

**Political Boundaries and Political Structure:  
the Limits of the Teuchitlan Tradition**

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**Abstract-** Many social scientists have proposed a relationship between the structure of a boundary and that of the system it delimits. Substantial anthropological and historical research has found the same tendency in analyses of traditional political structure. A model based on these findings was applied to the Teuchitlán Tradition of Classic period West Mexico, a region where the degree of political complexity and unification has been a subject of debate. A focused study of the eastern boundary of the Teuchitlán valley was undertaken to examine the nature of its political structure. Fieldwork located a number of defensive features forming a well-structured boundary system in the La Venta corridor that connects the Teuchitlán and Atemajac valleys. Other fortifications ringing the Teuchitlán valley strongly suggest that a defensive network had been established to monitor access into the core of the Teuchitlán Tradition. A Unitary, Territorial form of administration (from the work of Southall and Luttwak) is proposed as a model for political dynamics in the core region, but a review of the evidence for the more distant Teuchitlán architecture suggests that, at most, only a Hegemonic form of control more akin to that of the Segmentary state was exercised outside of the core valley. A connection with long distance resource acquisition is possible, but highly speculative at present.

**Resumen-** Varios científicos sociales han propuesto una relación entre la estructura de un límite y el sistema que se delimita. Investigaciones antropológicas e históricas de estructuras políticas tradicionales han notado la misma tendencia. Se aplicó un modelo basado en este concepto a la Tradición de Teuchitlán del período Clásico en el Occidente de México. El grado de complejidad de la Tradición ha sido el sujeto de debate y se llevó a cabo un estudio enfocado en su límite oriental para examinar la naturaleza de su estructura política. Durante el trabajo de campo, se localizó varios centros fortificados, los cuales parecen haber formado un sistema para controlar acceso al núcleo de la Tradición de Teuchitlán. También hay otras fortificaciones localizadas en las otras entradas al núcleo. Basado en estos datos y otros, se propone una forma de administración Unitaria y Territorial (de las obras de Southall y Luttwak) para el núcleo de la Tradición. Sin embargo, una reseña de la evidencia para la perifería sugiere que solamente una forma de control Hegemónica mas afín al Estado Segmentario fue ejercido afuera del valle central. Se especula que la distribución de arquitectura de la Tradición de Teuchitlán en la perifería pueda tener una relación con la adquisición de recursos a larga distancia.

## **Boundaries and Political Structure in Anthropology and Archaeology**

The delimitation of territory among prehispanic polities is of interest to archaeologists for various reasons. Not only can it clarify culture-historical questions as to the size of the polity or the limits of its conquests (e.g. Marcus 1992:Ch.6), but it may aid in broader questions on political structure. Several researchers, including political sociologists (Strassoldo 1980), Classicists (Luttwak 1976; Mattingly 1992), anthropologists (Southall 1988; Hassig 1985), and archaeologists (Kowalewski, et al. 1983; Redmond 1983; Gorenstein 1985) have proposed or implied that the structure of a boundary reflects that of the polity that it delimits.

Stephen Houston and I (Beekman and Houston 1993) suggested that boundaries can be a productive area to study political complexity, and we used examples with extensive historical documentation to develop a model applicable to prehistory.<sup>1</sup> The study developed out of a dissatisfaction with the standard studies from political geography (e.g. Kristof 1959; Prescott 1987), which only peripherally addressed questions of interest to anthropologists. We compared the ethnohistorically known boundary between the Tarascan and Aztec empires of the Late Postclassic with those attested by epigraphy among the Classic period lowland Maya. Whereas the former was marked by a heavy investment in border fortifications and the placement of sites in strategic locations (Gorenstein 1985), the latter are rarely visible archaeologically and often do not even display a clear break in settlement distribution (Houston 1993:142-145). Frequent hostilities have been documented in each of these cases (e.g. Houston 1993), so something beyond a basic concern for defense was influencing the form of these boundaries. We suggested that political structure was a second major factor involved. To illustrate this, we presented a number of cross-cultural examples that dichotomized socially-defined polities structured around the personal influence of the ruler, with more territorially-defined polities whose authority rests in a more formal and impersonal administrative network.

Southall's (1988:79-81) distinction between Segmentary and Unitary states parallels our division, and provides an established anthropological framework to which our preliminary observations on boundaries might be linked. Segmentary states have been suggested as appropriate models for Classic Maya political structure (e.g. de Montmollin 1989; Houston 1993), in which Maya rulers appear to have exercised mostly hegemonic, typically ceremonial and

symbolic, authority over subsidiary lords at other sites. This may well have involved extractive tributary relationships or other forms of dominance, but political absorption or economic restructuring is rarely evidenced. Southall sketches a hypothetical evolutionary trajectory, tracing how such a Segmentary state might obtain greater control of local affairs over time and develop a more Unitary, bureaucratic, state structure. In this context, it is notable that the only defined boundaries (not simply walled sites) identified among the lowland Maya are those of the most extensive and internally complex centers, as in the case of the massive earthworks marking the outer territory of Tikal (Puleston 1983:23-24). We can contrast the Segmentary state with probable Unitary states such as the Late Postclassic Tarascan Empire, in which territory and boundary settlements were closely tied into the wider political system (Gorenstein 1985;Pollard 1993).

A very similar distinction between Hegemonic and Territorial political and military strategies has been made by Luttwak (1976), and forms a productive theoretical undercurrent throughout Hassig's work on economy and polity in Mesoamerica (1985,1988,1992). Luttwak stresses how Hegemonic authority depends upon the perception of power to keep other centers subsidiary to the core, and the primary center is not actually involved in the administration of subsidiary sites. Mattingly has noted that such authority can be manifested in various ways, including the ceremonial investiture of local rulers by the Hegemonic power, or the emulation of architecture from the primary center in the secondary ones (1992:45,54-55,58). A Territorial polity emphasizes the more costly strategy of annexation, incorporation and direct administration of new sites and lands.

What both Southall and Luttwak have noted is the crucial point of how the nature of a ruler's power can differ, and it is clear that strategies of domination can vary spatially within the same polity (Southall 1988:52,72;Mattingly 1992;Whittaker 1994). Both authors have also noted what we discovered through our own research (Beekman and Houston 1993); that whereas Segmentary and Hegemonic polities have indistinct boundaries, Unitary and Territorial polities often make a point of defining, integrating, and controlling their borders, although only extremely centralized examples like the Roman Empire can do this thoroughly (Luttwak 1976). The similarities between Southall's and Luttwak's models are extensive, despite the fact that they were

originally formulated from studies of societies of dramatically different scales,<sup>2</sup> and while fusing the two models may seem to diminish the utility of both, to keep them separate would impose arbitrary barriers between similar concepts. While the forms of indirect rule encompassed under the general Segmentary/Hegemonic rubric vary widely and deserve individual research, they all tend to be individually negotiated patron-client relationships between primary and secondary rulers (Houston 1993:142; note also Smith 1986 for the Aztecs). A Segmentary/Hegemonic state might thus be characterized as a series of nested polities within a polity, rather than the highly structured functional distinctions of the Unitary or Territorial state. These models will therefore be considered together for purposes of this paper, and more detailed discussion of these and other examples can be found elsewhere (Beekman 1996). Here I will apply this preliminary research on boundaries to a west Mexican case in which political complexity has been proposed, but is still heavily debated.

### **The West Mexican Background**

West Mexico, when discussed at all, is frequently characterized in the archaeological literature as a poor cousin to the rest of Mesoamerica, and research in the region frequently goes unmentioned in textbooks. The region is described in normative terms as composed of atomistic societies, whose most complex form of organization was a peyote-induced shamanism, and whose members were obsessed with a "Cult of the Dead" (e.g. Furst 1975). However, there has been increasing controversy in recent years over the question of cultural complexity in West Mexico (Palafox 1989), partly in response to research on the Teuchitlán Tradition in central Jalisco.

The Teuchitlán Tradition of Late Formative and Classic Period western Mexico was centered in the highland lake basins of central Jalisco (Figure 1), and has been defined by elaborate, concentric circular ceremonial architecture, known as *guachimontones* (Weigand 1985,1992a,1992b,this issue). From our present understanding of local chronology, this appears to be an outgrowth and elaboration of the better-known "shaft tomb culture" (Weigand 1985:63-74;1992b:Figure 9). An arc of 240 km<sup>2</sup> of continuous settlement with several ceremonial/administrative precincts, arranged around the Ciénaga La Vega and the adjoining *chinampa* fields, composed the Teuchitlán valley core of the system during the Middle Classic

(Figure 2). Conservative population estimates for the core range between 50,000 and 60,000 people (Weigand 1992b; Ohnersongen and Varien, this issue).

This paper follows previous discussions by Weigand (e.g. 1992a, this volume) in ascribing socio-political functions to the *guachimontón* architectural form (cf. de Montmollin 1989; Isbell and McEwan 1991; Goldstein 1993 for similar interpretive frameworks). Legal excavations at *guachimontón* sites in the Teuchitlán valley are almost non-existent (López and Ramos 1994; Ramos and López, this issue), but architectural models looted from shaft tombs in the general region depict early *guachimontones* as the centers of ritual activity, and occasionally as the sites of conflict between warriors (Von Winning and Hammer 1972; Kelley 1974). There have been several excavations at those circles outside of the core region, still mostly unpublished, but available information tends to confirm the use of the *guachimontón* for funerary (Kelley 1971:770-774), ritual, and possibly habitation (Cabrero 1989:149-161, 187-195) purposes. Surface studies and excavations in core sites have found the *guachimontones* to be frequently associated with obsidian workshops (Soto de Arechavaleta 1990; Beekman 1996), and suggest some involvement in the distribution of those materials (Spence, et al. 1993). In sum, this public architecture would seem to have had a number of social functions, and its near monotonous replication wherever it occurs suggests the functional redundancy attributed to Segmentary States (de Montmollin 1989:22-23; Houston 1993:142-143). However, an obviously important aspect is the regional context in which it appears, which will be discussed later.

The present problem is to examine the political organization(s) represented in the Teuchitlán Tradition during its cultural apogee in the Teuchitlán I phase (A.D. 400-700) (Figure 3) (Weigand 1985:73,75). Weigand suggests that the Tradition coalesced into one or more states based on the evidence for a shifting emphasis from the subterranean shaft tombs to increasingly monumental architecture, the nucleation of population from surrounding valleys into the Teuchitlán core, intensive agricultural systems, settlement hierarchy, and the strategic location of those circles outside the core along transportation routes (1985, 1992b). Accompanying these developments was extensive craft specialization in obsidian production (Spence, et al. 1993; Soto de Arechavaleta 1990) and in manufacture of increasingly elaborate ceramics and other materials (Ramos and López, this issue). On the other hand, Fernandez and Deraga (1988, 1992) find the

claims for statehood to be unjustified and consider the Teuchitlán core to have been composed of multiple "señorios", or chiefdoms. These authors refer exclusively to the oldest publications on the Tradition (Weigand 1974,1975,1979) and their discussion cannot be considered current, yet their objections reflect a general skepticism among other archaeologists towards the idea of political and social complexity in a region with a long-standing reputation for neither. The identification of an apparent boundary demarcating the eastern edge of the Teuchitlán Tradition core provided a unique opportunity to critically address the first rough hypotheses regarding the region's political structure.

A sharp political boundary was proposed to the east of the Teuchitlán valley in west-central Jalisco (Weigand 1992a), manifested in strong differences in architecture and in cultural trajectories. The valley was the geographical and cultural center of the Teuchitlán Tradition, and the numerous *guachimontones* here show a clear, indigenous evolution out of the Late Formative architecture associated with the shaft tombs (Weigand 1985). During the Classic period, the valley underwent social and demographic transformations unprecedented for western Mexico, and Weigand argues for a rapid population increase fed by immigrants from the adjoining Magdalena, Amatitán, and probably Atemajac valleys (Weigand 1992b).

Yet, in the Atemajac valley to the east, architecture takes a different form during the El Grillo phase, characterized by a shift away from the prior Tabachines-phase societies which constructed the shaft tombs (Galván 1991). As part of the new complex, the *talud-tablero* architectural facade was used on rectangular monumental architecture at the sites of El Ixtépete (Corona Nunez 1960; Galván 1975; Castro Leal and Ochoa 1975), Coyula (Weigand 1987), and at El Grillo (Javier Galván, Personal communication 1993-94). Major changes occurred in burial patterns and mortuary ceramics, some of which suggest ties to central Mexico (Galván 1976; Schöndube and Galván 1978; Aronson 1993), or intervening portions of northwestern México (Jiménez Betts 1988a,1988b;Beekman 1995). Galván places the phase in the Middle Classic on the basis of proposed ceramic and mortuary complex similarities to Teotihuacan, the use of *talud-tablero*, and a single, fifth-century obsidian hydration date (Schöndube and Galván 1978; Galván 1993; personal communications 1993-1994). I have disagreed with this chronological assignment elsewhere (Beekman 1995), a point which becomes important later. In the light of Galván's work,

Weigand (1992a) proposed that a discernible political and cultural boundary existed between the Teuchitlán Tradition and the Teotihuacan satellites in the Atemajac valley, and that the Tradition may have centralized in response to Teotihuacan expansionism.

The two valleys are separated by the Sierra La Primavera, a range of hills up to 2270 meters above sea level and partially covered in pine and oak forest. In relative elevation, the sierra is up to 700 meters above the adjacent floors of the two valleys. It can take a full day or more to hike across the range due to the deep arroyo systems, but the easiest and clearest route is via the La Venta corridor (Figure 4). The present Guadalajara-Ameca highway runs through this pass, and local informants report it to have been a major transportation route and natural gateway (cf. Hirth 1978) early in this century.

Survey and test excavations were carried out in the La Venta corridor and the Sierra La Primavera in 1993 and 1994 in order to examine this boundary between the Teuchitlán and Atemajac valleys, and to link the two valleys in a regional synthesis (Beekman 1996). However, the results to date indicate that the two phenomena, the intrusive El Grillo phase and the presence of a boundary, largely date to different phases (Beekman 1995). Here, I will present evidence for a boundary between the two valleys, and discuss the implications for further research into the political structure of the Teuchitlán Tradition.

### **Expansion and the Establishment of a Boundary**

During the Aqualulco phase (AD 200-400), the Teuchitlán Tradition apparently expanded out of the Teuchitlán valley, but shortly afterwards underwent a contraction as part of the population nucleation into the core. It is during this latter process, which extended into the Teuchitlán I phase, that a boundary was established. In contrast to the numerous circles known from the Teuchitlán valley, only two *guachimontones* are known from the Atemajac valley. These are Bugambillas Abajo, at the eastern end of a rugged route through the Sierra La Primavera, and El Resumidero, at the eastern end of the La Venta corridor, and both sites appear to have associated shaft tomb remains (Galván 1982,1991:318-320;Beekman 1996). The sites are dated to the Tabachines phase in Galván's sequence, and to the Aqualulco phase of Weigand's sequence (Figure 3). They mark the earliest eastward expansion of the Tradition out of the Teuchitlán

valley and, as far as we can tell archaeologically, were contemporaneous with the first fortifications to be described below. The abandonment of these early circles prior to the start of the Teuchitlán I phase corresponds to Weigand's estimated date for the beginning of the population nucleation westwards back towards the core (Weigand 1992b). In contrast, the major sites remaining after this contraction were those with features that mark the defensive "specialization" of the primary settlement of the corridor.

The southern edge of the La Venta corridor consists of broken terrain, with several parallel mesas separated by impressive arroyo systems. There are few positions in this area that would allow observation of, or rapid reaction to, movement in the pass. The Estolanos mesa (PP.33) is one of the shorter, more isolated plateaus, but the extensive surface cover leaves little doubt that the site was occupied full-time. Deep ravines and a wall-and-ditch system<sup>3</sup> provided a highly defensible location, and the adjacent mesas probably supplied the subsistence base. The habitation cover and the backfill from dozens of looted shaft tombs place the site in the Aqualulco and Teuchitlán I phases. Although the site clearly demonstrates a concern for defense during this period, its isolation suggests that it played little strategic role in the formation or maintenance of a boundary.

Another semi-fortified site does occupy a key position. The flat-topped, defensible Mesa El Zacate (PP.45) sits in the center of the pass with a view of the entire corridor and was occupied from the Aqualulco phase through Teuchitlán II. Although sherds and groundstone remains were frequent, the only structural evidence was in the owner's statement that a "corral" had been destroyed during the initial plowing. The mesa has several spurs trailing off in all directions, and a small wall was built across the spur that allows easiest access into the site, while three of the other narrow spurs are cut by small ditches. The wall and ditches are all distributed along the eastern and northern sides of the mesa. It is in plain view of Cerro Tepopote (see below) and more importantly it is in a position to allow a rapid reaction to any movement through the pass.

Marking the northern edge of the pass is Cerro Tepopote, clearly a commanding position, and it is here that the primary evidence for a monitored or controlled boundary occurs. Although most of the mountain was virtually uninhabited, the edge bordering the pass was the major

architectural and population concentration for the Classic period in the corridor. Ranging from 90-150 meters up the mountain is the Southwestern Tepopote Complex (PP.48,50,52), the second largest site we have discovered (Figure 5). It consists of nearly 100 mounds, terraces, and connecting walkways scattered across two separate ridges, as well as two well-defined circles of the Teuchitlán Tradition and a possible third too heavily damaged by looting to distinguish without excavation.<sup>4</sup> Access from below is very steep and partially blocked by the stone escarpment, while a 250 meter long wall linking up with natural ravines even protects the site against intrusions from the interior of the mountain.

The site itself has a view not only of the western half of the La Venta corridor, but also deep into the Teuchitlán valley, including approximately one third of the Teuchitlán core settlement area. Even more interesting from a strategic perspective is its view of a second corridor at the southeastern edge of the Teuchitlán valley, near the town of Navajas. Several clusters of small semi-circles of stone directly above the occupational area may have served as lookout positions and/or windbreaks for smoke signalling to the core or the Navajas corridor. Artifact cover here is low overall (partly because it cannot be plowed),<sup>5</sup> but two distinct sheet middens are associated with the largest architectural concentrations. Surface and excavated ceramics pertain equally to the Ahualulco and to Teuchitlán I phases.

Evidence indicates that the Southwestern Tepopote Complex was intended to observe traffic through the pass from a defensively strong location and suggests participation in a broader system working in concert to control access to the core. The presence of discernible refuse zones, residential structures, and the site's strategic position above the La Venta corridor, argue for a full-time occupation rather than a temporary place of refuge for farmers living below.

At the eastern edge of this mountain, 100-150 meters above the pass, is Peñol de Tepopote (PP.7), the largest site located to date by our survey and one with an impressive view deep into both the Atemajac and Teuchitlán valleys (Figure 6). It consists of over 120 constructions within 8 hectares, surrounded by a combination of sheer rock faces and stone walls. Several *lama y bordo* style agricultural terraces (Spores 1969) within the walls suggest a degree of self-sufficiency among the inhabitants of the site that argues for full-time occupation. Surface and excavated ceramics indicate occupation of the site during the Ahualulco and Teuchitlán I

phases, followed by a substantial increase of material in the Teuchitlán II phase.

This temporal pattern is duplicated in the architecture, in that a probable *guachimontón* and other apparently early platforms have suffered an overlay of distinct Epiclassic architecture. These later structures, nicknamed *corrales*, are double-walled foundations for a perishable superstructure, almost certainly residential, and are associated with Galván's Atemajac complex. Field research has also documented the *corrales* at Bugambilias Arriba in the Atemajac valley (Galván 1982), our PP.16 in the La Venta corridor (Beekman 1996), and Santa Quiteria (Weigand 1985:81) and Las Pilas in the Teuchitlán valley. Several, but not all, of these sites are located on high ground, and none are located within the Teuchitlán settlement core around the Ciénaga La Vega. The *corrales* and their ceramic complex are limited to the contemporaneous Teuchitlán II and Atemajac phases in the region under discussion (approximately A.D.700-900 [Weigand 1979; Beekman 1995]). However, very close parallels can be found in many locations in the north, in northern Jalisco and parts of Zacatecas, in both earlier and later contexts (Gamio 1921:43-44, Figure 69; Hers 1989:58,132, Figure 19; Foster 1978; Mozzillo 1990: Figure 4; possibly Cabrero G. 1989:145,165, Figure 65).

The survey and excavation results suggest that the La Venta corridor to the east of the Teuchitlán core was a closely observed communication route during the Aqualulco/Teuchitlán I phases, principally through the Southwestern Tepopote Complex and the Peñol de Tepopote. In addition, the western and northwestern passes into the Teuchitlán valley were similarly monitored during this period from the hilltop site of Cerro Pipiole and the walled site of Llano Grande (Weigand 1985:90;1992b:13-14) (Figure 2). Aside from Cerro Pipiole, which had an earlier El Arenal phase (300 B.C.-200 A.D.) component, these sites all appear to have been founded in the Aqualulco phase, and then left isolated by the population nucleation into the core. The circles in these sites correspond to the lowest tier in Weigand's structure hierarchy (1992b: Figure 15a; Ohnerson and Varien, this issue), and appear to be small, special purpose sites that are unlikely to have formed the nuclei of independent polities in relation to the core region.

To judge from the presence of the fortified sites and the *guachimontones*, and their strategic placement with views of the other pass and the Teuchitlán core, these sites formed an integrated system designed to monitor traffic entering (or leaving) the Teuchitlán valley. The

hypothesized defensive system in the Teuchitlán valley has some similarities to that of the Monte Albán polity in the Valley of Oaxaca, where there appear to have been a number of defensive sites distributed around and within the valley (Elam 1989) in a similar, if messier and less conclusive, pattern (but see also Redmond 1983). In the Jalisco case, there are at least three routes into the Teuchitlán valley with maintained fortifications or "control sites"- the La Venta, Pipiole, and Llano Grande corridors. The pass near Navajas may be a fourth example, as the hills to either side have not yet been explored, and the fortified *guachimontón* site of El Molino is beyond Navajas along the route to Lake Chapala. It should be emphasized that the only significant center in a hilltop location within the area bounded by these sites is the central *Guachimontón* site itself (Ohnersorgen and Varien, this issue).

The boundary evidence supports the proposition that the Teuchitlán core region underwent a unification of its decision-making hierarchy, probably in late Ahualulco and Teuchitlán I times, that established a Unitary, Territorial form of political administration. A similar conclusion is implied by the extensive, grid-planned *chinampa* systems at Magdalena and Estanzuela argued to date to the Classic period (Weigand 1993), which suggest that some subsistence activities were being organized at a high level (cf. Parsons 1976). Preliminary analyses of the obsidian distribution network within the Teuchitlán valley found more evidence for relatively independent subsystems centered around the larger centers (Spence, et al. 1987,1993), but future studies should focus on a variety of archaeological materials.

The relationship between the core and those *guachimontones* that have been identified elsewhere in Jalisco (Galván 1982; Beekman 1996; Joseph Mountjoy, Personal communication 1994), in Nayarit (Weigand 1992b), Colima (Rosalio Serna 1991), Zacatecas (Cabrero García 1989), Guanajuato (Sánchez Correa and Marmolejo Morales 1989), and Querétaro (Nalda 1987:181), needs clarification. The common denominator among these sites appears to be an occupation in the Teuchitlán I phase (though there are indications of slightly earlier or later dates), the possession of small versions of the *guachimontón* architecture, and occasionally the presence of small amounts of Pseudo-Cloisonne ceramics (Kelley 1971:771;Cabrero García 1989:157; Sánchez Correa and Marmolejo Morales 1989:272). While the origins and significance of Pseudo-Cloisonne ceramics are still debated (J. Charles Kelley, Personal communication 1994), their

comparatively greater frequency in the core area strongly suggests that the region was a major manufacturer and participant in whatever sphere of interaction is invoked to explain Pseudo-Cloisonne distribution (e.g. Lumholtz 1903:II:460-462,Pl.13-15;Kelley 1974:22-24;Holién 1977:220-234,325-326). It is these regional differences that can enlighten us further.

The Teuchitlán Tradition has been described as having a core-periphery spatial pattern (Weigand 1985:74), and this is reflected in a number of distinctions between the *guachimontones* in the Teuchitlán valley and those in surrounding regions. The circles in the central valley show a considerably greater size range, are better constructed, much greater in number, and only in the core are they accompanied by ballcourts (Weigand 1985,1991). The circles are also the only identified form of civic-ceremonial architecture in the central valley until the Teuchitlan II phase, while the more distant examples sometimes appear in the same site with other forms of public architecture, though often spatially separated (e.g.Kelley 1971:770-774; Sánchez Correa and Marmolejo Morales 1989:Figs.2,4). Whereas centers in highland Jalisco with this form of architecture are typically found on flatlands or lower piedmont, those in what we refer to as the periphery are often found in "commanding positions" (e.g. Cabrero García 1989; Joseph Mountjoy, Personal communication 1994) over what are, and probably were, communication routes. The Teuchitlán lake basin also has a vastly richer and more differentiated resource base than the peripheral regions, and only here is there evidence for highly organized intensive agriculture associated with *guachimontón* sites (Weigand 1985,1993). Finally, the evidence for a direct relationship between the Teuchitlán Tradition and the largely contemporaneous shaft tombs is difficult to deny for the core valley (Von Winning and Hammer 1972:58-61,69-71; Weigand 1985,1992b; López and Ramos 1994; Ramos and López, this issue), but elsewhere the connection between the two elements seems weak (e.g.Joseph Mountjoy, Personal communication 1994;but see Cabrero 1989:165), and they may well represent separate developments or radiations. For these reasons, I find the use of the terms core and periphery acceptable and useful, without any *a priori* assumptions that a dependency relationship existed between them.

The distinctions enumerated above suggest an interpretative problem similar to that of other putative macro-regional polities in Mesoamerica (Tollan, Teotihuacan, etc.). However, the artifactual and architectural evidence often cited as indicating the presence of those central

Mexican centers has been repeatedly shown to have had extraordinarily wide temporal distributions in Mesoamerica (e.g. Braniff 1972; Gendrop 1984; Galván 1991:51-63). Unlike the simple, pan-Mesoamerican *talud-tablero* facade, the *guachimontón* architectural form is far too elaborate and clearly embedded in ritual to be dismissed. Yet the occasional integration of apparently local architectural elements into the overall concentric pattern, and co-occurrence of other forms of architecture in some of these peripheral sites (Cabrero G. 1989:139,142,164; Sánchez Correa and Marmolejo Morales 1989:Figures 2,4; Rosalio Serna 1991:18) suggests local adoption of the *guachimontón* rather than its external imposition. But adoption for what purpose?

Algaze (1993) argues that a core-periphery pattern such as that described earlier occurs when pristine states expand in search of particular resources. While it would not be appropriate to follow Algaze's model too closely, access to rare or common resources could be suggested (Weigand 1985,1992b) for the expansion of the Teuchitlán Tradition to the north (Chalchihuites mines [Weigand 1968]), south (Sayula salt industry [Weigand 1990;Valdez, et al. this issue]), west (presumably coastal products), and east (possibly the Sierra Gorda cinnabar mines, or the Teotihuacan economic sphere [Secretaria de Patrimonio Nacional 1970]) (Figure 1). This does not imply that there was an attempt to gain direct control of the resources themselves, but the distribution and local flavor of the peripheral *guachimontones* suggests a strategy to secure trade routes through the aid of local elites.

Assuming present chronological interpretations hold, I propose that the distant *guachimontones* may represent local elites who have adopted the architecture and its accompanying ceremonialism through participation in a broader economic network. Such a relationship between core and periphery would not have entailed any direct administration by the core, which is likely to have exerted authority primarily through its position at the peak of the ceremonial hierarchy. With this proposal, largely speculative, we have returned to the model presented early in this paper.

While the Teuchitlán Tradition core is posited to have had a Unitary, Territorial political structure, the periphery follows more closely the expected pattern of Segmentary, Hegemonic administration. Significantly, Southall (1988:72,80) notes that the larger, historically known Segmentary states tend to have a Unitary core region (as opposed to a site), where the central

ruler exercises considerably more direct control over local matters, surrounded by a Segmentary zone where the ruler has a different kind of authority. Some scholars working on controlled boundaries elsewhere have also come to the conclusion that boundaries mark this distinction between administration and authority (e.g. Lattimore 1940:429-437; Mattingly 1992; Whittaker 1994:Chs.2,3), which is, of course, what boundaries do in our own era. These findings further emphasize that political structure needs to be discussed in spatial terms, rather than classifying a given polity as one type or another.

### **Decline of the Boundary and the Teuchitlan Tradition**

The dissolution of the Teuchitlán Tradition took place in the Epiclassic, during the Teuchitlán II phase (A.D. 700-900). Cerro Pipiole, Llano Grande, and the Southwestern Tepopote Complex are all abandoned by the onset of the phase, and by its end we see the complete cessation of activities in the remaining ceremonial circles of the Teuchitlán Tradition (Weigand 1985:90; 1990). During the Teuchitlán II phase, the sites of Mesa El Zacate and Peñol de Tepopote adopt the Atemajac complex ceramics, which I argued to have strong ties to northern Jalisco and Zacatecas, and the new residential architecture appears at Peñol de Tepopote. What this means in terms of the cultural identity of the people living there remains unclear. If these sites in the corridor were still affiliated with the shrinking core, visual contact with the Navajas corridor to the south was no longer emphasized. However, since all other signs point to a profound break with the previous phase, I find it more likely that the boundary had collapsed and these sites may have been re-occupied by other, intruding, populations (Beekman 1995).

The Teuchitlán Tradition collapse is complicated further by the recent re-evaluation of the chronology for the El Grillo complex, which was found to be almost certainly contemporaneous with the Atemajac complex and Weigand's Teuchitlán II phase (Beekman 1995) (Figure 3). Previously, there had been disagreement over whether the materials pertained to a Middle Classic expansion by Teotihuacan into West Mexico (Corona Nunez 1960; Galván 1993), or an Epiclassic/Early Postclassic development with unspecified links to central Mexico (Castro-Leal and Ochoa 1975). With the vastly increased database for West and North Mexico, it now seems

reasonably secure that the El Grillo phase pertains to the Epiclassic. The signal box-U-shaped architecture associated with the complex (such as at Santa Cruz de Bárcenas [Weigand 1990]) and many elements of the ceramic complex show several parallels to the Bajío/Los Altos region, which underwent some kind of local expansion at this time. The Atemajac complex, though originating in northern Jalisco and Zacatecas, was probably moving into the Teuchitlán core region as part of the same process. Hence, there appear to have been two intrusive, but distinct, complexes with northern and eastern origins entering the study area as the Teuchitlán core polity was collapsing, and there appears to have been a spatial division within the core valley (Beekman 1995).

This realignment of the central Jalisco chronological sequences is also significant because the boundary discussed above is now contemporaneous with Galván's Tabachines phase. During this time there is little settlement in the Atemajac valley (Galván 1991:205-214), thereby identifying the valley as peripheral to the social, economic, and political processes taking place to the west in the Teuchitlán core. This further emphasizes that the establishment of fortifications around the Teuchitlán valley is as closely linked to the delimitation of political territory as it is to actual military defense against an exterior force, these being the two main reasons described earlier as encouraging the formation of controlled boundaries.

## **Conclusions**

It is time to discard the very dated characterization of the west Mexican Classic period political landscape as composed of simple "Enduring Villages" (Borhegyi 1964) owing any signs of complexity to contact with central Mexico. The work of various archaeologists in west Mexico since the 1970s has emphasized the complexity of the region's indigenous societies, among which the Teuchitlán Tradition stands out due to its exotic and clearly regional nature. The realignment of the two central Jalisco sequences shows that the process of centralization of the Tradition was not in response to the hostile expansionism of Teotihuacan (Weigand 1985,1992a), but appears to have been a strictly west Mexican phenomenon.

The study of the La Venta corridor provides evidence of a centralized boundary monitoring strategy carried out by the polity based in the Teuchitlán valley during part of the

Ahualulco and Teuchitlán I phases (probably A.D.300-600). This boundary network was abandoned prior to the Teuchitlán II phase and the gradual decline of the Teuchitlán Tradition core. By focusing upon the boundary itself through an approach that relates political boundaries to political models, I have drawn certain conclusions:

- 1) a Unitary, Territorial political structure probably existed for the core valley of the Teuchitlán Tradition during its peak in the Early/Middle Classic.
- 2) If the core exerted any authority over the other West Mexican sites with *guachimontones*, then it was probably related more to the pattern of the Segmentary state, or Hegemonic authority. The relationship between the core and periphery may reflect an effort to obtain access to the trade routes for certain localized resources.

Studying the boundaries of a polity is not the key to interpreting prehistoric political structure, but in conjunction with other evidence, it has allowed certain broad proposals regarding political administration in the Teuchitlán Tradition. It must be emphasized, however, that I have been discussing general patterns of political administration, some of which occur in societies that differ greatly in other social and economic aspects (Southall 1988). Further testing and refinement of the propositions made here will need to focus particularly upon chronology, and both local and long-distance economies and how these may or may not have been integrated into the higher political structure. This will also serve to better tie the region into the rest of northern and central Mesoamerica, and allow us to discuss the Tradition with more reference to neighboring societies than has hitherto been done. Whatever the Teuchitlán Tradition's position relative to other powers in ancient Mesoamerica, in west Mexico it was a political and social phenomenon of the first magnitude and will require both extensive and intensive research.

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## Endnotes

1. We are well aware that political, economic and social boundaries need not coincide (e.g. Marcus 1983; Hodder 1977) and are here referring specifically to the limits of political administration.
2. Southall (1988) and Hassig (1988, 1992) have applied each of these models to more and less complex societies. The Segmentary State model begins to shed its kinship and ceremonial aspects and resemble Luttwak's Hegemonic structure even more closely as it is applied to larger polities. See in particular Southall (1988:69) on its application to the Rajputs and the Mughals, where the links to Luttwak's model become obvious.
3. Although the wall and ditch, here as in other sites, can only be dated to the total temporal span of the site in which they occur, the placement of all of these sites in locations with difficult access argues for a defensive orientation from their foundation.
4. These are clearly the same variety as those represented in architectural models looted from the shaft tombs (e.g. Winning and Hammer 1972: Figures 39, 41, 43).
5. The region has a relatively low ceramic density, which may be due to the extensive use of gourds for utilitarian purposes, a practice still followed in rural areas. Therefore, a low ceramic density cannot confidently be used to postulate a part-time occupation.