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### Review of *Archaic States*, edited by Gary M. Feinman and Joyce Marcus

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## BOOK REVIEWS

ARCHAIC STATES, edited by *Gary M. Feinman* and *Joyce Marcus*. (School of American Research, Advanced Seminar Series.) Pp. xiv + 427, figs. 64, tables 10. School of American Research Press, Santa Fe 1998. \$45 (cloth); \$19.95 (paper). ISBN 0-933452-98-5 (cloth); 0-933452-99-3 (paper).

Since the 19th century the study of ancient states and civilizations has always been at the center of archaeology, but in the 1960s and 70s the application of systems theory transformed their study. In 1972 K. Flannery identified segregation and centralization as the salient characteristics of states, and subsequently archaeologists have oriented much fieldwork toward their identification. This approach has not been without critics, who have worried that it fosters linear, simplistic, hierarchical orderings, is conceptually rigid and static, and excludes other successful adaptive modes of complex integration. Recent advocates of sociobehavioral approaches have emphasized the need for a less mechanistic, more dynamic and cognitive approach to the study of states.

Consequently, the arrival of this book, with contributions by the participants of a seminar at the School of American Research in 1992, should pique the interest of anyone wanting to know what's new in the study of ancient states. Such expectations, however, are only partially rewarded in this volume, for there is no synoptic discussion of the issues, and contributors with different perspectives are virtually unrepresented.

To be fair, the goal of the organizers was somewhat more limited. They charged the discussants to move beyond the study of origins and collapse to what they view as the central problem, namely "the full range of variation in . . . the operation and diversity of ancient states." Yet it seems to this reviewer that these goals fail to question the prevailing paradigm and do not confront the hermeneutic dilemma of a scientific archaeology. As a result, there is no acknowledgment of the burden laid on the discipline by its quest for prime movers and little self-consciousness of how this approach constrains archaeology from contending with the social dimensions of human cultures and the broader sweep of human history.

Thus, instead of engaging the widely acknowledged problems with the paradigm of segregation and centralization, the studies here remain fixated on issues of classification and nomenclature. Repeated questioning of the validity of the term "city-state," for instance, merely avoids acknowledging the importance of bringing "secondary" states into the discussion. Despite claiming that this volume will present comparative studies, the cases presented largely conform to those from the New and Old Worlds that have already been identified as "pristine" states. The exceptionally rich body of archaeological information available in other areas of the world is ignored.

Of the contributions to this volume only H. Wright explicitly illustrates a strictly archaeological and systems-

oriented approach. The goals of the organizers notwithstanding, he maintains that more has been learned about the operation of states than about their genesis, and he affirms that for anthropological archaeologists the latter must remain the primary objective. Wright advocates that fieldwork should provide refined analyses of microstratigraphy and a detailed and sophisticated understanding of regional settings. His case study of the pristine Uruk states in the Zagros mountain plains compares the central area of the Susiana Plain with the hinterland Deh Luran and Izeh Plains, and formulates hypotheses about the relationship and roles of the inhabitants on the margins to those in the center. Because he recognizes that this material record speaks to changes in the political economy and to sociopolitical relationships, Wright believes archaeologists must also pay close attention to the iconographical record. There we can read the changing understanding the inhabitants had of their relationship to the world around them. In short, Wright argues that archaeologists must consult the full range of evidence, from the particular to the most general, if we are to succeed in developing comprehensive and dynamic models of the process of emergence of complex societies.

In contrast, Blanton criticizes the systems approach for its limitations and advocates instead a more open-ended behavioral one that may be analyzed through a categorical matrix of different sources and types of power. As an antidote to systems thinking, Blanton offers the study of how corporate groups exercise power, notably in opposition to the monopolistic tendencies of executive power holders. He uses examples from Early Dynastic Mesopotamia, Classical Greece, and China to explore the tensions inherent in the episodic change between exclusionary and corporate political forms from the perspectives of ritual and moral controls, access to technology, and the forms of distributed autonomy. Blanton's important chapter challenges archaeologists to look closely at their own areas for signs of egalitarian behavior and evidence of its role in checking the momentum toward executive and monopolized authority.

The contributions of Marcus and Feinman also highlight vexing problems of the systems paradigm. In a broad comparative study, Marcus advocates for and elaborates her "dynamic model" of the cyclical nature of states as they consolidate, expand, and dissolve. She argues that if we graph the changing size of a state over time, we will describe physically the ebb and flow of a changing political economy and better identify different levels of integration and disintegration. Though useful for visualizing the changing nature of complex societies, such a procedure neither explains nor predicts change and continuity. This model does not take into account the problems of cultural continuity and discontinuity, and it ignores the rich body of recent historical, cultural, and ethnographic research that demonstrates the necessity of investigating local histories and conditions. By adding more cases to her model, Marcus supposes it will be elevated to

the status of a theory but instead merely succeeds in displaying the irredentist tendencies of a true believer.

Feinman acknowledges the limitations of the systems paradigm and hopes to overcome them by incorporating the ebb and flow of complex formations into a dynamic model of "nested, multiscale" regional systems. He insightfully considers the problems of organizational scale and state size. Early states, he observes, were often small and decentralized, and difficult to distinguish from chiefdoms. Scale and complexity are not easily correlated and there is no rule, as Carneiro has argued, that increasing size must be accompanied by elaboration in scale and complexity. Complexity has a fluid and situational nature, while scale should be considered both horizontally and vertically. Like Marcus, Feinman maintains that "secondary states" are usually the consequence of the disintegration of pristine states. This leads him to his case study of the Maya, in which he explores how pristine states "decompose," and he concludes that they do not follow the same trajectory in disintegration that they did in integration.

A different tack is taken by J. Baines and N. Yoffee. They compare Egypt and Mesopotamia in order to isolate their different principles of organization and change. Their study contrasts Mesopotamian political and economic centralization in urban centers and the decentralized political economy of Egypt, where power is dispersed among estates in the hands of elites. Kingship prevails in both, but in the former it is constrained by the city-state form and its local religious and economic institutions, while kingship in the latter, without a central political urban form, is overarching and unified according to an all-encompassing cosmology. Baines and Yoffee choose order, legitimacy, and wealth as terms of analysis because these are concepts shared by both modern analysts and ancient actors; they also help bridge the difference of our sources: the wealth of literary testimonia from Mesopotamia and the predominance of monumental representations, often funerary, in Egypt. Because power was held by private individuals, institutions, and the state in a complex arrangement, there was a tension in Mesopotamia between rulers and ruled. In Egypt, because of the profound inequality between rulers and ruled, the elite assumed a protective role that made an extensive documentation of their relationship unnecessary. Baines and Yoffee contend that we must study Egypt and Mesopotamia not only as archaic states but also as civilizations. In Egypt the forms of civilization emerged very early in an art that the privileged inner circles used in intragroup competition. For Mesopotamia Yoffee emphasizes the preeminence of writing, though in many studies I. Winter has shown that art is equally sophisticated and important as a communicative device among the inner elite. As Baines and Yoffee emphasize, it is the inner elite who create and maintain civilizations and whose influence continues long after the collapse of their states.

Two chapters in this book present case studies of cultures and areas that seem ill-suited to the systems theory model, either because the model inadequately accounts for the information available or because the evidence of social and cognitive behavior has not been recognized or properly interpreted in previous studies. G. Posschl reviews the state of research for the Indus Valley, where

the lack of evidence for an elite leadership, bureaucracy, state religion, and centralized economy in an otherwise highly developed culture leads him to identify the Harappan centers as differentiated "non-states," a woefully inadequate term. Alternative models, such as Blanton's corporate political economy, might offer a more fruitful picture of the evidence, but these clearly would have to be coordinated with systematic and intensive regional studies. C. Morris's study of the Inka illustrates how prevailing interpretations employ the systems theory model to demonstrate centralization and domination but ignore the problems inherent in the necessary integration of regions. He advocates an approach that focuses less on coercive power and more on communicative and economic strategies adapted to local circumstances. He shows that the archaeological evidence supports an interpretation of the importance of ceremony and public feasting as strategies of incorporation, especially when held in architectural settings that reflected the organizational and hierarchical principles of Inka ideology. Additionally, Morris argues that the traditional notion of military coercion is undermined by the widespread absence of weapons, although its importance in maintaining the cohesion of the far-flung Inka state is unquestioned.

The issue of coercion is an old chestnut that D. Webster takes up in the final contribution, which compares Mayan and Polynesian warfare. Although he rightly laments the absence of comparative studies of early warfare, his own is narrowly confined. Of interest is his discussion of the difficulty of establishing the archaeological correlates of warfare and his important distinction between internal and external warfare. His comparison between the two societies is instructive for its consideration of the many dimensions of armed conflict and its role in pristine settings.

Individually these studies are of interest, but taken as a whole they illustrate the need for more open and inclusive conversation among those interested in archaic states. It is in recognition of what is lacking that the reader will realize the acute need for fresh ideas from other regions and from different scholars in order truly to advance our understanding of archaic states.

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WORLD-SYSTEMS THEORY IN PRACTICE: LEADERSHIP, PRODUCTION, AND EXCHANGE, edited by *P. Nick Kardulias*. Pp. 352, figs. 18, tables 13. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, New York 1999. \$55 (cloth); \$26.95 (paper). ISBN 0-8476-9103-9 (cloth); 0-8476-9104-7 (paper).

World systems theory (WST) sprang almost unaided from the brain of Immanuel Wallerstein during the 1970s and has been a potent influence among those historians and archaeologists who (in spite of attempts at decon-