist ways in which epigrapher Javier Urcid, beginning with his *Zapotec Hieroglyphic Writing* (2001),[48] has called to question a raft of embedded assumptions about the infamous Danzante reliefs, the Building J "conquest slabs" and other pictographic displays that have figured so large in essentially all interpretations and narrative (re)constructions of the great capital. Urcid's intensive and iconoclastic manner of operating, as I will explain at length in chapter 5, entails not simply adjustments about what these "monumental narrative compositions" were intended to mean, but rather paradigm-rattling new starting points for the (re)assessment of Monte Albán history.

In this case, then, while the link between "sacred history," a term that I borrow from Mircea Eliade,[49] and the Zapotec epigraphy on which Urcid concentrates is not so direct, chapter 5's exploration of the visual presentation of mythico-historical events and personages begins with another pair of background blocks: First is a very general and fairly concise discussion of the broadly framed ideas about the interconnections among myth, history, narrative, "indigenous memory" and the inevitable discrepancies between intended meanings and received meanings,

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[48] Urcid, *Zapotec Hieroglyphic Writing* (2001) is the earliest of innumerable major works by Urcid that I will discuss in chapter 5.

[49] Mircea Eliade, "Cosmogonic Myth and 'Sacred History,'" *Religious Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2 (April 1967): 171-183; reprinted as chapter 5 in Mircea Eliade, *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 72-87.

which are presented by Eliade and Urcid along with hermeneutical philosopher Paul Ricoeur, Mexican historian Enrique Florescano, and Marxist theorist Bruce Lincoln.[50] Then a second, much longer background block veers into the deeper weeds of Zapotec epigraphy by examining the history of ideas about Monte Albán's three most prominent narrative displays: the Danzante Wall, the Building J conquest slabs, and the South Platform cornerstones. In each case, I explain how Urcid's work presents a daringly new point of departure for how those pictorial displays inform our understanding of Monte Albán.[51]

Again that wide detour into very specific controversies raises a host of issues and challenges not directly related to the so-termed ritual-architectural commemoration of sacred history (priority II-B). But again, that extensive background also provides apt preparation for my consideration of four main variations on that theme, all of which present distinct permutations in Monte Albán: (1) architectural embodiments of creation stories, (2) public memorializations of mythico-historic episodes or occurrences, (3) public memorializations of mythico-historic personages or individuals, and (4) commemorations of mythico-geographic places or locations, the enduring prestige of the mountaintop site of Monte Albán foremost among them.

C. Politics (priority II-C): Engaging the Particulars of the North Platform and Revisiting Debates about the Theocratic Nature of Monte Albán Polity

Chapter 6 uses the shorthand rubric of "politics" to explore the ritual-architectural configurations that variously commemorate, legitimate or, on occasion, challenge Monte Albán's structures of socio-economic hierarchy and/or temporal authority (i.e., priority II-C). Where the background sections of chapter 5 focus on three main complexes in the southern sector of the Main Plaza (Buildings L-sub and L, Building J and various iterations of the South Platform), the

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[50] In chapter 5, see the five sub-sections under the more general heading of "General Theoretical Background—Five Approaches to Monte Albán's Narrative Displays: Zapotec Writing, Myth, History and 'Strategic Tinkering with the Past.'"

[51] In chapter 5, see the three sub-sections under the more general heading of "Specific Oaxacan Background—Three Prominent Narrative Displays at Monte Albán: The Danzante Wall, the Building J Conquest Slabs, and the South Platform Cornerstones."

background sections of this chapter take a hard look at the configuration and construction history of the North Platform—that is, the sector of the city that has frequently been interpreted as the administrative sector of the Zapotec capital. Of special concern in this history of ideas about the shifting patterns of inclusive versus more authoritarian modes of authority are fascinating but debatable assertions that Monte Albán was the most "theocratic" of any Mesoamerican center.[52]

That synopsis and reassessment of opinions about the various components of the North Platform will provide the somewhat indirect background for more patentedly hermeneutical exploration of three main variations on the politics priority (II-C): (1) Ritual-architectural configurations that reflect and perpetuate the prevailing social hierarchy; (2) built configurations that challenge, undermine and, thus, perhaps change the prevailing social hierarchy; and (3) ritual-architectural configurations that serve more explicitly governmental functions such as glorifying a particular ruler, facilitating day-to-day bureaucratic operations, or providing symbolic expression of the strength and stability of the state and/or other religio-civic institutions.

D. The Dead (priority II-D): Engaging the Distribution, Diversity and Historical Development of the Zapotec Tombs, Funerary Murals and Urns

Chapter 7 on the ritual-architectural commemoration of the dead (priority II-D) provides an opportunity to review critically the slew of issues and controversies with respect tombs, burial and Zapotec notions of the afterlife. The background in this case entails coming to terms with an over-abundance of information rather than an absence concerning the seemingly unique quantity, diversity and elaboration of Monte Albán's ballyhooed funerary architecture. Once I have revisited some of the major debates concerning the Zapotecs' arguably unsurpassed preoccupations with honoring their dead, I will look to the immense catalogue of cross-cultural practices of memorializing and accommodating the deceased in order to consider the respective

[52] On claims like that of Ignacio Bernal, *Ancient Mexico in Colour* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 38, that Monte Albán "may have been far more theocratic than any of its neighbors," especially Teotihuacan, see Jones, *Narrating Monte Albán*, chap. 2, the sub-section on "Period IIIB: Late Classic Monte Albán: Teotihuacan's Demise and the Zapotecs' Theocratic Successes and Excesses."

pertinence at Monte Alban of three broad options: (1) architectural configurations that facilitate "bodiless memorializing" insofar as this possibility involves strategies for architecturally commemorating the dead (who are often conceived as very much "alive") that are undertaken largely irrespective of actual bodily remains; (2) architectural configurations that serve as the actual embodiment, reactualization or transmutation of the dead insofar as megalithic or stone constructions are conceived as actually being the (un)dead; and (3) architectural configurations designed for the assiduous treatment and accommodation of the physical, bodily remains of the (un)dead, which often entails either housing the deceased or facilitating their purportedly perilous passage to some more permanent posthumous destination.[53]

[53] Note that once I actually write chapter 7 (which thus far I have not) I will provide here more thorough and detailed summary comments on the layout and logic of that discussion of the ritual-architectural commemoration of the dead (priority II-D).