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PART I

Introduction

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Factional competition and political development in the New World: an introduction

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This volume calls attention to the importance of factional competition as a force of social transformation. It argues that factional competition is implicated in developments as diverse as the spread of ceramic technology and maize agriculture, the origins of permanently instituted leadership offices, the expansion and collapse of states, and the European domination of indigenous New World peoples. Although this volume focuses upon the New World, its perspective is relevant to the social histories of other areas of the world as well, because all non-egalitarian societies, both ancient and modern, are shaped by the dynamics of factional competition. Bringing an agent-centered perspective to the study of political development, this volume also contributes to a general understanding of social stability and change. An agent-centered perspective maximizes the amount of data drawn into the analysis and thus permits the most detailed and complete account of specific cases of political continuity and transformation.

Our studies of factional competition both complement and critique the two prevailing approaches to prehistoric social change: cultural ecology and Marxism. Cultural ecology focuses upon the dynamic interactions of human populations and their local environments. As a complement to this, the studies in this volume examine the internal dynamics of local populations, dynamics that help to shape the strategy of resource exploitation. Marxist theory focuses upon the dynamics of class struggle: a model postulating solidarity within classes and struggle between them. As a complement to class struggle, the essays in this volume emphasize the importance of conflicts within classes and alliances between them. As critiques of cultural ecology and (particularly structural) Marxism, the studies in this volume demonstrate the necessity of replacing a theory of strict systemic or structural determination of human behavior with a theory that integrates agent-centered and system-centered analyses into a single framework. Most of the studies in this volume employ versions of an agent-centered practice theory developed in the work of Barth (1966), Giddens (1979), and Ortner (1984).

Practice theory is especially suited to the analysis of factional competition. Factions are characterized by an informal, leader-focused organization (Nicholas 1965, Bujra 1973, Silverman 1977); thus, it seems reasonable to initiate analysis by examining the goals and strategies employed by faction leaders as individual social actors. Furthermore, factions are groups whose single function appears to be gaining access to limited physical and social resources (Bailey 1969:52), and these goals are best achieved through the application of a pragmatic, advantage-seeking, maximizing strategy such as that imputed to agents in practice theory. Finally, factions are structurally and functionally similar groups that compete for advantages within a larger social unit such as a kin group, ethnic group, village or chiefdom. Practice theory anticipates conflict between individuals similarly positioned within society while cultural ecology and Marxism do not. As argued below, this internal competition supplies the dynamic for political development.

This introduction begins by defining factions and factional competition. Then, it discusses the relationship between factional competition and "ecological" variables such as population, warfare, agricultural production, and long-distance trade. Third, it proposes how factional competition and class struggle interact to produce the social formations discussed in the case studies that follow. Fourth, it considers how factions and factional competition can be identified in the archaeological record. Finally, it examines the wider theoretical implications of an agent-centered perspective.

What are factions?

Aside from a few brief discussions of factions prior to 1955 (Lasswell 1931, Linton 1936:229, French 1948, Fenton 1955), anthropological interest in factions developed as part of an effort to expand the scope of social anthropology beyond the description and analysis of formal social structure. This was accomplished first through the recognition of the many informal, noncorporate groups present in contemporary non-Western

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societies (including action groups, cliques, networks, factions, and patron–client dyads), and second, through the investigation of how social structure is generated by individuals acting to maximize their self-interest given their particular sets of cultural and material constraints (Whitten and Whitten 1972; Cohen 1974:40–3; Vincent 1978). From the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, the construction of models of informal groups and individual-centered social transactions was a flourishing, if somewhat insular, enterprise within social anthropology, and factions became the object of considerable interest.

At issue was the definition of factions (Lewis and Dhillon 1954; Firth 1957; Boissevain 1964; Nicholas 1965), whether factions served positive social functions or were a form of social pathology (Siegel and Beals 1960; Schwartz 1969); the relationship between factions and class conflict in peasant societies (Sandbrook 1972; Alavi 1973; Gross 1973; Schryer 1977), and whether factions were an obstruction or an impetus to social change (Bujra 1973; Silverman and Salisbury 1977). However, this interest in factions abruptly collapsed in the late 1970s when anthropologists turned away from local-level, agent-centered studies to pursue the issues raised by the world systems perspective. Although factions have continued to serve as a basic construct for analyzing peasant politics (e.g., Hegland 1981; Greenberg 1989; Munson 1989), the theoretical debates surrounding factions have ceased.

There are two reasons for resuscitating what appears to be a dead horse. First, in the sudden move away from factions fifteen years ago, a number of theoretical issues concerning factions were left underdeveloped or unresolved. Second, while factional competition was analyzed extensively in relation to contemporary peasant politics, its usefulness for understanding the politics of prehistoric societies has not been explored. Dealing first with the most important of the unresolved questions, we can ask, how should factions be defined?

During the 1960s, factions were defined in terms of their characteristics as a group. Factions were said to be politically oriented conflict groups whose membership was recruited and maintained through the efforts of a leader (Nicholas 1965; Bujra 1973; Silverman 1977). In such groups, unity derives from ties between leaders and followers; lateral ties among followers are poorly developed (Nicholas 1965:28–9; Bujra 1973:134). This was said to account for the loosely structured, personalistic character of factions (Firth 1957:292). Factions were also said to be based upon calculations of self-interest rather than moral commitment to the group (Bailey 1969:52), to be transitory groups with membership recruited on many different bases (Nicholas 1965), and to be lacking in corporate property, frequent meetings, structural complexity, and rules governing succession to leadership (Boissevain 1964; Bujra 1973). Explicitly or implicitly, factions were contrasted with corporate groups, the traditional focus of structural-functional analysis in social anthropology.

These definitions are quite useful for investigating the character of factions as a type of informal group, but they divert attention from the most interesting dynamic property of factions, namely the competitive relationships between them. If the object of investigation is to discover how factional competition acts as a force of social transformation, it is preferable to view factions in terms of what they do rather than in terms of what they are (Salisbury and Silverman 1977). Therefore, in this volume, factions are defined as *structurally and functionally similar groups which, by virtue of their similarity, compete for resources and positions of power or prestige.* In this definition, factions are understood to be groups engaged in political competition which are neither classes nor functionally differentiated interest groups.

The lack of structural and functional differentiation between factions has been frequently noted. In a South India village, Siegel and Beals (1960:396) found "*few indications of consistent differences* between them in terms of policy or kinds of people who belonged." In Boissevain's (1964:1276) view, a faction is "a loosely ordered group in conflict with a similar group." Similarly, Sandbrook (1972:111) defines a faction as "a segment of a clientage network organized to compete with a unit or units of similar type."

Bujra (1973:136–8) provides an excellent theoretical account of the structural similarity of factions. She explains that faction leaders come from similar social backgrounds because while "social distance restricts competition, social contiguity engenders it . . . Conflicts thus often begin between people who are more socially alike than different." In addition, faction leaders tend to come from the "dominant" sectors of society, since it is these individuals who have the resources needed to recruit large followings. Coming from the same privileged sector of society, faction leaders are likely to share similar political goals, and these goals are not likely to challenge the basic structure of society.

Bujra (1973:137) adds that leaders, wishing to enlarge their followings, will seek supporters in all the different sectors of society, claiming allegiance on many different bases: past or future patronage, proximity of kinship, a common religion or ethnic identity, etc. Therefore, the individuals forming a faction lack an identity of interests

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that would engender common political goals beyond winning advantages for their own faction. Nor are there clear differences between the members of different factions that might result in policy differences between them.

Thus, while factions compete for resources, their structural similarity insures that they will hold similar ideas about what the world is like and what it should be like. Factional competition tends to be non-revolutionary in intent. The objective of factional competition is to achieve a favorable allocation of existing benefits; each faction hopes to gain more while its competitors gain less. Participants conceptualize factional competition as a zero-sum game in which one party's gain is another's loss. Thus, in factional competition, debate generally centers upon the relative legitimacy of each faction's claims rather than the merits of substantively different social programs.

Given the lack of structural differences between competing factions, it is at first difficult to see how they might act as vehicles of social transformation. Because factional competition is non-revolutionary in intent, it has often been regarded as non-revolutionary in consequence (Siegel and Beals 1960, Gross 1973, Sandbrook 1972). However, Salisbury and Silverman (1977:6–7) observe that factionalism has an inherent dynamism grounded in competitive strategizing: "Each confrontation [between factions] changes the terms on which the next confrontation will take place ... [T]he strategy of one side ... does not produce an exact or mirror-image strategy ... Relations are, in fact, systematically oblique and groupings are systematically unalike. Factionalism, in short, produces actions and reactions that do not simply balance out ..."

The issue of whether, as Silverman and Salisbury suggest, factional competition could serve as a mechanism of social transformation has not been thoroughly explored. A major obstacle to gauging the transformative power of factional competition has been that, prior to this volume, factions have been studied in contemporary communities under the dominance of a state: Native American communities supervised by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and peasant communities in colonial or recently post-colonial nations. In such communities, the state constrains both the scale of conflict and the degree of structural change resulting from factional competition. For this reason, previous studies may easily have underestimated the transformative power of factional competition. Almost certainly, factional competition was a more dynamic force in pre-state societies than it is in the modern world.

Another issue that has not been thoroughly explored is the proper scale of analysis for the study of factional competition. In the ethnographic literature, outside forces have sometimes been seen as influencing factional competition. For example, the rise of factions is often attributed to the decline of traditional, power-holding corporate groups under the impact of Western contact (French 1948; Siegel and Beals 1960; Nicholas 1965; Nagata 1977). And several observers have suggested that the strength of factions and faction leaders varied according to their access to outside sources of revenue and influence, most often supplied by the state (Schwartz 1969; Sandbrook 1972; Bujra 1973; Gross 1973; Schryer 1977; Salisbury 1977). Nevertheless, factions have been regarded as an aspect of "local level politics" (Schwartz 1968), impinged upon by regional or national politics but not affecting them in reverse.

In contrast, several essays in this book investigate the interplay of local and regional processes in tribal politics. Spencer (Chapter 3) argues convincingly that the internal and external dimensions of tribal leadership are intertwined. The formation of competing factions within communities goes hand in hand with the development of alliances between faction leaders in different communities. The net effect of this process is to turn an entire region into a single political "arena," a community within which competing coalitions of faction leaders vie for resources. In a similar fashion, it becomes extremely difficult to differentiate between local, internal dimensions of political violence (the suppression of rebellion) and regional, external dimensions of political violence (the pursuit of warfare) once communities became enmeshed in intervillage alliances that compete at the regional level (see Anderson, Chapter 6, for Mississippian societies and Pohl and Pohl, Chapter 13, for the Classic Maya).

In examining factional competition and political development in prehistoric societies, the essays in this volume raise a number of issues, most of which are new to archaeology. These include: the opportunities and constraints presented by different mediums of competition including feasting (Clark and Blake, Chapter 2), external alliances and trade (Spencer, Chapter 3), and warfare (Redmond, Chapter 4; Helms, Chapter 5); the sources of factional competition in the kinship and political structures of chiefdoms (Anderson, Chapter 6), states (Byland and Pohl, Chapter 11; Pohl and Pohl, Chapter 13; Fox, Chapter 14) and empires (van Zantwijk, Chapter 9); factional competition and ethnic identity (Pollard, Chapter 7; Brumfiel, Chapter 8); and factional competition and imperial expansion (Hicks,

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Chapter 10). The apparent absence of corporate groups and factional competition is analyzed for the Valley of Oaxaca (Kowalewski, Chapter 12), cycles of factional competition and political change are defined for the southeastern United States, the Maya lowlands and the Postclassic highlands (Anderson, Chapter 6; Pohl and Pohl, Chapter 13; Fox, Chapter 14), and the shifting composition of factions and factional conflict in pre-imperial, imperial, and colonial societies is examined for the central Andes (D'Altroy, Chapter 15).

All the essays in this volume are concerned with the relationships of factional competition to ecological conditions and class conflict. The next two sections of this introduction explore these relationships.

Factional competition and cultural ecology

At first glance, the study of factional competition and cultural ecology would seem to have little to offer each other. Factional competition focuses attention upon the inner dynamics of social systems while ecosystem theory derives the dynamics of social change from the interaction of human populations with their environments (Hill 1977:88; Binford 1983:221). The study of factional competition involves consideration of strategic decision making by self-promoting leaders while, in the view of cultural ecologists, social change is unrelated to the perceptions and motives of social actors (Hill 1977:66–7; Price 1982:720). Despite these differences, cultural ecology can only benefit from a more explicit consideration of factional politics. Such studies would reveal the internal needs and resource requirements of complex political institutions that affect their distribution in time and space. And studies of factional politics would reveal the importance of the traits that accompany complex political institutions but appear to serve no critical ecological function. For these reasons, perhaps, a concern with factional politics is already present in the work of several ecosystems theorists (Flannery 1972; Webster 1975, 1976; Yoffee 1979; Spencer 1982).

Cultural ecologists generally assert that socio-political hierarchies evolve because chiefly and state hierarchies provide for a more effective relationship of a population to its environment; under certain demographic and environmental conditions, political hierarchies are adaptive.

Ecosystem theorists often assume that incipiently complex political institutions are at least sporadically present in simpler societies, ready to be pressed into service when they are favored by demographic and environmental conditions. The timing and location of incipiently complex institutions is said to be random; they do not in themselves constitute a problem suitable for research. Variation, as Price (1982:716) observes, "arises constantly in all living systems and does not, in terms of an evolutionary paradigm, require explanation." But this is not entirely true. Just as sociopolitical complexity might be precluded by environmental problems that have no managerial solution, complex political institutions might be precluded by ecological conditions that do not meet their own institutional requirements.

An excellent example of this principle is supplied by Clark and Blake (Chapter 2 , summarizing Hayden 1990; Hayden and Gargett 1990). All but the most ephemeral forms of political leadership require a disposable surplus, a "fund of power" (Sahlins 1968:89). But so long as humans relied upon limited and fluctuating resources, the competitive accumulation of surplus depleted communal resources and was not tolerated. Hence, despite the managerial benefits that more powerful specialized leadership might have conferred upon the population, such leadership did not emerge until after subsistence came to be based upon rich and reliable food resources.

A second and even more interesting example concerns long-distance trade. Long-distance trade has a tendency to increase as political institutions become more complex. Cultural ecologists, with their attention perennially fixed on population–environment interaction, have supplied three accounts of long-distance trade. One regards it as a means of procuring critical resources that are not locally available (Rathje 1971; Johnson and Earle 1987:245). A second regards it as a means of gaining alliances and valuables (storable wealth) that enhance subsistence security (Flannery 1968; Halstead and O'Shea 1982). The third regards long-distance trade as unimportant because it is most often concerned with sumptuary, as opposed to subsistence, goods (Price 1977; Binford 1983:227–31; Sanders 1984).

However, all these accounts draw attention away from the fact that valuables acquired from distant sources supply considerable political control because of their ability to attract followers, allies and patrons and to maintain hierarchies of control (Schneider 1977; Earle 1978; Friedman and Rowlands, 1978; Helms 1979; Kristiansen 1981:257; Brumfiel and Earle 1987; Gosden 1989). Coalition building is an essential activity in creating and maintaining political power. But we cannot fully appreciate the importance of this aspect of long-distance trade in valuables until we stop looking for a directly adaptive function for this institution or, unable to find one, assess such trade as epiphenomenal.

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Although factional competition must be considered in ecological analyses of political complexity, ecological variables are essential for understanding factional competition. As Hayden and Gargett (1990) suggest, factional competition will not exist so long as subsistence is based upon limited and fluctuating resources associated with generalized foraging. When factional competition is present, the success of faction leaders is partly determined by local resource productivity and trade route accessibility. Faction leaders will be most successful in areas that are most productive, giving the prevailing methods of resource exploitation. For example, under conditions of low agricultural intensification, faction leaders will do best in areas (like the American Bottoms region of the middle Mississippi River) where a large following can gather to enjoy the benefits of factional membership without incurring the costs of intensified subsistence effort. But under conditions of higher agricultural intensification, leaders will do best in areas with the greatest quantity of intensifiable resources (irrigable land, etc.).

Pohl and Pohl (Chapter 13) suggest that ecological variables affecting agricultural production also shape the onset and intensity of factional competition. Rainfall agriculture permits a more mobile commoner population, easily able to shift allegiance from one leader to another. Leaders then compete to control segments of this mobile population. More intensive agricultural regimes tie farmers to the land, lessening competition between political elites and permitting greater political stability. Price (1984) has also noted this difference, adding that leaders in rainfall agricultural regimes are more likely to engage in conspicuous generosity in order to attract followers.

Anderson (Chapter 6) suggests that extreme competition and violence are common during periods of environmental instability or change. He believes that European contact intensified factional competition among native peoples in the southeastern United States, first through the introduction of European diseases that killed individuals who occupied strategic positions in the regional alliance network, and second through the introduction of European trade goods that opened new possibilities for acquiring wealth items. Spencer (Chapter 3) cites a case where disease in a Shavante village led to a realignment of factions.

Geography, by affecting the shape of interaction networks, also shapes factional competition. Clark and Blake (Chapter 2) argue that more open settlement systems with greater possibilities for regional interaction have greater potential for being dominated by a single, advantageously situated authority. Conversely, both Anderson (Chapter 6) and Byland and Pohl (Chapter 12) suggest that, in patchy environments, the difficulty of maintaining communications between scattered communities prevents any one from dominating the others. Under these conditions, factional competition tends to persist in a more or less stable equilibrium.

The recognition that factional competition is shaped by ecological variables does not imply that factional competition is always, at the base, caused by subsistence shortages. Cultural ecologists have frequently argued that intercommunity warfare is the result of growing populations competing for scarce subsistence resources (Sanders and Price 1968; Carneiro 1970; Webster 1975; Ferguson 1984; Johnson and Earle 1987). Alternative views on the motivation and character of warfare appear in this volume. For example, Redmond (Chapter 4) finds that, in northern South America, tribal warfare is motivated by the desire for revenge rather than the desire for resources. A careful consideration of Panamanian chiefs leads Helms (Chapter 5) to conclude that their leadership of warfare was motivated by their desire for personal gain without the added spur of population pressure. Spencer (Chapter 3) suggests that the elitist character of warfare in ranked societies is revealed archaeologically in the fact that elite centers are fortified while smaller communities are not.

But if warfare arises from the desire for revenge, why does it occur in some societies but not others (Johnson and Earle 1987:124, 134)? And if warfare arises from the selfish motives of chiefs, why do followers participate? As Redmond (Chapter 4) makes clear, individuals *are* very reluctant to fight; in fact, an ambitious leader may earn the indebtedness of individuals who must seek revenge by organizing a raiding party on their behalf (see also Spencer, Chapter 3). Presumably, leaders organize these raids on the same basis as other activities that they carry out, by calling to action those indebted to them for previous favors. Thus, warfare becomes possible once individual jealousies and the desire for revenge become linked to the political goals of self-aggrandizing leaders who have established followings that they can call upon to implement their plans (see also Sillitoe 1978).

In more stratified societies, the participation of subordinate groups in warfare is less problematic. Rulers compel participation through coercion, and they reward participation by conferring promotions of status upon those whose performance is outstanding. The link between warfare and population pressure in stratified societies is weak. This is clearly indicated by Pohl and Pohl's (Chapter 13) observation that the population of

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Caracol grew by 325 percent in the 130 years after it defeated Tikal. If Caracol was making war with a population of less than one-third of its capacity, it is difficult to believe that the war was a consequence of population pressure.

Factional competition and class conflict

If, because of earlier research agendas, factions have frequently been contrasted with corporate groups, our own interest in social transformation leads us to contrast factions with classes. Under conditions of class struggle, society is divided by horizontal cleavages that separate internally solidary and externally competing strata. This contrasts with a situation of factional competition in which society is divided by vertical cleavages that unite members of different strata and foster conflict between members of the same strata.

Intra-class competition is a common theme in Marx's writings on capitalist society. Marx (1977:266–7) observed that capitalist society contained two market-driven, intra-class struggles: on the one hand, "the industrial war of capitalists among themselves" to maintain profits, on the other hand, the competition among workers for employment. Marx maintained that intra-class competition is only overcome by class consciousness brought about by class struggle: "The separate individuals form a class only in so far as they have to carry on a common battle against another class; otherwise they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors" (Marx and Engels 1947:48–9). Thus, factional competition and class conflict are presented as inversely related, the former fading as the latter intensifies. And class struggle is given the greater explanatory weight: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx 1977:222).

As Bloch (1983:18) points out, Marx's emphasis upon class struggle has not been very helpful for anthropologists investigating the causes of change in classless societies. In the absence of class struggle, Marxist anthropologists have variously attributed social change in classless societies to technological development and environmental change (see Levine and Wright 1980); to the structural incompatabilities ("contradictions") between the forces of production, the relations of production, and the social and ideological superstructure (Godelier 1977; Friedman 1975; Friedman and Rowlands 1978); or to the conflict of interests between individuals who occupy subordinate statuses within society (women, lineage juniors, etc.) and those who dominate them (Bloch 1983:160). The dynamics of conflict among those in similar social positions has received little attention.

On the other hand, several anthropologists, working from a variety of positions sympathetic to Marxism, have suggested that factional conflict within the elite stratum explains the intensification, modification and decline of elite power in chiefdoms and agrarian states (Webster 1975; Earle 1978, 1987; Cowgill 1979; Kristiansen 1981; Brumfiel 1983; Gailey and Patterson 1987; Patterson 1991). This volume extends their arguments to suggest that conflicts within (both commoner and elite) strata interact with conflicts between strata to determine the course of political development.

First of all, competition between non-elites provides frequent opportunities for leaders to expand their influence and power. As Spencer (Chapter 3) and Redmond (Chapter 4) indicate, leaders in lowland South America increased their influence by assisting individuals embroiled in personal disputes or blood feuds. Brumfiel (Chapter 8) suggests that mediating competition between *calpulli* and *teccalli* groups for houses, land, titles, and other resources was an important service performed by city-state rulers in central Mexico prior to Aztec rule. Pohl and Pohl (Chapter 13) indicate that the Postclassic Maya elites, as patrons to their subjects, resolved property disputes and defended community resources against outside attack. And the military commanders of the pre-Inka Wanka prosecuted wars that at least ostensibly defended community resources from raids by neighboring groups (D'Altroy, Chapter 15). In each of these cases, competition among non-elites motivated commoners to subordinate themselves to a political leader. The resulting alignments were factions.

At the same time, competition among political elites frequently moderates the intensity with which commoners are exploited. In the tribal societies described by Clark and Blake (Chapter 2), Spencer (Chapter 3), and Redmond (Chapter 4) leaders compete with each other to supply benefits to followers, although the successful leader will also have cultivated his ability to call in his debts at critical junctures. In chiefdoms and city-states, rulers seek to finance their competition against rival elites by enlarging the size of their tribute-paying populations. Although this is sometimes accomplished through conquest, it can also be achieved by offering commoners prime agricultural land (Earle 1978) or a low per capita tribute burden (Pohl and Pohl, Chapter 13) as inducements to settle. In pre-Aztec Mexico, intense competition within the ruling class enabled commoners to move from one city-state to another, thus avoiding conditions of intense exploitation (Hicks 1982; Brumfiel, Chapter 8).

The suppression of commoner residential mobility

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may be a necessary condition for the existence of class stratification in agrarian states. This could be accomplished through "social circumscription" (Carneiro 1970), as Pohl and Pohl (Chapter 13) suggest for the Petén Maya. Or, it might be accomplished by the political unification of a region, resulting in uniform conditions of exploitation for the commoner class. Seeing the advantages of unification, ruling elites might voluntarily surrender their sovereignty to an expanding regional state (Smith 1986; Hicks, Chapter 10).

Commoners can sometimes exploit intra-elite competition to their own advantage even without leaving home. When plagued by oppressive rule, commoners can support the efforts of some ambitious prince to overthrow the incumbent ruler. Class warfare can assume the guise of civil war between noble factions (Fallers 1956:247; Sahlins 1968:92–3). Thus, the suppression of intra-elite competition is a second condition necessary for the emergence of class stratification. Mechanisms for unifying the ruling class include fostering a homogeneous elite culture (Pollard, Chapter 7; Brumfiel, Chapter 8), elite intermarriage (van Zantwijk, Chapter 9), the rotation of status-conferring ritual and political activities (van Zantwijk, Chapter 9; Pohl and Pohl, Chapter 13; Fox, Chapter 14), and the forging of patron–client relationships between the state and individual members of the regional nobility (Pollard, Chapter 7; Hicks, Chapter 10; Fox, Chapter 14; D'Altroy, Chapter 15). Interestingly enough, a homogeneous elite culture, elite intermarriage, and possibly the rotation of ritual responsibilities were present among the Classic Maya, who never achieved regional unification (Pohl and Pohl, Chapter 13). Thus, intra-elite patron–client relationships, backed by coercive force, emerge as the most important mechanism for securing a unified ruling class among the relatively non-bureaucratic Aztecs and Inkas.

While factional competition affects the dimensions of social inequality, class structure shapes competition and alliance building (Lloyd 1965). In the tribal systems described by Clark and Blake (Chapter 2), Spencer (Chapter 3), and Redmond (Chapter 4), classes are absent, and followers align themselves with the leader who supplies them with the greatest immediate benefits. These vertical alliances are shallow, extending only from followers to the local leader. On the regional level, linkages are supplied by alliances between village leaders, and these linkages are the most critical advantage that incumbent leaders enjoy over aspiring rivals. Alliances between leaders give incumbents greater access to exotic goods and military assistance than is available to their rivals. Spencer (Chapter 3) suggests that efforts by incumbent leaders to regularize relationships within their alliance network might lead them to deal preferentially with the heir of a deceased leader, initiating a form of ascriptive leadership that could develop into a permanent chieftainship.

Institutionalized tribute extraction in chiefdoms and city-states makes available greater quantities of wealth for elite competition and alliance building. Anderson (Chapter 6) suggests that competition is most intense when the material rewards associated with leadership are greatest, and this is borne out by the high level of factional competition within the elite stratum of the chiefdoms and city-states described in this volume. Internally, close kinsmen struggle to control leadership offices; externally, leaders struggle to gain higher positions in the regional political hierarchy. Their allies in this quest are an unstable coalition of consanguineal and affinal kin and commoners raised to noble rank as a reward for valorous military service. These coalitions are held together by the redistribution of tribute wealth to noble followers and the allotment of segments of the tribute-paying population to the leader's strongest rivals.

But the intra-elite competition, as discussed above, limits exploitation, creating a chronically underfunded ruling class. To augment their incomes, leaders make war upon their neighbors, and, as Redmond (Chapter 4) documents so convincingly, warfare in chiefdoms reaches an intensity that is clearly greater than that found among tribal peoples. To survive both internal and external competition, leaders place themselves under the patronage of strong regional leaders. These vertical alliances have greater depth (three or four levels) and territorial range than the vertical alliances found in tribal "big-man" systems. Anderson (Chapter 6) suggests that such systems are marked by a secular trend away from intra-elite and inter-class relations based upon display and redistribution toward the greater use of force.

The unification of elites in a regional state permits very high levels of tribute extraction. This surplus flows to the paramount ruler who establishes himself as the primary supplier of sumptuary goods and military assistance to subordinate leaders. Thus, vertical alliance networks all converge on the state rulers while horizontal alliances between local rulers wither away. State patronage permits subordinate rulers to enjoy a definite in-group advantage over their local rivals. As in modern systems of centralized patronage, the level of overt factional competition tends to be quite low.

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The position of local elites is further weakened when the state creates new territorial units and administrative offices filled by members of the state's ruling group instead of by local rulers. Such policies result in the severing of ties between rulers and ruled and strengthen class stratification (D'Altroy, Chapter 15). Subsequently, these policies may give rise to disputes between those who have traditional claims on resources and those who derive claims from the new system, both of whom must turn to the state for recognition of their claims. The absence of local solidarity and the competition between local factions for favorable treatment by the state weakens the local capacity for resistance (D'Altroy, Chapter 15; see also Dennis 1987). The greatest threat to these states is factional competition at the very highest level, within the royal family (van Zantwijk, Chapter 9; D'Altroy, Chapter 15).

As states disintegrate, considerable wealth and power may become lodged outside the realm of political control. Blanton (1983) points out that associations organizing craft production or exchange tend to arise during periods of weakened state control. Religious power may also be lodged in more or less autonomous institutions such as the priesthood during Postclassic times in Oaxaca and possibly also the Maya lowlands (Pohl and Pohl, Chapter 13; see also Patterson 1985). To deal with these groups, political elites are sometimes forced to admit their members to political office so that the interests of outside groups coincide with the interest of the political elite (Lloyd 1965:98). At other times, such groups promote factional competition among political elites to maintain their own autonomy. Aligning themselves with different elite factions, outside groups may succeed in transforming a tributary state into a broker state, in which factional competition is overshadowed by competition between functionally differentiated interest groups.

Factional competition and the archaeological record

Factional competition involves two complementary processes: the construction of coalitions of support and participation in political contests. In building coalitions of support, leaders forge ties between themselves and their clients, allies, and patrons. In political contests, leaders exchange information on the strength of their coalitions and determine who will control contested resources (see Bailey 1969). Coalition building and contests may occur simultaneously, as when leaders compete to offer potential supporters the most attractive gifts. Both alliance building and political contests leave distinctive imprints on the archaeological record.

Alliance building is frequently achieved through exchange. Locally, the liberal distribution of gifts and preferred foods is used to attract followers who are then tied to the leader by their indebtedness for unreciprocated favors (Sahlins 1968:88–90). Regionally, balanced gift exchange establishes a pattern of mutual aid between allied leaders while asymmetrical exchange (involving the movement of staple crops upward and the flow of valuables downward) characterizes relations between local elites and regional paramounts. The valuables used in these exchanges are scarce and highly valued, usually owing to their foreign origin or the quantity of labor involved in their production (Drennan 1976:357). The valuables are endowed with symbolic meanings that validate the alliances under construction; furthermore, the valuables are distributed in ritual contexts that further validate the relations of alliance.

The intensity and organization of alliance building are visible in the frequency and distribution of exotic or highly crafted wealth items, preferred foods, and feasting paraphernalia in prehistoric sites. Clark and Blake (Chapter 2) cite the presence of finely finished, elaborately decorated ceramics and maize to argue for competitive coalition building on coastal Chiapas by 1600 BC. D'Altroy (Chapter 15) suggests that the high concentration of butchered camelid bones and certain jar and basin types in elite households are evidence of elite sponsorship of feasts at Tunanmarca, Peru. Since there appear to have been few dietary differences between elites and commoners, commoners were probably the guests at elite-sponsored feasts (see also Costin and Earle 1989).

A more exclusive sphere of elite alliance building at Tunanmarca is suggested by the restriction to elite houses of metal working and metal artifacts. Metal was probably used in gift exchanges that created coalitions of support among political elites. In Barinas, Venezuela, a similar restriction of polished stone jewelry (much of it from extra-local serpentine) to elite contexts also suggests the existence of a separate sphere of elite alliance building (Spencer, Chapter 3).

The presence of non-local goods in non-elite contexts might reveal another dimension of alliance building. For example, in Early to Middle Formative Oaxaca, the uniformity among households of the sources of obsidian used suggests that obsidian was distributed to all households from a single point (Winter and Pires-Ferreira 1976). This could be interpreted as evidence that obsidian procurement and distribution was used by a faction leader to build a popular following (see Clark 1987 for a discussion of how the procurement and processing of

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obsidian provided opportunities for political entrepreneurship in Middle Formative Mesoamerica).

Shifts in the frequency and distribution of prestige goods, preferred foods, and feasting paraphernalia provide information on changes in the structure and intensity of alliance building over time. Anderson (Chapter 6) argues that the declining frequency of prestige goods in Mississippian chiefdoms marks the transition from leadership based on persuasion (which required chiefs to build a mass following among commoners) to leadership based on coercion (which permitted chiefs to limit their attentions to a smaller group of strong-arm men). In the Valley of Mexico and the central Andes, a decline in the frequency of vessels used in feasting in the capitals of previously autonomous states reflects the suppression of political competition among local polities by a powerful regional state (Brumfiel 1987a, Costin and Earle 1989).

Marriages also play an important role in alliance building. Unfortunately, the archaeological record only rarely preserves evidence of marriage alliance. Stone inscriptions from the Classic Maya constitute one of the very few instances where such records are preserved (Marcus 1976). Pohl and Pohl (Chapter 13) suggest that the Late to Terminal Classic shift in stelae subject matter from marriage to warfare reflects a secular trend in Maya political factionalism from an earlier dependence upon alliances among regional elites to a later pattern of violent competition.

The construction of coalitions requires the production of surplus wealth which can underwrite gift exchange and feasting (Sahlins 1968, D'Altroy and Earle 1985). Because the vast majority of production in agrarian societies is household based, changes in the intensity of factional competition should be marked by changes in household size and composition. The initial stages of coalition building ought to be marked by high birth rates, polygamy, and/or the inception of dependent labor within the households of faction leaders (Sahlins 1968:89, Coontz and Henderson 1986). Increases in leaders' influence and power should be reflected in the size and structure of a growing number of households as the leader extracts increasing amounts of goods and labor from a wider circle of clients and subjects.

Successful coalition building might leave its imprint on settlement patterns. The size of the leader's settlement may suddenly increase as it did during the emergence of chiefdoms on the south Chiapas coast (Clark and Blake, Chapter 2). The early expansion of San José Mogote in the Valley of Oaxaca might also be an example of an unusually large settlement created by successful coalition building (Flannery and Marcus 1983b). The successful control of local rivals should be reflected in the distribution of elite residences within a region, as in de Montmollin's (1989:191–6) "Elite Forced Settlement" measure – the proportion of elite residences found at political centers compared to the total number of elite residences in the political catchment controlled from these centers. Alternatively, paramounts might favor a policy of dispersing their rivals to a maximum extent (Anderson, Chapter 6). A lack of control over rivals might be indicated by evenly dispersed, tight clusters of elite and commoner housing indicative of leader–follower groupings well suited to factional competition.

Successful coalition building may also be evident in constructions that by their size or complexity suggest communal labor: raised fields and causeways in Venezuela (Spencer, Chapter 3), agricultural terraces and defensive works in Peru (D'Altroy, Chapter 15), and fortifications and monumental architecture among the Mayas (Pohl and Pohl, Chapter 13; Fox, Chapter 14). The particular type of labor investment reflects different strategies for competitive success. Agricultural intensification may improve the leader's ability to attract followers by sponsoring larger feasts or by supplying them with improved lands (Earle 1978). Fortifications suggest that warfare provided wealth that a leader could redistribute to followers (Webster 1975). Monumental architecture might involve manipulation of the symbols of group unity: the ancestral or patron deity. Such symbols would be most prominent under conditions of competition at the regional level as part of an effort to create bonds between leaders and followers that could not be easily transferred to competing leaders. Ethnic symbols may be manipulated with similar goals (Brumfiel, Chapter 8; Pohl and Pohl, Chapter 13). Public architecture also suggests efforts to impress a regional audience of potential allies and rivals who use the size of the building projects to judge the size and commitment of one's following.

Competition on the regional level often takes the form of warfare. Warfare is archaeologically visible in a number of ways: physical evidence of violent death and the taking of war trophies, defensive works, large settlement size, ephemeral site occupation, defacement of public buildings and prestige goods, and depictions of warfare in art and inscriptions. Drawing upon data from Oaxaca, Kowalewski (Chapter 12) suggests that territorially based competing polities on the regional level might also be indicated by the occurrence of shrines, boundary markers, and buffer zones between localities, by roughly equivalent amounts of civic-ceremonial

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