



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **Grounding the past : the praxis of participatory archaeology in the Mixteca Alta, Oaxaca, Mexico**

Geurds, A.

### **Citation**

Geurds, A. (2007, June 19). *Grounding the past : the praxis of participatory archaeology in the Mixteca Alta, Oaxaca, Mexico*. CNWS/LDS Publications. CNWS Publications. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/12085>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/12085>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

# **Grounding the Past**

**The Praxis of Participatory Archaeology  
in the Mixteca Alta, Oaxaca, Mexico**

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van  
de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,  
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus, Prof. Mr. P.F. van der Heijden,  
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties  
te verdedigen op 19 Juni 2007  
klokke 16:00 uur

door  
Alexander Geurds  
geboren te Velp (Gld.)  
in 1974

Promotiecommissie

Promotor: Prof. Dr. M.E.R.G.N. Jansen  
Prof. Dr. W.F.H. Adelaar

Referent: Prof. Dr. R.A. Joyce, University of California, Berkeley, VS

Overige leden: Prof. Dr. N. Grube, Universität Bonn, Duitsland  
Prof. Dr. C.L. Hofman  
Prof. Dr. B.J. Ter Haar  
Prof. Dr. W.J.H. Willems  
Dr. S. Wichmann, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig,  
Duitsland

# **Grounding the Past**

**The Praxis of Participatory Archaeology  
in the Mixteca Alta, Oaxaca, Mexico**

Alexander Geurds

CNWS Publications  
2007 Leiden

CNWS Publications 150

CNWS publishes books and journals which advance scholarly research in Asian, African and Amerindian Studies. CNWS Publications is part of the Research School of Asian, African and Amerindian Studies (CNWS) at Leiden University, The Netherlands.

Correspondence should be addressed to:

CNWS Publications

c/o Research School CNWS

Leiden University

PO Box 9515, 2300 RA Leiden

The Netherlands.

[cnwspublications@let.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:cnwspublications@let.leidenuniv.nl)

[www.cnwspublications.com](http://www.cnwspublications.com)

Grounding the Past: the Praxis of Participatory Archaeology in the Mixteca Alta, Oaxaca, Mexico

Alexander Geurds

Leiden: CNWS Publications.

(CNWS Publications, Vol. 150)

ISBN: 978-90-5789-150-2

Subject headings: Archaeology, Mexico, Oaxaca, Mixteca Alta, Community Archaeology, Landscape

Printing: Ridderprint, Ridderkerk, The Netherlands

Layout: jnj-studio

Cover design: jnj-studio

Photo's: Alexander Geurds

© Copyright 2007 Research School CNWS

Universiteit Leiden, The Netherlands

Copyright reserved.

Subject to the exceptions provided for by law, no part of this publication may be reproduced and/or published in print, by photocopying, on microfilm or in any other way without the written consent of the copyright-holder(s); the same applies to whole or partial adaptations.

The publisher retains the sole right to collect from third parties fees in respect of copying and/or take legal or other action for this purpose.

## Contents

List of Tables	x
List of Figures	x
Acknowledgements	xiii
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction	1
1.1.1 Mesoamerican cultural backdrop	2
1.1.2 Site-based and Valley-based archaeology	5
1.2 Objectives	7
1.2.1 Participatory archaeology	7
1.2.2 Monte Negro Mapping and Heritage	9
1.2.3 The Apoala Valley survey	10
1.2.4 Organization of the thesis	11
<b>2. Background, Methods, and Approach</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 Geographical and Cultural Backdrop	13
2.1.1 Oaxaca	13
2.1.2 Mixteca Alta	16
2.1.3 Monte Negro	19
2.1.4 Apoala Valley	21
2.2 Previous Research	24
2.2.1 Themes in Oaxacan Archaeology	24
2.2.2 Themes in Mixteca Alta Archaeology	26
2.2.2.1 Monte Negro	30
2.2.2.2 Apoala Valley	34
2.3 Archaeological methods	34
2.3.1 Site-based mapping at Monte Negro	35
2.3.1.1 Mapping	35
2.3.1.2 Heritage Management	39
2.3.1.3 Terraces	40
2.3.2 Valley-based surveying in the Apoala Valley	41
2.4 Reflexive methods	44
2.4.1 Community archaeology	46
2.4.2 Participatory Archaeology in the Mixteca Alta	48

## PART I: PAST OVER PRESENT

<b>3. Site-based mapping at Monte Negro</b>	<b>52</b>
3.1 Monte Negro in Oaxacan perspective	52
3.2 Mapping Results	54
3.2.1 Residential units	54
3.2.1.1 Unit 1	55
3.2.1.2 Unit 2	58
3.2.1.3 Unit 3 (X)	58
3.2.1.4 Unit 4 (Building W)	60
3.2.1.5 Unit 5 (Building U)	60
3.2.1.6 Unit 6	61
3.2.1.7 Unit 7	62
3.2.1.8 Unit 8	63
3.2.1.9 Unit 9	63
3.2.2 Plazas	64
3.2.2.1 Plaza 1	64
3.2.2.1.1 Structure 1-Este ('Sistema R')	65
3.2.2.2 Plaza 2	67
3.2.2.2.1 Structure 2-Este ('Templo X')	68
3.2.2.2.2 Structure 2-Oeste ('Templo Y')	69
3.2.2.3 Plaza 3	70
3.2.2.3.1 Structure 3-Este ('Templo T-S')	72
3.2.2.4 Plaza 4	72
3.2.3 Public Architecture	74
3.2.3.1 Temple T	74
3.2.3.2 Temple T-N	76
3.2.3.3 Structure R-Norte	78
3.2.3.4 Structure R-Sur (System R)	79
3.2.3.5 Structures A, B, and C	79
3.2.3.6 The main avenue ( <i>Ichí Iya</i> )	80
3.3 Heritage assessment of the monumental core	81
3.3.1 Current State of the Site	82
3.3.2 INAH consolidation	83
3.3.3 Contemporary residences	85
3.4 Analysis	86
3.4.1 Relations between rulership and sacrality	90
3.4.2 Form	91
3.4.3 Location	97
3.5 Conclusion	101

<b>4. Valley-based surveying in the Apoala Valley</b>	<b>103</b>
4.1 Introduction	103
4.2 Ethnohistorical data on the Apoala Valley	105
4.3 Survey results	109
4.3.1 Tiki Tinduu Akama (AV1)	111
4.3.2 Tiki Kahua Akama (AV2)	112
4.3.3 Tiki Kahua Kuchindahua (AV3)	115
4.3.3.1 La Cueva (AV3a)	118
4.3.4 El Guerrero or Danzante del Kahua Laki (AV4)	118
4.3.5 Kahua Tidinuu (AV5)	120
4.3.6 Kahua Torri Kuaha (AV6)	121
4.3.7 Tinduu Va (AV7)	122
4.3.8 Yahui Che'en (AV8)	123
4.3.9 Sata Kahua Laki (AV9)	126
4.3.10 Toto Ndzaka (AV10)	126
4.3.11 Yuku Ñiñi (AV11)	129
4.3.12 Tinduu Toto Ñee (AV12)	129
4.3.13 Tinduu Ñuu Kuaa (AV13)	130
4.3.14 Yuku Andyishi (AV14)	131
4.3.15 Tiki Tinduu Ndodo Kimi- Yuku Andyishi (upper slope) (AV15)	132
4.3.16 Kahua Kandihui (AV16)	133
4.3.17 Ndodo Che – Centro Apoala (AV17)	134
4.3.18 Yahui Kaha – Centro (AV18)	135
4.3.19 Ndoko Yoo-Ofrenda a la luna (AV19)	136
4.3.20 Yahui Kahua Tidinuu (AV20)	138
4.3.21 Yahui Koo Maa (AV21)	138
4.4 Settlement dynamics	139
4.4.1 Early and Middle Cruz (Early Formative phase) Settlement	139
4.4.2 Late Formative (Late Cruz phase) Settlement	140
4.4.3 Ramos (Terminal Formative phase) Settlement	141
4.4.4 Las Flores (Classic phase) Settlement	142
4.4.5 Natividad (Postclassic phase) Settlement	144
4.4.6 Convento (Early Colonial phase) Settlement	147
4.5 Summary Survey data	147
 <b>PART II: PRESENT OVER PAST</b>	
<b>5. Deconstructing Community Participation</b>	<b>149</b>
5.1 Introduction	149



5.1.1 Archaeological fieldwork and social context	150
5.1.2 Knowledge production in the field	151
5.2 Participation Dilemmas: A chronology of contact	152
5.2.1 Positionality in initiating participation	154
5.2.1.1 Political Office-holders	155
5.2.1.2 Santiago Tilantongo: Power of Authority	155
5.2.1.3 Santiago Apoala: Absence of Authority	159
5.2.1.4 Summary	162
5.2.2 Agency of social actors	162
5.2.2.1 Santiago Tilantongo: 'Donde no hay agua'	163
5.2.2.2 Santiago Apoala: 'Santuario de la Mixteca'	166
5.2.2.3 Summary	168
5.2.3 Positionality in collecting data	170
5.2.3.1 Mapping Monte Negro	170
5.2.4 Trust in the field	176
5.3 Conclusion	178
<b>6. Constructing Landscape Narration</b>	<b>181</b>
6.1 Introduction	181
6.1.1 Oral tradition	181
6.1.2 Archaeology and oral tradition in the Mixteca Alta	182
6.1.3 Landscape	184
6.1.3.1 Landscape archaeology	184
6.1.3.2 Landscape Studies in Mesoamerica	185
6.2 Landscape narration in the Mixteca Alta	186
6.2.1 Deep and recent times of the Cerro Negro landscape	186
6.2.1.1 Foundational symbolism of Monte Negro	188
6.2.1.2 The water paradox	189
6.2.1.3 Foundations	191
6.2.1.4 Summary	192
6.2.2 Mapping knowledge: Toponyms in the Apoala Valley	193
6.2.2.1 Mapping methodology	194
6.2.2.2 Classification of toponyms	198
6.2.2.3 Summary	199
6.3 Conclusion	200
<b>7. Discussion and Conclusions</b>	<b>202</b>
7.1 Introduction	202

7.2 Discussion of key points	203
7.3 Landscape and authority	204
7.4 Conclusion	207
<i>Epilogue</i>	208
Appendix A: Conservation assessment forms (in Spanish)	210
Appendix B: Oral History recorded in Santiago Apoala	228
Appendix C: Oral history recorded in Santiago Tilantongo	231
Appendix D: Toponymic data recorded for the Apoala Valley	248
Appendix E: Ceramic Registration Forms Monte Negro (in Spanish)	255
Appendix F: Ceramic Registration Forms Apoala Valley (in Spanish)	283
Bibliography	335
Index	362
Curriculum vitae	369

## List of Tables

Table 2.1 Point measurements taken for Monte Negro perimeter	36
Table 4.1 Total site and component sizes for all phases	110

## List of Figures

Figure 1.2 Chronological Chart of different Mesoamerican regions.	3
Figure 1.1 Map of Mesoamerica.	3
Figure 1.3 Villa Chalcatongo de Hidalgo.	8
Figure 2.1 Map of Oaxaca and the Oaxaca Valley (modified from Marcus and Flannery 1996).	14
Figure 2.2 The Oaxaca Valley.	15
Figure 2.3 Map of the Mixteca, outlining the three sub-regions (modified from Terraciano 2001).	16
Figure 2.4 Mixteca Alta landscape.	17
Figure 2.5 Severe gully erosion in the Mixteca Alta.	18
Figure 2.6 Santiago Tilantongo with Monte Negro in the background.	19
Figure 2.7 The Apoala Valley.	21
Figures 2.8 and 2.8a Canal irrigation in the Apoala Valley.	23
Figure 2.9 The monumental core of Monte Albán.	25
Figure 2.10 Early map of Monte Negro (Caso 1938).	31
Figure 2.11 Mapping at Monte Negro.	37
Figure 2.12 Surveying the Apoala Valley.	42
Figure 2.13 Surveying with guide in the Apoala Valley.	43
Figure 2.14 Esteban Avendaño (at left) at Monte Negro.	50
Figure 3.2 Aerial photograph of Cerro Negro, centrally showing Monte Negro.	53
Figure 3.1 Map of Cerro Negro (modified from INEGI E14D35).	53
Figure 3.3 Drawing of Residential Unit 1.	56
Figure 3.4 Drawing of Residential Unit 2.	57
Figure 3.5 Residential Unit 2.	57
Figure 3.6 Drawing of Residential Unit 3.	59
Figure 3.7 Drawing of Residential Unit 3 (as illustrated in Acosta & Romero 1992).	59
Figure 3.8 Drawing of Residential Units 4 and 5.	60
Figure 3.9 Drawing of Residential Unit 7.	62
Figure 3.10 Drawing of Residential Unit 7 (as illustrated in Acosta & Romero 1992).	62
Figure 3.11 Drawing of Plaza 1.	65

Figure 3.12	Drawing of Plaza 2.	67
Figure 3.13	Drawing of Structure 2-Este ('Templo X').	68
Figure 3.14	Drawing of Plaza 3.	71
Figure 3.15	Structure 3-Este ('Templo T-S').	71
Figure 3.16	Drawing of Plaza 4.	73
Figure 3.17	Temple T.	75
Figure 3.18	Drawing of Temple T-N (as illustrated in Acosta & Romero 1992).	76
Figure 3.19	The main causeway 'Ichi Iya'.	80
Figure 3.20	Artemio Hernandez G. and Taurino Hernández C. consolidating Residential Unit 3.	83
Figure 3.21	Joke de Vrieze consolidating Residential Unit 3.	84
Figure 3.22	Contemporary residences at Monte Negro.	85
Figure 3.23	Stone carving on structure Temple T.	93
Figure 3.24	Plaza 4, seen from northeast corner.	95
Figure 3.25	Drawing of North section.	96
Figure 3.26	Drawing of Residential Units at Monte Negro.	98
Figure 3.27	Unit 5, seen from Structure 3-Oeste.	98
Figure 3.28	Drawing of Temple Z showing architectural ties to Structure 1-Este.	100
Figure 3.29	Drawing of Temple T-N.	100
Figure 4.1	The Apoala Valley.	104
Figure 4.1a	Map of the Apoala Valley (modified from INEGI E14D26).	105
Figure 4.2	Detail from Codex Zouche-Nuttall, Page 36 (modified from Anders et al. 1992b).	106
Figure 4.2a	Codex Zouche/Nuttall, Page 36, depicting the Apoala Valley (modified from Anders et al. 1992b).	107
Figure 4.3	General map Tiki Tinduu Akama (AV1).	112
Figure 4.4	General map Tiki Kahua Akama (AV2).	113
Figure 4.5	Panoramic view of Tiki Kahua Akama.	115
Figure 4.6	Boulders that characterize Tiki Kahua Akama's landscape.	115
Figure 4.7	View of the Apoala Valley featuring the Tiki Kahua Kuchindahua peaks in the central background.	116
Figure 4.8	General map Tiki Kahua Kuchindahua (AV3).	116
Figure 4.9	Well preserved defensive walls at north side Tiki Kahua Kuchindahua.	117
Figure 4.10	Rock carving, known locally as 'El Guerrero' or 'El Danzante'.	119
Figure 4.11	Drawing of 'El Guerrero' rock carving.	119
Figure 4.12	Rock art with black paint at Kahua Torri Kahua (AV6).	120
Figure 4.13	Map of Tinduu Va (AV7).	121
Figure 4.14	Platform and adjacent modern structure at Tinduu Va (AV7).	122

Figure 4.15 The southern end of the Apoala valley showing the extensive terracing of Yahui Che'en in the background (AV8).	123
Figure 4.16 Yanhuitlan Red on Cream sherds.	124
Figure 4.17 Eagle or vulture tripod vessel support in Miguelito Hard Grey.	125
Figure 4.18 Yanhuitlan Red on Cream subhemispherical bowl at Toto Ndzaka (AV10).	127
Figure 4.19 Panoramic view of Tiki Tinduu Ndodo Kimi (AV15), seen from northeast.	131
Figure 4.20 Alignments of worked stone at Tiki Tinduu Ndodo Kimi (AV15).	132
Figure 4.21 Boulders dot a path granting access to Kahua Kandihui (AV16).	133
Figure 4.22 Semi- or complete vessels in a private collection from the Ndodo Che site (AV17).	135
Figure 4.23 Basalt instrument, potentially utilized in the production of amate paper.	135
Figure 4.24 Rock art with white paint at Ndoko Yoo (AV19).	137
Figure 4.25 Ramos Phase site sizes.	140
Figure 4.26 Las Flores Phase site sizes.	143
Figure 4.27 Natividad Phase site sizes.	145
Figure 5.1 Municipal sign of Santiago Apoala, on the main entry road from Nochixtlan.	158
Figure 5.2 Laura Van Broekhoven in a communal meeting in front of the municipal building at Santiago Tilantongo.	164
Figure 5.3 Communal meeting on the church lawn at Santiago Apoala.	168
Figure 5.4 The <i>Parador Turistico 'Ve'e Turista Yutsa To'on'</i> in Santiago Apoala.	169
Figure 5.5 Communal meeting in the Monte Negro primary school building.	174
Figure 5.6 Dialogue during a communal tour of the Monte Negro site.	175
Figure 6.1 Laura Van Broekhoven discussing the Apoala political landscape at one of several stone border posts, or <i>mojoneras</i> .	187
Figure 6.2 Conducting the toponymic survey around Monte Negro.	187
Figure 6.3 A House of Water ( <i>Vehe Savi</i> ) on Cerro Negro, near the Monte Negro site.	190
Figure 6.4 Consulting the map during the toponymic survey in the Apoala Valley.	195
Figure 6.5 Processing toponymic data with local partners.	196
Figure 6.6 Sample of photographic representation of narrated landscape in the Apoala Valley.	197

## Acknowledgements

Lucky circumstances put me in contact with many residents of Santiago Tilantongo and Santiago Apoala. This includes those who had to engage with the ideas expressed in this book due to their municipal cargo, as well as those wanting to discuss local history because of their personal interests. All have been of exceptional value for indicating the value of listening to different voices in this research. Sure enough, not all can be mentioned, but for Tilantongo in particular I include Don Artemio Hernandez Gutiérrez; Don Taurino Hernandez Cruz; Doña Ester Gutiérrez Montesinos; and former municipal president Eleazar Pedro Santiago. In Apoala I benefited from conversations with Margarito López Hernández; Don Leopoldo Guzmán Alvarado; Don Antonio Guzmán Gutiérrez; Don Isauro López López; Don Alvaro Ramos López; Doña Otilia Jimenez López; Don Ventura Hernández; Don Gilberto López; Doña Justa Serapia Guzmán; Doña Francisca García López, Doña Liberia García; Doña Tina Ramos; Doña Amalia Hernández López; Don Guillermo López Pacheco; Doña Apolinaria López Pérez; Don Roel García Santiago; Don Mario Jiménez López; and Don Alvaro Guzmán. Also, de manera muy especial: Don Prisciliano Alvarado; Don Ubaldo López Garcia and former municipal administrator Renato Luis Esperanza helped shape the project into what it would become.

The material and financial support of the Research School CNWS for Asian, African and Amerindian Studies and the Netherlands Foundation for Scientific Research (NWO) is acknowledged. The archaeological findings reported on are the result of a voluntary participation in research directed by INAH, under direct and continuous supervision of the regional centre in Oaxaca, within a framework of cooperation between the Centro INAH-Oaxaca and the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University. The former director of the Centro INAH-Oaxaca Eduardo López Calzada enthusiastically engaged in this cooperation and facilitated the Faculty's proposals to assist in the development of this project. Nelly Róbles García, the director of the Monte Albán Archaeological Zone, together with her crew provided valuable orientations and equipment regarding the work at Monte Negro. Raul Matadamas Diaz was an insightful colleague and loyal companion on many trips in the Mixteca. He, together with his wonderful family received me and many others with open arms in Oaxaca.

Several archaeology students participated in this research between 1998 and 2004. Ivan Kisjes; Joke de Vriese; Enrique García García; Tom Hos; Shu-li Wang; Pieter Teekens; Sandra Warning; Evelien Pater; and Alessia Frassani are thanked for their dedicated work. A special thank you is given to Ivan and Enrique, who have contributed significantly to the descriptive work of Monte Negro. Alexander Vinkeles Melchers is thanked for his valuable assistance regarding several illustrations.

I thank colleagues and friends who have been willing listeners and valuable contributors. In particular I mention Alistair Bright; Alicia Barabas; Miguel Bartolomé; Arlo Griffiths; Bas van Doesburg; Christopher van Gestel; Corinne Hofman; Gabina Aurora Pérez Jiménez; Ivan

Rivera Guzman; John Bintliff; Juan-Julian Caballero; Manuel Rios Morales; Michael Swanton; Miguel-John Versluys; Sabine Luning; and in particular the Van Broekhoven family. An honorary 1-4-3 Club Member, Rivke Jaffe aided considerably in covering up some of my anthropological shortcomings, many thanks to her.

Finally, I thank my parents for their unconditional and unrelenting support over the years. I hope the present book is as much a meaningful result for them as it is to me.

Laura Van Broekhoven has been my most important stimulator and critic, by far. She made it possible and witnessed every moment of it, and it is therefore dedicated to her. Lastly, my daughter Nandana has witnessed the final stages of creating this manuscript, and taught me the value of 'getting on with it' by periodically luring me away from my desk with a persuasive proposal to play.