This book investigates the emergence of social complexity and state formation in a New World region. Around 500 B.C., the Valley of Oaxaca, in present-day Mexico, was the site of one of the earliest Native American states, when a new regional capital was established at Monte Albán. Today one of Mexico’s most famous and spectacular archaeological sites, Monte Albán signaled an important series of changes in regional political structure in the direction of greater political complexity and integration within a larger domain. The four authors of this introductory text have over the years produced much of the most important primary information we have about developing complex societies in this region. Drawing on the abundance of excavated remains and a survey of regional archaeological settlement patterns, they provide a succinct account of the causes and consequences of political change in the region.

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All have worked extensively in Oaxaca and have published widely on the archaeology of the region.
This series aims to introduce students to early societies that have been the subject of sustained archaeological research. Each study is also designed to demonstrate a contemporary method of archaeological analysis in action, and the authors are all specialists currently engaged in field research. The books have been planned to cover many of the same fundamental issues. Tracing long-term developments, and describing and analyzing a discrete segment in the prehistory or history of a region, they represent an invaluable tool for comparative analysis. Clear, well organized, authoritative and succinct, the case studies are an important resource for students, and for scholars in related fields, such as anthropology, ethnohistory, history and political science. They also offer the general reader accessible introductions to important archaeological sites.
Ancient Oaxaca

The Monte Albán State

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Our book title, *Ancient Oaxaca*, is well known to students of pre-Hispanic Oaxaca. The original book with this title, edited by John Paddock (1966), stood for many years as the definitive overview of Oaxacan archaeology, and was a book that gave us, and many others, our first taste of this archaeologically exciting region. We dedicate the present volume to John, to keep alive the memory of one of the pioneers of modern archaeology in Oaxaca.

The state that developed at Monte Albán, in the Valley of Oaxaca, Mexico, was the earliest and one of the most influential in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica. Because of its significance and the richness of its archaeological and epigraphic remains, Monte Albán and the surrounding valley have received much archaeological attention for over a century. Research in the Valley of Oaxaca has included long-term projects that have been among the preeminent investigative efforts in the history of Mesoamerican archaeology. These projects include those of Alfonso Caso and his students and colleagues, and studies by Kent Flannery and Joyce Marcus and their students and colleagues. Our own archaeological settlement pattern surveys of the entire Valley of Oaxaca also have contributed useful data, and we are now extending our survey coverage beyond the boundaries of the valley itself. Although there is still much to do, the amount of information on past social change in Oaxaca is substantial. For the most part, the results of these research efforts are not readily available except in technical and academic publications (Marcus and Flannery 1996 is an important exception). We were therefore delighted when we were invited to contribute a book on Monte Albán to this series.

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