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INTRODUCTION

The present contribution with the tombs and burials so far uncovered at the archaeological site of Lambityeco, located in the Valley of Oaxaca, Mexico (Fig. 1). Specifically, it presents the data from the osteological analysis of the human remains and attempts to reconstruct the archaeological context in which the tombs and burials were found. The data presented here constitute the first step of a more extensive study that aims at exploring a number of aspects of prehistoric Zapotec society. For this reason, this thesis will limit itself to a brief description of a variety of archaeological data from tombs.

The Study of Prehistoric Societies

The study of past social structures has been accomplished through the analysis of various kinds of archaeological materials and symbolic attributes in ceramics (Longacre 1969; Daegu 1970; Miller 1968), burial practices (Brown 1971; Bryn 1973; Miller 1976; Painter 1975, 1977; Sempowski 1981; and others), settlement patterns (Willcox 1956; Billard 1968; Blanton 1978). These approaches have been useful in studying different structural levels that range from the purely local (e.g. kinship), to the community or the regional level. The particular aim of the present study—which by the local nature of the data cannot reach the regional sphere—has been approached through the analysis of data related to tombs. The fundamental premise, both implicit, and obviously of archaeology itself, is that human behavior responsible for the archaeological record is not random, allowing us to understand how past societies