

New World States and Empires: Economic and Social Organization

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We take a critical perspective in discussing recent publications on the archaeological study of the ancient state-level societies of Latin America. For some topics, such as intensive agriculture and exchange, data are far ahead of theory, whereas for others (e.g., gender and ethnicity), theory has outstripped data. Craft production, a topic that has achieved a good balance of data and theory, is one of the success stories of recent Latin American archaeology. After a discussion of sources of data, we review these and other topics (e.g., consumption patterns, household studies, social organization) in terms of both data and theory. In a second review article, we cover the topics of politics, religion, urbanism, and the processes of change.

KEY WORDS: archaeology; complex societies; states; New World.

INTRODUCTION

The past decade has seen a real explosion in archaeological and documentary research on the state-level societies of the pre-Columbian New World. As in much of contemporary archaeology, there is a tension between the relative prominence and elaboration of data and theory in this area. On the one hand, fieldwork and analysis are proceeding at a rapid clip, often leaving theoretical and conceptual understanding lagging far behind. On the other hand, much current archaeological theorizing is highly speculative in nature, with little connection to the realities of the archaeological record. In the long run, most current interpretations will fall by the wayside, leaving the data as the enduring contributions of archaeological

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research. Nevertheless, our understanding of the past is greatly enhanced by placing current archaeological data within the context of broader anthropological and archaeological models. The perspectives and findings of allied disciplines—history, historical linguistics, paleoclimatology, geomorphology, and others—also can contribute much to our understanding of the past, but archaeologists need to devise better methods and concepts to make this happen.

Much of the variation in the relative prominence of data and theory on New World complex societies relates to the different topics studied by archaeologists. For some topics, such as chemical sourcing of artifacts and reconstructions of paleoclimates and paleoenvironments, the data are far ahead of theory. We currently lack the concepts and theoretical perspectives to make sense out of new scientific data on these topics. Until conceptual advances are made, it is difficult to evaluate these data and their social and cultural contexts. This shortcoming is not unique to the New World, of course, and its rectification requires work on a broader geographical and conceptual level. How can frequencies of imported objects be used to reconstruct the mechanisms and contexts of exchange? How can we identify human responses to climatic change? We now know a lot of facts about many ancient New World cities, for example, but we have a poor understanding of processes of urbanization and its social context. We desperately need comparative analysis and theory building in these areas.

For other topics—spatiality (or spatial practice), agency models, and perhaps ethnicity and gender—theory is moving too fast for data to follow, leading to speculative and ungrounded interpretations. We think that many archaeologists are giving too much attention to the literature in cultural anthropology and social theory on these and other currently fashionable topics, and not devoting enough effort to the development of our own concepts and methods tailored to the nature of the archaeological record and archaeological practice. On the other hand, topics such as craft production, household archaeology, political organization, and mortuary practices are advancing rapidly in both the empirical and conceptual dimensions. These are among the more successful current research topics for New World complex societies and continuing advances can be expected in the future.

In this article we review recent publications on a variety of economic and social topics among the state-level societies of Latin America. In a followup to this article (Smith and Schreiber, in press), we review research on political organization, religion, and urbanism. These articles are updates to “New World Complex Societies: Recent Economic, Social, and Political Studies” (Smith, 1993), and they cover publications between 1992 and 2003. We follow very generally the format of that article but include a number of areas of inquiry that have come to the fore in the most recent decade. We limit our discussion to societies generally classified as states and empires, leaving out chiefdoms for reasons of space. Useful reviews of chiefdom research in Latin America can be found in a number of recent works (Clark, 1997a; Drennan, 1995; Flannery and Marcus, 2000; Grove, 1997; Redmond, 1998; Rosenswig, 2000). To keep some kind of

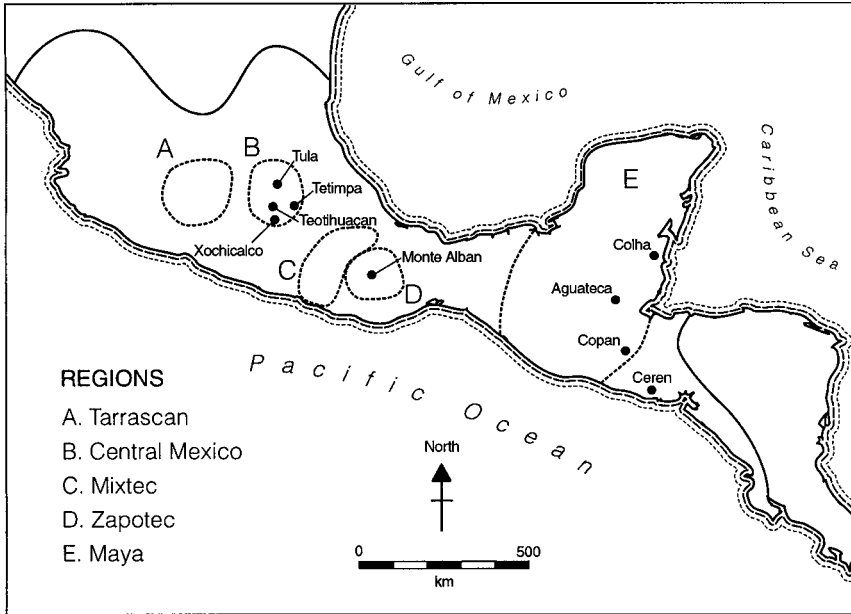


Fig. 1. Major regions and sites in Mesoamerica mentioned in the text.

limit on the bibliography, we avoid citing individual chapters in edited volumes except where necessary to make a specific point. The major regions and sites mentioned in the text are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The past decade has seen a plethora of reference works on ancient New World complex societies. These include scholarly encyclopedias (Carrasco, 2001; Evans and Webster, 2001; Peregrine and Ember, 2001, 2002) and other book-length reference works on Mesoamerica (Gendrop, 1997; Maldonado Jiménez, 1992; Palka, 2000; Winfield Capitaine, 1997). The massive *Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas* includes two volumes on Mesoamerica (Adams and MacLeod, 2000a, 2000b) and two on South America (Salomon and Schwartz, 1999a, 1999b). Most of the entries are written by specialists, and their bibliographies point the reader to the archaeological literature. Prem (1997) covers all of Latin America in outline format.

Several new or revised overviews of South American and Mesoamerican prehistory have appeared since 1992. Bruhns (1994) and Wilson (1999) cover all of South America, whereas Richardson (1995) and Moseley (2001) focus on the Andes. Recent overviews written for a more general audience (Morris and von

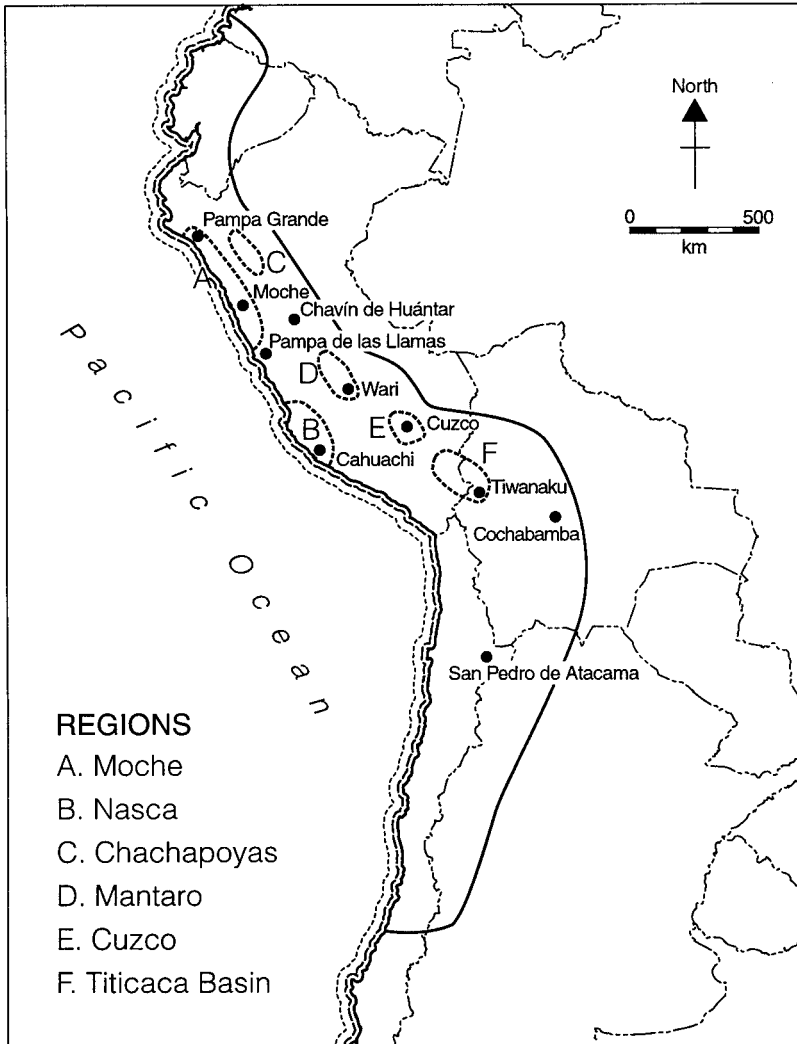


Fig. 2. Major regions and sites in South America mentioned in the text.

Hagen, 1995; von Hagen and Morris, 1998) are useful for university students. For Mesoamerica, Coe continues to revise his two popular textbooks (Coe, 1999; Coe and Koontz, 2002), and two readers targeted at student use have appeared, one reprinting already-published papers (Smith and Masson, 2000) and the other presenting new papers with a “social archaeology” perspective (Hendon and Joyce, 2004). Useful Mesoamerican textbooks on more limited regions or sites include works on Teotihuacan (Pasztory, 1997), the Tarascan state (Pollard, 1993), and

two books on early Zapotec society (Blanton *et al.*, 1999; Marcus and Flannery, 1996). Blackwell Publishers initiated a series of book-length treatments of specific New World complex societies, including Tiwanaku (Kolata, 1993), the Moche (Bawden, 1999), Nasca (Silverman and Proulx, 2002), and the Inkas (D'Altroy, 2002) in the Andes and the Aztecs (Smith, 2003a) in Mesoamerica. Ten years later, however, Blackwell discontinued this series (although they continue to publish on Mesoamerica in other series; e.g., Hendon and Joyce, 2004).

Several new Andean regional journals have appeared in the last decade, including *Tawantinsuyu*, devoted to archaeological and historical investigations of the Inka empire, and the *Boletín de Arqueología PUCP*, published by the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, which comprises annual, thematically oriented volumes. Other leading Andean journals include *Chungara*, published in Chile, and the *Gaceta Arqueológica Andina*, published by the Instituto Arqueológico de Estudios Andinos (INDEA) in Lima, Peru. *Andean Past*, published by the Latin American studies Program of Cornell University, is a biennial journal publishing data-oriented research reports. A formerly prominent journal of Andean prehistory, *Ñawpa Pacha*, has been in hiatus since 1990 but is expected to resume publication shortly. *Latin American Antiquity* has taken the lead in publishing theoretically oriented articles and data reports in all areas of Latin American archaeology.

For Mesoamerica, *Ancient Mesoamerica* has emerged (alongside *Latin American Antiquity*) as the premier scholarly journal in English. The German periodical *Mexicon*, with articles in English and Spanish, seems to be changing from a newsletter into a scholarly journal. The top Mexican journals are the technical journal *Arqueología* (published by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia) and the glossy popular magazine *Arqueología Mexicana*. Less visible regional journals that often have crucial articles include the *Boletín de la Escuela de Ciencias Antropológicas de la Universidad de Yucatán* (Yucatán), *Cuadernos del Sur* (Oaxaca), *Expresión Antropológica* (State of Mexico), *Estudios de Cultura Otopame* (north-central Mexico), and *Relaciones* (Michoacán and west Mexico). For Guatemalan archaeology, important journals include *Revista de la Universidad del Valle de Guatemala* and the annual volumes from the *Simpósio de Investigaciones Arqueológicas en Guatemala*, published by the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología, and *Mesoamérica*, published in Spanish in the United States. Important European journals for New World archaeology include the *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* (Paris) and the *Revista Española de Antropología Americana* (Madrid).

For professionals and students, review articles by specialists are particularly useful in gaining entry to the literature. A number of review articles have appeared on the ancient Maya (Andrews, 1993; Fash, 1994; Houston, 2000; Lucero, 1999; Marcus, 1995, 2003; Webster, 1999, 2000). Other review articles on Mesoamerica include several on the Olmec (Clark, 1997a; Flannery and Marcus, 2000; Grove, 1997) and articles on Teotihuacan (Cowgill, 1997), Aztec archaeology (Hodge, 1998), and West Mexico (Pollard, 1997). For South America recent review articles

cover Andean archaeology (D'Altroy, 1997), south coast Formative developments (Silverman, 1996), research in Ayacucho (González Carré and Pozzi-Escot, 1992), Moche culture (Quilter, 2002), provincial Inka research (Stanish, 2001b), obsidian research (Burger *et al.*, 2000), northern chiefdoms (Drennan, 1995), and the rise of states (Stanish, 2001a). Aveni (2003) reviews archaeoastronomical research in all parts of the ancient New World. Another set of useful reference works is Internet bibliographies. The FAMSI (Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies) bibliography contains several thousand entries on Mesoamerican archaeology, but its usefulness is hindered by the lack of a means to export data in a standard bibliographic format.

PRODUCTION AND EXCHANGE

Intensive Agriculture

Much research on ancient intensive agriculture in the 1970s and 1980s emphasized theory and speculative accounts of the role of population growth in agricultural intensification (e.g., Cohen, 1977). This approach has now been replaced with a significant body of fieldwork addressed at documenting ancient field systems. Two recent masterful syntheses of ancient agricultural systems in South America (Denevan, 2001) and Mesoamerica (Whitmore and Turner, 2001) provide in-depth descriptions of research with extensive bibliographies (see also Doolittle, 2000). South American research on terracing, long a strength of Andean archaeology, has slowed in the past decade, and Mesoamericanists are now catching up in the quantity and quality of fieldwork on terracing. New studies in the Petexbatun region (Dunning and Beach, 1994; Dunning *et al.*, 1997), at Caracol (Chase and Chase, 1998), and other areas of Belize (Beach *et al.*, 2002; Fedick, 1994) show that terracing was far more extensive among the ancient Maya than previously thought (although see Turner, 1983). The ubiquitous Aztec relic terraces in central Mexico have seen little recent attention, however (Smith and Price, 1994). Maya water management has been addressed by Scarborough and others (Scarborough, 2003; Scarborough *et al.*, 1995; Scarborough and Isaac, 1993); additional studies of Mesoamerican irrigation include Hunt (1994), Nichols and Frederick (1993), and Winsborough *et al.* (1996). An important recent article (Dunning *et al.*, 2002) discusses the role of karst depressions (*bajos*) in shaping Maya settlement and land use patterns.

With some exceptions, coastal irrigation systems in South America, like terracing, saw much more fieldwork in the 1970s and 1980s than in the 1990s. In the Nasca region of the Peruvian south coast, Schreiber and Lancho (1995, 2003) have documented the system of subterranean aqueducts, locally called *puquios*, and have placed their initial construction in the mid-first millennium A.D. Initial construction of the *puquios* coincided with a period of cultural upheaval

in Nasca entailing changes in sociopolitical organization, population movement into previously unoccupied regions, aggregation of the population into fewer but larger sites, and an increase in violence. While they disagree with arguments that the *puquios* were entirely a Spanish introduction (Barnes and Fleming, 1991), they do find that a limited number of *puquios* may have been remodeled by the Spanish. In the north coast Moche Valley, Billman has documented the extent of irrigation systems from 1800 B.C. to the time of the Spanish conquest and finds that managerial requirements of irrigation were relatively unimportant in the emergence of the southern Moche state (Billman, 2002).

Research on raised field agriculture has followed an inverse pattern in comparison with terracing and irrigation: decreasing fieldwork in Mesoamerica (Siemens, 1998; Sluyter, 1994) and more research in the Andes. The focus of research on raised fields in the latter area continues to be the Lake Titicaca basin, where archaeologists have hotly debated a number of issues. For example, were raised fields managed or controlled by the state, or was production organized independently on the household level? What role did raised field agriculture play in the rise and fall of the Tiwanaku state? (e.g., Erickson, 1993; Kolata, 1996; Mathews, 1997; Stanish, 1994). In 1993 Smith (1993, p. 9) suggested that for raised field agriculture, "the jury is still out on its organizational requirements and political implications." Unfortunately, the research and debate on Tiwanaku (and other) raised field systems have still not settled the issue. Agricultural production in the central Peruvian highlands, and intensification of maize production by commoner households under Inka domination, have been documented by Hastorf (1993, 2001).

Lowland tropical gardens and tree crops have become an important focus of research in Mesoamerica (e.g., Anderson, 1993; McKillop, 1994; Pyburn, 1998), some of which explores the nature and implications of urban gardening at Maya sites (e.g., Isendahl, 2002). Particularly important collections and syntheses of ancient Mesoamerican intensive agricultural systems are Fedick (1996) and Whitmore and Turner (2001). Unfortunately, few of these new data have been placed into the context of current theoretical debates on the nature of preindustrial agricultural intensification (e.g., Johnston, 2003; Morrison, 1994; Stone, 2001).

Craft Production

The nature and organization of craft production continues to be a popular topic for New World complex societies. The majority of recent publications are devoted to the technology of particular craft industries, with some limited attention to their social context. Not surprisingly, Mesoamericanists have focused their technological research extensively on obsidian tool production (Aoyama, 1999, 2001; Braswell *et al.*, 1994; Clark, 1997b; Clark and Bryant, 1997; Healan, 1997; Hirth, 1995; Hirth and Andrews, 2002; Otis Charlton, 1993; Parry, 2001). Obsidian

quarries are receiving more detailed attention than in the past (Cruz Antillón, 1994; Darras, 1999; Pastrana, 1998). Production of chert tools at the Maya site of Colha in Belize also continues to be the focus of considerable research (e.g., Hester and Shafer, 1994; King and Potter, 1994; Masson, 2000a).

Some of the most notable advances in the analysis of Mesoamerican craft production and its social implications have occurred in the realms of metallurgy (Hosler, 1994, 1999; Torres Montes and Franco Velázquez, 1996) and textiles (Hendon, 1992; McCafferty and McCafferty, 2000; Nichols *et al.*, 2000; Pohl, 1994; Stark *et al.*, 1998), two crafts with longer histories of research in the Andes (e.g., Benson, 1979; King, 2000). Other craft industries receiving considerable attention in both regions are ceramics (Arnold *et al.*, 1993; Balkansky *et al.*, 1997; Costin and Hagstrum, 1995; Druc, 1998; Foias and Bishop, 1997; Hernández Reyes *et al.*, 1999; Reents-Budet *et al.*, 2000; Shimada, 1994), shell (Feinman and Nicholas, 1993; Owen, 2001; Velázquez Castro, 1999), and rubber (Fillooy Nadal, 2001; Hosler *et al.*, 1999).

New World archaeologists have been following Costin's (1991) advice to move beyond the vague and nebulous concept of "specialization" and focus on the individual dimensions of the organization of craft production (for an updated and expanded account see Costin, 2001a). Mesoamericanists have found that most craft production activities took place within the domestic setting (e.g., Feinman, 1999; Feinman and Nicholas, 2000; Iannone and Connell, 2003; McAnany, 1993; Otis Charlton *et al.*, 1993; Sugiura Yamamoto, 1996), and several studies have found evidence for the presence of more than one craft specialty in a single domestic "workshop" location (Feinman, 1999; Feinman and Nicholas, 2000; Widmer, 1991). It appears that many or most craft items were produced in both rural and urban settings (Finsten, 1995; King and Potter, 1994; Nichols, 1994; Nichols *et al.*, 2000; Smith, 2003a, pp. 78–105). The issue of independent versus attached (i.e., sponsored) production was pioneered in Mesoamerica by Brumfiel (1987). The cases of household-level production listed above most likely pertain to independent commoner crafters; other studies have documented likely elite-sponsored production of Classic Maya ceramics (Inomata, 2001; Reents-Budet, 1994) and Aztec lapidary jewelry (Otis Charlton, 1994). Janusek (1999) proposed a third concept—embedded specialization—to describe craft production by corporate groups at Tiwanaku, a pattern that does not easily fit into the independent or attached categories. Ames (1995) had earlier used this same term (embedded specialization) to refer to the production of craft items by elites, a pattern that may describe some of the palace-based crafts in Classic Maya and Mixtec societies. A series of essays on the social identities of crafters (Costin, 1996; Costin and Wright, 1998; R. Joyce, 1993) adds a new dimension to production studies (Costin, 2001a).

In both the Andes (Arnold, 1985; Costin, 2000; Duncan, 2000; Sillar, 2000) and Mesoamerica (D. Arnold, 2000; P. Arnold, 2000; Deal, 1998), ethnoarchaeology has begun to make crucial contributions to understanding the

nature of craft production systems, particularly for pottery. When the advances outlined above and described in greater detail in Costin (2001a) are tallied up, it is clear that archaeologists now have achieved a much stronger understanding of the variation and significance of craft production activities than ever before. Archaeologists have been reluctant, however, to take the next logical step in this line of analysis—to discard the concept of specialization, a vague and misleading term whose usefulness since Costin (1991) has been minimal (Smith, 2004).

Exchange Systems

Smith (1993) noted a decade ago that in the analysis of New World exchange systems, conceptual advances lagged far behind empirical research. Today the situation is no better. Archaeologists continue to rely on the outdated, simplistic, and inadequate trilogy of Karl Polanyi (1957)—reciprocity, redistribution, market exchange—instead of developing more refined and appropriate models of ancient exchange (for discussion, see Smith, 2004). As in the area of craft production, obsidian leads the way in chemical sourcing research. Scholars are generating new data on the geological sources of obsidian artifacts in Mesoamerica (e.g., Healan, 1993; Moholy-Nagy, 1999; Neff *et al.*, 2000), but unfortunately many studies use poor sampling procedures (e.g., Joyce *et al.*, 1995; Santley *et al.*, 2001). These authors do not adequately describe just how they selected the artifacts to analyze, suggesting strongly that they did not use random sampling. Consequently, their results cannot be generalized beyond the (typically small) nonrandom sample of sourced artifacts to wider populations of interest (such as all obsidian from a site or a phase or a region). As Drennan (1996, pp. 89–93) points out, strict adherence to random sampling is not required in order to generate reasonable inferences from sample to population, but archaeologists do need to obtain some kind of quasirandom (unbiased) sample, and they do need to describe explicitly their sampling methods, to avoid the limitations of haphazard sampling. No one has yet attempted a synthesis of Mesoamerican obsidian exchange systems. Methodological research on obsidian sourcing techniques (e.g., Braswell *et al.*, 2000; Glascock *et al.*, 1998) promises to improve research results in the future.

Substantial progress has been made in identifying the physical locations of Andean obsidian sources, previously identified only on the basis of chemical characteristics (e.g., Burger *et al.*, 1998; Jennings and Glascock, 2002). Most significant has been the location of the major Quispisisa source, long thought to be in Huancavelica, in the department of Ayacucho (Burger and Glascock, 2000, 2002). Changes in long-distance exchange of obsidian from preceramic to late prehistoric times are described by Burger *et al.* (2000). Although their analysis, like the Mesoamerican examples mentioned above, suffers from a lack of controlled sampling procedures, they argue that two primary sources of obsidian—the Alca and Chivay sources in Arequipa—were exploited and widely distributed through much of the south-central Andes. They suggest, based on this evidence, that

there were strong ties between the Cuzco region and the Titicaca Basin through all periods, except during the Middle Horizon when exchange patterns were disrupted by the expansion of the Wari and Tiwanaku states.

Ceramic sourcing using neutron activation analysis continues to be popular in Mesoamerica (e.g., Neff, 1992; Neff *et al.*, 1994; Scott and Meyers, 1994). In comparison to the obsidian research, ceramic provenience studies tend to use better sampling methods (Neff, 1993), they tend to use better comparative analogical data for interpretations (Arnold *et al.*, 1999), and they tend to be more explicitly problem oriented. Foias and Bishop (1997), for example, use sourcing data to evaluate alternative models of ceramic production and exchange as they relate to the Classic Maya collapse. In central Mexico, a long-term sourcing study of Aztec ceramics has been particularly successful in documenting several production zones for Aztec black-on-orange ceramics, adding considerably to our understanding of exchange systems in the Basin of Mexico (Hodge *et al.*, 1992, 1993; Nichols *et al.*, 2002). Ceramic sourcing is also making inroads in other parts of Mesoamerica, notably West Mexico (Williams and Weigand, 2001). Unfortunately, ceramic petrography has lagged far behind chemical analysis in Mesoamerica (Kepecs, 1998).

Ceramic sourcing has been slower to gain widespread use in the Andes, but preliminary results from a variety of regions (e.g., Costin, 2001b; D'Altroy and Bishop, 1990; Druc, 1998; Hayashida, 1999; Vaughn and Neff, 2000) indicate that this approach can produce results especially useful for understanding both the production and the distribution of prehistoric ceramics. Chemical sourcing has contributed to significant advances in the study of several other commodities in Mesoamerica, including bronze (Hosler and Macfarlane, 1996; Hosler and Stresser-Péan, 1992) and greenstone or jadeite (Lange, 1993; Seitz *et al.*, 2001).

The analysis of exchange systems at various spatial scales is becoming more common in Mesoamerica. Regional exchange has been the focus of research in several areas, including the Copán Valley of Honduras (Aoyama, 1999, 2001), the Cerén area of El Salvador (Sheets, 2000), northern Belize (Dockall and Shafer, 1993; Lucero, 2001; Santone, 1997), and the Aztec Valley of Mexico (Hodge and Smith, 1994; Parry, 2001). At a larger scale, core-periphery models and various types of world systems approaches have been applied in both Mesoamerica and the Andes (Blanton *et al.*, 1992; Burger and Matos Mendieta, 2002; Carmack, 1996; Goldstein, 2000b; A. Joyce, 1993; Kepecs *et al.*, 1994; Peregrine and Feinman, 1996; Schortman and Urban, 1992; Smith and Berdan, 2003).

Transport techniques and costs are crucial variables in any analysis of long-distance exchange. After several seminal works on this topic in Mesoamerica during the 1980s (e.g., Drennan, 1984; Hassig, 1985), research has unfortunately slowed down considerably (Drennan, 1994). A recent collection on transport in ancient South America (Herrera and Cardale de Schimpff, 2000) may foretell continuing productive research in that area.

Although many scholars acknowledge government control of exchange as an important variable in structuring ancient economies and societies, New World archaeologists have been slow to explore this issue conceptually or methodologically. Institutional economics (Jones, 1993; North, 1991) and other traditional political economy approaches (Allen, 1997; Hirth, 1996; Roseberry, 1989) offer conceptual tools for addressing economic patterns in ancient states, but progress has been slow among archaeologists (Smith, 2004). Controlled comparisons between the two best-documented New World state economies—the state-dominated redistributive Inka economy and the commercialized Aztec economy—offer a fruitful avenue of analysis (Stanish, 1997). Hirth (1998) proposed a promising material culture model of commercialized exchange (see also Smith, 1999), and if his approach can be extended and refined, it will help put debates about the degree of commercialization of prehistoric economies on a firmer empirical basis. Several of the chapters in Masson and Freidel (2002) address questions of commercialization and state control among the Classic Maya, but it will be difficult to resolve these issues in the absence of better concepts and methods.

THE DOMESTIC SPHERE

Household Archaeology

“Household archaeology” became a significant topic of research in New World archaeology with the appearance of a series of influential works in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g., Bawden, 1982; Flannery, 1976; Wilk and Ashmore, 1988; Wilk and Rathje, 1982). In the face of critiques of these and other studies (e.g., Hendon, 1996; Shanks and Tilley, 1987; Tringham, 1991), enthusiasm waned and many archaeologists stopped talking about “household archaeology” as a distinctive approach. Some grew bored with household archaeology (e.g., “household archaeology, in published form, can be a very pedestrian affair—overdescribed and undertheorized” McAnany, 2002, p. 117), while others published studies dominated by theory-driven speculation about households unencumbered by empirical data on actual houses or domestic activities (e.g., Hutson, 2002; Levi, 2002).

One distressing trend is a continued conceptual sloppiness, first pointed out in Smith’s earlier review article (Smith, 1993). To quote that paper, “some archaeologists claim to map and excavate ‘households,’ when in fact they study houses (artifacts) in order to infer households (behavior). Such imprecise use of terminology only contributes to the conceptual problems that now hold back the archaeology of houses” (Smith, 1993, p. 13). Recent examples of this problem from Latin America include LeCount (2001), Sheets (1992, 2000, 2002), Kievit (1994), and Quattrin (2001). Nevertheless, more and more archaeologists have been excavating and studying houses, and, as Steadman (1996) and others point out, household-scale research provides some of the best data on ancient social and

economic patterns. (Several topics that are part of “household archaeology” are discussed in other sections of this essay.)

Marc Bermann’s (1994) study of houses at Lukurmata (Bolivia) and the integration of their residents into the larger economic and political systems of the Tiwanaku region is one of the best recent examples of a rigorous and sophisticated approach to household archaeology in the ancient New World (see also Bermann, 1997). Recent work at the site of Moche (e.g., Pillsbury, 2001; Van Gijseghem, 2001) has focused on households and their role in the urban economy and society. A series of studies of household archaeology in far southern Peru and northern Bolivia, ranging in date from the Middle Horizon to Late Horizon, may be found in a volume edited by Aldenderfer (1993). While most of these studies focus on domestic architecture, some also address issues of ethnicity and household-level production in the context of changing political landscapes.

In Mesoamerica, few monographs on residential excavations have appeared in the past ten years (notable examples include Cobean and Mastache, 1999; Sánchez Alaniz, 2000). Several important collections of papers have been published, however, and we hope that this signals full monographic treatment of these residential excavations in the near future. Santley and Hirth (1993) published a collection of useful studies reporting excavations of houses, interpretations of spatial and social patterns, discussions of formation processes, and ethnohistoric data on houses and households. Several studies on residential excavations in Mesoamerica also are included in Schwartz and Falconer’s (1994) comparative study of Mesoamerican and Near Eastern villages.

Some of the most interesting “household” studies in Mesoamerica report the artifactual remains of rapidly abandoned houses. The site of Cerén in El Salvador has long been held up as the closest New World analog to Pompeii as a site quickly buried by volcanic ash (Sheets, 1992), and useful studies of household remains from this site continue to appear (Brown, 2000; Kievit, 1994; Sheets, 2002). Tetimpa in Puebla is another site where volcanic deposition has produced well-preserved remains (Panfil *et al.*, 1998; Plunket and Uruñuela, 1998). Aguateca (Inomata and Stiver, 1998; Inomata *et al.*, 2002) and Xochicalco (González Crespo *et al.*, 1995; Webb and Hirth, 2000) were rapidly abandoned political capitals with rich house floor assemblages. These and other case studies are brought together in Inomata and Webb (2003). Such studies are important not only for their documentation of domestic life (and settlement abandonment) at these sites but also for their implications for understanding houses whose formation processes were not so dramatic (Ashmore, 2000). Other useful studies of formation processes of domestic contexts include Hall (1994) and Webster *et al.* (1997).

The use of domestic archaeological remains to explore the social and economic conditions of households has seen only modest explicit research (Feinman *et al.*, 2002; Johnston and Gonlin, 1998; Masson, 2000b; Sheets, 2000; Smith *et al.*, 1999). In the Andean region households and domestic economy have been

viewed within the context of overarching state-level organization, and archaeological research has been aimed at documenting the effects of changing extraction policies on both elite and nonelite households (Bermann, 1994; D'Altroy and Hastorf, 2001; Kolata, 1993). In central Mexico, major advances have been made in the analysis of household and community organization from ethnohistorical records. Lockhart's (1992) massive volume synthesizes several decades of research on Nahuatl-language documents, and Terraciano's (2001) book covers similar ground for the Mixtec region of Oaxaca. In some areas the data are sufficiently fine grained to permit specialized analyses of topics such as family demography (McCaa, 1996).

Ethnoarchaeological studies are contributing much useful information on the material and spatial correlates of household activities and conditions (P. Arnold, 2000; Parsons, 2001; Pierrebourg, 1999; Sugiura Yamamoto, 1998); among these works Deal's (1998) ceramics study stands out for its comprehensive coverage and explicit focus on archaeologically relevant information. This is one of the most important monographs in recent Mesoamerican studies. Another new development is the application of an explicit built-environment approach, emphasizing spatial behavior patterns, to archaeological data on domestic contexts (Robin, 2002).

Ancestor veneration has emerged as a popular topic of analysis in domestic contexts, particularly in Mesoamerica. Most studies, building on McAnany's (1995) seminal monograph, emphasize mortuary remains from tombs in and around the house and their implications for symbolic links between people and their ancestors (Gillespie, 2001; McAnany *et al.*, 1999; Miller, 1995; papers in Silverman and Small, 2002). Related studies of ancestors include Marcus's (1998) analysis of Formative figurines from Oaxaca and Headrick's (1999) speculative discussion of possible mummy bundles at Teotihuacan.

In the Andes ancestor veneration is often assumed, based on documentary evidence of the importance of such practices within Inka society, wherein deceased rulers became honored ancestors, with a large subset of their direct descendants devoted to the cult of their mummy. Working with colonial period documents, Salomon (1995) finds that social groups (*ayllus*) within late prehispanic towns often considered themselves to have been descended from pre-Inka ancestor/heroes. In a Middle Horizon context, Cook (1992) describes a cache of 40 turquoise figurines found at the Wari site of Pikillacta, finds that the characteristics of these figures tie them to ancestor worship, and suggests they may represent the founding ancestors of the Wari polity. More recently, Lau (2002) discusses evidence for village-level public ceremonies that combined feasting and ancestor worship and finds that changes in these practices resulted from sociocultural transformations during the period of Wari domination. Although most archaeological considerations of Andean ancestor worship have been aimed either at very late prehispanic periods, or at state-level societies, Lau's work is evidence that the door may be opening to studies of ancestor veneration in earlier and less complex societies.

Consumption

Archaeological research on consumption has moved beyond questions of what goods and foods were used (What did people eat for dinner? Where did they get their obsidian?) to ask questions about the social uses and cultural significance of goods (Did feasting take place? Did diverse social groups have different uses for obsidian blades?). This broadening of the meaning of consumption follows trends in anthropology (e.g., Appadurai, 1986; Douglas and Isherwood, 1979). Archaeologists cannot abandon the earlier questions of the identification of domestic foods and goods, and these remain important topics (see above for chemical artifact sourcing). Several excellent syntheses of paleoethnobotanical research, featuring New World contexts, have appeared recently (e.g., Hastorf, 1999; Pearsall, 2001). Faunal analysis continues to be an important method (e.g., Burger and Salazar, 2003; Masson, 1999; Middleton *et al.*, 2002; Polaco and Fabiola Guzmán, 1997), and this may be a topic ripe for synthesis. The quality and precision of dietary inferences from bone chemistry continue to improve (Gerry, 1997; Tomczak, 2003; Ubelaker *et al.*, 1995; White, 1999), and scholars also have begun to assemble systematic ethnohistoric and artistic evidence on ancient diet (Coe, 1994). As these empirical advances are synthesized in a broader conceptual framework (e.g., Danforth, 1999; Gumerman, 1997), our understanding of ancient New World consumption patterns will increase dramatically.

One result of the newer social approach to consumption has been a focus on key foods rich with symbolism that were served at important social occasions: public rituals, feasts, state ceremonies, and the like. In Mesoamerica, cacao (Coe and Coe, 1996; Dillinger *et al.*, 2000; Powis *et al.*, 2002) and pulque (Bruman, 2000) are the best-known examples of this category. Bruman's (2000) study of alcohol consumption in ancient Mesoamerica brings to light numerous poorly known local alcoholic beverages from the distant corners of Mexico. The analysis of alcoholic beverages is an important topic, but New World archaeologists have yet to tie the growing empirical data to conceptual models of the significance of alcohol in ancient states (e.g., Arnold, 1999; Dietler, 1990).

In the Andes research has focused on the consumption of both alcohol and psychoactive plants, especially *Anadenanthera colubrina* and San Pedro cactus (*Trichocereus sp.*), and their role in shamanic rituals. A recent volume edited by Torres and Llagostera (2002) includes papers on snuffing practices and artifacts from Tiwanaku-related sites in the southern Andes. Knobloch (2000) has identified images of *A. colubrina* in both Wari and Tiwanaku iconography and suggests that whereas this plant was used as snuff in Tiwanaku, the Wari added it to maize beer (*chicha*) to greatly enhance the effects of that beverage. Several of these studies emphasize the role of ritual in the maintenance of state political power.

In the analysis of domestic consumption of nonfood material items, one of the first questions to consider is the use or function of artifacts. Although more complex analyses of consumption events like feasts depend on accurate functional interpretations, this topic is only in its infancy for New World complex societies. Most studies of ceramic vessel use rely on analogical interpretations of vessel forms (Deal, 1998; Hildebrand and Hagstrum, 1999; Lesure, 1998; Powis *et al.*, 2002; Pratt, 1999), although ethnohistoric sources and native pictorial sources also can provide important insights into the use of vessels (Bray, 2001; Stuart, 2001). Recent studies of lithic tool function, emphasizing microscopic methods of use-wear analysis, include Aoyama (2001) and Rovner and Lewenstein (1997). Functional analysis of ground stone tools (e.g., Biskowski, 2000) lags far behind research in the southwestern United States, and application of some of the methods and approaches from the latter area (Adams, 2002) could significantly advance our knowledge of domestic consumption practices among the ancient complex societies of Latin America.

Feasting has become something of a bandwagon in the past few years. Influential articles by Morris (1979), Clark and Blake (1994), and Gero (1992) established feasts—special meals with distinctive social, political, and/or ceremonial contexts—as an important cultural and political category in the ancient New World. Dietler and Hayden's (2001) important collection, which includes only one article on ancient Latin America, describes the state of the art in feasting research, at least for nonstate societies. A recent collection on ceramic evidence for feasting in ancient states (Bray, 2003b) complements the Dietler and Hayden volume and includes several chapters on states in Mesoamerica and the Andes. These chapters, and other recent studies (e.g., Bray, 2003a; Hastorf, 2003), are refining our knowledge of the kinds of ceramic vessels and foods that were likely used in feasts in different areas and of the nature of the architectural settings where feasts took place (Pohl, 1998).

As many of these studies suggest, feasting can be difficult to identify securely with archaeological data. Sometimes specific archaeological deposits, typically offerings, can be interpreted as the probable remains of one or more feasting events (Bray, 2003b). When working with middens and other secondary refuse deposits, however, it can be difficult or impossible to isolate the remains of feasts (typically fancy or special serving vessels) from the remains of everyday meals in which special serving vessels were used on a regular basis. One recent high-profile article on Maya feasting (LeCount, 2001) is notable for its lack of any specific evidence for feasts at the site in question (Xunantunich), relying instead on simplistic and untested functional interpretations of ceramic vessel forms in refuse deposits (for another study that argues for feasting in the absence of data, see Fox, 1996). All societies seem to have occasional feasts; the challenge is to determine how frequent they were and the nature and level of their sociopolitical impact, if any.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND IDENTITY

Inequality and Social Class

A fascination, or even obsession, with elite culture has always characterized archaeological research on ancient civilizations. In Mesoamerica this interest has intensified in the past decade as scholars have heeded Culbert's (1991, p. 344) call for a renewed "tombs and temples orientation" after two decades of settlement patterns and household research. Palaces, both royal and nonroyal, have become prime foci for excavation and analysis, particularly at Classic Maya sites (Ciudad Ruiz *et al.*, 2001; Hohmann, 1998; Houston, 1998; Reents-Budet *et al.*, 2000; Webster *et al.*, 1998). An important edited collection presents numerous case studies with architectural, artifactual, and glyphic evidence on Classic Maya palaces and court life (Inomata and Houston, 2000/2001). Spencer (2003) reports excavations at the earliest palace yet identified in Oaxaca.

De Vega Nova (1996) excavated part of a large Aztec royal palace at Yauhtepec, and Elson (1999) analyzed and published data from Vaillant's excavations at the Chiconautla Aztec palace in the 1930s. Documentary evidence on Aztec palaces has been analyzed by Evans (1998), Batalla Rosado (1997), and Smith (2003a, pp. 139–146). It has always been difficult to identify palaces at Teotihuacan, but one likely candidate was recently excavated (Manzanilla and López Luján, 2001). Mesoamerican palaces were large, complex structures that housed numerous social, political, and economic activities. Their analysis would benefit greatly from the application of cross-cultural data and concepts, an approach begun by Sheehy (1996) and Flannery (1998). The heavy emphasis on palace excavations at Maya sites (Christie, 2003; Inomata and Houston, 2000/2001), coupled with research on writing and iconography, threatens to produce a one-sided view of Classic Maya society. Temples and palaces are expensive to excavate, and this trend takes resources away from excavations of commoner houses and other nonelite contexts. We hope for a more balanced approach in the future.

Although most of the palace research cited above tends to be narrowly empirical, other recent work takes a more analytical approach to elite culture and its role in society. Essays in Richards and Van Buren (2000) by Joyce, Brumfiel, and Van Buren discuss the dynamics of elite knowledge and actions in ancient Mesoamerica and the Andes. Brumfiel's (1998, 2001b) work on Aztec ideology identifies the crucial element of class interests in the rich symbolism of the imperial capital and its central temple. Evans (2000) and Pohl (1998) address evidence for elite competition and cooperation within the contexts of special palaces. Some of the major issues in the study of elite culture, for example, to what extent were key practices and knowledge restricted to elites, are only starting to be addressed in Mesoamerica. Were Maya commoners literate (Houston, 1994)? Did Aztec commoners know about ancient cities like Teotihuacan (Hamann, 2002;

Smith, 2003b)? Did commoners have significant social power (Joyce *et al.*, 2001)?

The latter question highlights a lack of research dedicated to the social characteristics of ancient commoners. The household studies reviewed above provide much new information on commoner activities and social conditions, but they tend to ignore questions of class, power, and ideology. Chapdelaine (2000, 2001) has begun to explore these issues for urban commoners at Moche, as have D'Altroy and Hastorf (2001) in Inka provincial settings. In Mesoamerica, most of the research linking commoners to class analysis has been done in the context of a simplistic debate over whether there was an ancient "middle class." On one side, Chase and Chase (A. Chase and D. Chase, 1992, 1996) argue that a two-class model does not fit the data on the Classic Maya and thus the Maya had a middle class. Marcus (1992, 1995) replied that the data are consistent with the standard class structure of most agrarian states in which there was variability (in wealth and power) within two fundamental social classes. Unfortunately, no one has presented sufficient data to evaluate these claims empirically for the Classic Maya.

Other scholars have abandoned the study of Classic Maya social classes entirely, turning instead to the vague concept of "heterarchy" as a replacement or alternative (Scarborough *et al.*, 2003). Heterarchy (nonhierarchical or horizontal complexity) is another term for the concept of heterogeneity as discussed long ago by McGuire (1983). One of the important points made by McGuire is that heterogeneity is analytically separate from hierarchy or inequality (vertical complexity), and that both dimensions of complexity need to be considered in any social analysis. Archaeologists riding the "heterarchy" bandwagon, however (Ehrenreich *et al.*, 1995), seem to think that heterogeneity is a substitute for inequality, allowing them to abandon class analysis. In our opinion, use of the concept of "heterarchy" by Mayanists (e.g., Iannone, 2002; Levi, 2002; Scarborough *et al.*, 2003) has not notably improved our understanding of Classic Maya social organization.

A similar debate exists for Aztec class structure. Smith presented quantitative data showing a clear two-class structure (elites and commoners) at rural Aztec sites (Smith, 1992, pp. 359–367), a pattern consistent with the extensive written record on Aztec inequality (Lockhart, 1992; Smith, 2003a, pp. 131–146). Sanders (1992) argues that most Mesoamerican societies had two social classes, although in the final century before Spanish conquest a third class of merchants and artisans was emerging in the imperial capital. Hicks (1999) offers a strange and unconvincing argument for an Aztec middle class based upon first principles. He reasons that elites in agrarian societies need a distinct class of servants and retainers to serve them, and thus any society with an elite class must by definition have a middle class of such people. Smith favors Sanders's views, but more empirical data and better methods are needed to resolve these questions.

Given the importance of social classes and stratification in most social models of agrarian states, the lack of dedicated attention to archaeological methods of measuring wealth, power, status, and social class is distressing. Only a few Latin Americanists target these questions directly and explicitly (e.g., Garraty, 2000; Gerry, 1997; Hirth, 1993; Moore, 1996), although many archaeologists are doing relevant research (e.g., Billman and Feinman, 1999; Chapdelaine, 2001; D. Chase and A. Chase, 1992; Janusek, 1999; McAnany, 1995; Santley and Hirth, 1993), and perhaps the time is near for an analytical synthesis of the archaeology of social class in Latin America.

Corporate Groups

Archaeological and documentary research continues on the Andean *ayllu* and the central Mexican *calpolli*, corporate groups with long histories of scholarship in each area. Whereas earlier scholarship tended toward simplistic debates about whether these residential groups (typically communities) were based on kinship or territory, recent research has addressed issues of variability, resources, and social context. Isbell's (1997) analysis of Andean burial patterns contains the most extensive recent discussion of the nature and origins of the *ayllu*. Other scholarship has focused less on the *ayllu* itself and more on its role within Murra's (1972) model of verticality (e.g., Goldstein, 2000a; Quattrin, 2001; Van Buren, 1996). In central Mexico, Lockhart's (1992, pp. 102–110) identification of social variation between western and eastern Nahua regions resolved many of the seeming contradictions in the historical sources. Rural settlement in the western Nahua zone (the Basin of Mexico and Morelos) was based upon the *calpolli*, a spatially localized community dependent on one or more nobles for access to land. Hare (2000) explores archaeological manifestations of *calpolli* and other ethnohistorically described social units. The *calpolli* was absent or weak in the eastern Nahua area (Puebla and Tlaxcala), where the noble house (*tecali*) took its place as the major corporate group (Chance, 1996, 2000). The archaeological expressions of the latter pattern have yet to be addressed, however.

Chance found that Lévi-Strauss's (1987) "house society" model helps make sense of documentary data from early colonial Puebla, and his paper in *American Anthropologist* (Chance, 2000) joined one by Gillespie (2000) in advocating the usefulness of this model for understanding some Mesoamerican societies. First brought to anthropological prominence by Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995), the "house society" model describes named corporate groups ("houses") whose identities are linked to a physical or metaphorical house. Recruitment typically includes both kin and nonkin relationships, and the "house" maintains property, both physical and symbolic (names, titles, etc.), which provides multigenerational continuity. Joyce and Gillespie (2000) edited a collection that applies this model to a variety of modern and ancient societies. They argue that the "house" model is a better

fit for Classic Maya royal groups than the traditional lineage interpretation (see also Gillespie, 2001; Joyce, 2000). Their collection (Joyce and Gillespie, 2000) does not include any Andean examples, although the earlier volume (Carsten and Hugh-Jones, 1995) does include two chapters on Amazonian ethnographic cases.

Houston and McAnany (2003) criticize Gillespie and Joyce's application of the house society model to the Classic Maya, arguing instead for a poorly defined "court society" model based on early modern European royalty (Adamson, 1999; Inomata and Houston, 2000/2001). Braswell (2003), on the other hand, makes a strong case for the usefulness of the "house" as an alternative for lineage (Carmack, 1981) as the dominant elite corporate group in the Postclassic polities of the highland Maya. Unfortunately, none of these studies propose a solid methodological foundation for identifying "houses" (or lineages) in the archaeological record, nor do they explore the theoretical and comparative implications of the house and lineage models as applied to the Maya or other ancient societies. To avoid the confusion of using the term "house" for the group, Gillespie has suggested (personal communication to Smith, 2003) using Lévi-Strauss's original French term, "maison," for the corporate group, leaving "house" for the residential structures excavated by archaeologists.

Gender

The past decade has seen a veritable explosion in gender studies in archaeology, and New World research holds a prominent place in this literature. This is not to say that sex and gender were not addressed prior to the 1990s, but many earlier studies tended to be art-historically based and aimed at simply identifying male or female imagery in Mesoamerican and Andean art styles. Momentum picked up in mid-1980s (Conkey and Spector, 1984), and by the time the seminal volume *Engendering Archaeology* (Gero and Conkey, 1991) appeared, many researchers found new promise in studies of gender. Moving beyond a focus on the identification of (usually) females in the archaeological record (Bruhns and Stothert, 1999), the study of gender has turned toward the study of gender roles and identities and the social, economic, political, and ideological implications of gender differences. The literature on gender in the complex societies of the New World is too vast to review here, and we refer the reader to a number of excellent edited collections for surveys of the topic (Ardren, 2002; Klein, 2001; Nelson and Rosen-Ayalon, 2002; Sweely, 1999; Wright, 1996). Joyce's (2000) *Gender and Power in Prehispanic Mesoamerica* is particularly notable for its explicit conceptual approach and its creative analysis of archaeological and representational data on ancient gender patterns.

A cautionary tale suggesting some of the complexities of reconstructing patterns of ancient gender is provided by work on the status of Aztec women. Although there is considerable evidence on the topic, including Spanish and native-language

documents, pictorial codices, public art, and archaeological artifacts and architecture, scholars cannot agree on the interpretation of that evidence. Some portray Aztec women as oppressed and downtrodden (Rodríguez-Shadow, 1997, 1999), subject to tighter limits, harsher penalties, and more negative stereotypes than men (Brumfiel, 1996, 2001a). Others, however, see Aztec women as far more independent and powerful, with roles and statuses complementary to those of men (Burkhart, 1997; Hendon, 1999; Joyce, 2000, pp. 168–169; Kellogg, 1995; Marcos, 1998; G. McCafferty and S. McCafferty, 1999; S. McCafferty and G. McCafferty, 1988). The resolution of this and other questions in the analysis of gender in the past will require advances in empirical evidence, theoretical constructs, and methodological linkages between the two.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a tough topic for archaeologists. We do not know the conditions that determine whether ethnicity will or will not be expressed in material objects in any given circumstance. Without that knowledge, we cannot know whether observed variation in ceramics, house style, or any other material category was because of ethnic differences or other factors. Perhaps because of this uncertainty, many archaeologists have resorted to three simplistic assumptions to study ethnicity archaeologically (Jones, 1997): (1) all members of an ethnic group use the same types and styles of material objects; (2) ethnic groups stay in the same location for long periods of time, interrupted only by mass migrations to other areas; and (3) for long periods of time ethnic groups do not change their use of particular artifact types and styles. All of these assumptions are contradicted by abundant evidence (e.g., Emberling, 1997; Jones, 1997; Wells, 2001), making the archaeological study of ethnicity difficult or impossible in many areas.

The most successful archaeological studies of ethnicity in the New World have concentrated on ethnic enclaves. In these situations groups of people deliberately settled among people of a foreign ethnic identity for specific economic or political reasons (Spence, 1996). In the Andes enclaves are an important part of Murra's verticality model, and they have been the focus of much ethnohistoric and archaeological research (e.g., Aldenderfer, 1993; Goldstein, 2000a; Murra, 1995; Sutter, 2000; Van Buren, 1996). Unfortunately, as Van Buren (1996) points out, many of Murra's original assumptions, based on a reading of ethnohistoric documents and pertaining to the period of early contact between Andean and European societies, have been uncritically incorporated into archaeological investigations of highland-coastal relations in earlier periods. Indeed, in some regions of northern Chile and far southern Peru, this model drives virtually all research, as researchers seek to find enclaves of highlanders living on or near the desert coast, thus homogenizing interpretations of vastly different cultural and temporal contexts.

In Mesoamerica, the best-known example of an enclave is the so-called “Zapotec barrio” at Teotihuacan, where a group of people probably from Oaxaca lived for many generations with distinctive material culture and ritual practices (Rattray, 2001; Spence, 1992, 1996). Other possible ethnic enclaves in Mesoamerica are discussed by Spence (1996), Santley *et al.* (1987), and Hernández Reyes (1990). In the Andes important new strides in bioarchaeology are allowing archaeologists to address issues of ethnicity and migration using human osteological remains. Cranial vault modification, a practice occurring in infancy, and one that results in a permanent and visible cranial shape in one’s adult years, may be an important clue to ethnic identity. Most bioarchaeological research along these lines to date has been aimed at understanding the relationship between Tiwanaku and regions under its influence (Blom *et al.*, 1998; Hoshower *et al.*, 1995; Torres-Rouff, 2002)

Analyses of social identities other than (or in addition to) ethnicity include Schortman *et al.* (2001), Hendon (2000), and the essays in Chesson (2001). Costin and Wright (1998) published an excellent collection of papers on “craft and social identity” that includes several New World case studies, and a new collection on colonies and colonization addresses various realms of identity in Mesoamerica and the Andes (Stein, n.d.). In part 2 of this series, we address the issue of ethnicity in relation to language groups and language change (Smith and Schreiber, in press).

CONCLUSIONS

The literature reviewed in this article covers a wide range of variation in the relative importance of data and theory. Some of this variation is associated with regional research traditions and other variation is topical in origin. Research on Andean complex societies continues to be more descriptive than analytical, whereas many Mesoamericanists are active users of current archaeological, anthropological, and social theory. Some Andeanists would argue that the Andes are unique among the regions of early state formation, so much so that comparative models or concepts like “city,” “state,” or “empire” cannot be applied to the Andean situation. Other Andeanists, in contrast, take a comparative, anthropological perspective on the societies they study. Within Mesoamerica, the greatest variation is found within the field of Maya studies. There is a long-standing scholarly trend of emphasizing the uniqueness of the Maya; sometimes this take the form of particularistic studies of Classic Maya sites that eschew comparisons, and sometimes this takes the form of asserting an enduring essence of “Mayaness” (for comment, see Smith and Schreiber, in press). On the other hand, many Mayanists today work within a comparative, anthropological framework.

The balancing of data and theory in archaeology can be a difficult and contentious endeavor. Recent research shows that the various topics addressed by archaeologists working on ancient New World states and empires fall at different

places along a continuum of the relative contributions of data and theory. In our opinion, topics like intensive agriculture and exchange are currently overburdened with data and in desperate need of adequate theory to advance understanding and interpretation. Topics like gender and ethnicity, on the other hand, have too much theory and not enough relevant data right now. Although archaeological research on consumption is on the upswing and work on social class is declining, both are important topics that need much more work in both data and theory, as does the realm of household-level analysis. Finally, we feel that the analysis of craft production is one of the recent success stories for the ancient states of the New World, due in part to the achievement of a good balance of data and theory.

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