

## Segmentary Organization and Multi-Strategy Polities

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This paper focuses on segmentary organization in political dynamics, using the Teuchitlan Tradition of western Mexico as an example of the concept's strengths and pitfalls. The Teuchitlan Tradition is defined by the remarkably faithful adherence to a symbolically charged form of concentric circular monumental architecture across 7 states of western Mexico from around 300 B.C. to A.D. 900. Late Formative examples are composed of four rectangular structures evenly spaced around the outer rim of a circular patio with a circular stepped altar in the center. High status tombs are often located beneath the outer structures while ceramic models of the period depict climbing ceremonies focused on a pole coming out of the central altar. Oconahua Red on Cream finewares of the period commonly break up the design field into four quarters, much like the architecture. Both architecture and ceramics are probably making the first reference to the Mesoamerican cosmogram in this region. Represented are the four cardinal directions, an underworld represented by the tombs, an upperworld symbolized by the central altar mound and the pole, and finally the patio representing this world.

The architecture rapidly becomes much larger and more complex, however. Before the beginnings of the Classic, the four structures have become 8, or occasionally 10 or 12, but always maintaining the regular and even symmetry. I have argued elsewhere that these structures have by this point taken on the very close appearance of a cross section of 8 rowed maize, and both symbolic and biological data tend to support this view at this time. I might add that as of mid-March, our excavations exposed the bedrock floor of the patio of the circle at Llano Grande, and we not only found a carved hole for the pole depicted in the models, but a series of lines and designs carved into the bedrock that at first blush suggest a preoccupation with tracking solar phenomena. Does anyone have Tony Aveni's phone number?

Although some minimal excavation has been published that indicates that burial and caching were associated with the circles, it is unclear as to whether they had residential functions as well. The ongoing excavations of Efraín Cárdenas and Phil Weigand at Guachimontón, and my own excavations at the more modest site of Llano Grande, should clarify this point soon. Suffice it to say that these circles are surrounded by tens, hundreds, and thousands of ordinary rectangular residential buildings throughout the region, and hence additional residential functions seem unnecessary.

The paucity of excavation means that most interpretations of political organization have come from regional syntheses of architecture and settlement patterns. Here I will largely focus on the core of the Tradition, in central Jalisco. Evidence for segmentary organization in the Late Formative and Classic period could include:

- 1) the truly monotonous replication of the circular architecture (around 300 examples identified) within central Jalisco. The larger the site, the larger the circle. There is a concave rank-size settlement hierarchy, but the only known forms of public architecture are the circles and the

appended ballcourts. For those using Randy McGuire's terms, we have considerable evidence of Inequality, but very little of Heterogeneity. This first of all suggests to me the functional redundancy attributed to the Segmentary State. I also sympathize greatly with the approach that Susan McIntosh and others have taken in pointing out the wide range of methods by which sodalities, religious societies, and other organizations can play an institutionalized political role. I am tempted to see each of the 8 surrounding structures around the circular patio as being the seat of such groups. Our current excavations are directed towards this topic. But for now, the repetitive nature of the public architecture and its pyramidal arrangement seem to be the dominant themes. Whatever the power-sharing arrangements in the Teuchitlan Tradition, the circles and ballcourts are the only specialized architecture that might be associated with those activities.

2) Within the most densely populated core region of central Jalisco, settlement is actually quite dispersed. Islands of public architecture are found in a sea of residential structures, with compounds located no more than 300 meters apart across an area of over 300 km<sup>2</sup>. This is reminiscent of the common dispersed lowland Maya pattern, in which even antagonistic polities are linked by a continuous distribution of residential households. This suggests a certain lack of articulation between political elites and commoners, and the lack of any direct administration of the ordinary populace or local economy.

3) During the Late Formative and Early Classic segments of the sequence, mortuary ritual is quite prominent at the shaft tombs, whether associated with the circles or not. Fine and imported artifacts that might be associated with ritualized display such as hollow figures, elaborate ceramics, jade, shell trumpets, etc. are either limited to these periods, or are more common then. Bob Pickering's analysis of the skeletal remains from the tomb at Huitzilapa also suggest strong familial ties among those interred. I have suggested that these rather strongly associate the shaft tombs with a Network like strategy of political competition among ranked lineages.

There is some evidence for a more corporate Unitary political system within the lake basins of central Jalisco, all of which apparently pertains to a brief Middle Classic period (A.D. 400-550). It is tempting to argue that this more Unitary strategy developed when elites took advantage of the vastly richer and more diverse environment of this core area. But we must watch our language here and avoid determinism. But I *would* argue that environmental diversity provided a certain level of political potential unmatched elsewhere in the far west, if elites could obtain preferential access. Evidence from this period includes:

1) The ritual associated with the circular public architecture appears more public, and corporate than that found with the shaft tombs. The ceramic models of pole ceremonies have been argued to be related to solar, agricultural, and a variety of other topics, all rather communal in orientation. Individuals are more anonymous. These images are unprovenanced, and I do not cite them for their chronological value. But they do depict distinct rituals in the circles from those associated with the tombs, and the trend towards smaller tombs and larger surface architecture suggests associated changes in ritual, the former emphasizing like competing groups and the latter more group oriented.

2) There is a zone of grid-planned raised fields along the edges of Lake Magdalena and Lake La Vega. Glenn Stuart of Arizona State University is in the process of dating the material from these fields. If they date to the Middle Classic, as has been thought, they would provide evidence of higher level decision making within the core related to basic issues of Staple Finance.

3) The presence of small, isolated, and quite specialized boundary sites ringing the core in central Jalisco. My prior research along the eastern edge of the core identified walled sites emphasizing defensible locations that yet retained views of an important transportation corridor. Our current excavations are at Llano Grande, another of these sites located this time in a pass on the western edge of the core. Three long north-south running walls totally block all traffic from west to east, and three additional walls prevent further access even from the surrounding arroyos. The labor cost of these walls dwarfs that of the meager 35 structures that populate the site. This settlement makes little sense as an independent polity, but appears instead to be an instrument of a larger political entity. Three other passes into the core were similarly monitored, and I have elsewhere argued that the core must have had a Unitary political system for at least a brief time. When we examine those circles of the Teuchitlan Tradition that are scattered discontinuously across a much wider area of western Mexico, our segmentary evidence reasserts itself. The Teuchitlan Tradition appears to have made use of multiple strategies of control.

Similar examples of multi-strategy polities can be cited only briefly here. Luttwak's study of the Roman Empire identified both Territorial and Hegemonic strategies, which later authors have shown to have been simultaneously in operation. Simon Price's fascinating study of the cult of the Roman Emperor has also separated the emperor's more direct administrative power from his broader ritual suzerainty. Steve Lansing's excellent work in Bálí has shown how a more Corporate temple-controlled irrigation system existed side by side with the Network oriented palaces of political elites, although the application of the terms of the Dual-Processual model was suggested by a student of mine.

Another example cuts more closely to the heart of the concept of this session, and that is the Segmentary State of the Alur. The definition Southall presented is not simply one in which we have multiple ranked bearers of legitimate authority, but rather one in which different strategies of domination are being used simultaneously and in the same areas. Although Southall used the term *segmentary* state, he quite blatantly describes a political system in which a *unitary* strategy is being used within the core area of that ruler's domain, and the term *segmentary* more precisely refers to the nature of any given ruler's authority as it dribbles off into the periphery. A segmentary political landscape is one in which each and every acknowledged ruler, whatever the scale of their domain, has authority out to a given physical or social distance, and secondary elites and commoners both can find themselves caught in the conflicting webs of power of multiple rulers. In this kind of landscape, attempts to even define where a given "polity" (with its inherent assumption of autonomy) begins or ends become very difficult, and we are instead forced to shift our focus towards the nature of the *relationships* between those individuals holding political power, and how people deal with conflicting loyalties. These strike me as more anthropologically interesting and viable questions. Terms such as Chiefdom and State seem doubly normative and sterile when considered in this light.

The segmentary state model also tends to confound neo-evolutionary formulations that expect certain trends and tendencies over time, since segmentary and unitary strategies can occur at a wide range of complex societies, from the Alur to Vijayanagara. This is Southall's gift to us as archaeologists studying political systems - a model that truly allows us to focus on power relations and the distinct ways in which authority is exercised or resisted without feeling that we must fit it within an evolutionary framework. If we are to faithfully adhere to the structures and processes of real political systems, we must adopt not simply multilinear models of change, but non-linear models that focus less upon causality *per se* and more upon how different options are

chosen under differing circumstances. Success will likely require us to increasingly shift from verbal and diagrammatic modeling to computer simulation.