

## Society for American Archaeology

---

Opportunities for Advancement: Intra-Community Power Contests in the Midst of Political Decentralization in Terminal Classic Southeastern Mesoamerica

Author(s): Patricia Urban and Edward Schortman

Source: *Latin American Antiquity*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Sep., 2004), pp. 251-272

Published by: [Society for American Archaeology](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4141574>

Accessed: 29/01/2011 10:22

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=sam>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*Society for American Archaeology* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Latin American Antiquity*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT:  
INTRA-COMMUNITY POWER CONTESTS IN THE MIDST  
OF POLITICAL DECENTRALIZATION IN TERMINAL CLASSIC  
SOUTHEASTERN MESOAMERICA**

Patricia Urban and Edward Schortman

*Archaeologists traditionally investigate the emergence of complex sociopolitical formations at micro- and macroscales. As fruitful as these analyses have been, they ignore insights garnered from studying how the diverse members of individual communities contested for power and material resources during periods when former political capitals were in decline. Such volatile circumstances provide ample opportunities for those seeking power to experiment with novel political forms while their would-be subordinates maneuver to undermine these overweening ambitions. Site 128 in the Naco Valley, northwestern Honduras, witnessed these struggles during the Terminal Classic. Taking advantage of the waning power of the Naco Valley's Late Classic rulers at La Sierra, magnates in this small community competed for control over clients and their labor. The resulting political configuration pitted corporate institutions against individual aggrandizers, each using a limited suite of valuable resources to capture the loyalty and labor of supporters. The inability of one faction to vanquish the other created an unstable situation ultimately undermined by unresolved tensions. Though studies of political decline usually highlight the falls of dynasties, there is much to be gained by studying those who scrambled, with varying success, to cobble together sociopolitical structures in the shadows of former states.*

*Los arqueólogos han investigado el desarrollo de la jerarquía política a los niveles de la casa y de la región. Aunque estos análisis han sido fructuosos, no se toman en cuenta lo que se puede aprender estudiando como los miembros de comunidades lucharon para poder y recursos durante las épocas cuando los capitales políticos se habían caído. Tales circunstancias volátiles proporcionan las oportunidades para aquellos quienes están buscando poder, pueden experimentar con nuevas formas políticas mientras sus clientes luchan en contra de estas ambiciones. El Sitio 128 en el Valle de Naco, Honduras, atestiguó a estas luchas durante el Clásico Terminal. Aprovechándose de la disminución del poder de los líderes de La Sierra durante el Clásico Tardío, los líderes en este pueblo pelearon para controlar las personas y su labor. En la nueva configuración política, instituciones colectivas se peleaban contra individuos poderosos, ambos utilizando recursos limitados para agarrar lealtad y labor. La inhabilidad que una facción tenía para vencer a las otras creó una situación inestable. Aunque las épocas de decadencia política no llaman mucha la atención a los arqueólogos, hay mucho que se ganará estudiando a los que intentaron a crear estructuras sociopolíticas en las sombras de los estados anteriores.*

**A**rchaeological interest in sociopolitical forms and change processes is enduring. In dealing with this multifaceted domain, investigators tend to focus on specific aspects. Two components that have exercised a perennial fascination for archaeologists are political centralization, the extent to which power is concentrated in a few hands; and inequality, the degree to which relations among social groups are hierarchically

structured (Feinman and Neitzel 1984; McGuire 1983; Paynter 1989). Independent or correlated shifts in expressions of these variables are often addressed at the level of entire polities or even inter-societal interaction networks (e.g., Blanton and Feinman 1984; Upham 1982; see papers in Chase-Dunn and Hall 1991; Kardulias 1999; Peregrine and Feinman 1996; Schortman and Urban 1992). Such macroscale perspectives model changes in

**Patricia Urban** ■ Department of Anthropology, Kenyon College, Gambier, OH, 43022 (urban@kenyon.edu)

**Edward Schortman** ■ Department of Anthropology, Kenyon College, Gambier, OH, 43022 (schortma@kenyon.edu)

political complexity as they are expressed over long time spans and at extensive spatial scales. Alternatively, there are those who concentrate on how households are articulated within regional and interregional political frameworks (Bermann 1997; Blanton 1995; see papers in Santley and Hirth 1993; Schwartz and Falconer 1994; Wilk and Ashmore 1988). Here, attention centers on the ways in which the structure of daily life, including power relations, within these basic co-residential, cooperative units reflect processes operating at polity and interpolity levels (e.g., Sheets 1992, 2000, 2002). There is even talk of how household resistance to elite decrees may help shape the very political structures in which these supposedly humble social units are embedded (Gailey 1987; Joyce et al. 2001).

Investigators working from opposite ends of the spatial spectrum emphasize heterogeneity in the interests of social factions, the resources over which they compete, and the success with which these assets are deployed in efforts to achieve and resist domination (Ashmore 1988; Blanton 1995; Smith 1993; Stein 1994, 1998). Such work exposes a messy reality in which even the most mundane decisions made by individuals, such as choosing where to live and what occupation(s) to pursue, are informed by principles operating at spatial scales ranging from the intimate to the interregional.

Selecting a point of entry into the study of ancient sociopolitical structures and processes is, therefore, neither easy nor obvious. In general, analyses of regional and interregional patterns are amenable to top-down perspectives stressing the undeniable importance of paramount demands in defining the social, political, and economic options available to their client populations. Coming at the topic from the household level usually leads to considerations of how non-elites cope with these constraints, creatively meeting imposed requirements for surpluses and labor while preserving some level of local autonomy (Hagstrum 2001; Sheets 1992, 2000, 2002; Spielmann 2002).

Such complementary viewpoints yield valuable insights but often ignore two facets of the problem. First, until very recently, there has been little systematic attention paid to communities, those settlements composed of multiple households where macro- and microscale political processes intersect (Canuto 2004). In many hierarchically organized societies, paramount rulers do not meddle directly

in the lives of their subordinates. Instead, they work through agents embedded within pre-existing communities (Bermann 1997; Marcus 1993, 1998). Elevating parochial leaders to state functionaries can exacerbate intra-community sociopolitical differentiation and inequality even as such promotions create tensions born of conflicting loyalties between local constituents and distant lords. Similarly, non-elites maintain important social relations with peers residing beyond their immediate households. These horizontal ties, and the social groups they engender, cover varying spatial extents but are most intense and clearly delineated with their immediate neighbors. The communities resulting from these processes are, therefore, volatile groups shaped by hierarchical and heterarchical forces (Canuto 2004; see papers in Canuto and Yaeger 2000).

Second, studies of sociopolitical complexity and its consequences, regardless of scale, consistently focus on periods when political centralization and inequality are increasing. Decidedly less interest has been shown in the ways in which householders and minor nobility maneuver to take advantage of opportunities presented by the declining fortunes of paramounds (but see Fash 1991; Foias and Bishop 1997; Graffam 1992; Marcus 1993, 1998; Webster et al. 2000). The study of communities offers great potential for addressing this issue. Communities frequently survive the demise of the polities that formerly encompassed them (e.g., Graffam 1992; Marcus 1993, 1998). Variations in the power and wealth of their members provide different vantage points from which individuals assess emergent opportunities for aggrandizement and can act on those realizations. At the same time, the dense network of interpersonal ties uniting community participants of every rank encourages involvement of all members in the creation of novel political and economic relations. Community responses to political and economic shifts are the products of negotiations among people with diverse backgrounds, interests, and abilities. The resulting structures are never simple and need not be stable. This is especially the case when paramount rule is in decline and restrictions imposed from above on the organization of power at the local level are relaxed. Community studies, therefore, can yield insights into the creative ways people cope with novel political landscapes and the opportunities they provide.

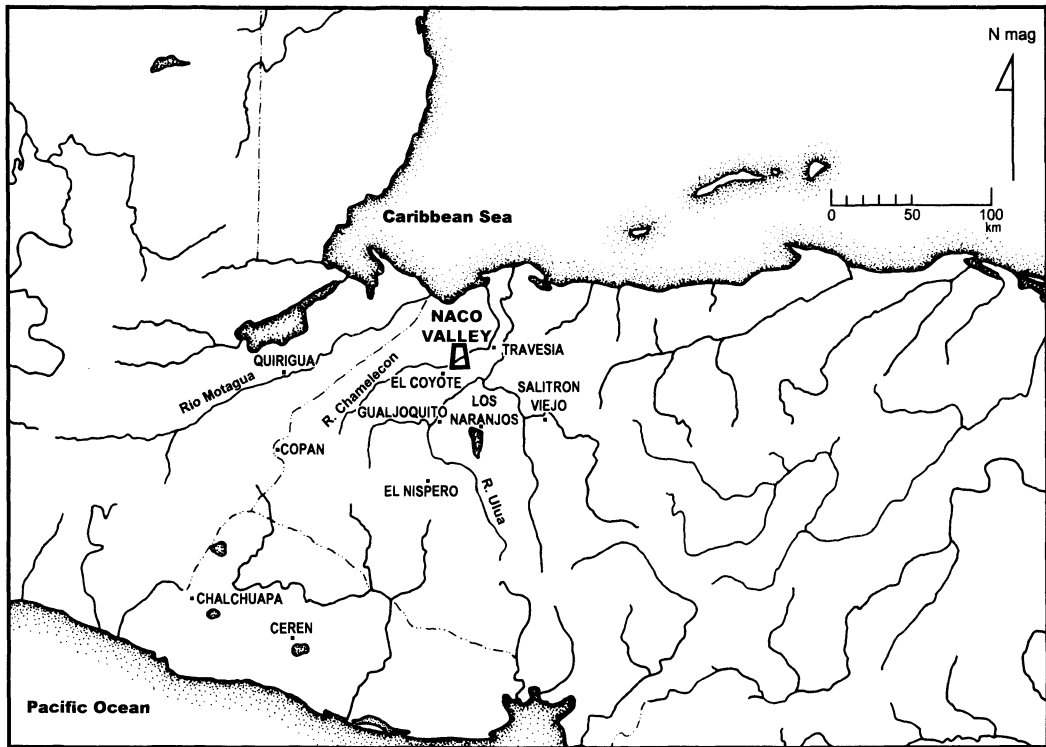


Figure 1. Map of Southeastern Mesoamerica showing the locations of La Sierra and the Naco Valley.

Research conducted at Site 128 in the Naco Valley, northwestern Honduras, is used to examine the ways in which processes of political centralization and inequality articulated in this specific community (Figure 1). Site 128 was occupied from the Middle Preclassic (1000–400 B.C.) through the Late Postclassic (A.D. 1300–1550). Its demographic and political florescence, however, coincides with the Terminal Classic (A.D. 900–1100) waning of centralized power at La Sierra, 5 km southeast of Site 128 and the Late Classic (A.D. 600–900) capital of the Naco Valley. The surge of Terminal Classic construction and economic activity at Site 128 suggests that the decline of the La Sierra polity was not mourned by all its former members. In order to understand this reaction and specify its parameters, we focus on how strategies promoting political centralization and inequality were advanced at the settlement and in its environs, the manner in which these strategies were funded (D’Altroy and Earle 1985), and tensions resulting from the above processes.

### Setting

Site 128 is located in the northwest corner of the Naco Valley, a basin containing approximately 96 km<sup>2</sup> of flat to rolling terrain, 100–200 m asl. (Figure 2). The valley is hemmed in by the steep ascents of the Sierra de Omoa and watered by the southwest-northeast trending Río Chamelecon. Soils in the settlement’s immediate vicinity are deep and moderately fertile, products of centuries of alluviation from the Río San Bartolo, ca. 150 m northeast of the site (Anderson 1994; Douglass 2002). Proximity to perennial water and arable land encouraged early and persistent settlement at Site 128. Scattered remains indicate diffuse occupation on this spot during the Middle Preclassic and, again, throughout the Early Classic (A.D. 400–600). Site 128’s population grew during the Late Classic, though no large-scale building efforts were initiated then. This trend matches the general pattern noted for much of the contemporary Naco Valley where the founding of new settlements and expansion in existing ones point to marked demographic

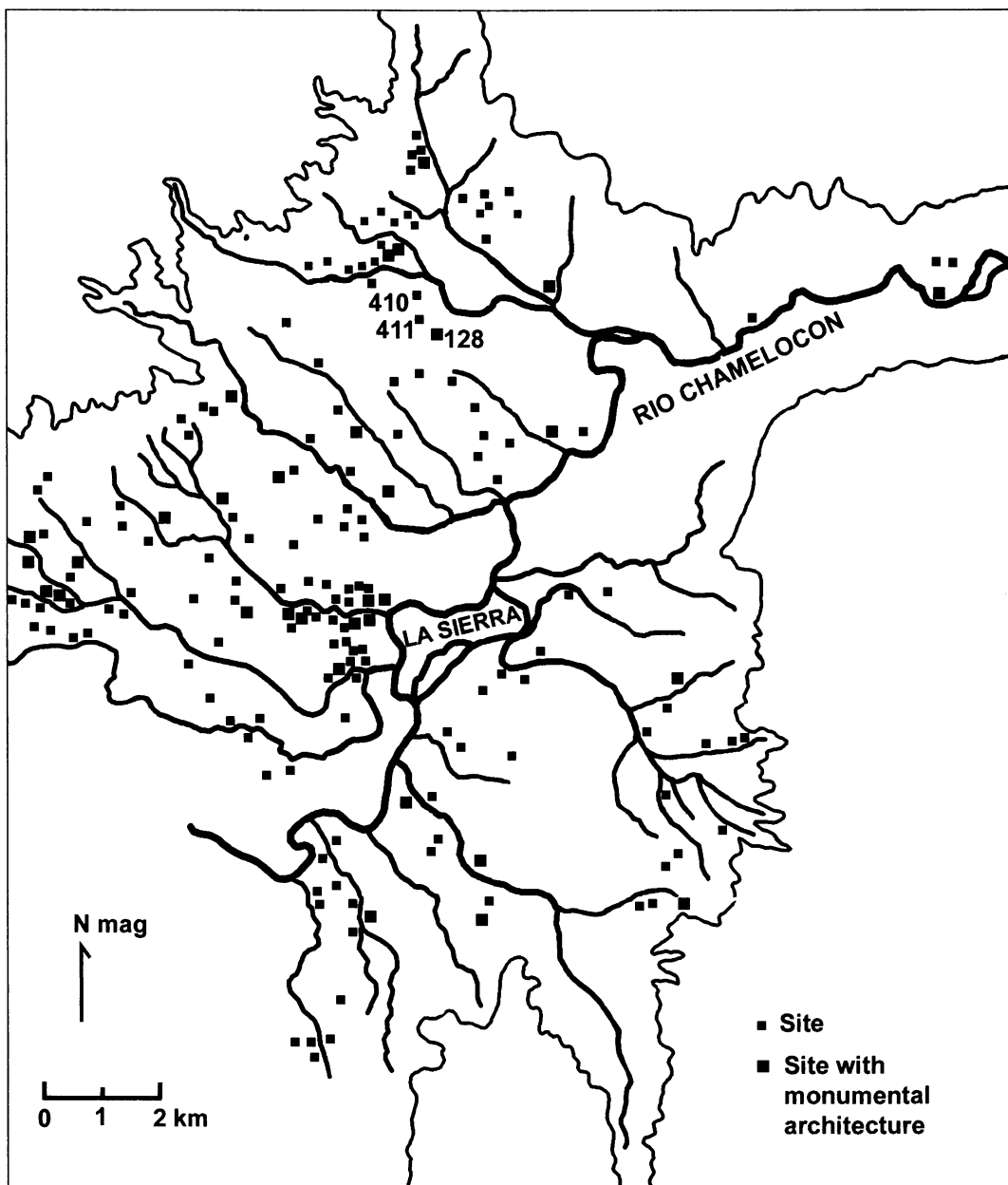


Figure 2. Map of the Naco Valley showing the locations of Site 128 and settlements in its immediate hinterland (after Ross 1997).

increases contemporary with political centralization at La Sierra.

The subsequent Terminal Classic witnessed a significant drop in La Sierra's political preeminence, attested to by the dismantling of major constructions in the capital's core. Though La Sierra remained a significant population and economic center, its leaders experienced marked declines in

their ability to control valley political and economic processes by this time. The Terminal Classic at Site 128, on the other hand, was a period of expansion. All 28 of the center's extant structures reached their final forms. Included in this number are six monumental edifices, platforms standing at least 1.5 m high, most of which are arranged in two adjoining patio groups on the eastern site margin (Figure 3).

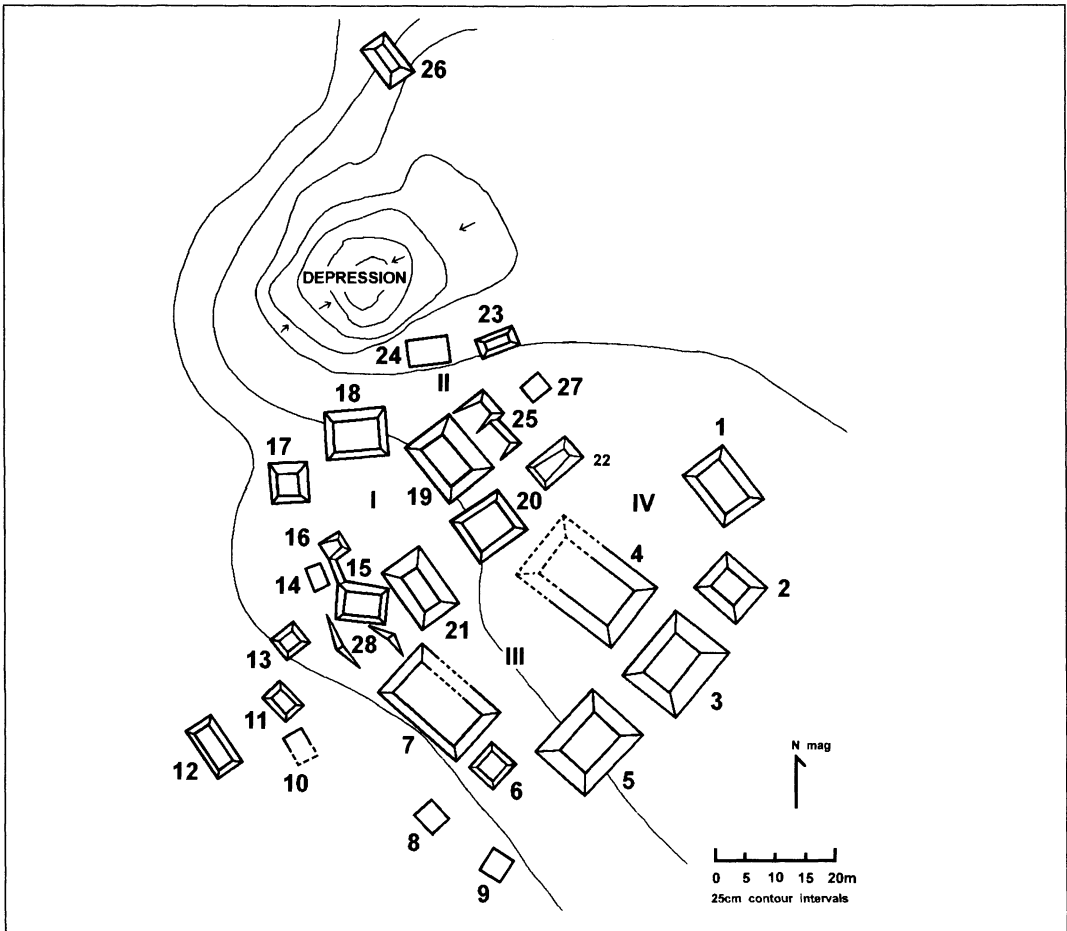


Figure 3. Map of Site 128.

The remaining humbler constructions are, by and large, organized around two patios that border their monumental counterparts on the west; five additional small buildings are scattered west and north of this aggregation. By the Terminal Classic, Site 128 was one of at least eight contemporary political centers in the Naco Valley, including La Sierra, with 1 to 13 monumental platforms. In addition, population over the entire valley was apparently growing throughout this span as new sites were added to the corpus of still-occupied Late Classic settlements. Site 128, therefore, flourished in the midst of political decentralization and demographic increase.

This success was short-lived. By the Early Postclassic (A.D. 1100–1300) construction was no longer being initiated at Site 128 and population seemed to be in decline. The above trend persisted through the Late Postclassic; Site 128 then showed

only scattered signs of small-scale, or intermittent, settlement. By these last prehistoric centuries, most of the area's population was living in the newly ascendant center of Naco, ca. 3 km to the southwest, and an important outlier of that capital, Site 144, .25 km in the same direction (Wonderley 1981). Originally mapped in 1978, Site 128 was excavated from February through May 1996, by students and staff of the Naco Valley Archaeological Project. During the course of this work, 14 structures and 27 test pits were dug, resulting in the clearing of approximately 900 m<sup>2</sup>. Within the four contiguous patios that comprise Site 128, three monumental edifices were investigated along with eight smaller buildings; three of the structures dispersed north and west of the site were also dug (Urban et al. 1999). Studies of exposed architecture, stratigraphy, and slightly more than 28,000 artifacts form the basis of this analysis.

Table 1. Dimensions and Functions of Buildings Excavated at Site 128.

Structure	Basal Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Height (m)	Function (s) <sup>1</sup>
128-3	117	2	Administration
128-4	125	2.3	Administration
128-7	120	1	Residence? Storage? <sup>2</sup>
128-12	57	.63	Cooking, Residence
128-13	20	.37	Storage, Cooking, Work Space
128-17	67	Surface-level	Residence, Storage
128-18	53	.39	Residence, Work Space
128-19	91	1.5	Residence, Administration, Storage, Work Space
128-20	59	.49	Residence, Storage, Work Space
128-21	104	1.2	Residence, Administration, Storage, Work Space
128-23	28	.47	Residence, Storage, Cooking, Work Space
128-24	18	.64	Residence, Storage, Cooking
128-25	30	Surface-level	Residence, Cooking, Storage
128-26	29	.63	Residence, Storage, Work Station

### Intra-Community Organization of Domestic Groups

Terminal Classic Site 128 was composed of at least two households whose members resided within the modest structures defining the western patios (Patios I and II, Figure 3). The excavated buildings here functioned as venues for such domestic chores as storage and cooking as well as providing facilities for sleeping (Table 1; Figures 4–7). Building proximity and orientation toward a shared enclosed space suggest that the occupants of each western patio participated in a common identity re-created in the course of daily, intense interactions (Ashmore and Wilk 1988).

Each western patio is paired with a plaza (Figure 3), delimited by monumental constructions, on the east (Patios III and IV). In the case of the southern dyad (Patios I and III), this linkage was formalized through behaviors associated with Structure 21, an edifice that covers 104 m<sup>2</sup> and stands 1.2 m high (Figure 6). The building's superstructure is organized around a massive, by local standards, stone-faced, L-shaped bench that covers 13 m<sup>2</sup>. This construction faced both northwest, over a set of steps leading up from Patio I, and southeast into Patio III, defined by monumental Structures 3–5. No other investigated building at Site 128 has this Janus-like orientation. Structure 21 also stands out for the relatively high ratio of bowl to jar rims in its terminal debris assemblage (Table 2). Diverging from the nearly ubiquitous ratio at Site 128 of 1:1, bowl rim fragments at Structure 21 are roughly twice as common as jar rims.

This discrepancy may indicate that the activities focused on Structure 21 involved sharing larger quantities of prepared foods than was the case at most other contemporary buildings. Structure 21's distinctive orientation and artifact patterning suggest that its residents played a significant role in uniting at least two portions of the settlement, this integration possibly facilitated through feasting. Destruction of the northern monumental patio prior to the 1996 investigations precludes reconstructing its relation to the neighboring domestic unit.

Social groups within Terminal Classic Site 128, therefore, consisted of those occupying individual domiciles who were, in turn, organized within two households whose dwellings were arranged around distinct patios. Each residential patio cluster on the west was seemingly paired with a monumental counterpart on the east. This linkage was formalized in the case of the southern public/domestic dyad through behaviors conducted on and around Structure 21.

### Power Strategies within the Community

The public/domestic contrast noted above is matched by what seem to be two different ways of organizing power at Terminal Classic Site 128. A corporate strategy, focused on institutions supported by, and operating in the name of, the entire community (Bawden 1995; Bayman 2002; Blanton et al. 1996; DeMarrais et al. 1996; Earle 2001; Feinman et al. 2000; Renfrew 1974; Saitta 1994) is materialized in Patios III and IV on the east. Their relatively large, formalized open spaces could

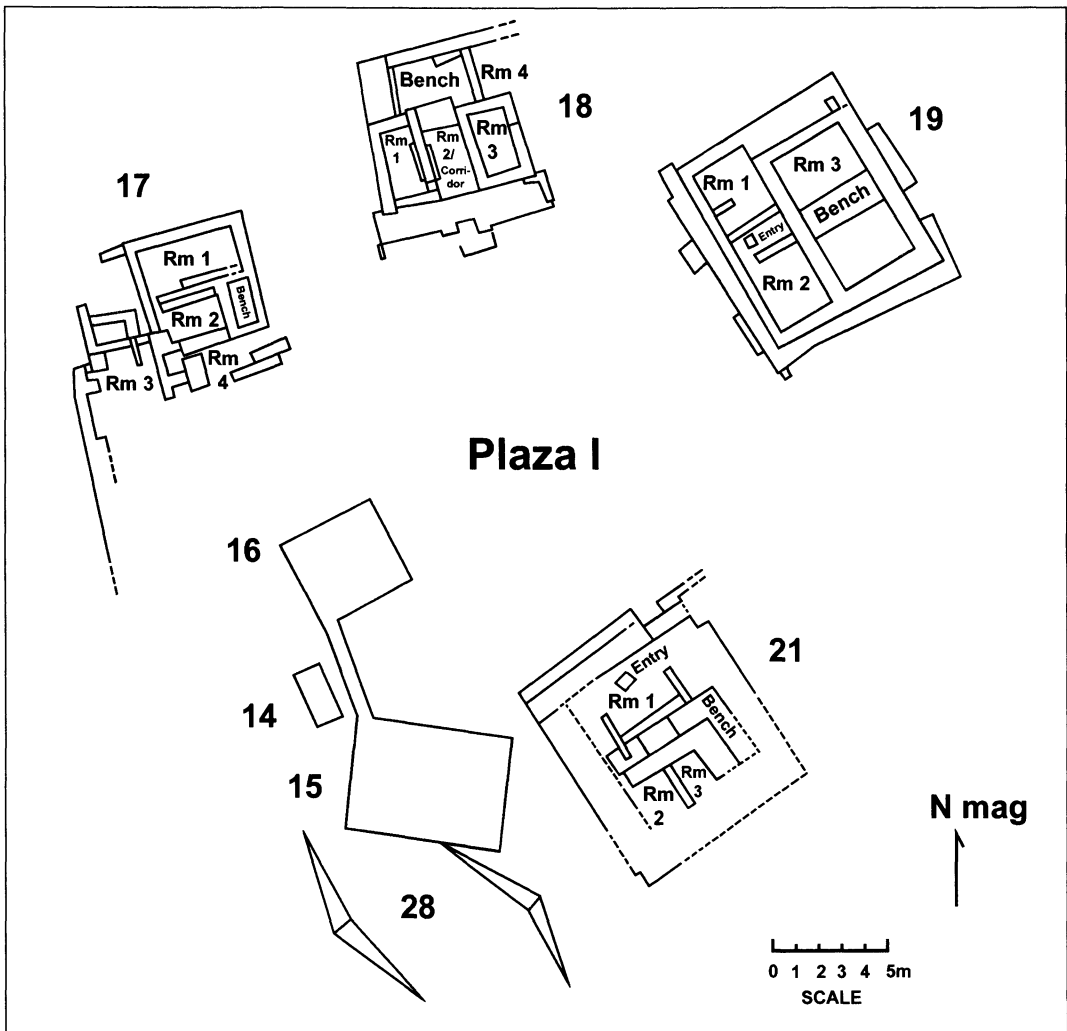


Figure 4. Plans of structures excavated in Site 128's southwest patio.

accommodate most of the community's total population during public gatherings. The two excavated monumental platforms, Structures 3 and 4 (Figure 6), are also distinguished by their ample summit enclosures (covering 20–23 m<sup>2</sup>; out of 32 measurable rooms at Site 128, 24 encompass 5 m<sup>2</sup> or less). These compartments lack such common domestic furniture as benches, implying that they were not domiciles. Instead, the summits of Structures 3 and 4 may have served as venues for regular gatherings in which segments of the total population participated. That the meetings took place in an elevated area hints at their importance in the political process. The unusually high ratio of jar-to-bowl rims at Structure 3 (roughly 2:1) suggests that significant quantities of food and drink

were stored here, possibly to be dispersed in periodic feasts in which high-ranking members of the community participated.

The eastern patios were apparently arenas for convening variable proportions of the entire community. In some circumstances, the patios may have been filled by all members while, in others, particularly influential representatives of the community could have met atop the monumental platforms. The absence of domestic architecture on Structures 3 and 4 implies that the gatherings were held under the aegis of corporate institutions and not at the behest of powerful individuals residing on these platforms. The sizable eastern constructions, therefore, were likely built by community labor to memorialize and materialize corporate political



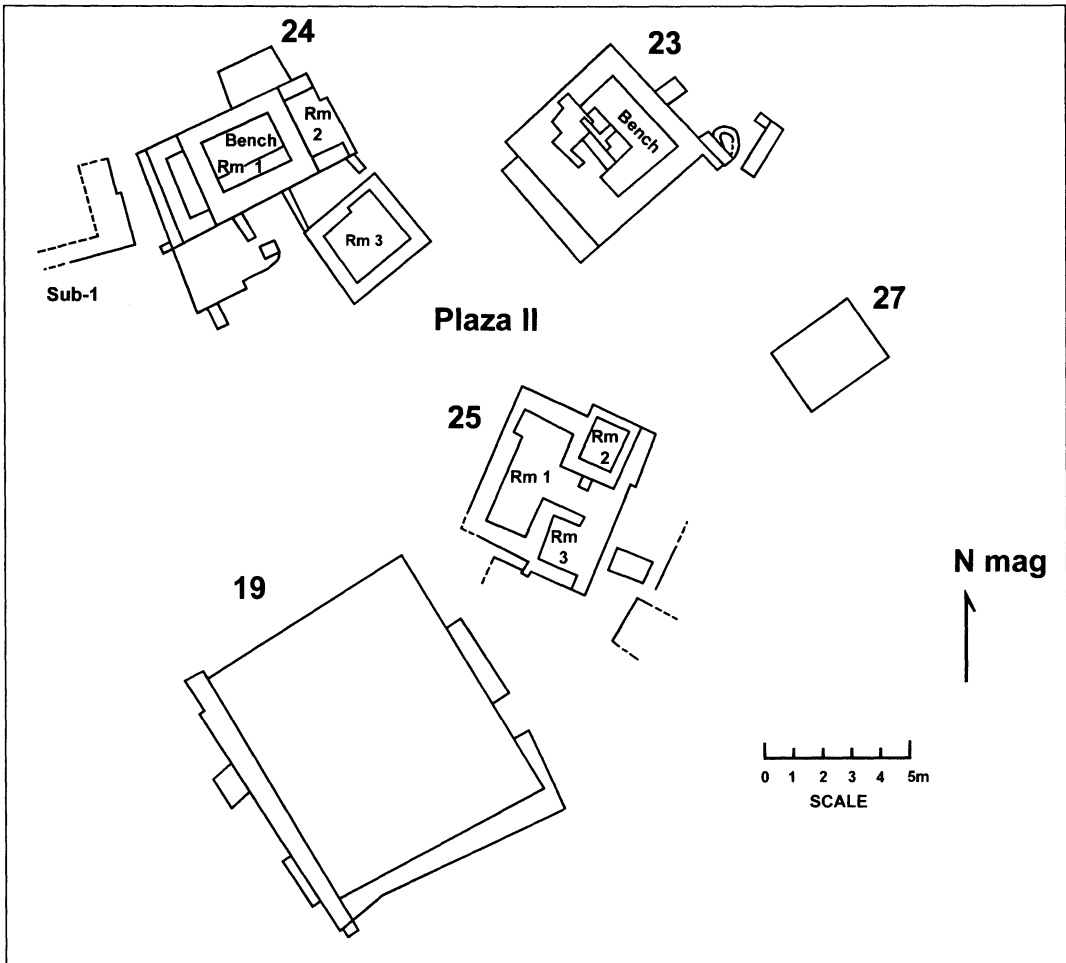


Figure 5. Plans of structures excavated in Site 128's northwest patio.

institutions whose operation required the support and participation of all residents in varying capacities (DeMarrais et al. 1996).

In contrast, an excavated monumental platform, Structure 19, is embedded within the domestic quarters. Like its eastern counterparts, this edifice supported a sizable summit enclosure (21 m<sup>2</sup>) that could accommodate relatively large gatherings. Here, however, a stone-faced bench occupies the room's center. Whatever meetings took place on Structure 19 were focused on the building's residents. The labor invested in raising this platform, therefore, exalted its occupants as well as the assemblies they hosted.

Along the lower end of the architectural spectrum there is a continuum of building sizes, suggesting a comparable sliding scale of labor control for their occupants (Table 1). Almost all humble

Site 128 edifices were modified during their use-lives, though these were relatively simple activities resulting in lateral expansions rather than the creation of more imposing height. Variations in the sizes of modest structures reflect relatively slight differences in the extent and strength of the social networks mobilized by individuals for construction tasks.

Structure 21's intermediate size, falling between monumental and humble buildings, may reflect the role(s) its occupants played in mediating relations between the private and public spheres. Not quite as massive as Site 128's monumental platforms, Structure 21's relatively large size could have accommodated those gatherings through which community members and the political institutions they forged were integrated.

Power was differentially distributed within Ter-

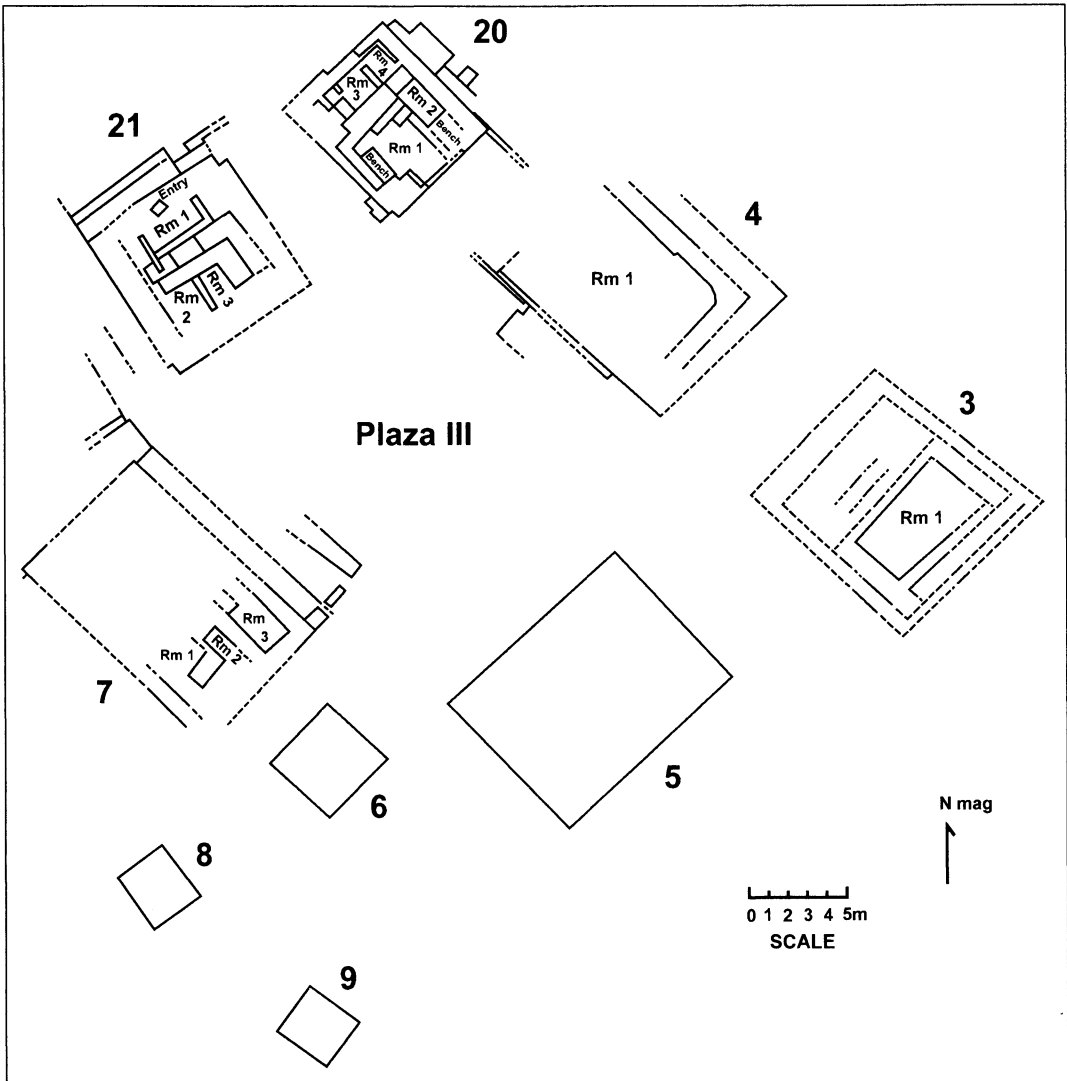


Figure 6. Plans of structures excavated in Site 128's southeast plaza.

minimal Classic Site 128. Continuous variation in the sizes of buildings less than 1.5 m high suggests minor, probably fluctuating, distinctions in the abilities of their occupants to call on help in erecting and modifying their edifices (Hirth 1993; Trubitt 2000; Webster 1990). Larger platforms signify centralization of labor control, though in some cases this power was in the hands of an individual family (residents of Structure 19) while in others labor was apparently directed by agents of corporate institutions (Structures 3 and 4). Activities centered on Structure 21 may have helped bridge this gap.

Both corporate and individual leadership strategies were enacted through gatherings held atop

monumental platforms, but in the case of Structure 19 these assemblies were orchestrated by, and centered on, specific individuals. Such distinctions imply that Site 128's residents were not simply divided into commoners and elites. Instead, different political strategies pursued by community members yielded both powerful families and potent institutions, neither of which achieved absolute dominion. Political centralization was therefore relatively underdeveloped, though not from lack of trying. Furthermore, despite mediating efforts focused on Structure 21, the agendas of these contending factions need not have been congruent or mutually supportive. Their potentially conflicting

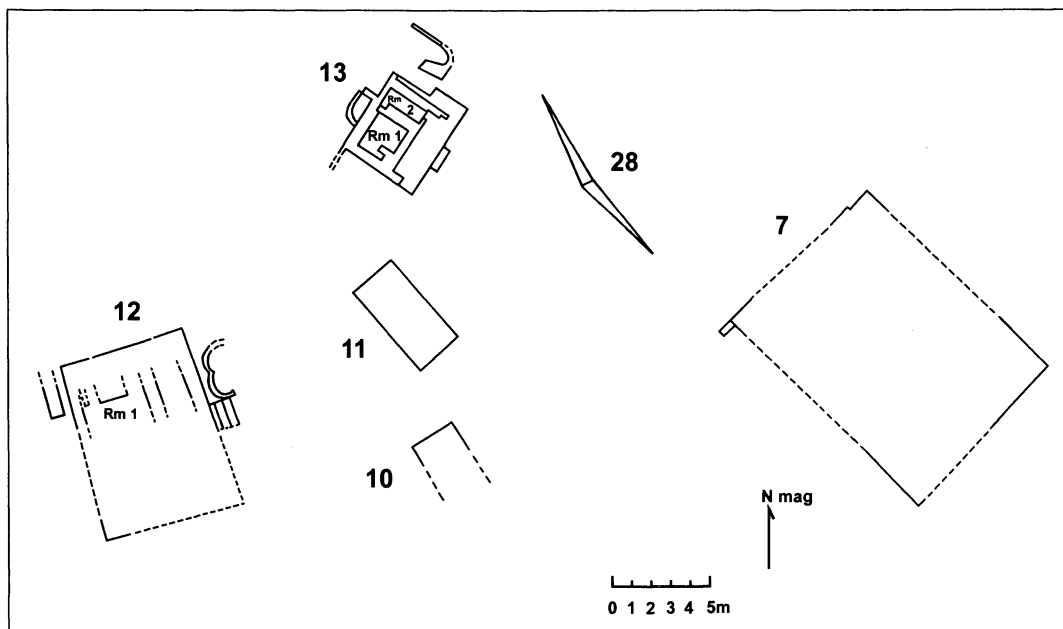


Figure 7. Plans of excavated ancillary structures located on Site 128's southwest margin.

demands on the productive efforts of the population may have been a source of stress that undermined the stability of both leading citizens and institutions.

### Funding Power Strategies

One way in which agents of corporate institutions and enterprising individuals could have advanced their agendas was through privileged control over commodities required by all community members. Those in need would be forced to surrender labor and loyalty in exchange for items only obtainable from those at the hierarchy's apex (Costin and Earle 1989; D'Altroy and Earle 1985; Earle 1994). Elaborately decorated and/or imported ceramic vessels (EDICs) might have been used in this way to gain political advantage at Terminal Classic Site 128.

EDICs are pottery containers whose appearances were embellished through the application of two or more surface enhancements; they include painted bichromes and polychromes as well as combinations of incising, modeling, and/or painting. The effort and skill required to manufacture such items and/or secure them from afar would have imparted a high value to them (Feinman et al. 1981; Hagstrum 1988; Smith 1987). These same factors of technical expertise and distant sources would also have conspired to ensure that distribu-

tion of EDICs could be controlled by those who monopolized the knowledge to fashion and/or obtain them (Hayden 1995:22; Peregrine 1991:2-3). That these esteemed containers were widely used at Site 128 during the Terminal Classic is suggested by their recovery from every excavated building at the center (Table 2). Nevertheless, the proportions of EDICs in terminal debris assemblages varies from 2-5.63 percent across the investigated structures. The two highest concentrations of decorated and foreign wares were found in Structures 19 and 20. As noted earlier, Structure 19 seems to have been an elite residence, its occupants apparently enjoying privileged access to community labor. Structure 20, on the other hand, functioned as both residence and storehouse (Figure 6). Three diminutive rooms (.4-2.4 m<sup>2</sup>) here lack domestic architecture and are so small that it is hard to imagine that they were used for anything but object curation. These cubicles are set in a line backing two larger compartments (5.3-8.9 m<sup>2</sup>), each of which has a bench. Such an unusually high concentration of storerooms indicates that object curation was an important part of Structure 20's function, the goods kept here probably belonging to more people than the building's inhabitants. Interestingly, while Structure 20's EDIC proportions are the second highest at Site 128 (5.57 percent), its artifact diversity measures are among the lowest (Table 3). This

Table 2. Proportions of Bowl and Jar Rims and Elaborately Decorated and/or Imported Ceramics (EDICs) at Site 128's Excavated Structures.

Structure	Bowl Proportion	Jar Proportion	Total Rims	EDIC Proportion	Total Ceramics
128-3	39%	61%	207	2.93%	1,603
128-4	47%	53%	76	4.79%	1,002
128-7	55%	45%	40	3.21%	996
128-12	30%	70%	37	2%	541
128-13	50%	50%	561	2.60%	5,806
128-17	50%	50%	312	4.36%	3,346
128-18	58%	42%	113	3.14%	1,493
128-19	45%	55%	98	5.63%	1,528
128-20	57%	43%	136	5.57%	790
128-21	63%	36%	154	4%	2,249
128-23	46%	54%	150	2.68%	3,326
128-24	47%	53%	107	3.42%	2,103
128-25	51%	49%	150	3.88%	2,137
128-26	25%	75%	28	3.60%	557

Table 3. Distribution of Six Artifact Categories<sup>3</sup> by Number and Occurrences per m<sup>2</sup> Across Thirteen of Site 128's Fourteen Excavated Structures.<sup>4</sup>

Structure	Ocarina	Fig.	Inc.	GS	Cand.	Jewelry
128-3	3 (.07)	12 (.28)	25 (.57)	6 (.14)	0	0
128-4	3 (.05)	22 (.34)	13 (.20)	8 (.12)	0	0
128-7	1 (.02)	7 (.11)	10 (.15)	6 (.09)	0	0
128-12	9 (.29)	20 (.64)	11 (.35)	2 (.06)	4 (.13)	1 (.03)
128-13	14 (.32)	56 (1.27)	73 (1.66)	21 (.48)	10 (.23)	4 (.09)
128-17	21 (.24)	53 (.61)	35 (.41)	12 (.14)	12 (.14)	7 (.08)
128-18	4 (.06)	15 (.22)	16 (.23)	7 (.10)	4 (.06)	3 (.04)
128-19	13 (.11)	27 (.22)	32 (.26)	18 (.15)	3 (.03)	0
128-20	0	3 (.03)	6 (.07)	10 (.11)	0	0
128-21	5 (.06)	9 (.12)	15 (.19)	11 (.14)	0	1 (.01)
128-23	9 (.22)	20 (.49)	9 (.22)	2 (.05)	6 (.15)	2 (.05)
128-24	13 (.15)	26 (.31)	22 (.26)	8 (.14)	0	0
128-25	11 (.18)	14 (.27)	29 (.48)	9 (.15)	3 (.05)	0

building was seemingly the repository for a restricted suite of valuable commodities. Structure 20's location in the center of the site would have facilitated monitoring access to these goods. Similarly, the architectural arrangement, in which the storerooms were shielded behind two residential spaces, enhanced the safety of the stored valuables (Hendon 2000).

Who, then, could use these items? The scant 3 m separating Structures 20 and 4 suggests that the former's contents were employed in corporate political processes. The likelihood that Structures 4 and 20 were linked by construction tentatively supports this proposition as do the relatively high EDIC figures associated with Structure 4 itself (4.79 percent, third highest ranking at Site 128).

In contrast, Structure 3, another putative locus

of corporate power, has very modest EDIC measures (2.9 percent) and no attached storehouse. Such variation may partly reflect differences in building functions; display and use of EDICs might not have been as central to the activities performed on Structure 3 as they were to the behaviors enacted on Structure 4. Corporate power, therefore, could have been variably expressed and materialized through activities pursued on different monumental edifices. The intermediate EDIC measure for Structure 21 (4 percent) also hints that valuable pottery containers were used as, but did not dominate, serving vessels for feasts held at specific buildings.

In general, decorated and exotic pottery vessels seem to have been deployed in social displays and ceremonies in which all community members par-

ticipated to some extent, as suggested by their distribution throughout the Terminal Classic settlement. Differences in the prevalence of EDICs among structures implies that some individuals and representatives of political institutions enjoyed privileged access to these items and may have supervised their local disbursement. Control over EDICs, therefore, was a potential point of contention among different political factions at the center. Both corporate institutions and enterprising individuals may well have used these items in social displays. They might also have been vying with each other to capture clients through strategic deployment of EDICs as gifts and rewards for service. Such contests, in turn, could work to the advantage of the community at large, encouraging the relatively even distribution of valuables by those seeking adherents to their cause. Though not everyone had equivalent access to these vessels, the resulting distinctions are muted.

Similar factors may explain the dispersion of obsidian blades throughout the center. This import was disbursed widely among all excavated structures, implying roughly equivalent access. Obsidian was so ubiquitous, it seems, that there was little temptation to use locally available chert as a substitute. If corporate and individual leaders were responsible for acquiring obsidian from sources approximately 200 km distant, then they were constrained to be generous with these imports. Ironically, therefore, the inability of any one faction to monopolize the local distribution of generally desired goods, whether obsidian blades or EDICs, retarded the development of the very hierarchy would-be rulers intended to create. At least the use of material markers to express and reinforce invidious distinctions was severely restrained by inter-elite competitions.

Also counterbalancing hierarchical divisions was what seems to have been communal ownership of at least some property stored in Structure 13 (Figure 7). This platform's small size (covering 20 m<sup>2</sup> and standing .37 m high), two diminutive summit rooms (1.6 m<sup>2</sup> and 3 m<sup>2</sup>), and general lack of built-in residential furniture, such as benches, suggest that it served primarily as a warehouse. That Structure 13 ranks highest in artifact diversity among excavated buildings implies that it contained a wide array of objects used in a variety of tasks (Table 3). Its low EDIC proportion, 2.6 percent,

however, indicates that most of the objects it contained did not figure in political contests (see Table 2). The building's location outside a patio group implies that Structure 13's relatively mundane artifact inventory was accessible and possibly belonged to all Site 128 residents. The ease with which one could pass over Structure 13's broad southeastern terrace into the interior rooms reinforces the impression that the building's contents could be easily retrieved by community members, a sharp contrast to the situation at Structure 20.

Structure 13 might not have figured in anyone's overt political strategy; sometimes a warehouse is simply what it seems. The daily practice of securing items from its recesses, however, could well have reinforced and implicitly symbolized community solidarity and encouraged some level of settlement-wide integration free of overt hierarchical expressions. In this sense, Structure 13 was more than just a handy repository for prosaic goods. It was also an embodiment of the shared experiences and responsibilities that linked Site 128's residents to each other (Hendon 2000). The building's disassociation from any particular patio group would have simultaneously expressed its connections to all community members while symbolizing that unity to the inhabitants of other settlements. Structure 20's secluded location and physical linkage with Structure 4, on the other hand, unequivocally conveyed messages of exclusion and distinction. Limited access to this building and its contents contributed, albeit imperfectly, to the elevation of one social segment over others at Site 128, to marking divisions rather than encouraging solidarity (Hendon 2000).

Site 128 during the Terminal Classic was a locus of contradictory forces. Representatives of different factions sought privileged access to a limited labor supply through the local distribution of valuable ceramic vessels and, possibly, other imports such as obsidian blades. Unable to assert and maintain their preeminence vis-à-vis each other, these agents were constrained to be generous to potential clients, giving away much of their political capital in efforts to woo supporters. Consequently, corporate and individualizing strategies remained at loggerheads, with no one side gaining ascendance. This stalemate worked to the benefit of the majority and, in fact, may have been encouraged by those who played one side off against the other.

Table 4. Distribution of Artifacts Suggestive of Craft Specialization Across Site 128.<sup>5</sup>

Structure	Used/Worked Sherds	Stamps	Figurine Molds	Polyhedral Obsidian Cores
128-3	2	1	1	0
128-4	4	1	1	1
128-7	0	0	1	0
128-12	2	0	1	0
128-13	5	4	3	0
128-17	0	8	0	1
128-18	0	11	0	0
128-19	0	0	0	0
128-20	0	2	0	0
128-21	0	0	0	0
128-23	1	0	0	0
128-24	6	0	1	1
128-25	2	2	3	0
128-26	0	0	0	1
Northwest Depression	5	1	0	1

Underlying these machinations, and contributing to the failure of hierarchy, was a persistent communal ethic implicitly symbolized through group ownership of prosaic items stored in a humble edifice on the site's southwest margin.

### Craft Specialization

Craft specialization also could be used to forge and defend corporate or individual power (Clark and Parry 1990; Costin 1991, 2001). If rulers can monopolize the fashioning of goods needed by all, then they can convert peers into subordinates who comply with elite demands rather than risk alienation from crucial assets (Clark and Parry 1990; Costin 1991, 2001). Evidence for the production of four crafts dating to the Terminal Classic was uncovered at Site 128.

The industry that left the largest mark on the landscape is production of ceramic vessels. A 1.43 m-deep depression measuring 32 x 45 m lies on the site's northwest margin; Structure 24 overlooks and is built into the southeastern rim of this declivity (Figures 3 and 5). Excavations revealed that the pit was dug into extensive clay deposits during the early Terminal Classic, creating a borrow pit analogous in form and size to those associated with both modern and ancient ceramic manufacturing facilities in the Naco Valley (Connell 2002). Associated with the northwest depression was an unusually dense concentration of worked and used sherds, vessel fragments whose edges were rounded intentionally or through use. Eleven of these items (40

percent of the Site 128 collection) were found on the margins of and within the depression, including six of this total associated with Structure 24 (Table 4). The functional significance of worked and used sherds is unclear, though the form and size of these items are compatible with their use in shaping pottery vessel walls (Lopez Varela et al. 2001; Smith and Smith 1994:359). No clear firing facilities were recorded at Site 128; however, an irregularly shaped patch of fire-reddened and ashy earth covering .96 x 1.36 m was located on the declivity's northwest edge. This feature may result from open-air firing of ceramics, though alternative interpretations are possible.

That residents manufactured more than pottery containers is suggested by the recovery of 11 ceramic figurine molds at Site 128. These implements are widely scattered among seven structures. Slight concentrations occur Structures 13 and 25 (three molds found in and around each building).

Thirty ceramic stamps with designs molded in high relief on their flat surfaces, likely used in decorating cloth, were retrieved from eight structures. Slightly more than a third of the collection (11 pieces) derives from Structure 18 in the southwest domestic group. The next largest concentration is from neighboring Structure 17 where eight stamps were found (Figure 4). The absence of other signs of cloth production, such as spindle whorls, may imply that weaving and fiber preparation occurred at locales other than those investigated in 1996.

Five polyhedral obsidian cores were distributed widely across the site, though three were recovered

from contexts on the settlement's northwest margin (Structures 24, 26, and within the northwest depression; Figures 3 and 5). Knapping blades from these nuclei seems to have been a task in which a few residents participated to limited degrees (Ross 1997).

With the exception of the northwestern borrow pit, the distributional data outlined above most likely do not identify production loci. Instead, the pattern probably reflects where implements used in different crafts were stored and, as such, gives a sense of variations among domestic groups in their commitment to specialized manufacture (Moholy-Nagy 1997). It appears, therefore, that craft production was largely conducted within household contexts, pursued at relatively low levels of intensity, and yielded modest outputs. The quantity of clay mined from the northwest depression potentially suggests a production scale above that inferred for the other three industries. If, as seems likely, this mining operation was spread over a century or more, however, the yield in any given year may not have been very high.

The distribution of implements used in craft activities also indicates widespread participation in these pursuits, though several households seemingly were more heavily involved in manufacturing tasks than others. Patio I, for example, has a greater concentration of the tools needed to decorate cloth and residents of Patio II were possibly more involved in fabricating figurines than were people living elsewhere at the settlement. A slight concentration of obsidian nuclei on the northwest site margin may indicate nothing more than relegation of blade fabrication to an area where the sharp debris generated in the manufacturing process would not be a threat to casual passersby (Santley and Kneebone 1993). There are also instances where evidence for the practice of different crafts overlaps, Structures 13 (figurines and cloth decoration), 17 (obsidian blades and cloth decoration), and 24 (pottery vessels and obsidian blades) being the most salient examples. Structure 13, as noted earlier, was likely a repository for goods belonging to most, if not all, community members. Accordingly, the occurrence of tools used in several manufacturing processes here could simply reflect general participation in these tasks by Site 128's residents. Structures 17 and 24, on the other hand, may have housed social groups whose mem-

bers engaged in multiple crafts, and stored some of their implements close at hand.

Though commitment to specialized manufacture varies across Terminal Classic Site 128, there is no reason to suspect that craft production was anything more than a part-time occupation. Nor is there an indication of centralized control over manufacturing or most distribution processes. The putative elite residence, Structures 19, is unusual for its total lack of evidence for specialized manufacture. The preeminence of those residing there was not founded on their direct participation in craft production. Implements used in manufacturing processes are found at Structures 3, 4, and 20. The numbers involved do not exceed those recorded for humbler domestic loci at the center, however, and they cannot be used to argue for supervision of production by corporate institutions. It may be that the obsidian cores employed in the blade industry were imported by local magnates, operating on their own or as representatives of institutions. Elites would have had the time and capital, in the form of community surpluses, with which to acquire these nuclei from distant sources. Nevertheless, once obtained, the cores were apparently dispersed widely to the actual producers. Though we cannot be certain how blades were disseminated, the observed distribution of nuclei does not support an argument for centralized control over the artisans' output. Consequently, craft production had limited political impact in Terminal Classic Site 128.

### Site 128 and Its Environs

Site 128's residents were embedded within social and political networks extending well beyond the settlement's limits. The social, occupational, and political heterogeneity of this community guarantees that its external ties were complex and varied. We will focus, therefore, on a specific facet of those linkages, the manner in which the power manifest at Site 128 was founded on relations maintained by the settlement's leaders with residents of its immediate 6 km<sup>2</sup> hinterland (a figure based on the distribution of comparably large Terminal Classic centers in Site 128's vicinity). Results of extensive excavations at Sites 410 and 411, two of the estimated 10 Terminal Classic hamlets within Site 128's putative support area, are used to consider this query (Figures 2, 8, and 9). Sites 410 and 411

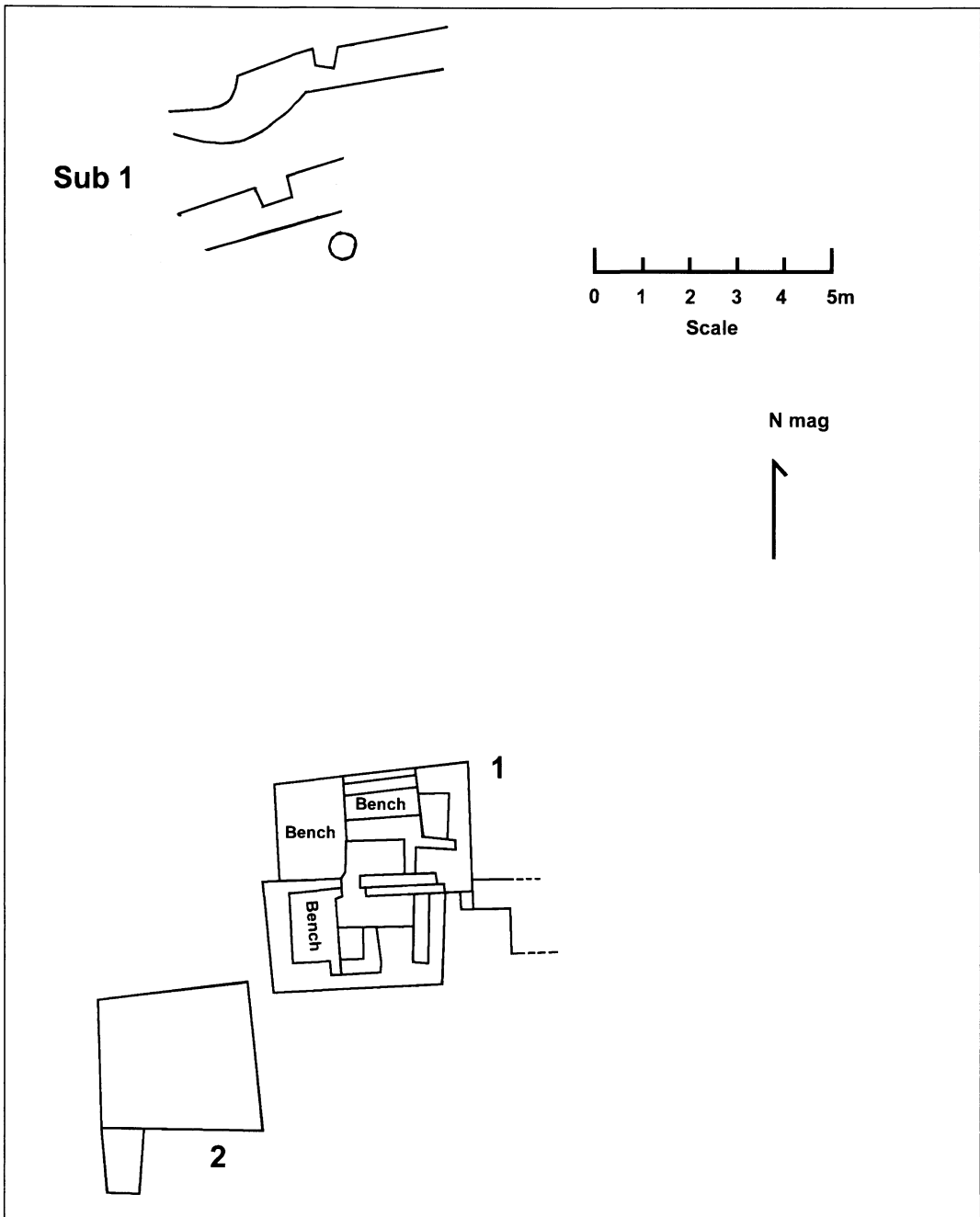


Figure 8. Plan of excavated structures at Site 410.

contain three and five structures less than 1 m high, respectively, are within 700 m northwest of Site 128, and date primarily to the Terminal Classic. Their small sizes and proximity to the latter center make them likely residences of some of Site 128's dispersed support population and members of its extended community.

Excavations at Sites 410 and 411 during the 1996 field season cleared 147 m<sup>2</sup> and 189 m<sup>2</sup> in the course of exposing two and four buildings, respectively (Figures 8 and 9). Organized around patios, these constructions are the physical remains of households comparable to those occupying the western Site 128 building clusters (Patios I and II).



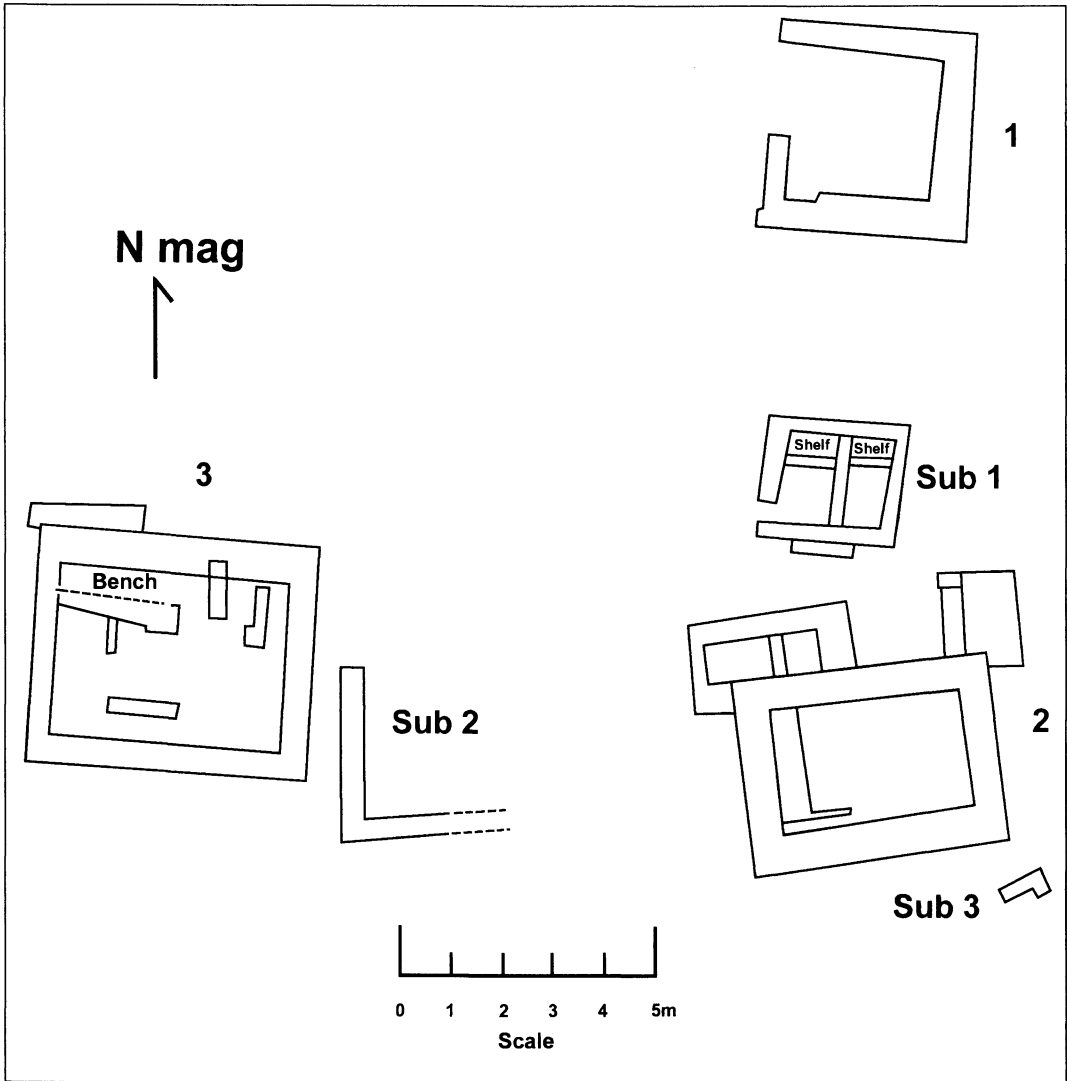


Figure 9. Plan of excavated structure at Site 411.

Unlike Site 128, however, there is no evidence of marked variations in structure dimensions that point to significant differences in the power exercised by their residents (Table 5). In fact, comparing Tables 1 and 5 suggests that denizens of Sites 410 and 411 could call on smaller labor forces to raise their buildings than almost any of Site 128's occupants. While not dramatic, these distinctions reveal a greater heterogeneity in the power of non-elite domestic groups than is evident within Site 128 alone.

A specialized storage facility, Structure Sub1, was recorded at Site 411. This edifice has two small rooms each covering 1.5 m<sup>2</sup> and containing a stone-

faced shelf. Structure Sub1 suggests that households above a certain size (those using five or more structures, perhaps) required, or could support, constructions devoted to curating items on which all members had a claim. As noted above, such warehouses may have symbolized, as well as created, a sense of settlement unity through the regular practice of retrieving items from their cubicles (Hendon 2000). Smaller social groups, such as the one occupying Site 410, might have been better able to accommodate storage within their residences and did not need to reinforce communal ties so explicitly. This situation contrasts with that reported for seventh-century Cerén in western El Salvador

Table 5. Sizes and Functions of Excavated Structures at Sites 410 and 411.<sup>6</sup>

Structure	Basal Dimension (m <sup>2</sup> )	Height (m)	Function(s)
Structure 410-1	19	.45	Residence, Storage
Structure 410-2	11	.35	Work Station
Structure 411-1	26	.3	Residence, Work Station
Structure 411-2	16	Surface-level	Residence?
Structure 411-3	25	.5	Residence
Structure 411-Sub1	7	Surface-level	Storage

where each of the four excavated households contained a free-standing warehouse (Sheets 2002:198–200). Such variation in how items were curated suggests not only different ways of storing goods but variations in the social relations reflected by those arrangements. For now, all we can surmise is that further study of storage patterns may well provide insights into sociopolitical forms that complement those obtained from the analysis of other data categories (Hendon 2000).

The existence of at least one storage facility at Site 411 indicates that its residents exercised some control over their labor and its fruits. Limited variation in structure sizes at both settlements further suggests that their inhabitants' daily experiences of hierarchy and its physical expressions were muted compared to constant encounters with both at Site 128. As noted earlier, however, it is very likely that the productive efforts of those living within Site 128's hinterland were periodically co-opted to support the institutions and preeminent personages operating from that center. The uniformly diminutive sizes of constructions at Sites 410 and 411 may reflect this persistent siphoning off of labor. How was such loyalty secured? Institutional and individual control over EDICs and obsidian cores may have been components in centralizing strategies.

The EDIC proportions for Sites 410 and 411 are nearly identical: 2.8 percent out of 3,052 analyzed sherds at Site 410 and 2.5 percent out of 3,557 analyzed sherds at Site 411. These figures are slightly below the average for Site 128 (3 percent) but are about half the proportions obtained from Structures 19 and 20 at the center. One possible interpretation for this pattern is that both institutions of corporate power (with storerooms in Structure 20) and prominent individuals (residing in Structure 19) exercised some control over the dispersal of valued ceramics to clients within *and* outside Site 128. That the EDIC figures for the center and two of its

hamlets are so close implies that these distributions were relatively even-handed.

Sites 410 and 411 yielded minimal evidence for occupational specialization. A polyhedral obsidian core fragment was recovered from the larger hamlet, Site 411, a ceramic stamp came from Site 410, and each settlement yielded a single used or worked sherd. This distribution suggests that specialized manufacture was pursued in rural settlements at scales and levels of intensity lower than those attested to at Site 128. It may be that artisans at the latter center fashioned at least some of the items used in the immediate area. Figurines, for example, possibly were fabricated primarily by Site 128's residents, along with pottery vessels. Nuclei needed to knap obsidian blades may also have been secured by Site 128's magnates and distributed, to a limited extent, among their rural supporters. Evidence from Site 410, however, implies that certain hinterland denizens were consumers, not producers, of these lithic implements. Whether blades flowed to Site 410 down the hierarchy from Site 128 or moved horizontally from another hamlet, such as Site 411, is unclear (Ross 1997).

Present evidence, therefore, suggests some disparity in the investments Site 128's households made in craft production vis-à-vis their rural neighbors. Whether these distinctions translated into economic dependencies used to secure the labor and loyalty of supporters depends on the degree to which artisanal output was controlled by political institutions or preeminent individuals. At present, there is no reason to infer elite oversight of manufacturing processes. Rather, the decision to engage in specialized production seems to have been made by specific individuals or households, operating free of paramount interference. The one potential exception is the obsidian blade industry. Obsidian cores had to be imported from considerable distances, their acquisition most likely in the hands of

notable individuals or agents of corporate institutions who could mobilize the resources needed to fund these long-distance transactions. Some political leverage might have been secured through the elite's ability to disburse or withhold this essential item. The actual fabrication of blades, however, was in the hands of people residing in Site 128 and its vicinity.

The capacity of Site 128's leaders to direct the actions of subordinates throughout their hinterland and claim their allegiances may, therefore, have rested in part on centralized control over distribution of EDICs and obsidian cores. As noted earlier, the inability of any one faction to monopolize disbursement of these goods seemingly contributed to a contested political structure and widespread sharing of elite largesse.

### Discussion

Excavations at Site 128 reveal a community whose members were divided by their occupations, access to valuables, and control over labor. The political structure they created was characterized by unresolved tensions between corporate and individualizing tendencies. The labor and, presumably, surpluses of subordinates residing in the center and its hinterland financed these political foundations and agents. In spite of efforts to mediate relations among institutions and aggrandizers, the resulting situation was far from stable. At the very least we can imagine that competition over assets needed to support communal and individual political activities and agendas was persistent, if not always openly expressed. One such contested resource might have been EDICs. Concentration of these items in an elite residence (Structure 19) and a storage area linked to a public edifice (Structures 20 and 4, respectively) imply that both institutions and individuals used such vessels in social displays and as gifts with which to bind clients to patrons. Given their limited supply and high value, access to EDICs may well have been the subject of many tense negotiations. Local distribution of imported polyhedral obsidian cores might also have been contested. That Structure 4's final version was never finished suggests that these competitions were not always amicably concluded. Access to the labor needed to complete remodeling of this edifice was abruptly cut off, possibly as a result of unresolved

rivalries for the allegiance of subordinates. Unfortunately, we can not specify whether the occupants of Structure 19 continued to thrive as Structure 4 deteriorated or whether they, too, experienced a comparable and simultaneous decline in their fortunes.

Craft specialization does not seem to have played an important (or, at least, an obvious) role in securing labor and loyalty. Instead, people residing both at the center and in its vicinity seem to have engaged in manufacturing processes largely free of meddling from above. The horizontal linkages created by exchanging craft goods supplemented those actualized through intra-community sharing of items stored in special-purpose warehouses. These heterarchical ties contrast with hierarchical relations underwritten by elite-supervised distribution of polyhedral obsidian cores and valuable ceramic vessels. Terminal Classic Site 128 and its hinterland was, therefore, a community riven by tensions among contending political actors *and* between heterarchical and hierarchical tendencies. Political centralization was stunted as a result of these contradictory forces, and inequality, as measured by access to valuables, was minimized.

As complex as the synchronic rendering of Site 128's community may be, it pales in comparison to the image of this structure in motion. Site 128 rose to prominence in the midst of La Sierra's political and economic decline. The latter center had been the undisputed capital of the Late Classic Naco Valley. Ten times the size of its next largest valley contemporary, La Sierra was not only densely settled but contained the largest concentration of monumental platforms in the region. These 20 constructions defining the site core include apparent temples, elite residences, and a ballcourt (Schortman and Urban 1994). In addition to its political importance, Late Classic La Sierra supported a diverse array of workshops where ceramic vessels, *incensarios*, figurines, obsidian blades, and conch shell and coral ornaments were fashioned. At least some of this output was consumed throughout the valley, suggesting that subordinates were partially dependent on rulers for goods fabricated at the capital.

As noted earlier, much of La Sierra's core was abandoned and dismantled by the end of the Late Classic. The former capital remained a major population center throughout the Terminal Classic;

most of its 468 surface-visible buildings were probably still occupied during this span. Craft production continued here as well, at least one of La Sierra's ceramic kilns having been used into the thirteenth century A.D. Similarly, monumental construction did not cease; 13 large structures erected immediately east of the Late Classic core were likely a new focus of political power. Nevertheless, the emergence of monumental centers like Site 128 throughout the valley and the dispersal of craft production from La Sierra to its rural hinterland suggest that the Terminal Classic was an interval of political and economic decentralization. La Sierra probably remained a major demographic and economic center during the Terminal Classic and its leaders may have retained some degree of suzerainty over the valley. This control, however, was considerably reduced from Late Classic levels, creating chances for enterprising agents to forge novel political and economic relations. Site 128's rapid ascent from small farmstead to political center indicates that at least some people took advantage of their opportunity.

The political and economic structures that emerged from this process were not necessarily uniform across the Naco Valley, or stable. The material heterogeneity and varied crafts attested to within the Terminal Classic Site 128 community need not have been replicated among its contemporaries. Further, the juxtaposition of corporate and individualizing power structures inferred for Site 128 could well have been distinctive of its political system. Even within small regions, such as the Naco Valley, we cannot assume that the possibilities offered by shifting power relations triggered uniform responses nor that these responses were uniformly successful. In the case of Site 128, hierarchy was stymied by the inability of any one faction to monopolize local distribution of crucial social valuables (such as EDICs) and more prosaic items (obsidian cores). The resulting political economy was multifocused, pitting elites against each other in contests to secure adherents. In this case, clients could maximize their access to valuables while alternately supporting one set of claimants against another. We have no direct proof that such manipulations occurred. The general and extensive distribution of EDICs as well as obsidian blades and polyhedral cores is, however, in line with such an interpretation. Another obstacle to centralization

and expressions of inequality may have been those enduring intra-community heterarchical links symbolized through shared ownership of at least some property and the exchange of craft products largely unfettered by elite interference. Further, the small size of the community focused on Site 128, with a population probably numbering in the low hundreds, worked against hierarchy building. Living in the midst of their followers, interacting with them in a wide array of contexts, magnates were bound to their communities in ways that the more remote lords of larger polities would not have been. As such, would-be leaders could not easily ignore the demands or opinions of all community members and could not elevate themselves too far without alienating their compatriots. The result was a compromise in which centralization and inequality were advanced to limited degrees. This compromise should not be confused with equilibrium; as a compromise its tenets were undoubtedly subject to constant renegotiation, ultimately resulting in a collapse of hierarchy by the Early Postclassic.

The demise of centralized political economies offers an excellent context in which to investigate the machinations of agents and the consequences of their political strategies. Usually, we look to periods of political florescence for telltale signatures of aggrandizers and the institutions they created. This approach, though fruitful, encourages an emphasis on paramount elites and a view of their subordinates as those whose loss in power struggles results in their uniform subordination and impoverishment (cf. papers in Schwartz and Falconer 1994). Looking at the situation from the perspective of decentralization and disintegration gives us a chance to see how these putative subordinates responded to new opportunities for control over formerly centralized political and economic processes. In the course of such studies focus shifts from overpowering institutions and people to the diversely structured and variably enduring strategies employed at local levels by aspiring, and not always successful, individuals and agents of relatively small-scale social groups. Such a perspective complements the view from the crest of the political wave and provides insights obtainable only when sociopolitical processes are looked at from the trough. As important as a hinterland perspective on political form and process often is, there is also something to be gained by examining these

developments during intervals when distinctions between capitals and hinterlands are in flux and ill-defined.

*Acknowledgments.* This work was generously supported by the National Science Foundation (SBR 9407751, SBR 9322330) and Kenyon College. Students and staff of the 1996 Naco Valley Archaeological Project who directly and substantially contributed to investigations at Sites 128, 410, and 411 include B. Beacom, J. Bell, B. Carter, V. Chagnon, K. Delvendahl, A. Dietz, R. Johnson, M. Kneppler, A. McCoy, A. Mishelhoff, M. Morrison, A. Moser, H. Osborn, B. Robbins, B. Shade, M. Stockett, and M. Turek. In addition to these stalwart investigators, subsequent analyses of Site 128 materials by A. Althoff, F. Black, N. Handel, L. Keiner, and O. Steffans helped materially to provide the basis for this report. The Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia (IHAH), as always, steadfastly and generously promoted the Naco research and we are particularly grateful to its director during 1996, Dra. Olga Hoya; Lcda. Carmen Julia Fajardo, director of Archaeology; and Juan Alberto Duron, IHAH representative for the North Coast. The people of the Naco Valley, led by our indomitable and ever-gracious foreman, the late Sr. Luis Nolasco, labored long, hard, and with great patience and care to see the work through to a successful conclusion. An earlier incarnation of this paper was given at a symposium organized by Arthur Joyce and Cynthia Robin for the 2002 American Anthropological Association meetings. We greatly appreciate Art and Cynthia's invitation to join that session as well as the comments offered by Bernard Knapp and Jeremy Sabloff on the original essay. The thoughtful and thorough remarks of Wendy Ashmore, Arthur Demarest, Robert Sharer, an anonymous reviewer, and Suzanne Fish were also very helpful as we prepared the final draft of this manuscript. We very much appreciate the contributions of all of these individuals and agencies to the investigations and interpretations summarized in the above pages. We remind the reader, however, that, whereas archaeological field studies are invariably cooperative efforts, the authors are solely responsible for any errors that appear in this essay.

### References Cited

- Anderson, Kirk  
1994 Geoaerchaeological Investigations. In *Sociopolitical Hierarchy and Craft Production: The Economic Bases of Elite Power in a Southeast Mesoamerican Polity, Part 3, the 1992 Season of the Naco Valley Archaeological Project*, edited by Edward Schortman and Patricia Urban, pp. 85–125. Anthropology Department, Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio.
- Ashmore, Wendy  
1988 Household and Community at Classic Quirigua. In *Household and Community in the Mesoamerican Past*, edited by Richard Wilk and Wendy Ashmore, pp. 153–170. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
- Ashmore, Wendy, and Richard Wilk  
1988 Household and Community in the Mesoamerican Past. In *Household and Community in the Mesoamerican Past*, edited by Richard Wilk and Wendy Ashmore, pp. 1–27. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
- Bawden, Garth  
1995 The Structural Paradox: Moche Culture as Political Ideology. *Latin American Antiquity* 6:255–273.
- Bayman, James  
2002 Hohokam Craft Economies and the Materialization of Power. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 9:65–95.
- Bermann, Marc  
1997 Domestic Life and Vertical Integration in the Tiwanaku Heartland. *Latin American Antiquity* 8:93–112.
- Blanton, Richard  
1995 The Cultural Foundations of Inequality in Households. In *Foundations of Social Inequality*, edited by T. Douglas Price and Gary Feinman, pp. 105–127. Plenum Press, New York.
- Blanton, Richard, and Gary Feinman  
1984 The Mesoamerican World System *American Anthropologist* 86:673–682.
- Blanton, Richard E., Gary M. Feinman, Stephen A. Kowalewski, and Peter N. Peregrine  
1996 A Dual-Processual Theory for the Evolution of Mesoamerican Civilization. *Current Anthropology* 37:1–14.
- Canuto, Marcello  
2004 The Rural Settlement of Copan: Changes through the Early Classic. In *Understanding Early Classic Copan*, edited by Ellen Bell, Marcello Canuto, and Robert Sharer, pp. 29–50. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology Press, Philadelphia.
- Canuto, Marcello, and Jason Yaeger (editors)  
2000 *The Archaeology of Communities: A New World Perspective*. Routledge, London.
- Chase-Dunn, Christopher, and Thomas Hall (editors)  
1991 *Core/Periphery Relations in Precapitalist Worlds*. Westview Press, Boulder.
- Clark, John E., and William J. Parry  
1990 Craft Specialization and Cultural Complexity. *Research in Economic Anthropology* 12:289–346.
- Connell, Samuel V.  
2002 Getting Closer to the Source: Using Ethnoarchaeology to Find Ancient Pottery Making in the Naco Valley, Honduras. *Latin American Antiquity* 13:401–417.
- Costin, Cathy L.  
1991 Craft Specialization: Issues in Defining, Documenting, and Explaining the Organization of Production. In *Archaeological Method and Theory*, Volume 3, edited by Michael Schiffer, pp. 1–56. University of Arizona Press, Tucson.
- 2001 Craft Production Systems. In *Archaeology at the Millennium: A Sourcebook*, edited by Gary Feinman and T. Douglas Price, pp. 273–327. Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, New York.
- Costin, Cathy L., and Timothy K. Earle  
1989 Status Distinction and Legitimation of Power as Reflected in Changing Patterns of Consumption in Late Prehispanic Peru. *American Antiquity* 54:691–714.
- D'Altroy, Terrence, and Timothy K. Earle  
1985 Staple Finance, Wealth Finance, and Storage in the Inka Political Economy. *Current Anthropology* 26:187–206.
- DeMarrais, Elizabeth, Luis J. Castillo, and Timothy K. Earle  
1996 Ideology, Materialization, and Power Strategies. *Current Anthropology* 37:15–31.
- Douglass, John

- 2002 *Hinterland Households: Rural Agrarian Household Diversity in Northwest Honduras*. University of Colorado Press, Boulder.
- Earle, Timothy K.  
1994 Wealth Finance in the Inka Empire: Evidence from the Chalchaqui Valley, Argentina. *American Antiquity* 59:443–460.  
2001 Economic Support of Chaco Canyon Society. *American Antiquity* 66:26–35.
- Fash, William  
1991 *Scribes, Warriors, and Kings: The City of Copan and the Ancient Maya*. Thames and Hudson, London.
- Feinman, Gary M., Kent Lightfoot, and Steadman Upham  
2000 Political Hierarchies and Organizational Strategies in the Puebloan Southwest. *American Antiquity* 65:449–470.
- Feinman, Gary M., and Jill Neitzel  
1984 Too Many Types: An Overview of Sedentary Prestate Societies in the Americas. In *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory*, Volume 7, edited by Michael Schiffer, pp. 39–102. Academic Press, New York.
- Feinman, Gary M., Steadman Upham, and Kent Lightfoot  
1981 The Production Step Measure: An Ordinal Index of Labor Input in Ceramic Manufacture. *American Antiquity* 46:871–884.
- Foias, Antonia E., and Ronald L. Bishop  
1997 Changing Ceramic Production and Exchange in the Petexbatun Region, Guatemala. *Ancient Mesoamerica* 8:275–291.
- Gailey, Christine  
1987 Culture Wars: Resistance to State Formation. In *Power Relations and State Formation*, edited by Thomas Patterson and Christine Gailey, pp. 35–56. American Anthropological Association, Washington, D.C.
- Graffam, Gray  
1992 Beyond State Collapse: Rural History, Raised Fields, and Pastoralism in the South Andes. *American Anthropologist* 94:882–904.
- Hagstrum, Melissa  
1988 Ceramic Production in the Central Andes, Peru: An Archaeological and Ethnographic Comparison. In *A Pot for all Reasons*, edited by Charles Kolb and Louana M. Lackey, pp. 127–145. A Special Publication of Cerámica de la Cultura Maya, Temple University, Philadelphia.  
2001 Household Production in Chaco Canyon Society. *American Antiquity* 66:47–55.
- Hayden, Brian  
1995 Pathways to Power: Principles for Creating Socioeconomic Inequalities. In *Foundations of Social Inequality*, edited by T. Douglas Price and Gary M. Feinman, pp. 15–86. Plenum Press, New York.
- Hendon, Julia  
2000 Having and Holding: Storage, Memory, Knowledge, and Social Relations. *American Anthropologist* 102:42–53.
- Hirth, J. Kenneth  
1993 Identifying Rank and Socioeconomic Status in Domestic Contexts: An Example from Central Mexico. In *Prehispanic Domestic Units in Western Mesoamerica*, edited by Robert Santley and J. Kenneth Hirth, pp. 121–146. CRC Press, Boca Raton, Florida.
- Joyce, Arthur, Laura A. Bustamante, and Marc N. Levine  
2001 Commoner Power: A Case Study from the Classic Period Collapse on the Oaxaca Coast. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 8:343–385.
- Kardulias, Nicholas (editor)  
1999 *World Systems Theory in Practice: Leadership, Production, and Exchange*. Rowman and Littlefield.
- Lopez Varela, Sandra, Patricia McAnany, and K. Berry  
2001 Ceramics Technology at Late Classic K'axob, Belize. *Journal of Field Archaeology* 28:177–191.
- Marcus, Joyce  
1993 Ancient Maya Political Organization. In *Lowland Maya Civilization in the Eighth Century A.D.*, edited by Jeremy Sabloff and John Henderson, pp. 111–183. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.  
1998 The Peaks and Valleys of Ancient States: An Extension of the Dynamic Model. In *Archaic States*, edited by Gary M. Feinman and Joyce Marcus, pp. 59–94. School of American Research, Santa Fe, New Mexico.
- McGuire, Randall  
1983 Breaking Down Cultural Complexity: Inequality and Heterogeneity. In *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory*, vol. 6, edited by Michael Schiffer, pp. 91–142. Academic Press, New York.
- Moholy-Nagy, Hatula  
1997 Middens, Construction Fill, and Offerings: Evidence for the Organization of Classic Period Craft Production at Tikal, Guatemala. *Journal of Field Archaeology* 24:293–313.
- Paynter, Robert  
1989 The Archaeology of Equality and Inequality. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18:369–399.
- Peregrine, Peter N.  
1991 Some Political Aspects of Craft Specialization. *World Archaeology* 23:1–11.
- Peregrine, Peter N., and Gary M. Feinman (editors)  
1996 *Pre-Columbian World Systems*. Prehistory Press, Madison, Wisconsin.
- Renfrew, Colin  
1974 Beyond a Subsistence Economy: The Evolution of Social Organization in Prehistoric Europe. In *Reconstructing Complex Societies*, edited by Charles Moore, pp. 69–95. Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research 20, Chicago.
- Ross, Neil  
1997 Cores in the Periphery: Obsidian and Sociopolitical Hierarchy in the Naco Valley, Northwestern Honduras. Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Anthropology, Arizona State University, Tempe.
- Saitta, Dean  
1994 Agency, Class, and Archaeological Interpretation. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 13:201–227.
- Santley, Robert, and J. Kenneth Hirth (editors)  
1993 *Prehispanic Domestic Units in Western Mesoamerica*. CRC Press, Boca Raton, Florida.
- Santley, Robert, and Ronald Kneebone  
1993 Craft Specialization, Refuse Disposal, and the Creation of Spatial Archaeological Records in Prehispanic Mesoamerica. In *Prehispanic Domestic Units in Western Mesoamerica*, edited by Robert Santley and J. Kenneth Hirth, pp. 37–63. CRC Press, Boca Raton, Florida.
- Schortman, Edward, and Patricia Urban  
1994 Living on the Edge: Core/Periphery Relations in Ancient Southeastern Mesoamerica. *Current Anthropology* 35:401–430.
- Schortman, Edward, and Patricia Urban (editors)  
1992 *Resources, Power, and Interregional Interaction*. Plenum Press, New York.
- Schwartz, Glenn, and Steven Falconer (editors)  
1994 *Archaeological Views from the Countryside: Village Communities in Early Complex Societies*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.
- Sheets, Payson D.

- 1992 *The Ceren Site*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, New York.
- 2000 Provisioning the Cerén Household: The Vertical Economy, Village Economy, and Household Economy in the Southeastern Maya Periphery. *Ancient Mesoamerica* 11:217–230.
- 2002 Summary and Conclusions. In *Before the Volcano Erupted: The Ancient Ceren Village in Central America*, edited by Payson Sheets, pp. 197–205. University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Smith, Michael
- 1987 Household Possessions and Wealth in Agrarian States: Implications for Archaeology. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 6:297–335.
- 1993 Houses and the Settlement Hierarchy in Late Postclassic, Morelos: A Comparison of Archaeology and Ethnohistory. In *Prehispanic Domestic Units in Western Mesoamerica*, edited by Robert Santley and J. Kenneth Hirth, pp. 191–206. CRC Press, Boca Raton, Florida.
- Smith, Michael, and Cynthia Heath-Smith
- 1994 Rural Economy in Late Postclassic Morelos: An Archaeological Study. In *Economies and Politics in the Aztec Realm*, edited by Mary Hodge and Michael Smith, pp. 349–376. Institute of Mesoamerican Studies, State University of New York at Albany and the University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Spielmann, Katherine
- 2002 Feasting, Craft Specialization, and the Ritual Mode of Production in Small Scale Societies. *American Anthropologist* 104:195–207.
- Stein, Gil
- 1994 Segmentary States and Organizational Variation in Early Complex Societies: A Rural Perspective. In *Archaeological Views from the Countryside: Village Communities in Early Complex Societies*, edited by Glenn Schwartz and Steven Falconer, pp. 10–18. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.
- 1998 Heterogeneity, Power, and Political Economy: Some Current Research Issues in the Archaeology of Old World Complex Societies. *Journal of Archaeological Research* 6:1–44.
- Trubitt, Mary B.
- 2000 Mound Building and Prestige Goods Exchange: Changing Strategies in the Cahokian Chiefdom. *American Antiquity* 65:669–690.
- Upham, Steadman
- 1982 *Politics and Power*. Academic Press, New York.
- Urban, Patricia, Edward Schortman, Marne Ausec, Frances Black, Aimee Althoff, Bryan Robbins, Neville Handel, and Neil Ross
- 1999 Research at Site 128, Naco Valley, Northwestern Honduras. Poster Symposium given at the Society for American Archaeology meetings, Seattle, Washington.
- Webster, David, AnnCorinne Freter, and Nancy Gonlin
- 2000 *Copan: The Rise and Fall of an Ancient Maya Kingdom*. Harcourt College Publishers, New York.
- Webster, Gary
- 1990 Labor Control and Emergent Stratification in Prehistoric Europe. *Current Anthropology* 31:337–366.
- Wilk, Richard, and Wendy Ashmore (editors)
- 1988 *Household and Community in the Mesoamerican Past*.

University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.  
Wonderley, Anthony

- 1981 *Late Postclassic Occupation at Naco, Honduras*. Latin American Studies Program, Dissertation Series, 86, Ithaca, NY and Cornell University Press, New York.

## Notes

1. Administration: Recognized by the presence of ample open rooms that could accommodate sizable gatherings, possibly for council meetings. Residences: Usually recognized by the presence of benches at least 1.5 m long. Buildings so designated are also associated with a wide range of artifacts suitable for domestic shores (Table 3). Storage: Identified by the presence of rooms too small for any other known domestic purpose (< 3m<sup>2</sup>). Storage facilities may be associated with a wide or narrow array of materials, depending on contents, and might contain a shelf (a raised area less than 1.5 m long). Cooking: A term applied to areas of controlled, intensive burning, often associated with low, curved stone walls that may have been oven foundations. Work Station: Recognized by the provision of elevated spaces, presumably under a structure's eaves, where various tasks could be protected from the elements. Surface-level: Refers to a building erected directly on ground level; defined by stone foundations without a substructure platform.

2. Limited excavations at Structure 7, partly conditioned by its poor preservation, make it difficult to infer function.

3. Artifact categories were selected because they were sufficiently well-represented for intra-site comparison. Artifact numbers are followed by occurrences per m<sup>2</sup> in parentheses.

4. Fig. = Figurine; fired clay effigies of people and/or animals. Inc. = *Incensario*; apparent incense burner. GS = Ground Stone; primarily manos and metates used in food preparation. Cand. = Candelero; simply made, fired clay objects containing one or more chambers in which burning had occurred. Jewelry = Almost invariably simple ceramic pendants, beads, and earflares.

5. Stamp = Flat ceramic item with deeply molded designs, probably used in decorating cloth. Used/Worked Sherd: Vessel fragment whose edges are generally rounded through use or intentional shaping, probably used in pottery manufacture. Figurine Mold: Fired clay form used in the manufacture of ceramic effigies.

6. A third Terminal Classic edifice (Structure 410-Sub1) at Site 410 is not included. Slightly more than 11 m north of the principal patio, this badly preserved edifice was not sufficiently cleared to allow inferences concerning its uses; we are not even certain it was functionally integrated into the domestic round of Site 410's occupations.

---

Received March 31, 2003; Accepted November 23, 2003;  
Revised February 5, 2004.