

with the different institutions of political succession that Maya kingdoms deployed.

Old Kingdom Egypt, cogently evaluated by Ellen Morris, lasted 800 years and was more resilient than fragile. Experimentation was displayed in the development of the royal funerary cult beginning in the First Dynasty, with significant changes in sacrificial practices associated with the establishment of divine rulership. Pharaonic governments periodically responded effectively to discontent when tyrannical rule became too burdensome. This was not always the case, and course correction did not work in the First Intermediate period, but fragility was not a constant dynamic.

Timothy Pauketat has long advocated models of the rapid rise and collapse of Cahokia, in Illinois, with the implications of fragility relevant to the comparative design of this book. Here, he compares Cahokia with Chaco and reviews the arguments regarding the possible political and social institutions fostering their trajectories. He makes the intriguing suggestion that the fomenters of social complexity in these two cases may have known about each other, which is plausible in light of the possibility that societies of the American Southwest knew about Mesoamerican states, much farther away.

Like North American societies, the Indus civilization does not have textual history. Cameron Petrie's fine-grained review capably marshals archaeological evidence to show that Indus cities were integrated with a large and residentially fluid population of towns, villages, and hamlets in ways that led to politics characterized by constant negotiations among diverse groups.

Peter Robertshaw's study of complex societies in Africa is a welcome insistence that this vast continent be brought into the comparative discussion of global antiquity. The politics in these instances are much like those of other parts of the world, and the data show both fragility and resilience at work.

Miriam Stark's magisterial synthesis of historical and archaeological evidence of Khmer civilization in southeast Asia underscores how intricate the politics of power are shown to be when texts are available. Fragility is not a new theme regarding charismatic rulership here, but Stark effectively situates this theme within an archaeological perspective.

Yoffee and Andrea Seri argue that early Mesopotamian states and cities were inherently fragile. Cities were more resilient than states, embedded as they normally were in populated countryside with social and political institutions binding them together. But those populations also resisted. The arresting example of the demolition of the ziggurat at Uruk challenges the enduring model of the importance of temple governance in this cradle of urbanism.

This is a book for our times, worth reflecting on as we think about how archaeology can contribute to charting paths forward.

An Essay on Political Economies in Prehistory. TIMOTHY EARLE. 2019. Eliot Werner Publications, Clinton, New York. 56 pp. \$17.95 (paperback), ISBN 9783774941151.

Reviewed by Patrick V. Kirch, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Timothy Earle, emeritus professor of anthropology at Northwestern University, has been a leading figure in North American processual archaeology for four decades, contributing significantly to our understanding of the evolution of chiefdom-type societies in Hawai'i, the Andes, and Europe. This succinct essay (a mere 49 pages) derives from advanced seminars that Earle presented to audiences in Germany and Sweden in 2015, in which he synopsized his fundamental views regarding political economies in prehistory. Although brief, the work provides a valuable distillation of the thinking of a major theoretician of prehistoric archaeology that will be especially useful in university courses on archaeological theory.

In his five-page introduction, Earle outlines his intellectual debt to Karl Marx, Karl Polanyi, and the "substantivist" school of economic anthropology. This no doubt derives partly from Earle's early mentoring by Marshall Sahlins, whom he also credits for shaping his thinking about domestic modes of production. For Earle, economies are foundational for understanding the development of human societies (p. 7). In his efforts to understand ancient political economies, Earle applies Marx's idea of modes of production. He is especially interested in what he calls bottlenecks in the flows of resources through the social system. These bottlenecks are "constriction points in commodity chains that offer an aspiring leader the opportunity to limit access, thus creating ownership over resources, technologies, or knowledge" (p. 11).

In a brief section titled "Channelling Economic Sectors," Earle outlines a heuristic typology of four economic sectors: the subsistence economy, the social economy, the political economy, and the ritual economy. Although Earle claims that this is an analytical device to help dissect and understand the overall "general economy," the distinctions seem a bit forced and actually contradict Earle's earlier substantivist point that economic activities are, in fact, deeply embedded within the social structure.

The real meat of this essay is contained within the next two sections, “Staple-Based Political Economies” and “Wealth-Based Political Economies.” This dichotomy between staple- and wealth-based political economies is one that Earle introduced in 1985 with Terence d’Altroy in an influential article on the Inka political economy (*Current Anthropology* 26:187–206) and continues to draw from. The fundamental notion here is that ancient societies either based their political economies on the control of the subsistence sector by exploiting bottlenecks created through the control of land (property rights) and labor or “emerged based on control over prestige goods economies” with bottlenecks “in the commodity chains of prestige goods, weapons, and other highly valued objects” (p. 31).

As in his past writings, Earle draws on case studies from Hawai‘i, the Andes, and Bronze Age Europe to elucidate the contrasts he sees between these two political economies. While the distinction was certainly insightful in 1985 and has served Earle well over the years, this rigid dichotomy may have outlived its usefulness. It would seem that even Earle has begun to question how well the dichotomy of staple-based and wealth-based economies holds up, for he begins his discussion of the latter type with a short digression on the importance of feathered wealth items (capets, cloaks, and helmets) among the Hawaiian chiefs, even though he continues to maintain that the Hawaiian archaic states were exemplars of wealth-based economies.

Earle’s section on the Hawaiian Island states continues to place emphasis chiefly on control of land-escapable capital intensification of production, especially of irrigated taro-pond field systems, following from his early research on the island of Kaua‘i, where irrigation was indeed dominant. In my view, however, he continues to underplay the role of intensive dryland, rain-fed agriculture on the younger islands of Hawai‘i and Maui. These vast field systems, which were much more labor-intensive and prone to environmental perturbations such as drought, offered far greater opportunities for powerful and aggressive chiefs to exert control over bottlenecks in the highly productive irrigation systems of the westerly (and geologically older) islands. Moreover, it was in the eastern islands of Hawai‘i and Maui where the chiefs increasingly exercised control over prized bird feathers and the production of elite featherwork to manipulate the social hierarchy. In essence, as the Hawaiian archaic states emerged from complex chiefdoms in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, a wealth-based economy was grafted onto the underlying staple-based economy. Whether the political economy of

European-contact-era Hawai‘i at the end of the eighteenth century can truly be called a model of a staple-based political economy is, in fact, questionable. It was a hybrid economy in which control of *both* staples and prestige goods was equally important.

Such questions aside, Earle provides in this little booklet a succinct and useful overview of his thinking about ancient political economies. In the one-and-a-half-page conclusion, he also points out that archaeologists have much to contribute to our understanding of the rise of autocracy and inequality in the modern world.

The Archaeology of Villages in Eastern North America. JENNIFER BIRCH and VICTOR D. THOMPSON, editors. 2018. University Press of Florida, Gainesville. xvii + 211 pp. \$80.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-68340-046-2.

Reviewed by Alison E. Rautman, Michigan State University

“Village life seems to usher in a new way of conceiving the world.” Charles Cobb’s concluding thoughts on this volume (p. 198) speak to the heart of the matter—why we should care about the origins and operation of apparently humble village settlements in the archaeological record. In fact, (I believe) the development of village life represents a worldwide “event” equally significant as, if not more significant than, the emergence of social and political inequality. This volume contributes to the growing body of research that specifically considers the concepts of villages and village communities in the archaeological past.

These research essays investigate how people began, maintained, and came to depend on the specific sorts of social interactions that we find in residential village communities. Here, the editors define *village* very narrowly as a coresidential community: a restricted geographic space where people lived and engaged in face-to-face interactions with one another (p. 1). However, the main topic of interest is how social relationships develop and are expressed in villages—specifically, relationships of power. The editors ask how power works in basically nonhierarchical (or heterarchical) social contexts, how power differences are created and manifested both within and between villages, and how power relations change with changing circumstances over time. The case studies investigate the range of variation in the way that people in villages created and maintained a sense of community, how community life is to be