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PART I

Introduction

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Issues in the study of New World state formation

GRANT D. JONES AND ROBERT R. KAUTZ

The aim of this chapter is to identify the principal issues, problems, and common themes that we regard as central to the contributions of this volume and to consider their implications for future studies of the transition to statehood in the New World. Although we attempt to move beyond the particulars of such issues in the later sections of this chapter, the problems that we have chosen to address appear to be inherent in the discussion and polemic, which the contributions themselves are likely to generate. Despite the particular differences among the authors of this volume, we sense an expanding common ground of methodological and theoretical agreement. In our methodological comments we attempt to pinpoint the problems that nevertheless continue to hamper the progress of comparative research in this area; we tentatively suggest how some of these problems might be resolved. Our closing comments are directed toward issues of a more theoretical nature and may well be regarded by some as more divisive than synthetic in their net effect. The aim of these comments, however, is to attempt to demonstrate that a synthesis of divergent perspectives is an appropriate strategy at this point and that in fact the differences among authors may be less significant than generally supposed.

We provide at the outset an overview of the volume as a whole, discussing each chapter as an aspect of the larger organizational themes. This is followed by a discussion of certain definitional problems that still plague the archaeology of state formation, concluding, perhaps unfashionably, that definitions should be as fully grounded empirically as they are logically constructed from theoretical premises. We then consider some of the methodological problems inherent in studying the archaeologically ephemeral but historically necessary processes of development that must have led to state level societies. We conclude with a set of exploratory remarks on the study of the ideology of power in the context of state formation. Our remarks are in no sense intended as a full review

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of the literature; however, the volume as a whole may be considered as a first step toward such a review.

An overview

During the planning stages of the conference we indicated that it would be useful to categorize the various approaches to the processes of state formation in terms of their respective emphasis upon sociopolitical, environmental, or ideological factors. Individuals were asked to focus upon one of these, although they were in no sense led to believe that the conference organizers thought that knowledge or theories could be so neatly pigeonholed. As Jones remarked during the introduction to the conference,

Just as anthropologists tend to see the state holistically as a type of central leadership, we find it most useful to regard processes of social and cultural change as a systematic phenomenon including continuous and shifting interactions among social and political institutions, ideological phenomena or systems of belief, and physical processes of interaction with the environment. Any attempt to cast particular weight to any of these phenomena is thus only a matter of emphasis reflecting varying theoretical persuasions on the nature of the particular questions being asked of the data.

It is therefore of no surprise that the following papers tend to view the principal questions at hand from a broad and synthetic rather than from a narrow and strictly empirical perspective. Likewise, the general subject areas into which the chapters fall, even though reflecting the main themes of these chapters, appear to function primarily as guideposts. Although the subject matter has often been a matter of intense, polemic debate, these chapters—with some exceptions—seem to search for a resolution of conflicting theoretical positions and for an increased degree of cooperation in the discovery and analysis of data.

Part II, “Sociopolitical Factors in State Formation,” addresses two principal issues: the nature and role of the chiefdom in the process leading up to state formation and the nature of the evidence for “class conflict” in the early New World states. Both chapters emphasize their authors’ belief that conflict was a pervasive feature in both the process of state formation and the further consolidation or institutionalization of state control. Such conflict, they maintain, appears to intensify and widen over time, becoming increasingly pervasive with the establishment and maintenance of mature state organizations. Whereas one of these authors—Haas—would clearly identify himself solidly in a camp of “conflict theorists,” the other—

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Carneiro—is perhaps not so easily categorized. Their approaches differ in important ways, even though they both recognize that a study of relatively rapid systemic changes at the social and political levels *must* be based upon assumptions regarding the importance of conflict.

Carneiro (Chapter 2) develops a set of ideas that formed the core of his conference presentation; that is, the formation of the state is but the culmination of earlier processes of increasing scale in the size and, more especially, the scope of the political unit. In Carneiro's view there is a direct relationship between increasing degrees of political hierarchy and an increasing “transcending of local autonomy.” The chiefdom—“an autonomous political unit comprising a number of villages or communities under the *permanent* control of a paramount chief”—represents, then, an ideal type, the first political system based upon “permanent,” potentially hereditary control over a multicommunity unit. Although social stratification is a feature of chiefdoms, he considers it to be epiphenomenal to the political process. In this sense his theoretical approach differs significantly from that of Haas, for whom social stratification is the central feature of the process of state formation. In this regard it is important to point out that Carneiro is not explicitly concerned with the early state itself, as is Haas, but, rather, with its predecessor as an ideal type. Also, unlike Haas, who seeks to describe the role of conflict in the maintenance of the early state, Carneiro is concerned more with the evolutionary processes in which conflict serves ultimately to consolidate centralized leadership.

Carneiro presents a valuable synthesis of the history of the concept of the chiefdom, crediting the modern coinage of the term to Oberg (1955) but the modern origin of the concept to Steward (1948). The evidence for the chiefdom as defined by Carneiro is primarily ethnohistorical, and it is likewise ethnohistory that informs his minimal/typical/maximal chiefdom classification. Yet we find that Carneiro's own intellectual roots reach down to the logical rather than to the empirical categories of Herbert Spencer, whose “doubly compound” society conforms to Carneiro's multicommunity chiefdom concept. We wonder if parallel intellectual genealogies could not be reconstructed from other nineteenth-century evolutionary writers as well; this would certainly be the case if an attempt were made to account for Steward's important concept of levels of sociocultural integration (Steward 1955), an idea central to the notion of additive process in sociopolitical evolution.

Challenging other writers who do not share his view of the universal importance of the chiefdom as a stage in state formation, Carneiro criticizes as well the diagnostic criteria that most archaeologists have applied in seeking to identify prehistoric chiefdoms. His solution to

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the latter problem would be systematic surveys, the results of which would be comparative plottings of size versus frequency of sites. Such surveys, however, might better be regarded as tests of the bimodal curve/chiefdom versus the trimodal curve/state model rather than as independent confirmation of the sociopolitical phenomenon itself. Finally, Carneiro seeks to establish a unitary theory of the origin of chiefdoms and, by extension, of the state itself. This theory is an elaboration of his earlier statement (Carneiro 1970) on the evolutionary role of warfare in situations of environmental circumscription, but in this case the argument is more explicitly extended to apply to the chiefdom as well as to its logical successor—the state. Population pressure and a large potential territorial scale are considered as additional necessary conditions for the growth of three-tiered polities (potential states) that possess, in addition, the power to draft an army, tax its citizens, and enforce laws (true states). Warfare in the sense of territorial conquest is a prime mover in this process; class conflict, although perhaps an inevitable result, is nonetheless epiphenomenal in Carneiro's theory of the origins of political stratification. We see that the state is the mature expression of the process of warfare and territorial consolidation—a process through which the two-tiered chiefdoms were passed and superseded somewhere along the way. The model is thus elegantly simple and, of course, the subject is of considerable controversy.

Haas's chapter (3) is based on the premise that “the state developed primarily as a coercive mechanism to resolve internal conflict that arises between economically stratified classes within a society.” Such a premise would, as Haas argues, be opposed to one that views the role of the state as “an integrative mechanism to coordinate and regulate the different parts of complex societies.” The aim of the chapter is not, however, to argue the relative merits of these two positions on conceptual grounds but, rather, to demonstrate empirically the superiority of the conflict premise. This demonstration is solidly grounded in Fried's (1967:186) focus upon stratification (differential access to basic resources) as the sine qua non of the state. Because the presence of stratification must in such a model rapidly lead the short-lived chiefdom to the state proper, through the mechanism of class conflict, we find Haas focusing more upon the early state than upon its evolutionary predecessors or the processes that led to its emergence (see Friedman and Rowlands 1978 for a contrasting neo-Marxist approach to this problem). Similarly, he dismisses the problem of distinguishing the characteristics of pristine and secondary states (Price 1978) on the grounds that early states in general will manifest similar characteristics, regardless of their historical status (a position taken to considerable extremes by Claessen and Skalnik 1978).

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With such methodological dilemmas left in abeyance, Haas proceeds to explore the evidence in Andean and Mesoamerican early states for the differential distribution of three types of “resources that can be considered basic in all societies.” He examines, in particular, evidence for differential access to food, the tools used to produce and prepare food, and the items used defensively against the physical environment and an antagonistic social environment. In a valuable synthesis of heretofore scattered data Haas presents, on the basis of such evidence, a strong case for the presence of economic stratification in early New World states. He then goes on to examine in an original fashion the archaeological evidence for “internal conflict and centralized application of force” in such prehistoric societies. Such conflict would, in contrast to the system-expanding, transformational warfare cited by Carneiro, appear to be primarily system-maintaining or system-reinforcing—that is, a necessary condition for the maintenance of economic stratification but not a sufficient condition for the emergence of such stratification. It must therefore be reemphasized that Haas and Carneiro treat the role of conflict in different, even though potentially complementary, senses.

Haas’s archaeological treatment of internal class conflict and the use of centralized force is bolstered by ethnographic evidence from Hawaii and the Zulu, again indicating his willingness to search widely for useful comparative data. His caveats concerning the general weakness of the data for the comparative study of early states notwithstanding, it might be best at this juncture to recognize the general validity of the stratification-conflict model as tested here, while recognizing that an equally strong case could probably be made for the internal structural dependencies (integrative features) of any sociopolitical system as complex and as large as the early state.

In Part III, “Environmental Factors in State Formation,” Cohen (Chapter 4) and MacNeish (Chapter 5) review the role of the physical environment as an explanatory variable in the growth of state level polities. Those who are familiar with the earlier writings of these authors (in particular, M. Cohen 1977; MacNeish 1964, 1967, 1971b) will discover that they have brought earlier ideas to bear upon the present issues, although hardly in the sense of slavish repetition.

Cohen suggests that the phenomenon of state development should be viewed from two perspectives. The first, which is evolutionary in emphasis, seeks to discover general parallel adaptive strategies in the several areas of pristine state development. The second, whose emphasis is historical, addresses the question of why some populations achieved early pristine statehood while others did not. Although Cohen believes that a single explanation may be able to account for a *general*, essentially worldwide, evolutionary trend “in the direction of

centralized hierarchical government,” he considers it possible that the *particular* appearance of true states in certain areas of the world may have been “in fact random outcomes of historical processes . . .” That is, although he believes that an explanation of general evolutionary trends may be posited, only particularistic analysis may be able to account for specific local variations: multilineal evolution is nothing more than the historical epiphenomenon of more general evolutionary processes.

Cohen’s general explanation of the worldwide trend toward increasing political centralization is a variation upon the thematic question addressed in his book, *The Food Crisis in Prehistory* (M. Cohen 1977). In the present case this question asks “why many independent human populations began to organize themselves hierarchically at about the same time after so many millennia of egalitarian structure.” The answer to this problem has its origin in worldwide population pressures that Cohen believes led to the abandonment of a hunting-gathering way of life in favor of agricultural strategies. The net effect of this transformation was to increase caloric production per unit of space while narrowing the scope of the ecological niche. Increased ecological vulnerability resulting from the decline of traditional buffers among farming populations resulted in the development of various social and economic responses that functioned to reduce the stresses of increasingly risk-filled situations. Among the responses to such stress were the development of storage systems, the increase of interregional trade in both luxury goods and subsistence products, and the growth of centralized authorities who played a major role in providing economic security.

Cohen’s contrast between general parallel adaptive responses that led to increasing centralization and, in particular, local adaptive responses that led to the appearance of true states—which are therefore the “epiphenomena” of general evolution—would appear to contribute to a solution of a problem implicit in Carneiro’s discussion. That is, Cohen appears to be concerned, in Carneiro’s terms, with differentiating between explanations that might account for “chiefdoms” and those that would account for “states,” whereas Carneiro sees the latter as the logical result of the inexorable processes set in motion during the rise of the chiefdom. Carneiro’s unitary theory cites the potential territorial extent of a polity as a key factor in state formation, whereas Cohen would argue that no such single key factor may be discovered.

MacNeish’s chapter is an ambitious effort to identify significant parallels among four worldwide regions of pristine state formation (Mesoamerica, Peru, the Near East, and the Far East). These parallels include both a series of twelve developmental periods with associated sociocultural forms and a complex set of necessary (i.e., environmen-

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tal) and sufficient (i.e., sociocultural) conditions that, according to MacNeish, account for the shift from one developmental period to the next. He sees, then, striking similarities in the process of evolution toward statehood throughout the world.

MacNeish's empirical odyssey begins with the summary results of his and his associates' remarkable Tehuacán Valley study. The Tehuacán materials, which form an unbroken sequence from early collectors through "pristine national states," serve as the basis for a highland Mesoamerican variation of the comparative sequence. Against this ideal typology he poses another ideal type: a lowland Mesoamerican variation with certain differences in the sociocultural features of periods IV through XI, differences that are ultimately traced to environmentally distinguishable conditions. Between the highland and lowland types there is a gradient of variations not included in this chapter. Perhaps the most striking distinguishing feature of the highland–lowland dichotomy is his contention that systems of centralized leadership in the highlands tended toward the secular, whereas those of the lowlands were more sacred or religious in nature. We feel certain that this will be one of the more controversial aspects of MacNeish's discussion. Was the Olmec priesthood civilized center (X–L) really more "sacred" than the Tehuacán Palo Blanco chiefdom administrative center (X–H); or was Tikal (an XI–L sacred city state) really more "sacred" than Teotihuacán (an XI–H secular city state)? Some might also argue that MacNeish's pristine national states (XII) are actually secondary phenomena and that the sacred and secular city states (XI) more accurately represent his search for the pristine state.

MacNeish's efforts to establish empirical parallels between developmental periods and environmental variations in Mesoamerica, Peru, and, to a lesser extent, the Near East and the Far East is a stimulating one, although regional specialists will surely discover room for argument. This, of course, is MacNeish's aim, as he argues that monocausal theories like those based upon population pressure and warfare are insufficient in light of the importance of "real sufficient conditions," such as highland–lowland interaction spheres, the capacity for large food surplus production, and well-organized exchange systems. Such sufficient conditions have their origins in a universal set of broadly similar environmental factors, so that MacNeish's argument is far more deterministic than that of Cohen – and more universal in its scope than the multilinear approach of Sanders and Webster (1978). It should be emphasized, however, that MacNeish stresses the tentative nature of his hypotheses and his hope that they will encourage more detailed comparative study.

The authors of Part IV, "Ideological Factors in State Formation," each notes that modern archaeology has tended to understress the

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importance of ideology—religious ideology, in particular—in theories of prehistoric change. It is Coe's view (Chapter 6) that a highly uniform, conservative cosmological orientation functioned throughout pre-Columbian Mesoamerica to legitimize the continuity of stratified, centralized societies. Keatinge's contribution (Chapter 7), likewise, emphasizes the central role of religious ideology in the centralization process and in the spread of civilization, but he argues further that religion was an "enabler or catalyst," used by rising political forces to gain control over the manipulation of populations and their strategic resources. Finally, Freidel (Chapter 8) argues that culture itself has been slighted as a causal factor in theories of state origin and that the process must be understood, at least in part, in terms of the special nature of the ideological underpinnings of early civilization. Although these three authors are hardly in agreement on all issues, their emphasis on the forms and functions of ideology in state formation suggests a new trend in archaeological theory, one for which there is ample reinforcement in contemporary ethnographic and ethnohistorical thinking.

Coe, like Freidel, contends that the materialist orientation of much recent archaeology has blinded investigators to the manifested importance of ideology as a central feature of the early state and as a central factor in state formation. Religious ideology, in particular, he argues, is known to be a destroyer of the status quo as well as a creator and maintainer of stability. Religious ideological differences must therefore be central to any understanding of the differences between "widely divergent forms of social, cultural, political, and even economic life" throughout the several world areas of state formation. It is clear from Coe's statements, as well as from those of Keatinge and Freidel, that a broader examination of ideology as a factor in sociopolitical and economic change shifts our focus from the state per se to more general questions about the nature of the development of *civilization*, of which the state is but a feature, an organizational epiphenomenon. The implications of these concerns are discussed later in this chapter.

Readers familiar with Coe's writing will not be surprised by the importance that he places on what he believes to be the conservative continuity of the Mesoamerican world view or cosmology, at least from Early Classic through Postclassic times. Such continuity, Coe suggests, may have extended from Olmec times, although Formative period evidence for Olmec religious content is far from satisfactory. It is clear, however, that religious ideology played a major role in the establishment both of the Olmec centers, such as San Lorenzo, and the later highland Classic period city of Teotihuacán. His interpretation of the rapid formation of such centers, whose conceptualization was apparently rooted in publicly expressed religious motifs, rests on

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the plausible assumption that ideological innovation is more rapidly communicated among large numbers of people than are innovations in other spheres of life. Although he does not explore such innovation in terms of specific political stimuli and consequences, its implications for an understanding of the political activities that characterize increasing centralization of power are considerable. Somewhat surprisingly, Coe raises the possibility of the importance of religious revitalization movements in this process, only to pass over the idea for want of evidence prior to the lowland Maya Classic "collapse." As we suggest later, there is reason to believe that any religious innovation in an increasingly complex society may well be symptomatic of the presence of such movements.

Keatinge, focusing upon the Chaviñ data from Peru, suggests that the initially peaceful spread of a religious cult or movement, which appears to have had a set of common ideological themes, "provided both the means and sanctions for an increasing secularization in the goals of developing societies, goals whose emphasis became inexorably politico-economic." A Chaviñ-influenced religious movement penetrated a number of widely spaced local societies and was ultimately influential in the "initial fostering of interregional trade and communications" and "the development of economic and redistributive systems." Central to this process, he argues, was the establishment of pilgrimage centers under some degree of centralized authority, coupled with increasingly centralized controls over long-distance trade and other forms of communication between far-flung regions (cf. R. E. W. Adams 1977:94). What Keatinge adds to an interpretation of the importance of ideology in the establishment of centralized power is, then, the idea that universalizing religious beliefs serve as the "enabler or catalyst" in the formation of secular controls on a supralocal basis.

Keatinge argues further that the presence of large-scale and elaborate ceremonial structures in both pre-Chaviñ coastal and highland Peru indicates that politically controlled labor in the service of religion had long been available to these Peruvian polities. The later spread of a Chaviñ-influenced cult was thus built upon earlier ideological conceptions of the nature of power as supernaturally legitimized, and the effects of Chaviñ expansion were in the form of local syncretisms serving to legitimize further externally introduced secular controls. The oracle centers, which appear to have been part of the process of increasingly centralized controls, served as a means of defining new priesthoods intermediary between the gods and the common people. One is reminded of Helms's somewhat parallel argument that protohistoric and sixteenth-century Panamanian chiefs enhanced and increased their authority by their specialized knowledge of foreign, distant places, knowledge that was incorporated into