In Mexico, state-sponsored archaeology has been used to produce a glorious pre-Hispanic past in the service of national identity and economic development. Scientific techniques of excavation and reconstruction have brought certain pasts to light while silencing others. With these concerns, my dissertation focuses on the Epiclassic (c. 350-1300 CE) urban center of El Tajín, Mexico – currently home to a number of indigenous Totonac communities. Based on a community-grounded counter-mapping methodology, I argue that processes of land tenure transformation, changes in vanilla cultivation, and the effects of oil exploration in the region are three silenced histories constitutive not just of Totonac regional history, but of the modern archaeological site. In this analysis, government land surveyors, vanilla merchants, and foreign oil companies play foundational roles in the archaeological work of delimiting, managing, guarding, and reconstructing the pre-Hispanic past. Shifting my focus to the present, I then take an ethnographic approach to the archaeological site as a workplace. The site’s managers are the kinds of experts whose monopoly on knowledge production has been critiqued in archaeology and heritage studies. By the same token, El Tajín’s indigenous Totonac guards are the kinds of subjects employed in multivocal analyses. Closely examining the everyday politics of the workplace, however, demonstrates the precarious livelihoods of the former relative to the latter. From this contrast, I argue for a closer attention to the political economy of archaeological practice and heritage management. Ultimately, my dissertation develops theoretical and methodological tools for analyzing the kinds of social and material forces used to make the past present, and the histories silenced as a result.