

# THE ARCHAEOLOGY AND POLITICS OF FOOD AND FEASTING IN EARLY STATES AND EMPIRES



Edited by  
**TAMARA L. BRAY**

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of Food and Feasting in  
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**Tamara L. Bray**

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# Contents

<b>Chapter 1. The Commensal Politics of Early States and Empires . . . . .</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Tamara L. Bray</i>	

## PART I. OLD WORLD

<b>Chapter 2. Feasts, Funerals, and Fast Food in Early Mesopotamian States . . . . .</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>Susan Pollock</i>	
<b>Chapter 3. Pharaohs, Feasts, and Foreigners: Cooking, Foodways, and Agency on Ancient Egypt's Southern Frontier . . . . .</b>	<b>39</b>
<i>Stuart Tyson Smith</i>	
<b>Chapter 4. Feasting the Ancestors in Early China . . . . .</b>	<b>65</b>
<i>Sarah Milledge Nelson</i>	

## PART II. NEW WORLD

<b>Chapter 5. To Dine Splendidly: Imperial Pottery, Commensal Politics, and the Inca State . . . . .</b>	<b>93</b>
<i>Tamara L. Bray</i>	
<b>Chapter 6. From Stew-Eaters to Maize-Drinkers: The <i>Chicha</i> Economy and the Tiwanaku Expansion . . . . .</b>	<b>143</b>
<i>Paul S. Goldstein</i>	
<b>Chapter 7. Pots, Politics, and Power: Huari Ceramic Assemblages and Imperial Administration . . . . .</b>	<b>173</b>
<i>Anita G. Cook and Mary Glowacki</i>	



<b>Chapter 8. Feasting at Home: Community and House Solidarity among the Maya of Southeastern Mesoamerica</b> .....	<b>203</b>
<i>Julia A. Hendon</i>	
<b>Chapter 9. Aztec Feasts, Rituals, and Markets: Political Uses of Ceramic Vessels in a Commercial Economy</b> .....	<b>235</b>
<i>Michael E. Smith, Jennifer B. Wharton, and Jan Marie Olson</i>	
<b>PART III. CONCLUDING REMARKS</b>	
<b>Chapter 10. Clearing the Table: Some Concluding Reflections on Commensal Politics and Imperial States</b> .....	<b>271</b>
<i>Michael Dietler</i>	
<b>PART IV. EPILOGUE</b>	
<b>Feasting and the Practice of Stately Manners</b> .....	<b>285</b>
<i>Joan M. Gero</i>	
<b>Index</b> .....	<b>289</b>

## Chapter 1

# *The Commensal Politics of Early States and Empires*

TAMARA L. BRAY

Food and feasting are increasingly recognized as having played a prominent role in the emergence of social hierarchies and the negotiation of power and identity (Clark and Blake 1994; Dietler 1996; Dietler and Hayden 2001; Gero 1992; Goody 1982; Gummerman 1997; Nielsen and Nielsen 1998; Wiessner and Shieffenhovel 1996). The notion of ‘feasting,’ as used here, refers to a communal food consumption event that differs in some way from everyday practice (after Dietler 1996). Given the culinary nature of feasts, the use of containers for both food preparation and consumption is generally involved, a fact that increases the archaeological visibility of such events. The papers in this volume utilize culinary equipment as a window into the commensal politics of early states and empires, focusing on the question of whether and how food and feasting figured in the political calculus of archaic states. Using both New and Old World examples, the assembled papers offer particular case studies that serve as the basis for a comparative assessment of the role of feasting in the emergence and expansion of early states.

The focus on the political implications of culinary equipment and the role of feasting in imperial statecraft arises at the intersection of several current trends in archaeology, anthropology, and social theory. With the ascent of various post-processual approaches in archaeology, we have seen an increased emphasis on exploring the specificity of social structures, the meaningful basis of human action, and the active nature of material culture (e.g., Gero and Conkey 1991; Hodder

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1982a, 1982b, 1987; Shanks and Tilley 1987). Rather than emphasizing universal tendencies and pursuing prehistory at the level of macro-evolutionary processes, there is a growing interest in the “micro-politics” of ancient societies as negotiated in the arena of everyday life. The authors in this volume build on these ideas by examining how the broader political agendas of early states and empires were played out on the ground through the medium of food, feasting, and service vessels. With their focus on the social significance of state culinary equipment, these papers follow another important trend in the discipline that involves a movement away from typology-based approaches to archaeological ceramics that treat these materials primarily as indices of ethnicity, interaction, and time period (Braun 1983; Blitz 1993; Clark and Blake 1994; Potter 2000).

## THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF FOOD

The authors in this volume draw upon the theoretical insights of a specific genre of anthropological works that focus on food. The study of foodways has a long and venerable history in the annals of anthropology. Like sex, food has stood at the center of so many studies precisely because it is so fundamental to the reproduction of society. From early functionalist concerns with physiology and nutrition (Fortes and Fortes 1936; Richards 1932, 1939), to structuralist interests in the meaning and symbolism of food (Douglas 1966, 1975, 1984; Levi-Strauss 1966, 1969, 1978), to more recent explorations of the power of food to shape social identities, behavior, and relations (Adams 1990; Counihan 1988; Dietler 1996; Goody 1982; Mintz 1986; Weismantel 1988), anthropologists have amply demonstrated that a focus on food offers an important point of entry into the study of human relations on many different levels.

Within this genre, a number of works highlight the political dimensions of food preparation and distribution and the ways in which culinary practices reflect, respond to, and invoke political change. As Goody (1982) suggests in *Cooking, Cuisine and Class*, social hierarchies are often maintained through differential control over and access to food. In her ethnographic study of the Zumbagua Indians of Ecuador, Weismantel (1988) details how cooking, serving, and eating constitute important daily venues for asserting and negotiating identity and status. Other studies have demonstrated how gender disparity is constructed through food. In *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, for instance, Adams (1990) argues that male dominance is symbolized and celebrated through the eating of meat. These and numerous other works underscore the fact that food historically has been a both a strong component and marker of class, ethnicity, and status. They also suggest that cooking and cuisine constitute fertile ground for the generation of symbols used in the ideological and political discourse of any given society (see also Dietler 1996; Hayden 1990, 1996).

## FOOD AND IDENTITY

Recognizing that identity is not an essential property of individuals and groups but rather multi-faceted, dynamic, and situational leads to a consideration of how, where, when and with what identity is negotiated. Given its contingent nature, identity is understood to be rooted in ongoing daily practice and historical experience but also seen as subject to transformation and discontinuity (Jones and Graves-Brown 1996). As numerous scholars have suggested in recent years, consumption and material goods are intimately involved in the creation, maintenance, and manipulation of identity (see, for example, Bourdieu 1984; Miller 1985; Friedman 1994).

While the old axiom “you are what you eat” is a physiological fact, the statement encompasses a significant social dimension as well. How and what we eat is one of the fundamental ways we define ourselves as social beings and members of a given group. As suggested above, food and the manner of its consumption is one of the important indicators of ethnicity and class. As Dietler (1996:91) notes, the “potential of feasting and hospitality to be manipulated as a tool in defining social relations lies at the crux of the notion of commensal politics.” Though only one of many potential fields of political action, he goes on to suggest that hospitality is perhaps one of the most effective at disguising the self-interested nature of the process (*ibid.*).

## THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF FOOD

Various kinds of archaeological evidence can provide insight into the political dimensions of food, feasting, and culinary practices in ancient societies. Hastorf (1991), for instance, has analyzed paleobotanical remains and collagen recovered from human bone to consider how the diets of men and women in the central Andes were affected by their incorporation into the Inca empire. Dunbabin (1998:98) looks to the architecture of Greek and Roman dining rooms for insights into the commensal politics of these societies, suggesting that formal dining in the Roman empire was intended to express rank and hierarchy, while an ethos of egalitarianism was conveyed in the architectural arrangement of Greek dining. Various scholars have focused on zooarchaeological remains to get at questions of social class and the dynamics of power (e.g., Crane and Carr 1994; Gummerman 2001, 2002; Pohl 1985). Organic residues found inside ceramic vessels are being used to identify ancient culinary techniques (Hastorf and DeNiro 1985; Samuel 1996), while the art of ancient societies, as seen in studies of Egyptian tomb paintings (James 1984; Romer 1984), Sumerian cylinder seals and plaques (Schmandt-Besserat 2001; Collon 1987), and Moche and Nazca pottery (Yacovleff and Herrera 1934; Towle

1961), offers another source of information on banquets, feasting, and special foodstuffs.

The papers in this volume focus on the culinary equipment associated with early states. One of the points of departure for these studies is Braun's (1983) piece, "*Pots as Tools*," in which he urged analysts to look beyond style and consider the functional significance of pottery as well. Several recent works demonstrate the value of such an approach. Brumfiel (1991), for instance, is able to gain important insights into the impact of Aztec imperialism and local responses by directing attention to the functional significance of pots; Blitz (1993) finds a correlation between feasting activities and status in Mississippian society by focusing on vessel types, sizes, and distribution; and Potter (2000) similarly documents interesting changes in the political significance of feasting through time by analyzing pots as culinary equipment.

As suggested above, food is a basic element in the construction and maintenance of social relations of power and inequality. Emphasizing the political implications of feasting and culinary practices, the premise of this volume is that the cooking and serving equipment of early states can provide unique insights into specific strategies of imperial expansion and social control. The authors look particularly at the types of vessels that comprised the feasting equipment of the state and its representatives and consider the functional significance of these forms. They look at the features that characterized official state wares and consider how these differ from local or antecedent materials. And they consider the contexts in which official culinary equipment is found and the locations of state feasting events. By focusing on the functional, contextual, and stylistic attributes of ceramic vessels associated with early states, these papers collectively broaden the inquiry into the political and social lives of pots and the role of commensal politics in early states and empires.

## **ENGENDERING THE STUDY OF EARLY STATECRAFT**

Another source of inspiration for the theoretical orientation of the papers in this volume is recent scholarship in the area of gender studies. As Dietler and Hayden (2001) point out in the Introduction to their recent volume on feasting, the issue of gender relations, asymmetries, and transformations needs to be accorded greater emphasis in studies that focus on food, feasting, and the politics of cuisine. Several of the papers included here reflect this concern with engendering the study of feasting and culinary practices in ancient states.

In the earliest works to experiment with engendering the archaeological record, the studies tended to follow the conceptual and methodological contours of traditional disciplinary practices and goals (c.f., Braithwaite 1982; Gibbs 1987; Spector 1983). Not long thereafter, however, feminist scholarship began to inspire

new ways of looking at the old questions, which led in turn to deeper analyses of the conceptual frameworks within which these were embedded (Spector 1993; Watson and Kennedy 1991). Such traditional archaeological constructs as social complexity, population growth, the sexual division of labor, prestige, and the household began to be refracted through the lens of gender theory (e.g., Brumfiel 1991; Dobres 1995; Gilchrist 1994; Hendon 1997; Purser 1991; Whelan 1991). In problematizing these stalwart categories of archaeological knowledge, gender archaeology recasts them as local configurations of human social relations and makes it possible to imagine them as limited, contingent, mutable, and transient (as opposed to universal, permanent, and immutable) attributes of human societies.

Some have suggested that the use of gender as a conceptual and analytical category in archaeology entails a radical change in the scale of analysis. Conkey and Gero (1997:425; also 1991:15) have called specifically for a 'more peopled past' in which class, gender, factions, and other aspects of the social dynamic are considered at a more human, more intimate scale. Gilchrist (1999:29) notes that especially in Americanist gender archaeology, "a feminist epistemology has emerged that concentrates on the small-scale, on everyday occurrences and relations between people, on subtle shifts of power and the relations of production." This emphasis on individual agency and smaller-scale variability (as opposed to large-scale processes and meta-narratives) in gender archaeology is a feature that links it to other post-processual approaches. A gendered approach to the study of early statecraft shifts the focus to the micro-political level of human relations and social interaction, the place where the power of the state was actually negotiated and realized.

Various feminist scholars have argued that gender was essential to the creation of political hierarchy (Butler 1993; Gailey 1988; Gero 1992; Joyce 1998). In an insightful analysis of the Inca state, Silverblatt (1987), for instance, demonstrates how gender relations served as a model for the construction of a politics of dominance and subordination as the empire expanded. Several recent studies have also focused on the ways in which food figures in the construction and maintenance of unequal relations between men and women (e.g., Adams 1990; Corley 1993; Counihan 1999; Counihan and Kaplan 1998). If, as has been posited, food and feasting were important elements in the negotiation of identity and political power, it is critical to consider the issue of gender. In many cultures, food (and eating) is understood and experienced as a highly sexual and gendered substance (activity). Men and women often define their masculinity and femininity by claiming different roles in relation to food, and distinct attributes through identification with specific foodstuffs (Counihan 1999:9).

Given that the preparation and serving of food has long been associated with women, we need to consider how, in the context of competitive feasting and the amassing of political power and prestige, the shift from female to male control over

this domain was achieved, and the concomitant effects of this transformation on gender relations. In other words, given the dominant traditional role of women in relation to culinary practice, how were men in many cases able to effect the transfer of control such that the benefits of hospitality and food prestation accrued primarily to them rather than to their mothers, wives, and sisters? One possible suggestion is that the increasing importance of feasting and food prestation would have placed ever greater demands on women's time. Increased workloads in the area of food preparation would have potentially diminished their time available to participate in other social activities, such as ceremonial and ritual events where power and status were being negotiated, leaving them increasingly sidelined (see Hastorf (1991), Hendon [this volume], and Gummerman (2002:239) for examples).

With the rise of various post-processual approaches in archaeology, we have seen a trend toward greater concern with smaller-scale variability, individual agency, and the active nature of material culture. The idea that we might gain insight into larger cultural processes through the exploration of human interaction and relations at the local level is theoretically underpinned by feminist scholarship. Rather than emphasizing universal tendencies and pursuing an understanding of prehistory at the level of macro-evolutionary transformations, there is a new emphasis on the "micro-politics" of ancient societies as played out on the ground in social contexts informed by gender, status, and age differences. In the present volume, these trends translate into a focus on the people, the men and the women, who comprised the ancient imperial states. The politics of state rule is examined at the level of the social dynamics that pertained among the representatives and the subjects of the state. What did state-building look like locally and empirically? What were the interpersonal relational aspects of state politics that bound citizens of these formations into a coherent social unit? These are the more general issues addressed here via a focus on food, feasting, and culinary equipment.

## THE CASE STUDIES

The papers presented here encompass a concern with the political uses of material culture, the social significance of food and feasting, and the gendered construction of power. For comparative purposes, the authors have organized their contributions with an eye toward the following questions: How did food and feasting figure in the political calculus of early states and empires around the world? How do archaeologically discernible patterns of state feasting compare cross-culturally? Did the state elite typically seek to create recognizable social boundaries through the use of expensive foods, special culinary equipment or distinctive cuisines? Or, conversely, might food and feasting equipment have been used to obfuscate privilege and bind state subjects in asymmetrical relations of reciprocity?

The organization of this volume is geographical and roughly chronological. To begin, Susan Pollock investigates the commensal politics of the Early Dynastic period in southern Mesopotamia. While the study is based principally on the culinary equipment remains, she also incorporates iconographic and textual evidence. From her analysis of the ceramic assemblage, she infers a radical shift in political economy from kin-based self-sustaining units to the super-ordinate household entities known as *oikoi*. By focusing on the widespread distribution of mass-produced bevel-rimmed bowls and their successors, Pollock is able to offer insights into the types of political economic transformations occurring within early Mesopotamian states and their material manifestations. Like Nelson in the case of China, she also looks at the evidence for graveside feasting. Though Mesopotamian ideology surrounding the dead seems to have differed significantly from that of the ancient Chinese, the archaeological signature of the mortuary rituals in both cases appears quite similar and highlights the on-going importance of commensality between living and dead.

In Chapter 2, Stuart Smith offers a study of the Egyptian state that focuses attention on the micro-political processes of ancient imperialism. Through a far-reaching analysis that highlights ceramic materials recovered at the Egyptian outpost of Askut, Smith is able to provide new insights into the relations between state representatives and local populations in a frontier context. Tracking changes in the relative proportions of Egyptian to Nubian vessel types through time, he shows that a considerable degree of interaction and probable intermarriage occurred across the imperial border. His findings highlight the importance of integrating archaeological data with the ideological information transmitted by the state, and of engendering the imperializing process.

Next, Sarah Nelson considers how food, feasting, and special vessel types figured in mortuary rituals of the Late Shang dynasty, illustrating the way in which events construed as 'private' family ceremonies fit into the larger landscape of political power and social hierarchy. Nelson demonstrates how the Shang elite, through the medium of food and drink, endeavored to both create and then ingratiate themselves with the ancestors, who, in turn, would help advance the political agendas of the living. In this paper, Nelson offers an archaeological example of how the personal was also the political and an interesting twist on the strategies of commensality in early states.

Part II of the volume moves to a consideration of early states in the New World. This section begins with my own chapter, which focuses on the imperial Inca ceramic assemblage. In this study, the state assemblage is examined in terms of its functional and culinary significance. Information culled from ethnohistoric sources, archaeological reports, and ethnographic studies is used to draw functional inferences about Inca vessel forms and to outline the features of an imperial 'haute cuisine.' In the Inca empire, the relationship between rulers and subjects was largely mediated through the prestation of food and drink. Analyzing imperial Inca pottery



as culinary equipment highlights the links between food, politics, and gender in the processes of state formation. In this case, the study illuminates the important role of women in the negotiation and consolidation of imperial state power.

The next two chapters consider the imperial predecessors of the Inca, beginning with Paul Goldstein's work on the Andean polity of Tiwanaku. In his concise analysis of the Tiwanaku ceramic sequence, Goldstein argues that the emergence of this Middle Horizon state correlates with the development of a radically different corporate style and a distinctive new set of vessel forms, which he associates with the production and consumption of corn beer. Through a comparative analysis of subsequent changes in the culinary equipment from several different peripheral zones, he further posits that the expansion of Tiwanaku state hegemony was predicated on the introduction and subsequent embrace of this new culinary tradition. This compelling case study highlights the value of focusing on the functional significance of vessels as components of the total culinary assemblage. It also underscores the importance of integrating, rather than isolating, studies of the domestic and political economies in the context of early states, as do the contributions of Pollock and Hendon, in particular.

This chapter is followed by Anita Cook and Mary Glowacki's study of the culinary equipment associated with the Huari empire, Tiwanaku's northern counterpart and rival during the Middle Horizon period. Again utilizing the Inca as the comparative baseline for imperial feasting practices in the Andes, Cook and Glowacki analyze the evidence for the political uses of food by the Huari ruling elite. By integrating spatial and architectural data into the analysis of Huari pottery, the authors are able to identify a core state ceramic assemblage that is defined in terms of both style and ratios of specific vessel forms. Looking at the archaeological assemblages from Huari sites in both the heartland and the provinces, they are able to establish different patterns of feasting that they argue are linked to the creation and maintenance of power among the Huari political elite.

Moving to Mesoamerica, Julia Hendon offers another good example of the value of a micro-political approach to the study of power relations. Focusing on the Maya, she considers the role of feasting and food prestation in the political jockeying that went on among the elite lineages of Copan. Her focus on intra-site variability and differences in assemblages between Houses (a political entity that appears similar to the Mesopotamian concept of *oikos*) illustrates how 'fighting with food' was an on-going dynamic in the negotiation and maintenance of social identity, power, and prestige. Her study also incorporates an explicit concern with gender and the role of women in the commensal politics of Maya society.

In the last chapter, Michael Smith, Jennifer Wharton, and Jan Marie Olson examine the culinary equipment of imperial Aztec society. Their study highlights the importance of recognizing variations in the economies of early states and its affect on imperial processes and practices. In this particular case, while ample

documentary evidence exists regarding the importance of feasting in the negotiation and maintenance of political power, there is little archaeological support for the existence of a specific or exclusive state ceramic assemblage. Even though the evidence for state wares is lacking, the importance of food and feasting in Aztec state practices may nonetheless be discernible in the relative proportions of different vessel forms and sizes. As indicated in several of the studies presented here, the importance of alcoholic beverage consumption in state feasting events is registered in the high percentages of cup and bowl forms.

## FEASTING AND EARLY STATES

Ethnographic, ethnohistoric and contemporary evidence indicates that commensal activities are one of the primary arenas of social action. Indeed food, feasts and banquets have been implicated in significant ways in processes of social change and historical transformations. It is clear, too, that social identity and status are handily constructed and communicated via food-related practices and preferences. We may think here, as well, about the way in which social and political identities and aspirations, in turn, generate distinctive strategies of commensality and consumption.

The papers presented here constitute a set of highly contextualized and focused studies that address the role and significance of feasting in early states and empires. Using various lines of evidence to complement the focus on culinary equipment, including epigraphic, architectural, ethnohistoric, and osteological data, they all strongly suggest that feasting and food prestation was indeed an important element in the political strategies of early states. They collectively demonstrate that food practices were a prime way that states tried to simultaneously promote both allegiance and class distinction. They also show that the paramounts of early state societies engaged in commensal politics in multiple contexts that interlinked in complex ways. At the same time, they highlight the variability subsumed under the heading of 'commensal politics' and the different ways in which food and feasting were employed towards the desired ends of socially differentiating, asymmetrically obligating, and politically dominating members of the same and neighboring groups.

In sum, the collection of Old and New World case studies assembled here provides fresh insights into the strategies of statecraft and together take the archaeological investigation of early states and empires in new and important directions. Rather than simply looking at archaeological ceramics as signifiers of ethnicity, time period, or status, they focus on the active role of pots as functioning objects and the relationship between pottery and food in articulating, defining, and negotiating identity and power. While it is clear from these papers that not all early states

deployed food prestation and feasting in similar ways, it is nonetheless evident that in all cases the social practices surrounding food preparation, consumption, and distribution, were intricately bound up with imperial identities, ambitions, and agendas. These studies demonstrate how viewing archaeological pottery—one of the most enduring elements of the archaeological record—as a component of a wider set of technologies associated with food systems opens new windows into the commensal politics of ancient societies.

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**Part I**

# **Old World**



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## Chapter 2

# *Feasts, Funerals, and Fast Food in Early Mesopotamian States*

SUSAN POLLOCK

*“Theologian Excommunicates the Hamburger”*

In an interview published in an Italian newspaper in November 2000, the Rev. Massimo Salani declared, “Fast food reflects the individualistic relation between man and God introduced by Luther. . . . Lacking the community aspect of sharing, fast food is certainly not a Catholic model” (cited in the *Washington Post*, Nov. 18, 2000, p. B9). Billed by some as the excommunication of the hamburger, Salani’s remarks touched a raw nerve, provoking reactions that ranged from endorsement by some religious figures and those who oppose American-style fast food to indignation on the part of such international heavyweights as McDonalds.

Far from merely an amusing anecdote, Salani’s “war” against the hamburger and the flurry of reactions it provoked are testimony to the central role of food in culture. Food does far more than just satisfy biological needs; it plays a regular and active role in social, political, and religious life, in part *because* it is an inescapable necessity for all people throughout their lives.

In this paper I consider the politics of the distribution and consumption of food and drink as they contribute to state power and policies in the urbanized landscape of southern Mesopotamia in the Early Dynastic (ED) period (c. 2900–2350 B.C.). In particular, I focus on the ways in which food, drink, and commensality were used to resolve a dilemma faced by every state: on the one hand, how to forge allegiances

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to the state among people who have other affiliations and interests that potentially conflicted with those that state leaders and administrators sought to foster, and on the other hand how to create and maintain a stratified social order in which groups are distinguished by their relative access to privilege and prestige (cf. Appadurai 1981). I approach this issue by examining what I suggest are two extreme sides of food and drink-related practices that were closely connected to political and economic strategies of leaders in early Mesopotamian states: the distribution of rations and the bonds of dependency associated with this form of food distribution and consumption, and the exclusive contexts of elite ritual commensality as seen in visual imagery and burial ritual.

## **FOOD, DRINK, COMMENSALITY, AND THE STATE**

One of the significant political problems facing nascent states, empires, and other large-scale political organizations is how to create bonds of allegiance to the emerging large-scale political unit. Such allegiances must transcend existing local affiliations. The replacement or reconfiguration of local allegiances—frequently to kin-based units—is typically fostered through use of specific symbolism and rituals (Kertzer 1991:88–89). The creation of new allegiances alone is not enough, however. For at the same time as they try to bind people together through common allegiance to a new political entity, states also create and support deep and pervasive inequalities among their members which are upheld by promoting distinctions between and within classes of people (Bourdieu 1984). A prime means by which some states may try to achieve this delicate balance between simultaneously promoting unity and distinction among its members is through practices involving food and drink.

There are a number of reasons why food and drink frequently play crucial symbolic and ideological roles in all manner of social contexts. First, they are basic, constant, physical necessities, essential elements of life for all people in every society. Indeed, one might argue that food and drink are among the most mundane aspects of life. Because of the daily need for these elements, they can be a powerful means of social control: manipulating access to food and drink or to essential means of production can be translated into control over people. Second, food and drink are almost infinitely variable and subject to elaboration—not only what is eaten and drunk, but how it is prepared, served, and consumed. At the same time, food preferences and taboos are deep-seated. The ubiquity and necessity of eating and drinking, along with the multitude of foods and beverages one can consume and ways one can consume them, contribute to rendering food and drink “a peculiarly powerful semiotic device” capable of “bear[ing] the load of everyday social discourse” (Appadurai 1981:494). Food and beverage consumption also transcend the mundane and ordinary; indeed, food and drink as semiotic devices work at all scales from the humblest meal among family members to celebrations

among whole political units and, today, to the level of global political battles over food production (e.g., genetically engineered foods) and consumption (e.g., the “McDonaldization” of the planet). Food and drink figure prominently in rituals of all kinds, from rites of passage to religious rituals, and in many cultures they provide an important link between people and the gods (Appadurai 1981:496; Counihan 1998:5).

It is not just food or drink themselves that are important but especially their consumption as a social event. Commensality—the social context of sharing the consumption of food and drink—is a pervasive feature of agrarian societies, and there are typically strong rules that govern generosity and the sharing of beverages and food (Counihan 1999:14, 47). Commensality is one of the most profound ways of establishing social connections (Counihan 1998:3). The ways that food and drink are prepared, presented, and consumed contribute to the construction and communication of social relations, ranging from the most intimate and egalitarian to the socially distant and hierarchical (Appadurai 1981:494–496). Contexts of food serving and consumption can be used to foster solidarity or to promote competition as well as to support highly stratified social systems based on distinctions of gender, age, and the like. How one consumes is related to who one is (Bourdieu 1984). The mundane, communicative aspects of presentation and consumption of food and drink—what one might call “informal commensality”—contribute to social reproduction by reinforcing “appropriate” relations between people.

The pervasive and communicative features of commensality also make it politically malleable. What I will call “formal commensality” involves the manipulation of meanings associated with food and beverages through their presentation and consumption in the service of political, religious, and other social goals. Feasts are formal commensal occasions that have received increasing attention in archaeological literature (Dietler 1996; Gero 1992; Hayden 1996), but they are not the only examples of such practices. Rather, there may be multiple formal commensal contexts that are interlinked in complex ways, as I will argue for the Mesopotamian case. Indeed, the multiplicity of such contexts contributes to the effectiveness with which the social meanings of drink and food can be wrenched into the service of the state.

An intriguing example of how food practices in both their mundane and ritual/formal contexts serve to mark and help create a new sociopolitical system comes from the work of Feeley-Harnik (1994 [1981]) on Jewish and early Christian dietary rules and practices. She argues that meals “symbolize proper behavior among social groups” and between those groups and God (Feeley-Harnik 1994:2). “Who eats what with whom” expresses social, political, and religious rules, and kinship, class, gender, and age categories are distinguished by differences in foods consumed (Feeley-Harnik 1994:11). Jewish dietary laws are, according to Feeley-Harnik, both political and religious statements concerning exclusivity. By deliberately transgressing those laws, Jesus claimed that his message was universal and open to everyone, rather than restricted to those who observed certain dietary (and other) restrictions.

What foods and beverages are prepared and how, to whom and by whom they are served, with whom they are eaten, and in what settings, with what etiquette: all of these contribute to the meanings of commensality. But food must first be produced—grown or collected, hunted or husbanded, and transformed through various preparatory steps into what is considered edible. Understanding the meanings of food and drink must include more than their contexts of consumption; the political economy of food production not only underpins any study of its consumption but also contributes to the very meanings of that consumption, by, for example, creating the value of rare and expensive delicacies (cf. Brumfiel 1991; Sørensen 2000:112–113).

In this paper, I leave the archaeologically less well documented informal commensality aside and instead examine the political use of food in contexts of formal commensality in early Mesopotamian states.<sup>1</sup> I focus principally on the Early Dynastic period (c. 2900–2350 BC), although I will make reference to the preceding Uruk (c. 4100–3100 BC) and Jemdet Nasr periods (c. 3100–2900 BC) as well.

## MESOPOTAMIA IN THE ERA OF EARLY STATES

States emerged in Mesopotamia during the fourth millennium BC, known as the Uruk period, in the context of rapidly expanding settlement and the growth of towns and cities. By Early Dynastic times, the landscape of southern Mesopotamia was composed of numerous city-states, each consisting of one or a few major cities plus a rural hinterland. Surveys have revealed that by the later part of the Early Dynastic period only a small proportion of the population lived in small, village-sized settlements, and indeed urbanization seems to have reached unprecedented levels at that time (Adams 1981). Cuneiform texts, image-bearing artifacts, and other archaeological sources point to significant conflict: city walls, weaponry, and images and descriptions of violence abound. Strikingly competitive forms of burial display, including quantities of elaborate goods and even “human sacrifice” (Pollock 1991; Woolley 1934), complete the picture of a highly stratified society (see Nissen 1988, 1998:50–56; Pollock 1999; and Postgate 1992 for more in-depth discussions).

Mesopotamian economies were heavily agrarian, with an emphasis on the cultivation of cereals (barley and wheat) and raising of animals (especially sheep and goats, but also cattle and pigs). In the arid environment of the alluvial lowlands, agriculture was dependent upon irrigation. Even with an intricate network of irrigation canals, agriculture in Mesopotamia was always a risky and unpredictable venture. Larger corporate units may have had an advantage over smaller ones in that they could more easily absorb losses and store significant surpluses against future needs (Adams 1974; Powell 1994).

One of the puzzling features of the later Early Dynastic political economic landscape is the unprecedented concentration of people in large urban centers and

the scant traces of settled rural population. In this situation, workers presumably had to travel frequently from cities to the fields. It seems probable that at least during times of intensive agricultural labor, for example during harvest, some proportion of the workforce lived on a temporary basis in or near the fields. These field camps may have been sufficiently ephemeral that they have left little recognizable archaeological traces (Pollock 1999:72–73).

Cuneiform texts indicate that many workers neither owned nor had automatic use-rights in land. Instead, they were dependent on compensation in the form of rations from the institutions for which they worked, or they might enter into a tenant-farmer arrangement in which they were entitled to keep a portion of what they produced (Diakonoff 1969; Gelb 1969). In addition to restricted access to the means through which food itself was produced, the contexts in which food preparation took place also seem to have become more limited, as suggested in particular by the locations of ovens and hearths principally in temples and not in houses (Pollock 1999:123–148).

Although there are many ways in which food and commensality played a role in early Mesopotamian states, I concentrate here on two that represent extreme contexts of food use for political ends. The first of these is feasting, used, I will argue, principally as a means to distinguish exclusive contexts and styles of consumption in order to maintain social privilege and power. At the other end of the spectrum is what I call—partly tongue-in-cheek—the “fast food” revolution, in which the widespread distribution of rations became a way to create and maintain relations of dependency throughout the populace and to emphasize unifying bonds among members of the state.

## **FEASTS, FUNERALS, AND LIBATIONS, OR THE EXALTATION OF COMMENSALITY**

Feasts may be defined as events where communal, ritualized food consumption takes place and that differ from ordinary daily food consumption practices (Dietler 1996:89). Feasts, like other types of commensality, help to create and reinforce social connections and do so within a context in which distinctions among people can be emphasized and elaborated through the use of particular kinds of foods and beverages, serving equipment, and etiquette of seating, serving, and eating (Appadurai 1981; Dietler 1996). As with participation in any kind of ritual performance, taking part in feasts shows the participant’s assent to the social relations embodied in that ritual (Wolf 1999:21) and entails some understanding of the (unspoken) rules of how the ritual is to proceed.

Feasts in Early Dynastic Mesopotamia occurred on many occasions, involving different participants and different meanings. I focus my remarks on two kinds of representations of feasts. The first are representations in visual images. Secondly, I consider practices associated with funerals and post-funerary rituals as

**Table 2.1. Gender of Drinkers and Attendants in Early Dynastic-period Banquet Scenes (analysis is based on images of banquets in Selz, 1983).**

	Drinker	Attendant
Woman	152 (27%)	69 (20%)
Woman?	77 (14%)	13 (4%)
Man	229 (41%)	231 (67%)
Man?	99 (18%)	31 (9%)
TOTAL	557 (100%)	344 (100%)

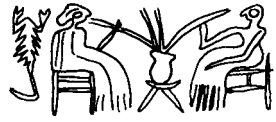
examples of representations, since they depict dead persons in particular, selected ways.

Visual images of people engaged in feasting are found on Early Dynastic seals (used as administrative devices), on inlaid items such as musical instruments, and on plaques that could be affixed to walls. These images, which have been referred to as “banquet” (or “symposium”) scenes (Amiet 1980; Frankfort 1939, 1943; Pinnock 1994; Schmandt-Besserat 2000; Selz 1983), depict one or more (most often two) people drinking together in a formalized scene; occasionally, they include tables loaded with food. When two participants are portrayed, they are usually shown seated and facing one another with raised cups in their hands or with a large jar equipped with straws situated between them (Figure 2.1). One or more attendants may wait on the drinkers, standing either in front of or behind them. The drinkers sit on stools that are depicted in a wide variety of styles. It is often impossible to distinguish the gender of either drinkers or attendants, but in the cases where discernible, males are found to slightly outnumber females in depictions of banqueters, and constitute a substantially larger number of attendants<sup>2</sup> (Table 2.1). For scenes in which it is possible to ascertain the gender of more than one banqueter, more than half include both men and women, approximately one-third include only men, and a smaller number have women only (Table 2.2). The overall pattern suggests that both women and men played important roles in whatever ritual feasts are being portrayed in these scenes and that they often engaged in these activities

**Table 2.2. Gender Distribution of Seated Banqueters in Scenes with more than One Person.\***

Men only	Women only	Men and women
58	26	118
29 %	13 %	58 %

\* Includes those scenes where the gender of two or more banqueters can be ascertained.



**Figure 2.1.** Banquet scenes: top row, seal from Royal Cemetery of Ur (after Amiet 1980: #1181) and seal from Khafajah (after Amiet 1980: #1171); bottom, plaque from Tell Agrab (after Boese 1971: Tafel 1).



together. In other words, banquets were not (depicted as) primarily gender-specific activities.

Some banquet scenes include more than two attendants and, rarely, more than three drinkers. In these scenes musicians and/or dancers may accompany the feasts. These larger-scale banquet scenes more often include food-laden tables than in the examples with fewer participants. One of the most famous of these feasting scenes is found on the “Standard of Ur” (Woolley 1934: Pl.91–93), a wooden box inlaid with shell, red limestone, and lapis lazuli. One side depicts a war scene and the other a banquet—presumably celebrating victory in the battle illustrated on the other side—presided over by the ruler. The banquet scene consists of three registers. In the lower two, a procession of men brings offerings including live animals and various burdens borne on their backs.<sup>3</sup> In the top register sits a man, presumably the ruler, who is clearly taller than all others. He holds a cup in one hand and is seated on a stool that features a bull’s leg as one of its supports. A male attendant stands before him; two other men stand behind him. Facing the ruler are six men seated on stools identical to the ruler’s; all hold cups in their hands. They are served by a male attendant who stands before them. Behind the seated drinkers is a musician with a lyre in his hands, and behind him another individual with hands clasped before his chest, possibly a singer.

Based on text references, albeit mostly from a few centuries later (Sallaberger 1993), as well as the stereotyped appearance of these scenes, it is likely that the feasting scenes depict a variety of rituals such as victory celebrations or religious festivals (Amiet 1980:127–30; Pinnock 1994:18–24). In most of the feasting scenes, the consumption of drink, rather than food, seems to predominate; food-laden tables appear principally in scenes with larger-scale feasts, as suggested by the greater number of attendants. Possibly, as Pinnock (1994:24) has suggested, drinking may stand for, or “summarize,” a commensal occasion. In Sumerian, the term for banquet meant literally “the place of beer and bread” (Michalowski 1994:29, n.6).

Archaeologically, some of the most commonly occurring ceramic as well as certain metal (copper, silver, and gold) vessels from the Early Dynastic period may have been connected to the serving or consumption of beverages. These include, for example, the ceramic “solid footed goblets” typical of the early part of the Early Dynastic period or the tall fluted cups found in some graves from the Royal Cemetery of Ur. In addition, depictions on shell engravings (for example, those that are part of the inlay on a lyre in Royal Tomb 789: Woolley 1934: Pl. 105) as well as mentions in somewhat later texts (Heimpel 1987–90:2) suggest that some open bowls were used for drinking. These probably included the ubiquitous shallow conical bowls that are among the most typical ceramics of the Early Dynastic period as well as more rounded forms in metal and semi-precious stone (e.g., Woolley 1934: Pls. 160b, 161–163, 174). Various forms of spouted jars, bottles, strainers, bowls, and ladles may have been used to dispense liquids, both for drinking and

for libations (Winter 1999:241–45). From text sources we know that pouring libations—usually of water, wine, or beer—was an important ritual act in association with rites honoring the deities or the dead (Homès-Fredericq 1987–90:7; Postgate 1992:99, 119–20) and that cups, bowls, bottles, and jugs were used to pour them (Heimpel 1987–90:2; Selz 1996). These various lines of evidence suggest that drinking and the dispensing of liquids may have held a greater symbolic and/or ritual importance than eating.<sup>4</sup>

The feasting scenes occur on artifacts that were seen and used by a relatively small and select group of people—musical instruments and other inlaid objects, relief plaques attached to walls in important buildings, and finely carved seals worn by and buried with people of wealth and high social standing (Pollock 1983b:183–84). The people depicted in feasting scenes were also a select, elite group. In that respect, the depictions parallel what we know of temple-based rituals and worship which seem to have been confined to members of the upper classes rather than being spectacles or participatory festivals for the populace at large (Oppenheim 1964:171–83; Sallaberger 1993). The dress, the stools, the gestures, the protocol and etiquette involved in banquets all bespeak a very specific clientele that shared the intricate knowledge of how to participate appropriately (Bourdieu 1984). The existence of sumptuous equipment—for example, metal vessels and drinking “straws” made of copper, silver or gold in the Royal Tombs at Ur (Woolley 1934; see also Müller-Karpe 1993)—strongly supports the notion that there were specific ritual occasions on which food and especially drink were consumed in a carefully prescribed manner. These were contexts in which both the consumables and the vessels and other equipment used in their consumption were designed to set the rituals and their participants apart from others.

In situations such as these where the audience for a set of images was to a large extent synonymous with the kinds of people depicted in those images, the material representations formed a sort of self-reflection of a particular group and their (ritualized and idealized) practices, of the ways they wished to be seen, helping in turn to shape the ways they acted (Joyce 1993:256–57). Ideologically, the images served as self-indoctrinations—to help maintain unity and coherence within a privileged group and to distinguish it from others (cf. Bourdieu 1984:56)—rather than an attempt to convince subordinated groups of the legitimacy or inevitability of their social circumstances. Feasts did not only distinguish elites from others, however, but undoubtedly also made distinctions *among* elites by gender, relative social position, and age.<sup>5</sup>

That the banquets depicted on reliefs and inlaid and engraved items were reserved for select people does not mean that all feasts were. Certainly members of the populace at large participated in some kinds of feasts; for example, texts speak of annual religious festivals in which the populace took part. But these large, public rituals were much greater in scale and almost certainly different in venue, consumables, and specifics of the procedures from the “elite” banquets—and hence

also in political meaning (cf. Gero 1992:26, n.12). The primary goal of feasting was symbolic and ideological and not one of “redistributing” needed sustenance to members of the population (cf. Gero 1992:24).

Commensality involved not only feasts among the living; it was also a feature of the rituals associated with the dead. Archaeologically, we know about funerary practices from burials and their accoutrements, which represent (parts of) the end result of funerals, rather than the whole ceremony. Information on other aspects of funeral rituals is supplied by texts.

A “proper” burial involved the services of a priest who was paid in grain, bread, beer and other items. Funerals for members of the upper classes included singers as well as numerous other participants, who, according to texts from the Early Dynastic state of Lagash, were paid in various types of bread and beer (Bauer 1998:558). Funeral rituals may in some cases have involved a sequence of stages, as suggested by some of the “royal tombs” at Ur, which exhibit a succession of depositional events in the filling of the graves (Woolley 1934:33–42) and the remains of what may have been ritual performances in the graves (Winter 1999). Rituals were not limited to the time of death; for important people there were libations of water and offerings of food at the grave for a long time thereafter (Postgate 1992:99). The pouring of libations and presentation of food to the revered dead might be understood to imply a sort of continuing commensality between the dead and the living.

The contents of graves indicate the importance of food and drink as part of the burial ceremony and/or as an accompaniment for the dead in the afterlife. It is important here to bear in mind that in Mesopotamian cosmology, the afterlife was at best a dismal affair, “where dirt is their drink, [and] their food is of clay” as so graphically described in the Epic of Gilgamesh (Kovacs 1989:65). The dead might act in a hostile manner toward the living, and the regular provisioning of the deceased with drink and food was necessary to avoid such an undesirable state of affairs (Weadock 1975; Bottéro 1980). Most Early Dynastic graves contain pottery vessels of various kinds, and some—especially those from the middle of the period (Early Dynastic II)—include tens or even hundreds of crudely made conical bowls and numerous spouted jars. Both Wright (1969:83) and Forest (1983:136) have suggested that the number of conical bowls might be related to the number of participants at the funeral. The quantity of bowls might indicate how many people the dead person’s family or institution could “afford” to invite to take part in the graveside commensality in honor of the dead person, or the number of people the deceased might try to win over through feasting in the afterlife. That the bowls were part of some kind of feasting ritual, placed there for their contents rather than (solely) for the vessels themselves, is supported by occasional finds of food remnants, including fruit (dates and apples), chickpeas, fish and other animal bones in the vessels in graves (Ellison et al. 1978; Forest 1983:136; Woolley 1934).

In addition to ceramic containers, some Early Dynastic graves contain stone and metal (copper, silver, and gold) vessels.<sup>6</sup> There is a complex relationship between the quantities and relative proportions of cheap, unadorned ceramic containers and the costlier and more elaborate stone and metal vessels found in graves.<sup>7</sup> In ED III times it was not uncommon for some burials to contain some metal and/or stone containers but to have few ceramic vessels, as in some graves from Khafajah (Delougaz, Hill, and Lloyd 1967) and from the Royal Cemetery of Ur (Pollock 1983b; Woolley 1934). Conversely, some graves from Ur and from Abu Salabikh (Steele 1990) that have stone and metal vessels—in the case of Ur, sometimes in considerable quantities—also have substantial numbers of ceramic containers. In the Royal Cemetery, some of these graves contained gold or silver drinking cups similar in shape to those depicted in drinking scenes, as well as bowls of gold, silver, and various kinds of stone, including occasional stacks of drinking cups. In some cases, vessels were found in the hands or in front of the face of the deceased, implying that she or he was meant to consume some drink or food from them. It seems that in some cases people who could “afford” to do so were buried with more valued vessels of stone and metal, which substituted for pottery. In other cases, where the deceased was buried with both stone and metal vessels as well as substantial quantities of pottery, it may be that the costlier stone and metal containers were for “personal” use whereas the ceramic vessels were relegated to (some of) the other participants in the funeral, who deposited their (used) vessels in the grave at the end of the ceremony.

In summary, both text and burial data indicate that most funerals were accompanied by a basic level of ritual that included the consumption of food and drink, using the undistinguished ceramics common at the time.<sup>8</sup> Vessels of stone—mostly limestones or calcite but, for the special few, lapis lazuli or obsidian—and of metal, with similar shapes occurring in copper, silver, and gold, were used to discriminate between those classes and individuals whose funerary feasts were “out of the ordinary.” The quantity of vessels is probably a measure of the number of participants the dead person’s family or institution could attract to the ceremony. In this way, commensality in the context of death rituals served primarily to distinguish people by the quantity and quality of the associated equipment and participants, although the common feature of consuming food and/or drink at a burial was a bond that cross-cut class lines. I turn now to the opposite end of the commensal spectrum, to a consideration of food distributed as rations.

## **FAST FOOD AND A NEW FORM OF COMMENSALITY**

The use of rations is well attested in Early Dynastic cuneiform texts (Gelb 1965), but the origins of ration systems extend well back into Uruk times. The so-called Archaic Texts, dating to the Late Uruk and Jemdet Nasr periods, contain

references to the distribution of rations (Charvát 1997; Englund 1998), and it has been argued that the ubiquitous beveled rim bowls that characterize Uruk-period sites were containers for measuring out and/or distributing them (Johnson 1973; Nissen 1970; Wright and Johnson 1975; cf. Chazan and Lehner 1990; Millard 1988). Although much scholarly attention has been focused on the allocations of food to dependent, “semi-free” laborers, cuneiform text references make clear that at least as early as the Jemdet Nasr period a wide range of people, from royalty to menial laborers and even the gods, were recipients of rations (Englund 1998:202–204). The major component of rations were foodstuffs, principally barley, though barley products (beer, bread, and flour), oil, meat, fish, milk, butter, cheese, honey, and dates were also distributed on some occasions and/or to certain people. In addition to food, wool and cloth were also regularly allocated. The quantities and types of rations a person received depended on their gender, age, and social position (Damerow 1996; Gelb 1965; cf. Waetzoldt 1987).

The distribution of rations must be understood within the broader economic context of early Mesopotamian states. I have argued elsewhere that the Early Dynastic period in southern Mesopotamia was dominated by an *oikos* type of economic organization (Pollock 1999: Chap. 5; see also Gelb 1972:90; Grégoire and Renger 1988). The term *oikos* refers to large, hierarchically organized households that owned land and other means of production, employed dependent labor, and attempted to produce most of what they consumed. In Early Dynastic Mesopotamia, examples of *oikoi* included temples, palaces, and large “private” estates. While *oikoi* played a major role in the political economy of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia, kin-based households also retained social and economic significance, and many people maintained ties to both kinds of households. In both Sumerian and Akkadian, the same word—*é* in Sumerian and *bîtum* in Akkadian—was used to refer to any kind of household, whether that of a family, the palace of the ruler, or the temple of a god or goddess.

The concept of the *oikos*—in ideal terms, a self-sufficient household whose members’ labor provided for all of the household’s economic needs—incorporates the notion of an institution as provider of all of its members’ basic necessities, including food. Access to the household’s products was accrued by virtue of membership in that household; people attached to an *oikos* were provided with rations during the time of their service to it. In some cases that service was permanent, but in other instances it was a temporary arrangement. Texts record the regular issuance of rations to all or most laboring members of an *oikos* including their heads, whether mortal or divine (Gelb 1965, 1979). In this fashion, the idea was reinforced that one’s subsistence depended on one’s attachment to a major institution, which *in name* did not differ from the “traditional” kin-based household.

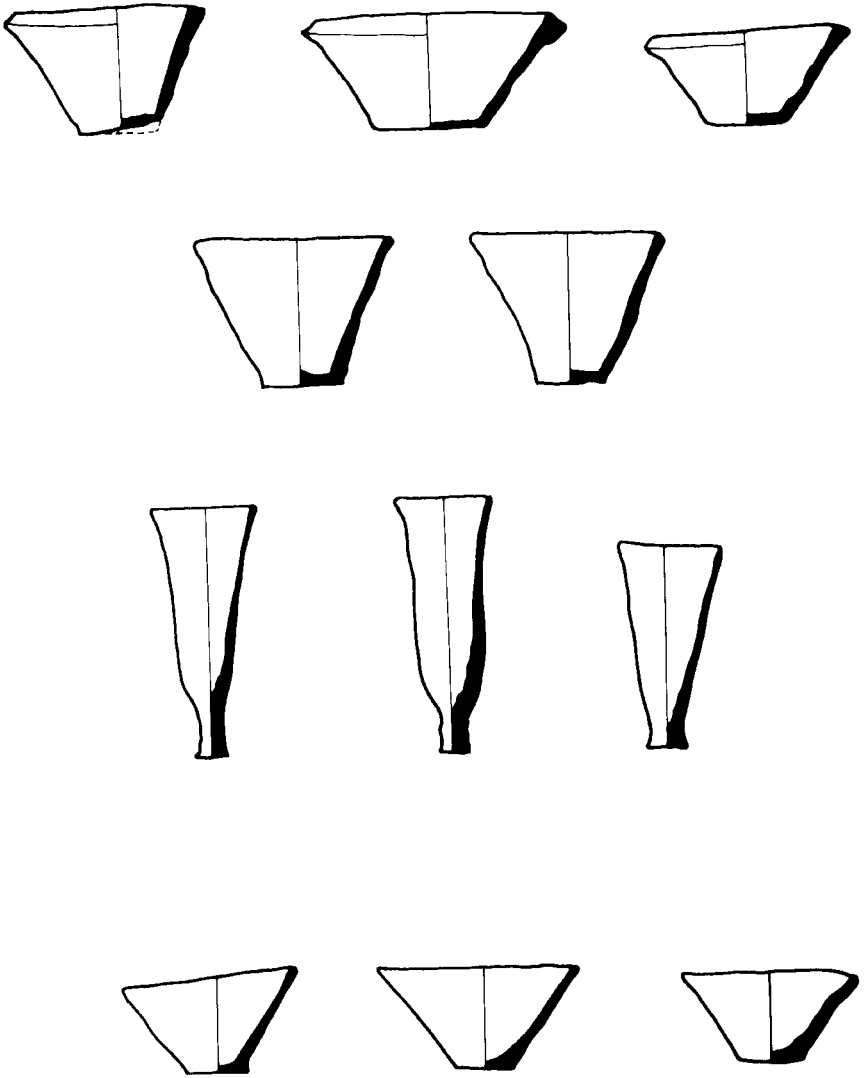
In addition to texts that record the disbursement of rations, archaeological evidence also points to the ubiquity of institutionalized distribution of food and drink within Early Dynastic society. Beginning in the Early Uruk period and continuing

without interruption through Early Dynastic times and beyond, Mesopotamian potters created a series of undecorated ceramic vessels that were produced—and discarded—in enormous quantities. These vessels—beveled rim bowls in the Uruk period, *Blumentöpfe* or coarse conical bowls in the Jemdet Nasr period, solid footed goblets in the early part of the Early Dynastic period, and conical bowls for the remainder of Early Dynastic times (Figure 2.2)—were mass-produced in ways that minimized the labor involved in making them and rendered them readily expendable. All of these vessels were frequently discarded while still intact.

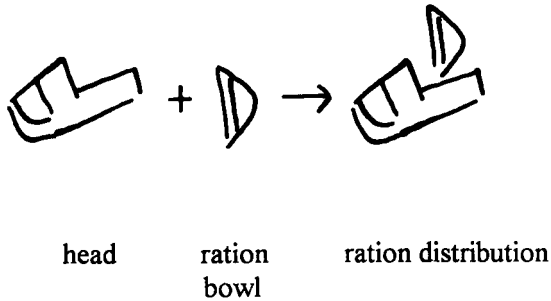
The use of expediently produced containers, especially beveled rim bowls, has been the subject of intense debate within the archaeological community (Beale 1978; Johnson 1973; Jones 1996; Nissen 1970). The arguments suggesting that they were ration containers rest upon a variety of evidence, which, taken together, seems convincing. It includes the enormous quantities in which these vessels are found; their expendability; their standardized shapes and sizes;<sup>9</sup> and similarities between the ideogram for rations in the Archaic Texts and the shape of beveled rim bowls (Englund 1998:126) (Figure 2.3).

Less clear is what the contents of these mass-produced containers may have been. Texts suggest that the principal form of rations was barley; Gelb (1965) assumes that this implies that it was unprocessed grain that then had to be turned into a consumable product (see also Englund 1998:202 on types of products distributed to state dependents). Chazan and Lehner (1990) and Millard (1988) have used parallels to Egyptian pottery and paintings to suggest that beveled rim bowls may have been used as bread molds, in which cases rations distributed in these bowls would have been a ready-to-consume product. Another possibility, although there is no direct evidence to support it, is that the barley was distributed in the form of a porridge or gruel, perhaps—especially in the warmer times of the year—already partly on the way to becoming a simple beer.

Although beer is mentioned principally as a special form of rations—disbursed on the occasions of festivals and to messengers—Piotr Michalowski (1994) has proposed that the large quantities of beer produced as well as the lack of other kinds of drinks might suggest that it was distributed and consumed more widely than the texts suggest (for a contrasting argument, see Neumann 1994). Indeed, the textual record may inform us about only one part of the disbursement of food and drink. Barley rations were distributed once per month, according to the written documents. Workers would have had to eat and drink on a daily basis, including during the course of the workday. Whatever was consumed, it was surely not unprocessed barley. One possibility is that institutional employers supplied drink and food *in addition to* the monthly barley rations (cf. Rosengarten 1960: 171–73). If such disbursements to laborers in the course of the workday were done as a matter of course—similar to distribution of drink and food at work parties that are widely known in the ethnographic literature—they may simply not have been included in the accounts recorded by scribes in the major institutions.



**Figure 2.2.** Mass-produced vessels: top row, beveled rim bowls (Uruk period); second row, coarse conical bowls or *Blumentöpfe* (Jemdet Nasr); third row, solid-footed goblets (Early Dynastic I); bottom row, conical bowls (Early Dynastic II–III). (Drawings after Postgate 1983: Fig. 15; Moon 1987: nos. 14, 28, 40, 97, 101, 103; and originals from Abu Salabikh in author's possession.)



**Figure 2.3.** Ideogram for “rations” in the Archaic Texts.

Alternatively, the barley rations allocated to workers may have served as an “account” against which workers could draw on a daily basis, receiving prepared food and drink from their employers which were deducted from the “balance.”

Relevant to the question of the contents of these ceramic containers is a consideration of the changing form and size of mass-produced vessels. Both beveled rim bowls and the coarse conical bowls that typify fourth millennium ceramics are wide and deep and could have held anywhere from one-half liter to more than three liters. The solid footed goblets of the early Early Dynastic, in contrast, held only small amounts—less than 0.4 liters—and their shape would have made them impractical for anything but liquids. Their use for liquid consumption is also supported by representations on seals and inlaid objects from somewhat later in the Early Dynastic period, which show individuals holding drinking cups that are similar in shape to the solid footed goblets. Early Dynastic conical bowls, while more similar in general shape to coarse conical bowls and beveled rim bowls than to solid footed goblets, became progressively shallower and smaller over time. These changes in shape and size suggest an increasing emphasis on small servings and the disbursement of liquids, which would have been especially important in the context of manual labor.

These ceramic vessels imply the mass distribution of foodstuffs and liquids, probably in many cases for on-the-spot consumption. The containers themselves, especially the shallower varieties, would not have been easy to transport when full, and their frequent asymmetry would have exacerbated the problem. They may have served as a concrete embodiment of a “fast-food mentality” in which foodstuffs were distributed and probably consumed “on the job” in the context of (alienated) labor for impersonal institutions. They may be part of a trend identified by Englund (1988, 1998:126) in texts from these times in which time, labor, and grain were deliberately conflated, so that workers were equated—at least in administrative terms—with their output (time and labor) and the rations (grain) needed to sustain them during their labor.



The distribution of food in compensation for labor—whether that labor was real or symbolic, as when kings claimed to have built a temple to an important deity—implies a radical restructuring of certain aspects of food-related practices and their place in social relations in early Mesopotamian states (Bernbeck and Pollock 2002). This restructuring came about through changes in the context and scale of food preparation, distribution, and consumption. In earlier periods, much food and beverage preparation and consumption probably occurred in domestic contexts, to judge by the frequent occurrence of most forms of vessels in such contexts as well as the presence of hearths and ovens for cooking (Pollock 1999: 83–85). Ceramic containers, especially those used for serving, were often painted, sometimes elaborately (Pollock 1983a). In contrast, with the advent of mass-produced pottery in the Uruk period, the preparation, distribution, and consumption of food and drink increasingly took place in non-domestic contexts (Pollock 1999: 123–37).<sup>10</sup> For many people from the lower classes, food rations may have formed a substantial—if not the entire—portion of their sustenance. Lacking use-rights in land, they were thereby rendered dependent in the most basic sense on the institutions for which they labored. This physical and material dependence was not the only change brought about by the emergence and consolidation of states, however. At the same time, contexts of commensality were profoundly altered so that food was acquired and probably also eaten together with those who shared similar circumstances of dependency, low hierarchical position, and alienated labor, rather than with kinfolk.

I suggest that these new contexts of distribution and consumption of food and drink were part of attempts to intentionally disrupt old patterns of commensality and social relations through the creation of new ones. The new ties were those of dependency rather than of intimacy or kinship. Ideologically, the notion that people of all social stations—and even the gods—received rations may have contributed to a sense that everyone was “in it together”, that everyone participated in laboring for the common good and received remuneration according to their contribution. That *oikoi* were identified by the same Sumerian and Akkadian terms that were used for domestic households may have been an attempt to identify the new arrangements with familiar, older ones. Although such ideological devices contributed to the sense that everyone was equally dependent on the *oikoi*, there were, of course, differences: what labor one performed, what one received as rations (barley and oil as opposed to dairy products, dates, meat, and fruits), the extent to which one depended materially as opposed to symbolically on rations for one’s sustenance, and the contexts in which one consumed one’s food, that is, one’s commensal partners. Yet, in contrast to the “language” of feasting discussed earlier, the distribution and consumption of rations seem to have aimed at promoting a sense of unity rather than distinction. Additionally, food dispensed as rations supported many people *materially* as well as bolstering ideological goals.

## CONCLUSION

I have tried to show the extent to which Early Dynastic state politics penetrated formal commensal practices at two extremes: in everyday meals distributed in the form of institutionalized rations and in the ritualized contexts of feasts for the upper classes. I have suggested that in these ways the political manipulations of formal commensality contributed to the creation and maintenance of social privilege and political power.

At the beginning of this paper I posed the question of how food, drink, and commensality contribute to the creation of new allegiances that bind state subjects together while at the same time helping to distinguish members of upper classes from others. This discussion of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia suggests two answers. First, at least two kinds of commensal contexts were used to emphasize different meanings: (certain kinds of ) feasts promoted distinction and thereby exclusivity, whereas the distribution and consumption of rations underscored commonalities among workers and even between classes. Although most workers may seldom, if ever, have been participants or even spectators at the lavish feasts of the upper classes, they would nonetheless have known something about them, even if only via rumors—the reports of the attendants, musicians, and others who served at banquets are likely to have made the rounds. Second, state policies worked to undercut the autonomy of existing social groups at both a material level—restricting access to means of production except through attachments to the newly emerging institutions such as the *oikos*. The result was attachments to state institutions as well as state-sponsored forms of commensality that were born of necessity and principles of exclusivity that were difficult to dispute because they had become ingrained among both participants and those who were excluded.

It is important in this regard to stress that the meanings of food, drink, and commensality are not just the results of beliefs or ideologies but also derive very much from *practices*. In the Mesopotamian case practice included commensality on the occasions of feasts and funerals and in the sphere of ration distributions. Practices serve to inscribe social relations and political realities onto “bodies.” Drawing on the work of Foucault and Bourdieu, Susan Bordo (1993:165–166) argues that bodies internalize cultural practices through the acquisition of habits, for example learning “proper” table etiquette. Bodies are thereby shaped into particular forms that serve to perpetuate such cultural constructs as class differences.

To more fully understand how Early Dynastic people were shaped through commensal practices would require investigation into the ways in which groups were attracted or coerced to adopt specific practices, thereby modifying or abandoning their accustomed ones. A compelling question that extends well beyond this particular case is how established systems of food sharing and commensality are broken down in the context of large stratified political units, so that some

people may be allowed to starve while others luxuriate in elaborate cuisine and unlimited quantities of food and beverages. Pursuit of this theme would also need to integrate in a much more detailed fashion the changing contexts and scales of food production and preparation. Consumption shapes and is shaped by production and preparation of food, but consumption is only the end result.

The focus in this paper on formal commensality and the political “dilemmas” of state leaders is a view from the top down. A more balanced picture of Early Dynastic commensal practices and their meanings would need to address the ways in which people sought to manipulate commensal occasions to try to bend them to their own ends and interests.

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## NOTES

- 1 Archaeology is well equipped to examine informal commensality through household studies and examinations of refuse, but this work has not been widely conducted on Mesopotamian sites from the fourth and third millennia. It must also be acknowledged that such investigations are likely to be more difficult in urban than in rural contexts, because urban practices of formalized refuse disposal may make it harder to connect the remains of food-related practices to particular households.
- 2 Gender can be recognized based on characteristics of dress or hair. Women in Early Dynastic images typically wear garments that cover one shoulder; their hair is often drawn together at the back of the head in various sorts of chignons of greater or lesser complexity (Selz 1983; Spycket 1954). Men wear skirts and are bare-chested. They occasionally sport beards; their hair—if any is present—may hang loose to the shoulders or upper chest; only rarely do men, who appear to represent extremely important individuals, wear elaborate bun-like arrangements at the back of the head (e.g., Woolley 1934: Pl.150). Many individuals are portrayed without any sign of hair on the head; although many of these may be men, I have not considered them as such except where confirmed by details of dress.
- 3 Early Mesopotamian depictions seem, in many if not all cases, to have been intended to be “read” from bottom to top (Hansen 1975:191; Winter 1985:18–19).
- 4 See also Michalowski (1994) for a discussion of the symbolism of drinking in connection with vassalage in later periods of Mesopotamian history.
- 5 I do not have the space in this paper to explore within-elite distinctions, except to note that scenes such as those on the Standard of Ur or Urnanše’s plaque from Girsu (Orthmann 1975: Pl.85) illustrate distinct differences in dress, gestures, and other attributes among individuals who are participants in the ritual.
- 6 Stone vessels appear to have played special roles in votive offerings to the deities, with the vessel itself being at least as important as the contents (Heinz 1989; Potts 1989, 1994). Although they are found in graves, many of the elaborately decorated or inscribed examples—the latter typically with formulaic dedications to a deity—are found in temple precincts. Their value is clearly attested by the fact that they were retained even when broken (Potts 1989:126).

- 7 All metal and most stone had to be imported to the alluvial lowlands. Clay was, however, locally available and abundant.
- 8 Texts offer no insight into the funerals of the poorer classes. Even archaeological evidence may not show us how those who were worst off in Early Dynastic society were buried, but there are enough examples of graves with no accompanying grave goods or, at most, a pot or two to make clear that many people were probably not afforded a “proper” burial.
- 9 Debate has raged as to whether the sizes of beveled rim bowls are actually standardized (e.g. Beale 1978; Johnson 1973; LeBrun 1980). However, consistent ration sizes need not have required vessels of precisely the same size (Jones 1996).
- 10 There are indications, however, of earlier forms of crude, mass-produced vessels in parts of northern Mesopotamia—the so-called Coba bowls (Frangipane 1996:147–52)—that precede the Uruk period and the emergence of states.

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## Chapter 3

# *Pharaohs, Feasts, and Foreigners*

## **Cooking, Foodways, and Agency on Ancient Egypt's Southern Frontier**

STUART TYSON SMITH

Previous investigations of Egyptian imperialism have focused principally on the policies of pharaoh and his close advisors to the exclusion of other data. But archaeological evidence indicates that Egyptian frontier communities did more than simply implement central policy. In this paper, I present an analysis of cooking and serving assemblages from the Nubian fortress of Askut that illustrates the role of individual agency in the day to day cross-border interactions that characterized frontier life. The study demonstrates that Egyptians and Nubians collaborated and may have intermarried in spite of a politically charged ideology of separate identities and otherness.

In historical studies of ancient empires, there is a tendency to view imperial frontiers as absolute and impermeable boundaries that separated insiders from ethnically distinct outsiders. This impression is typically reinforced by the decrees and proclamations of the rulers. Such is the case with ancient Egypt. Modern archaeology, however, reconstructs the reach and influence of

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ancient empires based on patterns of material culture as well as other elements such as architecture, art, and written records. To better understand how identities were manifest and deployed at imperial borders, I examine the ceramic materials found on Egypt's southern frontier with Nubia for insights into foodways, juxtaposing this data with the historical information offered on Egyptian and Nubian identities and relations. Foodways, defined as "modes of feeling, thinking, and behaving about food that are common to a cultural group" (Simoons 1967:3), may be accessed archaeologically through the functional analysis of cooking, serving and storage vessels. Such an approach provides insights into ethnic identity, hierarchy, and social relations within and between groups (Wood 1995).

Some anthropologists suggest that rather than expressing identity, food choices primarily reflect nutritional and biological needs (Harris 1985). Most, however, argue that while nutrition is important, the kind of food eaten, its manner of preparation, and the modes of consumption have a social significance that transcends biological necessity and relates more to the construction of identity and status (Goody 1982). While various forms of feasting are used to create and reinforce social distinctions (Dietler 1990), foodways also serve to bind individuals in larger social groups through shared understandings of cultural conventions (Wood 1995).

The views of imperial identity and cultural boundaries given in Egyptian monumental texts and art construct a strict distinction between inner civilization and outer barbarism. This is the view from the center, but what was the reality of day to day interactions of Nubians and Egyptians on Egypt's southern frontier? Previous investigations interpret Egyptian imperialism through the lens of the policies concocted by pharaoh and his close advisors, based on texts and artwork created by and for the Pharaonic state (e.g., Kemp 1978, 1997). Did Egyptian frontier communities do more, however, than simply implement central policy? As Driessen (1992) observes, individual agency can weigh more heavily than the pronouncements of administrators and ideologues in the day to day interactions that characterize frontier life. What role did individuals play in determining imperial interactions and outcomes between ancient Egypt and Nubia?

In what follows, I provide first a broad historical outline of the changing fortunes of Egypt's empire and interactions with Nubia from c. 2040–656 B.C. (Table 3.1). I then examine the dynamics of the frontier communities on the Egyptian-Nubian border through a carefully contextualized analysis of ceramics from the Egyptian colonial fortress of Askut located at the second cataract of the Nile. Finally, I consider the local interactions that helped shape larger scale geopolitics and attempt to reconcile the apparent contradictions between actual practice reflected in the archaeological evidence and imperial policy and ideology as given in royal inscriptions.

**Table 3.1. Egyptian and Nubian Political Chronology.**

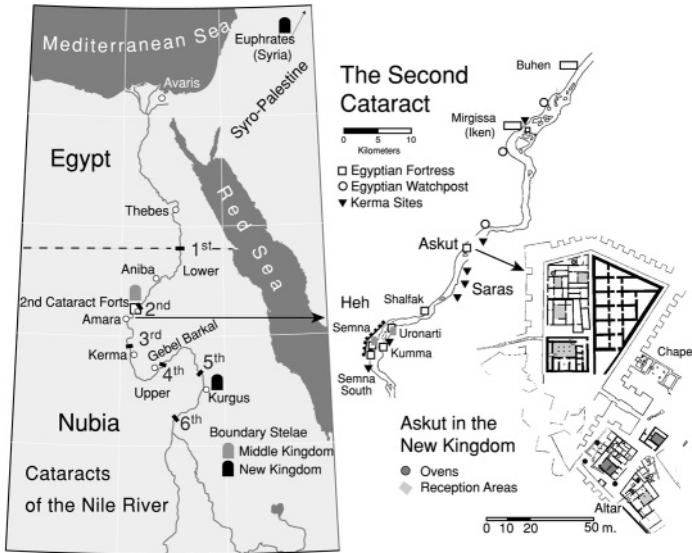
Dates	Egypt	Lower Nubia	Upper Nubia
2040–1650 B.C.	Middle Kingdom Dynasties 11–13	Egyptian Colony	Kerma Complex Chieftdom
1650–1550 B.C.	Second Intermediate Period Dynasties 14–17	Kerman Colony	Kerman State (until 1500)
1550–1050 B.C.	New Kingdom Dynasties 18–20	Egyptian Colony	Egyptian Colony
747–656 B.C.	Late Period Napatan Colony Dynasty 25	Napatan Colony/State	Napatan State (from 850 B.C. or earlier)

## EGYPT AND NUBIA: THE COURSE OF EMPIRE

As the Egyptian empire expanded south during the Middle Kingdom, firm international borders were established that delineated the extent of Egyptian conquests. During the Middle Kingdom in both the Nile delta to the north and second cataract to the south, Egyptian forces established impressive fortifications manned by military garrisons to create a hardened frontier. During the New Kingdom, from the Euphrates in the north to the fifth cataract to the south, triumphal stelae symbolizing “the pharaoh’s constant, watchful presence even at the farthest corners of his lands and dissuaded potential enemies from overstepping the boundary” (Hornung 1992:75) (Figure 3.1). Texts from both periods show that the movement of people, animals, and goods across these borders was monitored and controlled.

### The Middle Kingdom, c. 2040–1650 B.C.

Around 2000 B.C., pharaohs of the newly established Middle Kingdom sent armies south into lower Nubia, establishing control of the area between the first and second cataracts of the Nile. Over the next 200 years they built and expanded a series of massive fortresses at key population centers of the lower Nubian C-Group along the Nile and especially at the second cataract, where a series of eight fortresses created a formidable hardened frontier. These fortresses were massively constructed, perhaps as Adams (1977) has suggested partly as an expression of royal power and authority dominating the landscape and marking the limits of Egyptian control. This is reflected in the bellicose names of the forts, as for instance in the case of Askut, or Djer-Setiu, which means “Destroyer of Nubians.”



**Figure 3.1.** Map of the Egyptian empire and Askut fortress.

The construction of this physically impressive border at the second cataract culminated during the reign of Senwosret III (c. 1850 B.C.). He not only completed the fortress system, but also marked the boundary with a statue and stelae setting out detailed restrictions on who and what could pass the frontier (Koenigliche Museen zu Berlin 1913:255 f.; Smith 1995):

Southern Boundary made in Year 8 under the Majesty of KhakauRe, may he be given life for ever and ever; in order to prevent all Nubians passing downstream by water or land, in a ship or with any cattle, except when a Nubian comes to trade at Iken or on a commission. Do any good thing with them; but do not allow a Nubian boat to travel downstream past Heh, forever.

Monumental texts like this one cannot be taken at face value without supporting evidence (Carneiro 1992; Redford 1979). After all, Senwosret's edict could be merely posturing meant to bolster his prestige, and, of course, there is no guarantee that the limits were actually enforced after his death, although just to make sure, he included a lecture to his descendants (Hornung 1992:75; Koenigliche Museen zu Berlin 1913):

Each of my sons who maintains the border that My Majesty has set is my son and is born of My Majesty. The exemplary son protects his father and maintains the boundary of his begetter. He who lets it decline and will not defend it is not my son and is not born of me . . . He who lets himself be driven back from his border is a true coward.

Later pharaohs (and the bureaucrats who actually implemented imperial policy) apparently listened. The fortresses appear to have been well maintained and supplied with huge caches of weaponry for at least another 150 years (Smith 1995). The presence of an elaborate system of administrative sealing attests to local and central control over the supply and flow of goods to the fortresses (Smith 1990, 1995, 1996). A papyrus found at Thebes, Egypt's southern capital, contains a series of dispatches reporting that even small groups of natives were tracked through the desert. They also show that any Nubians not on legitimate business were turned away, in spite of their willingness to serve the Egyptians (Smither 1945).

When fully manned, the fort system could deal with any military threat, but Egypt's Middle Kingdom empire eventually fell to the growing power of the Hyksos in the Nile delta to the north and Kerma to the south. Originally considered a relatively simple chiefdom, recent excavations have shown that by circa 1700 B.C., Kerma was a power to be reckoned with (Bonnet 1990; O'Connor 1993). This capital city contains all the hallmarks of an early state, including a large fortified urban center with monumental architecture, central storage, institutions involved in the production of food for redistribution, and evidence for marked social differentiation both within the settlement and in the cemetery, where up to 400 sacrificial victims accompanied one Kerman ruler of Kush into the afterlife (Gues 1991; Reisner 1923).

## Second Intermediate Period, c. 1650–1550 B.C.

The old imperial boundaries of the Middle Kingdom proved surprisingly resilient under the new Nubian regime. Egypt's southern political border shifted back to the north, or perhaps better said Kerma's boundary expanded northwards to the first cataract. Archaeologically, Kermans are attested in small numbers in lower Nubia through their distinctive material culture and burial practices (Gratien 1978), but the new Kerman lower Nubian colony was run by administrators like Ka and Sepedhor of Buhen, the descendants of the Egyptian colonists who had established the Middle Kingdom fortress system over one hundred years before (Smith 1995). Their stelae indicate clearly that they had shifted their allegiance from pharaoh to the Kerman ruler of Kush:

The Nobleman Ka . . . says: I was a valiant servant of the Ruler of Kush; I washed my feet in the waters of Kush among the retainers of the ruler Nedjeh, and I returned safe and sound to my family. The Commandant of Buhen, Sepedhor . . . says: I was a valiant Commandant of Buhen, and never did any commandant do what I did; I built the temple of Horus, Lord of Buhen, to the satisfaction of the Ruler of Kush (Säve-Söderbergh 1949:55).

## The New Kingdom, c. 1550–1050 B.C.

Resurgent under the militaristic pharaohs of the New Kingdom, the Egyptian state again expanded southward, reconquering lower Nubia in 1550 B.C. and sacking Kerma itself in 1500 B.C., establishing a new southern boundary at Kurgus near the fifth cataract, and pushing as far north as the Euphrates in western Asia. Again the old administrative boundaries keyed to the cataracts proved highly durable. The administration of Nubia was placed under a single official, the Viceroy of Kush. Lower and upper Nubia, however, were each administered by a Deputy (Adams 1977). The degree of direct control imposed by Egypt under the new colonial regime correlates directly with the distance and difficulty of travel, and the complexity of the existing native polity, as suggested by Stein's (1999) distance-parity model. Thus, lower Nubia, with its proximity and relatively small population and ease of access was fully incorporated into Egyptian political, social and economic systems in a massive acculturation effort.

In the northern sector of upper Nubia between the second and third cataracts a series of "temple towns" were constructed in a pattern reminiscent of the original Middle Kingdom approach to lower Nubia. Large state temple complexes in each of these new semi-fortified settlements provided an institution for state administrative and economic control. In upper Nubia south of third cataract, Egyptian settlements are rare and keyed to strategic control of the river and trade routes (Edwards 1994). There is no evidence for formal control of the area between the fourth cataract and the official imperial boundary at Kurgus, where the harsh climate and rugged terrain apparently restricted human occupation. The Viceroy of Kush administered the entire colony from Thebes. Two deputies drawn from the C-Group and Kerman elite exercised authority over lower and upper Nubia respectively. The northern deputy was based at Aniba, founded in the Middle Kingdom, while the southern Deputy was based at Amara, one of the new "temple towns" (Adams 1977; Kemp 1978; O'Connor 1993).

## Napata and the Late Period

After the collapse of the New Kingdom empire c. 1050 B.C., there is increasing evidence that lower Nubia was not completely abandoned as had been previously thought (Adams 1977; Török 1998). Rather, it appears to have been at least a lightly occupied border zone between Egypt and the rising power of the Napatan kingdom of Kush. By c. 850 B.C., a strong ruler emerged at Gebel Barkal (Napata). By c. 750 B.C., these Napatan kings had conquered Egypt. They depicted themselves as the 'saviors' of Egyptian civilization, emulating in a comprehensive yet still selective way, Egyptian religious, political (especially royal) and domestic practices. The Napatan pharaohs of Egypt's 25th Dynasty became major players in Near Eastern politics, vying for a hundred years for control of Syro-Palestine with

the Neo-Assyrian empire, which in 657 B.C. conquered Egypt but not Nubia. This dynamic interaction between Nubian and Egyptian culture continued over 1000 years until the end of the last Nubian pharaoh's reign in A.D. 300.

## CERAMICS AND INTERACTION ON THE NUBIAN FRONTIER

The above discussion suggests that Egyptian boundaries were conceived of as absolute by the state. Although they changed over time and incorporated a considerable degree of cultural diversity, imperial borders were enforced by the threat of punishment or death for those who did not respect them. Egyptian representations of foreigners drew sharp distinctions between Egyptians and the peoples who surrounded them. Yet while pharaohs and bureaucrats dictated imperial policy from the center, it was the Nubian and Egyptian men and women on the frontier who either did or did not enact state ideology.

Recent studies suggest that imperial boundaries are and were more permeable than the pronouncements of governments assert (Driessen 1992). Did colonists, through their own actions, exert more influence on the nature and pace of cross-cultural relations on far-flung imperial frontiers than official policy from the capital at Thebes? In this section, I look at Nubia as a controlled but dynamic zone of contact and interaction between two powerful states and distinctive cultures, ancient Egypt and Kush (Kerma). I begin with a consideration of the role of ceramics as culinary equipment in feasting and how these elements were deployed in the negotiation of status and identity. Archaeological evidence from the Egyptian fortress of Askut in lower Nubia illustrates how pottery can inform upon the construction of political allegiances and identities within a colonial context.

### **Egyptian and Nubian Pottery**

Imperial Egyptian and Nubian ceramic traditions are dramatically different (Figures 3.2 and 3.3). Although both cultures used ceramics in public and private feasts, pottery seems to have been valued differently in the Egyptian and Nubian states. Throughout the Egyptian predynastic period, ceramics were elaborately decorated and used to create and reinforce status differences through display at burial. There is also evidence that fine ware ceramics were used in the same way during feasting. The importance of pottery changes through time, however, with Egyptian wares becoming markedly more mundane during the dynastic period. In Nubian society, however, fine ware vessels appear to have been recognized as status objects from early on and maintain their elite symbolic connotations.

The use of large scale religious feasts as displays of ruling power and authority began during Egypt's formative period and set a precedent that continued throughout ancient Egyptian history (Wilkinson 2000:95–99). Trash deposits that

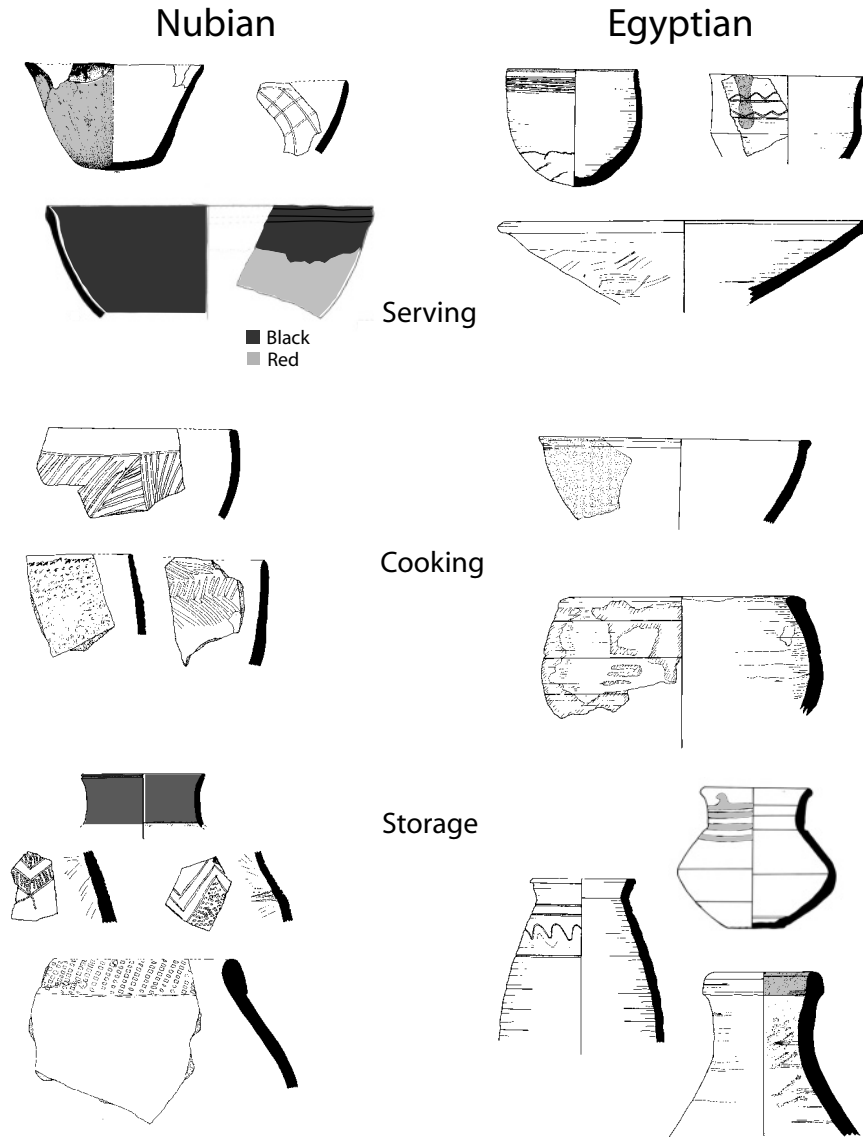


Figure 3.2. Nubian and Egyptian pottery.

include large quantities of animal bone and pottery have been recovered around the great open space that served as the main ritual complex at the late Predynastic urban center of Hierakonpolis (Adams 1995). In later times, historical and pictorial records indicate that feasting was conducted on immense scales, as in the case



**Figure 3.3.** Classic Kerma and New Kingdom Egyptian Fine Ware.

of the great Opet festival at Luxor Temple in Thebes, which, by the end of the New Kingdom, was celebrated for an entire month. Painted scenes at Luxor also record elaborate processions, the preparation of vast quantities of food, the kingly presentation of awards and luxury items, and the subsequent redistribution of the food offerings made in temples to the general public (Kemp 1989; Wilkinson 2000).

Feasting was apparently conducted both by the state and private individuals, sometimes in connection with religious festivals and sometimes on their own (Ikram 2000). In the New Kingdom, King Horemheb hosted a monthly feast for the elite of his court. Thousands of wine amphorae from the king's jubilee celebrations were discovered across the river from Thebes in trash deposits around Amenhotep III's palace at Malqata (Hope 1978). Wine apparently flowed so freely at these events that the servants appear to have lopped off the tops of the jars rather than taking the time to open the seals. Private banquets probably took place to celebrate or commemorate important events such as births and birthdays, deaths, marriages, and the like. The etiquette of dining, on one hand, embodied the social order (Goody 1982; Wood 1995) but on the other allowed for the negotiation of social position through display.

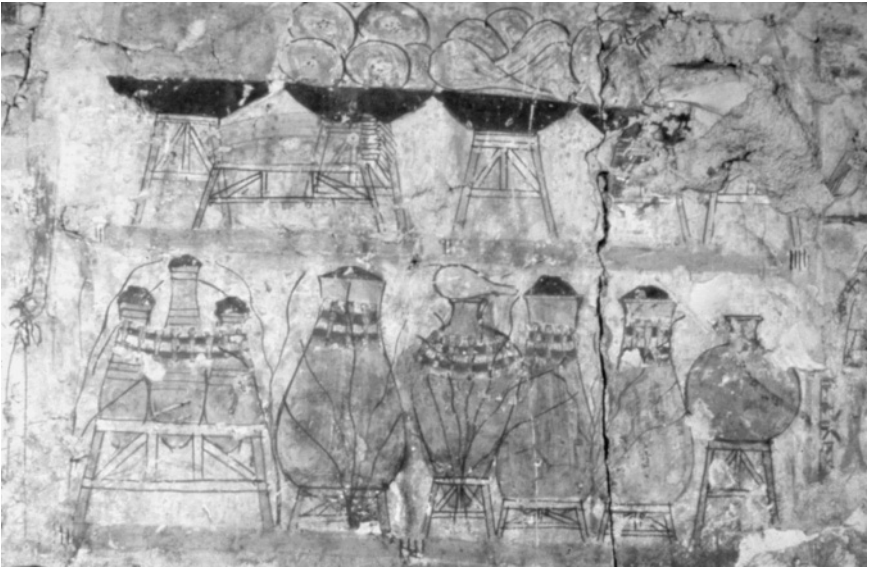
Tomb scenes, for example, imply that seating was hierarchical, with higher status individuals seated on chairs near the hosts, the lowest status kneeling on reed mats. On the other hand, the wealthy could enhance their position through hosting elaborate feasts. Artistic scenes depicting these events show musicians



and dancers and a vast array of luxurious foods and alcoholic beverages; they even graphically show the results of over indulgence, with people vomiting or passing out after eating and drinking too much! Guests dined on roasted meats, stews, various kinds of sweet and savory breads, fresh and cooked vegetables, and fruit and honeyed dishes for dessert (Ikram 2000).

Ceramics clearly played an important role in the feasting events depicted. Shortly after the official unification of the Egyptian state, however, around 3000 B.C., the decoration of Egyptian pottery becomes simplified, and ceramic wares are replaced as a marker of status by vessels made of metal and stone (Bourriau 1981). Even so, it is clear that ceramics continued to play an important role in public and private feasts with pottery cups, bowls and platters constituting elements of less wealthy contexts, and the larger storage vessels used at feasts often being decorated with garlands or specially painted (Figure 3.4; also Ikram 2000; Redmount 2000).

During the dynastic period, both simple deep bowls and platters continue to be used in food preparation. Most Egyptian pottery during this era was utilitarian in character and mass-produced using a slow wheel. Finishing was often minimal and the appearance of vessels crude and utilitarian. Some vessels were finished with care but decoration was primarily limited to the occasional appearance of polished surfaces, simple painted designs, and incised motifs (Bourriau 1981; Lacovara 2000). At the fortress site of Askut, the presence of wasters and fragments of



**Figure 3.4.** Bowls and Jars on display at a feast, from the tomb of Khnummose at Thebes (c. 1350 B.C.).

unfired vessels indicate that pottery was produced there on a small scale. The majority of pottery from this outpost, however, was undoubtedly imported from workshops associated with larger settlements (Lacovara 2000; Redmount 2000).

In contrast, Nubian wares apparently played a central role in elite display within the Kerma civilization. Contemporary Nubian ceramics are handmade with elaborate incised and impressed decoration and include high quality black-topped and red polished wares (Bourriau 1981; Gratien 1978). The distinctive beakers and bowls were very thin (about 2 mm), polished to an almost metallic sheen, and carefully fired to produce a characteristic red base, black top, and black interior, with an irregular purplish-white 'scum' line separating black from red. The high degree of skill needed to produce these fine wares meant that each pot was invested with a large amount of energy and, therefore, value. Various storage vessels were also polished or burnished, some similar to the beakers, others with less highly polished surfaces and impressed designs produced using a comb. Cookpots were cruder but still often decorated with incised motifs.

The presence of large quantities of this fine ware in royal and elite graves at Kerma reflects its importance within Nubian society (Reisner 1923). The regular inclusion of cookpots and the bucranea of slaughtered cattle in offering deposits associated with hearths points towards large funerary feasts conducted before the burial of Kerma kings and elite (Gues 1991). The discovery of large quantities of fine ware associated with the massive Deffufa, a temple complex in Kerma's urban center, also points to the connection between pottery and feasting in an urban setting (Bonnet 1990; Reisner 1923). Kerma pottery would therefore have served an important role in defining social roles, identity, and status during meals and feasts.

Even small amounts of Kerma fine ware would have stood out dramatically in contrast to contemporary Egyptian pottery in a frontier setting. The simple decoration found on Egyptian ceramics would have provided some opportunity for display during feasting, but perhaps would have served more as a marker of Egyptian identity than of status. Bearing these differences in mind, we now turn to the distribution of three functional categories of vessels at Askut, those used for cooking, service, and storage.

## ASKUT

Askut was excavated by the late Alexander Badawy between 1962 and 1964 during the Aswan High Dam Salvage Campaign (Badawy 1964, 1965, 1966). The fortress was located on an island at the second cataract, about ten kilometers north of the actual frontier. The occupation spans the entire period under discussion here, from the Middle Kingdom through the end of the New Kingdom (c. 1850–1050 B.C.), and including a substantial (re-?)occupation in the Late Period (c. 700 B.C.).

The excavations are remarkable for the completeness of the collection and care with which provenience was recorded. Other colonial sites in lower Nubia were poorly recorded or heavily sampled or culled for diagnostics, rendering the quantification of ceramics and other artifacts problematical (Smith 1995). Since virtually all of the artifacts from Askut were saved and can be located with some precision within the site, Askut represents an unparalleled opportunity to study a colonial Egyptian frontier community.

Unfortunately for the archaeologist, Askut's population led a relatively peaceful existence, so there are no dramatic abandonments or destructions that left pottery *in situ*. Outside of a few isolated *de facto* abandonment deposits, the pottery comes from secondary trash deposits. In particular, the northern end of the fortress was abandoned as the colonists moved outside the main fortifications to the southeastern part of the fort. The abandoned structures filled up quickly with sherds and other debris. The streets and open spaces around the buildings also contained secondary trash deposits. This process resulted in the mixing of the residues of all the various activities that took place in the general area (cf., Schiffer 1987). As a result, although a general domestic assemblage can be identified and dated, it is for the most part not possible to separate kitchen from serving from storage assemblages by context. Instead, I employ broad functional categories in order to ascribe different functional groups to different social settings.

Cooking vessels, for instance, would presumably have been used in kitchens. At the New Kingdom city of el-Amarna, archaeological evidence shows that cooking took place in open courtyards downwind, and therefore usually at the southern end, of the main house and away from reception areas (Kemp 1989:294–300). Scenes showing the interior space of mansions from elite tombs confirm this pattern (Davies 1929). The mansions at Amarna are similar to the larger houses at Askut, all of which have reception halls. The same pattern applies to more modest social contexts, like Deir el-Medina, the village of artists and craftsmen who built the tombs in the Valley of the Kings (c. 1500–1050 B.C.). The villagers located their kitchens at the back of their modest row houses (Badawy 1968:64–68, 92–115). The ovens recorded at Askut fit this same pattern, although a kitchen area was not identified for every house. Serving vessels like plates and bowls would serve to transport food from the kitchen to more public areas of the house, and would be used for meals and feasts. Storage vessels could have been used in both settings, as well as in storerooms and for the transport of foodstuffs.

Just the presence of Nubian pottery, jewelry, and other artifacts at Askut is interesting and indicates that the border was more permeable than the official edicts imply. Using the overall frequency of Nubian ceramics as an index (Table 3.2), it would appear that interaction during the Middle Kingdom was minimal. Not surprisingly, the amount jumps almost four fold during the Second Intermediate Period when the fortress communities owed allegiance to the Nubian ruler of Kush. The frequency declines only a bit in the New Kingdom, when Nubia was

**Table 3.2. Frequencies of Nubian and Egyptian Pottery at Askut.**

Period	Total ceramics	Egyptian	Nubian	% Nubian
Middle Kingdom	7473	7251	222	3.0%
Second Intermediate	616	542	74	12.0%
New Kingdom	3947	3571	376	9.5%
Late	2402	2092	310	12.9%
Totals	14,438	13,456	982	6.8%

theoretically brought fully into the Egyptian cultural sphere, finally rising to almost the levels found during the Second Intermediate Period in the Late Period when the Napatan pharaohs ruled both Egypt and Nubia, indicating still increased but relatively minor interaction.

This pattern in some cases matches expectations derived from the historical sequence outlined above but in others contradicts or at least poses questions about the implementation of imperial policy. Thus, during the Middle Kingdom, when the Nubian population maintained its cultural integrity and Egyptians in their fortresses remained aloof overlords of the local population (Adams 1977; Smith 1995), Nubian pottery represents a minor component of the ceramic assemblage. During the Second Intermediate Period, Nubian pottery jumps substantially as Kerma assumed control over the former Egyptian colony. But still the percentage of Nubian pottery seems small, especially in comparison with Avaris in the Nile delta, where levels of Middle Bronze Age pottery reached almost half the total assemblage when the Syro-Palestinian Hyksos assumed control during the same period (Bietak 1991). This pattern is consistent, however, with the idea that Kermans adopted a minimalist colonial policy and/or that the Egyptian fortress population simply switched its allegiance to the Kerman ruler of Kush rather than fleeing in the face of a substantial Kerman occupying force as previous models have suggested (Bourriau 1991; Emery 1965; contra Smith 1995).

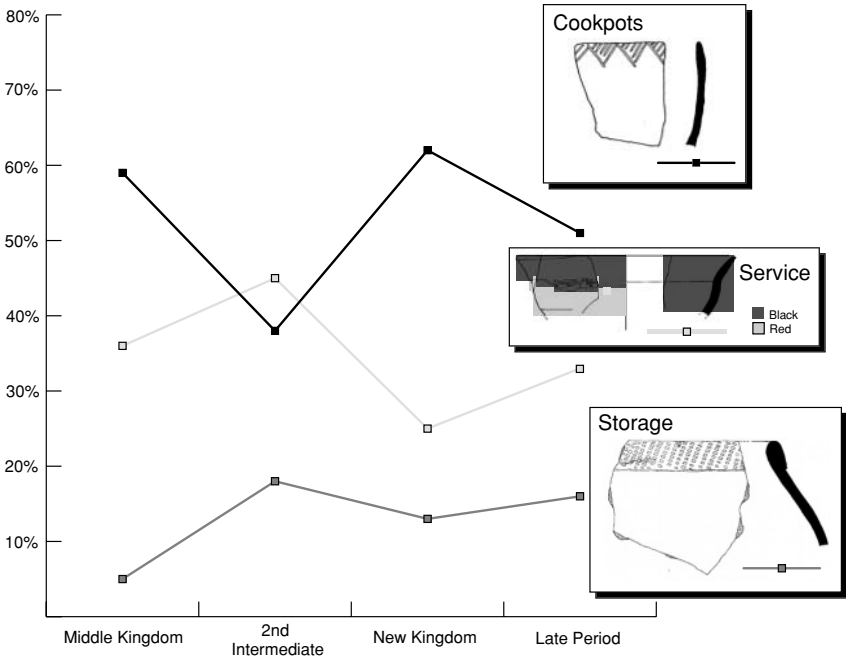
During the New Kingdom, we would expect the complete disappearance of Nubian ceramic traditions as Nubian society became “Egyptianized,” but while there is a decline, the percentage of Nubian pottery is still over three times that of the Middle Kingdom. This suggests that a more fundamental change may have begun in the Second Intermediate Period, continuing into the New Kingdom. The percentage of Nubian pottery reaches a slightly higher level during the Late Period than in the Second Intermediate Period. This is inconsistent with older models stressing the Egyptianization of Napatan society (Arkell 1961; Breasted 1909; David 1988; Emery 1965; Fairservis 1962; Reisner 1919) but in line with newer interpretations that argue that the Napatan adoption of Egyptian cultural features was selective and characterized by elite emulation rather than wholesale acculturation (Morkot 1995; Smith 1998; Török 1998; Yellin 1995). What does this

pattern represent in terms of actual people and social identities? Contextualizing the Nubian pottery through a comparison of different functional categories of vessels, i.e., cooking (cooking pots and bread molds), food service (plates, bowls, etc.) and storage (both small and large jars) vessels, allows for a more detailed consideration of different contact scenarios. The first possibility is that a small group of Nubians lived at Askut, either serving Egyptian masters or acting as a trade enclave (Curtin 1984). The distribution of Nubian pottery is, however, not localized or segregated as one would expect in such an enclave (e.g., Stein 1999) but rather spread throughout the site-wide assemblage. On the other hand, the Nubian pottery at Askut could simply reflect trade without the actual presence of Nubians living at the site. In this case, we might expect an emphasis on storage vessels containing imported goods.

Alternatively, political changes in the importance of Nubians to the community might be reflected by the increases in Nubian pottery. In this case, an emphasis on Nubian serving vessels for display in feasting would be expected to correlate with the height of Kerman control that occurred in the Second Intermediate Period. The use of Kerman elite wares in social and public contexts would demonstrate both economic prosperity and the community's connections with their trading partners and, more distantly, their overlords. Finally, Nubian pottery may indicate the presence and/or cultural influence of Nubians as an integral part of the frontier community, most likely through intermarriage. In this case, we would expect an emphasis on cooking vessels, which tend to be culturally conservative and would not be subject to the same kind of political pressures as serving vessels used in more public contexts.

Both service and to a lesser extent storage vessels track fairly well with the overall fluctuations described above, with a peak in the Second Intermediate Period and a small decline following, though still at higher levels than during the Middle Kingdom (Figure 3.5). This meets the expectations for a political emphasis on Nubian pottery connected to display and feasting. The frequency of cookpots, however, presents a very different picture from the simple overall percentages of Nubian pottery. Nubian cookpots are disproportionately represented at Askut, constituting almost half of all cooking vessels during the Middle Kingdom and increasing steadily over time to dominate the culinary assemblage. In comparison, Nubian serving vessels remain a minor component of their respective sub-assemblages as do storage vessels, making the trade scenario unlikely.

During the Second Intermediate Period, not only does the frequency of cookpots jump, but the relative frequency of Nubian service vessels, most of which are fine wares used for display and in feasting, also surpasses cook pots for the first and only time, again supporting the political scenario. Nevertheless, the dramatic rise in cook pots points towards the incorporation scenario, perhaps with intermarriage between colonists and Kerman Nubians. Since one would not expect highly utilitarian and idiosyncratic cookpots to be exchanged in preference to



**Figure 3.5.** Percentages of Nubian cooking, serving and storage vessels from Askut.

storage and decorative serving vessels, trade can be ruled out as the major source of Nubian influence. Although there is little direct evidence from Askut, cooking in other Egyptian contexts, as noted above, took place away from reception rooms at the back of houses, making the political scenario less likely.

The presence of other Nubian artifacts in addition to the pottery supports the idea of closer interaction between the expatriates and the Kermans. Nubian jewelry recovered at the site could represent trade but might also suggest the retention of a Nubian cultural identity or the transformation of Egyptian culture into a new colonial hybrid. A small fertility figurine in typical Nubian style found near a household shrine dating from the Second Intermediate Period implies the maintenance or syncretization of personal religious beliefs between the expatriates and resident Nubians, since Egyptians would be expected to use Egyptian figurines in this very intimate cultural setting. Fertility magic in household shrines was particularly the province of women in ancient Egypt, as was cooking (Robbins 1993). This combination of finds might indicate intermarriage of the colonists with Nubians. If intermarriage with Kermans really did take place, then the border was considerably more permeable in practice than the policy of royal edicts dictated. The next section explores the question of identity and the tensions between the

historical and archaeological records further, seeking to reconcile the political policy of exclusion and ideology of separation with the on the ground archaeological evidence for interaction.

## DISCUSSION

A combination of archaeological and textual sources supports the conclusions drawn above from Askut assemblage, showing that in spite of the politically charged ideology of separation and otherness, Egyptians and Nubians interacted and perhaps intermarried (Adams 1977). Did these interactions defy state policy, or did colonists contribute to the implementation of a more practical foreign policy, forging a new colonial society and identity? This section examines these issues by looking at the relationship between feasting, foodways, pottery, and imperial politics and finishes with a consideration of the pharaonic stereotype of foreignness in this analysis.

### Feasts

Food and feasting was an important dimension of Egyptian society and religion with specialized dishes appearing at funerals, state and private rituals, and large-scale festivals sponsored by the temples or pharaoh. Goody (1982) notes that complex societies tend to develop an elaborate court cuisine and uses Egypt as a prime example. The Onomasticon of Amenemope, a scribal student vocabulary exercise that supposedly lists every significant element of Egyptian society, records the words for many different kinds of foodstuffs (Gardiner 1947). For example, New Kingdom Egyptians had over 40 types of bread and cake to choose from, many of which have been found preserved in tombs (e.g., Schiaparelli 1927). The Onomasticon also lists 23 types of beer and 29 cuts of beef, which could be prepared with a variety of different spices, pickled or salted (cf., Ikram 1995). Private feasts demonstrated and negotiated social position and relationships through the use of elaborate foods, music, and dancing. Public festivals acted as backdrops for spectacle and feasting that reinforced the power of pharaoh through patronage and display (e.g., Smith 1997).

Pottery constituted the principal equipment for the preparation and consumption of food for both Egyptians and Nubians, as is common in pre-modern societies. The composition and shape of both water jars and cooking pots in particular contribute to the flavor of water stored and food cooked in them (Rice 1987:465). Similarly, the appearance, and thus the experience, of food is affected by the wares on which it is served. Since pottery affects both the taste and presentation of food, Goody's (1982:150–153) remarks on foodways are directly relevant to the interpretation of ceramic distributions. The following discussion applies Goody's ideas

about continuity and change to the patterns of food consumption and ceramic use noted at Askut.

Overall the proportions of Egyptian and Nubian ceramics show little variation in spite of the larger social and political changes experienced by the colony. This is consistent with Goody's remarks on the conservatism of foodways. But this conclusion relies too much on the normative view of culture that Goody rightly critiques. As noted above, applying a more contextual approach reveals key differences between the periods.

The fluctuating use of Nubian fine wares, i.e., serving vessels, discussed above may indicate adjustments paralleling larger political changes as the community adapted to a new geo-political order. Fine wares used during meals and feasting made up only about one-third of the Nubian ceramic assemblage during the Middle Kingdom when the Egyptian fortress system was established and interaction between Nubians and Egyptians was officially discouraged. But Nubian serving vessels outnumber Nubian cooking pots during the Second Intermediate Period, when the fortress communities owed allegiance to the Kerma ruler of Kush. With its distinctive and elaborate decoration, Kerma pottery would serve to demonstrate links between the colonial communities and their Nubian overlords and constitute an important element of display item during feasting events (cf., Dietler 1990). Even though ultimately outnumbered at Askut, the Nubian cups and bowls with their near metallic sheen and dramatic red/black contrast would stand out against their usually drab Egyptian counterparts.

Nubian serving vessels drop to their lowest during the period of the New Kingdom. This coincides with a time when Nubian culture was replaced by Egyptian elements in a deliberate imperial policy of acculturation. Markers of Egyptian identity would have been at a premium, and the use of Nubian serving vessels is muted. Nubian serving vessels increase somewhat during the subsequent Late Period when Napata ruled Egypt but Egyptian ethnicity was still to some extent at a premium, especially among the elite. This pattern is even more apparent when the change in serving vessels as a percentage of both Nubian and Egyptian serving vessels is calculated from period to period. For example, Nubian serving vessels show an almost fivefold increase between the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period, from two to over twelve percent of the service sub-assemblage (Table 3.3). Serving vessels decline between the Second Intermediate Period and the New Kingdom, but double from the New Kingdom to the Late Period.

Although comprising a smaller percentage of the Nubian assemblage, storage vessels actually show an almost sevenfold increase as a percentage of both Egyptian and Nubian storage vessels from the Middle Kingdom to the Second Intermediate Period. Nicely decorated storage vessels could have been used for display during feasting. This pattern may also simply indicate the freeing of trade barriers, allowing more Nubian pottery and goods to cross into former Egyptian



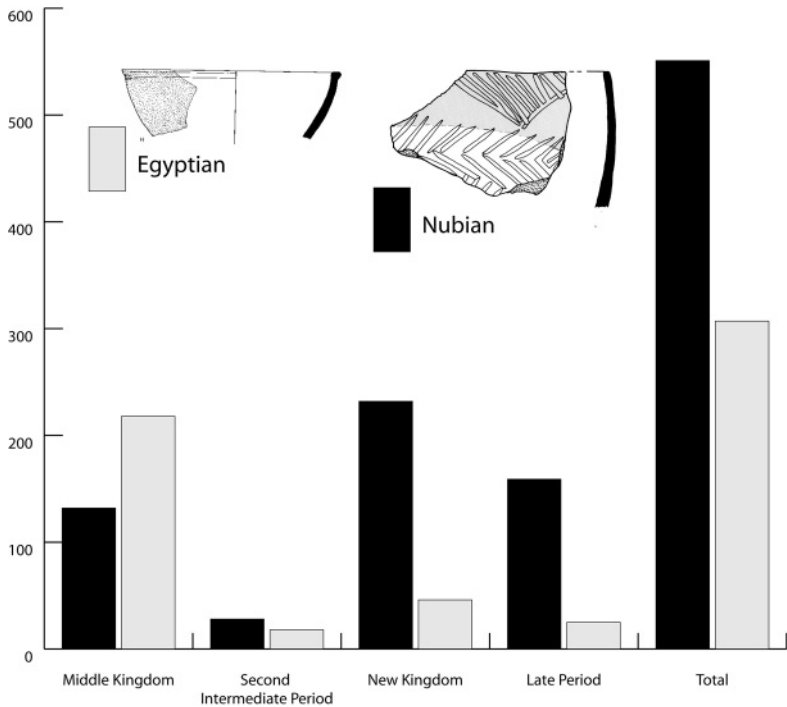
**Table 3.3. Nubian Vessel Categories as Percentage of Total Ceramic Assemblage at Askut.**

Period	Service vessels	Storage vessels	Cooking vessels
Middle Kingdom	2.1%	0.8%	37.7%
Second Intermediate	12.5%	6.3%	60.9%
New Kingdom	5.1%	3.5%	83.5%
Late	11.9%	4.1%	86.4%
Overall	4.6%	2.9%	64.2%

territory. On the other hand, if the jars contained foodstuffs, it could indicate a shift towards Nubian foodways with the acquisition of specialized ingredients. The subsequent decline of storage vessels in the New Kingdom would reflect an abandonment of a Nubian prestige cuisine with the fall of the kingdom of Kush. The import of prestige foodstuffs would be consistent with the rise of Nubian cookpots, described below, assuming that Nubian cooking vessels were used for the preparation of a Nubian cuisine.

In contrast to both service and storage vessels, Nubian cookpots steadily increase as a part of the overall cooking assemblage from the Middle Kingdom to the New Kingdom and Late periods (Figure 3.6). This presents a very different pattern from the ups and downs of the serving and storage assemblages. This distribution may correspond to Goody's distinction between foodways connected with larger systems that change rapidly in order to meet social contingencies and those that are independent of the larger social and political situation and can remain remarkably stable over time. The association between cooking vessels and traditional foodways is suggested by the generally conservative nature of cookpots cross-culturally (Rice 1987). The initial relatively high level of Nubian cookpots and their gradual increase throughout the occupation at Askut may reflect an initial diversity and then the gradual acceptance of Nubian foodways at the household level, particularly if Nubian women intermarried with Egyptian soldiers and bureaucrats. If, as is likely, the fortress communities were disproportionately male, then Nubian women might well have come into the frontier communities in large numbers. Intermarriage would also forge ties between the Egyptian colonists and their Nubian neighbors, in this case their Kushite trading partners rather than the local lower Nubian C-Group culture (Smith 1995, 1996).

Both intermarriage and the changing political tides could influence the makeup of colonial communities like Askut, but would affect people in different social strata in different ways. If we assume the association of cooking vessels with the private domain and serving vessels with public contexts, then the use of Kerma style cookpots by women in private spaces might reflect a Nubian identity, which unlike the use of pots in feasting, was not important to the demonstration



**Figure 3.6.** Nubian and Egyptian cookpots at Askut.

of status and external (imperial) relations. Such a situation would have guarded against the dramatic fluctuations seen in other vessel categories.

In the more public context of meals and feasting, Egyptian serving vessels predominated, possibly due to the preferences of Egyptian male members of society. At the same time, however, Kerma service and storage pottery also increases, especially during the Second Intermediate Period. These vessels may have been introduced by Nubian wives. The use of a combination of Nubian and Egyptian serving vessels would demonstrate both the colonial community's connections with Egypt *and* participation in the larger Kerma status system, particularly during the Second Intermediate Period when Kerma controlled Egypt's former lower Nubian colony.

## Pharaohs and Foreigners

The archaeological evidence discussed above indicates considerably more flexibility and room for individual agency in Egyptian–Nubian interactions across

the imperial frontier than the highly regulated system implied by royal edicts like the boundary stela of Senwosret III. How can we reconcile the contradiction between political statements and ideology with their emphasis on separation and exclusion on the one hand, and the archaeological picture of people and artifacts regularly transiting these political boundaries? Egyptologist Barry Kemp (1997) argues that we should look first to ideology to understand Egyptian imperialism. We need not, however, choose between ideological and material explanations. Instead, the integration of the material archaeological evidence with the ideological constructs given in texts provides an opportunity to better understand the nature of social dynamics at the borders of ancient imperial states.

Liverani (1990) argues that ideological statements about the nature of interactions with ancient Near Eastern states was aimed at legitimizing royal authority for an internal audience, and was often divorced from the practical functioning of empire and international relations. To the inner audience, Egypt was the center of the world and all foreign lands bowed down to pharaoh. Whether or not these claims had any basis in fact was irrelevant; the importance of this imperial propaganda lay not in the reality of control but rather in how it enhanced the ruler's prestige internally. The ideology of foreign submission played an important legitimizing role as the state attempted to reinforce and expand royal power and prestige (cf. Bawden 1995; Carneiro 1992; Grove and Gillespie 1992; Smith 1997).

Only the literate elite could understand the more esoteric connotations of these ideological expressions. But the materialization of state ideology through symbolism, monumental architecture and large scale state ceremonies would allow a less precise transmission reaching farther down the social ladder (DeMarrais et al. 1996; Kolb 1993; Liverani 1990:28). The huge temple complexes of the New Kingdom emphasized royal power in their decoration, including massive scenes on the exterior pylons of temples showing the king victorious in battle or ritually slaying foreign enemies. These scenes of warfare and chaos symbolically surrounded the inner divine order of the temple just as chaotic foreigners symbolically surrounded Egypt's inner political order (Hornung 1992:119)—at least as long as pharaoh was there to protect Egypt.

These scenes of pharaoh against the stereotypical foreigner served as a backdrop for huge state sponsored festivals which took place along processional ways, in front of monumental temple entryways, and in large courtyards within the temple complexes. Massive feasts accompanied these festivals, with thousands of loaves of bread, hundreds of slaughtered cattle, and many other foodstuffs. Nubians and other foreigners attending these important events appeared as the stereotypical 'other'—ultimately tamed by pharaoh but nonetheless exotic and threatening. Thus, in a rather Orwellian twist, Egyptianized Nubian princes from the lower Nubian colony, like Hekanefer of Miam (Aniba), had to don the 'barbaric' accoutrements of a foreigner bowing down to the power and authority of pharaoh



Nubian Prince performing the Nubian Topos

**Figure 3.7.** Nubian prince paying homage to Tutankhamen, from the tomb of Huy at Thebes (c. 1325 B.C.).

(Figure 3.7), even though they were as culturally Egyptian as any other official (cf., Davies 1926; Loprieno 1988; Simpson 1963).

Whenever the king made a public appearance, his own accouterments and surroundings emphasized his role as the defender of order against the foreign enemies of Egypt. When he rewarded officials at the ‘window of appearances,’ he rested on a balustrade supported by stereotypical images of the heads of foreign enemies (e.g., Kemp 1989:211–213). This kind of symbolism was exploited at every opportunity. For example, Tutankhamen is “the Perfect God who appears in *Ma’at* and who smites the nobles of all the foreign lands . . . all brought together beneath his sandals” (Littauer and Crowel 1985:pl. LXVI). Naturally his sandals had Nubians and Asiatics painted on their soles. Four of his walking staves had stereotypical representations of Nubians and Asiatics on the base (Reeves 1990), indicating that he could grind his enemies into the dust. Processional ways and footstools had similar images, so that the king symbolically trod upon his enemies as he walked and rested his feet upon their backs when he sat (Ritner 1993).

## CONCLUSIONS

The ideological construction of both physical and cultural boundaries drew a strict black and white divide between inner civilization and outer barbarism in order to legitimate royal power and authority. The distribution of culinary equipment in the form of ceramics for food service and cooking at Askut shows Egyptian frontier

communities did more than simply implement central policy. As Driessen (1992) observes, individual agency weighs more heavily than the pronouncements of administrators and ideologues in the day to day interactions that characterize frontier life. In spite of the politically charged ideology of separation and otherness, the patterns of Nubian pottery and other artifacts at Askut indicate that Egyptians and Nubians interacted and probably intermarried. In particular, Nubian women had a profound impact on colonial society through the gradual dominance of Nubian foodways reflected in cooking vessels.

The ties that the Egyptian colonists at Askut and other Egyptian communities established with Kermans must have played a key role in the peaceful co-opting of lower Nubia by the Ruler of Kush in a hegemonic system of control (D'Altroy 1992; Hassig 1988). Both the Egyptians and the Kermans had much to gain from cooperation after the collapse of the Egyptian central administration at the end of the Middle Kingdom. The colonists could see that the Kermans could impose their rule by force if necessary, and would naturally have exploited their relationships to avoid any possibility of violent conquest. The ruler of Kush also controlled the all important routes to the luxury goods from the south. The expatriates at Askut were at least well known and perhaps related to the very Kerman administrators who would have been charged with northward expansion, some of whom probably lived in the nearby Kerma settlements that thrived during the Second Intermediate Period and perhaps acted as liaisons to the Egyptian colonial communities even before they switched their allegiance to Kush (Smith 1995). The former Egyptian colonists were the ideal intermediaries with over a hundred years of experience in the Nubian trade. They also had close contacts within Egypt, particularly upper Egypt judging from the continuing flow of imported ceramics from this region during the Second Intermediate Period at Askut.

The colonists demonstrated their ties to both cultures through the use of both Kerma and Egyptian serving vessels, presumably both during family meals and in larger scale feasting. These same colonial communities survived the New Kingdom reconquest to serve the next Egyptian administration. Their experience in the management of Nubian trade and resources, connections with co-optable local elites, connections with Kermans, and direct knowledge of upper Nubia would have helped the new colonial regime implement its dramatic cultural, political and military expansion. Although the emphasis on Kerma serving vessels disappears, a more fundamental social change is reflected in the continuing increase in Nubian cookpots. This may reflect the presence of Nubian women and gradual ascendancy of Nubian foodways, producing a dynamic colonial culture that blended Egyptian and Nubian elements, contradicting the traditional Egyptianization models posited by Egyptologists. The men and women who forged these colonial frontier communities influenced the trajectory of Egyptian–Nubian relations by adapting to changing geopolitical developments and forging ties that crossed the seemingly absolute boundaries established by colonial administrators.

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## Chapter 4

# *Feasting the Ancestors in Early China*

SARAH MILLEDGE NELSON

*O soul, come back! Why should you go far away? All your household have come to do  
you honor: all kinds of food are ready.  
(from Chuizi, quoted in Chang 1977:32)*

The importance of feasting in graveside ritual during both the Late Shang dynasty and the slightly earlier Xiajiadian culture is strongly suggested by the numerous vessels found in burial contexts dating to these periods. But it seems to be feasting of a different nature than that described in the classical anthropological literature on pig feasts in New Guinea, which forms the basis of many of our models of the role of feasting activities in traditional societies (Rappaport 1967). Rather than constituting a means of cementing alliances, producing Big Men, and organizing for war, early Chinese feasting activities appear to have had other goals. The evidence for graveside feasting in early Chinese society suggests that enlisting the aid of the dead was of greater importance than forming alliances with the living. In other words, it seems that the deceased, both the recently departed as well as more ancient ancestors, were more powerful and desirable allies than their earthly counterparts.

The graveside feasting activities noted in the early Chinese period is not the only evidence that the ancestors' aid was considered more important than that of the living. As the inscriptions on Shang oracle bones show, propitiating the ancestors,

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who especially appreciated offerings of wine and food, took place on a regular basis throughout the year, with a particular ancestor always being feasted on the same day of the Shang ten-day week. Inscriptions on bronze vessels from both Late Shang (ca. 1200–1045 B.C.) and Western Zhou (1045–771 B.C.) periods as well as texts from as early as the succeeding Zhou dynasty echo the mute testimony of the neatly arrayed grave goods, which typically featured vessels for both meat and wine.

Occasionally, the offering of feasts to living individuals is mentioned in the oracle bones, though these feasts appear to have been much less important than feasting the ancestors and the Powers. The more distant and amorphous “Powers,” or animistic forces, were called upon only on an as-needed basis to control or predict acts of nature such as floods, or to confer generic blessings for good harvests (Keightley 2000: 113–116). In general, however, they seem to have been less important than the ancestors.

The purpose of funeral feasts is known from documents that date to only a slightly later time period than the oracle bones. According to these documents, such feasts were intended to create a new ancestral spirit who would be helpful to his or her descendants by aiding in warfare and weather control, and providing health, long life, and wealth. These blessings could only be obtained through ancestral spirits, by treating them well with sacrifices and ceremonies on appropriate days. It was particularly important that the ancestors were well fed. Chen (1996:272) tells us that, “. . . the highest priority was nourishment, and we know from texts that food and wine constituted the greater part of sacrificial offerings.” Another divergence from the model of feasting to create allies is that the feasts appear to have been family or lineage affairs, partaken of or witnessed only by those who would benefit from feasting these ancestors—that is, descendants and other close kin of the deceased. This is far removed from the notion of public feasting, and deserves closer scrutiny.

The following discussion on the significance of feasting in early Chinese culture is based on archaeological information from both the Late Shang Period at Anyang and the Lower Xiajiadian in Inner Mongolia. At Anyang, it is unfortunate that most of the royal burials from the Late Shang period were looted before the era of professional archaeology (Li 1977). Among the rare burials found intact at this site, the best reported and most spectacular are those of queens, especially the grave of Fu Hao, or Lady Hao. This burial, with its large numbers of bronze vessels arrayed around both the inner and outer coffins, allows us to make some inferences about the nature of graveside feasting. Additional evidence can be adduced from the oracle bones and inscriptions on some of the bronzes. Unfortunately, Fu Hao’s grave cannot be compared to non-royal graves. The only other well-reported burials from Anyang are those of sacrificed victims, mostly males, without grave goods. Although evidence of ordinary people, and even lower nobility, is still minimal for the Shang, one male burial, about the size of Fu Hao’s grave is crammed with sacrificed humans (Tang 1999:176–177).

The burial ground and city at Dadianzi, an important site of the Lower Xiajiadian culture, can help to fill the gap at Anyang. More than one thousand burials were excavated from this cemetery. Excavators divided these into the categories of ‘small,’ ‘medium,’ and ‘large’ tombs. The quantity and quality of grave goods, as well as features of the graves, make it clear that social ranking and identity were being expressed. The data from these two sites complement each other in the search for the meaning of graveside feasting in the context of early Chinese culture.

The era of the Lower Xiajiadian and Shang is often referred to as the Bronze Age in China. Bronze was used from as far north as Inner Mongolia to as far south as Panlongcheng in Hubei Province, and from the China Sea to Sanxingdui in Sichuan province in the west (Figure 4.1). The extensive use of bronze in China during this period has various implications with regard to the acquisition of raw materials, the organization of production, and trade. Ornaments and weapons were the earliest items produced in bronze, and such items are found, although sparsely, in Lower Xiajiadian burials. By the time of the Late Shang, the primary objects made of bronze were extremely elaborate containers for wine and food, apparently for the exclusive use of the elite, both living and deceased.

## NEOLITHIC FEASTING AT GRAVESIDE

The Bronze Age was not the beginning of ancestor worship nor of graveside feasts in China. Several scholars have found evidence for feasting in the Neolithic, especially in those cultures thought to be ancestral to the Shang. Underhill (2000) sees the site of Dawenko as containing evidence of marked status differences but believes that “food and drink were important parts of mortuary ritual for all kin groups, either as gifts to the deceased or for feasting among the mourners” (Underhill 2000:111). That is, whether the status of the kin group was high or low, food and drink were evident in the mortuary ritual. But while all graves contained tools of bone and stone, there were more ceramic vessels in the elite burials. Tall stemmed cups, which are believed to have been used for drinking wine, were the most elaborated form. This suggests that great importance was attached to the activity of drinking at the grave. The consumption of alcoholic beverages as part of these interment ceremonies demonstrates continuity between the Late Neolithic and Bronze Ages.

Underhill (2000:116) suggests that alcohol is important for its ability to transform, “making mourners feel that they could communicate with deceased loved ones.” Note that this is not the same as transforming the deceased into an ancestral spirit, which occurs in Shang times. The transformation Underhill is suggesting took place within the consumers of the alcohol, while later uses of alcohol were intended to create cooperative ancestral spirits who would be pleased by the aroma of the wine. There is a difference between creating solidarity among the living by



Figure 4.1. Map showing sites mentioned in the text (Bae map from Wen 1980, p. 192).

feasting the ancestors and feasting them to turn them into active spirits, although either transformation could be effected by the kin of the deceased. In post-Shang times this immediacy was lost, for the spirits had to be called to the world of the living by special spirit mediums, known as *wu*, who had special training for the task (Ching 1997:8–9; Falkenhausen 1995).

Although Underhill does not address the subject of ancestor worship at Dawenko, Liu (2000) makes a case for ancestor worship in Neolithic China. She finds evidence of three basic changes in mortuary ritual during the Neolithic. One change involves a shift from the veneration of ancestors as a collective group, to the veneration of individual ancestors with high status. Another involves a change in the worshipers from larger village groups to family or lineage groups. Finally, Liu sees a shift in the beneficiaries of the ancestors' attention from the village to the lineage. She presents specific archaeological evidence based on her work on the northern Chinese Neolithic to substantiate these interpretations.

Fung (2000) addresses the question of graveside feasting in the Neolithic using data from the Dawenko culture, rather than specifically from the Dawenko site as Underhill does in her article. Fung notes the ubiquity of ceramic vessels for storage, preparation, and consumption of food and drink in Chinese Neolithic burials. In some of these containers, animal bones and shells were found indicating that food was placed in the grave. His study of Neolithic burials shows that ceramic vessels tend to be placed farther from the body than other kinds of artifacts, with the exception of a particular type of drinking vessel. These are the stemmed drinking cups, which were placed near the chest or head of the deceased. The vessel is typically placed on its side with the top facing towards the head of the grave. Through time, tombs contain increasing numbers of vessels for the storing and of pouring wine. Ding tripods, which have been identified as cooking vessels, tend to be found near the waist or knee of the deceased. Stemmed platters for serving meat are also increasingly prevalent through time, though there are no individual bowls or plates. Fung interprets the lack of plates as a problem for positing individual consumption of meat, although it is possible that meat was eaten directly from a common container. Fung believes his data indicate that communal drinking at the graveside became increasingly common in the course of the Neolithic.

## THE BRONZE AGE

Although the historical model of the Bronze Age is that of the Sandai (the three sequential dynasties of Xia, Shang and Zhou), Chang (1980, 1986) has argued that these dynasties actually overlapped in both time and space. Records that purport to be a contemporaneous record of the Sandai are still extant (for a translation of the *Shu Ching*, also called the *Shang Shu*, see Waltham 1971). Although this document cannot be accepted entirely at face value, it is clear that the Shang

Dynasty was a different polity from the Xia Dynasty that it displaced, and the Zhou people who conquered Shang were likewise a separate cultural group. Thus Shang and Zhou must have been present and developing their might during the time recorded as the Xia Dynasty. Indeed, for both groups there are lists of named pre-dynastic ancestors. The archaeological evidence likewise suggests multiple polities, with some shared and other completely dissimilar features, jockeying for power during the Bronze Age and variously succeeding. While we cannot know the exact relationships between these polities, the archaeological record does provide some clues.

As noted above, evidence from the Late Shang Period at Anyang consists of a rich body of written material, a few spectacular graves, and enormous numbers of unprovenienced bronze vessels. But the site lacks the range of burials found at Dadianzi, a Lower Xiajiadian site in Inner Mongolia. The cultural connection between the Dadianzi and Anyang burials is evident in various characteristics of the graves themselves, although it is not possible to specify in exactly what way they are related (Huber 1999).

Lower Xiajiadian (2000–1500 BC) is earlier than the Late Shang, and seems to anticipate Shang styles in burials as well as vessel shapes and decorative patterns. Using Dadianzi to flesh out some details of the Shang may seem surprising to some Sinologists, but I believe that the archaeological evidence of a relationship is clear. To make this relationship more explicit, it is useful to point out that two basic types of tombs can be found in China (Nelson 1997) before the Qin Dynasty, which unified China in 221 BC and enforced standardization in many ways. In one type, the burial is near the surface and is often surrounded by stone slabs and is mounded over with stones or earth or both. The size of the mound and the number of individuals buried within the mound appear to express degrees of eliteness. The other type of tomb also indicates degrees of wealth by the size of the grave, but in this case it is the depth of the grave as well as its overall size that is salient. These larger and deeper graves also contain more elaborate grave goods in greater quantities. Wooden coffins were typically used in these tombs instead of stone slabs, and earthen niches above the coffin often contained additional contributions to the deceased. These two types of mortuary practices coexist both spatially and temporally, and they persist through several millennia.

The earliest known mounded tombs are from the Late Neolithic Hongshan culture, in Inner Mongolia and Liaoning Province (Guo 1995a), and they were the burial form of choice for Zhou rulers. But roughly contemporary with Hongshan in Shandong Province, the high status tombs (those with the most stemmed cups) are log tombs with a second level ledge, perhaps distantly related to the tombs of Lower Xiajiadian, described below. Thus mounds and deep burials are culturally distinct but contemporaneous beginning in the Neolithic period.

While tomb mounds became more common in China in the course of the Zhou Dynasty (1045–221 BC), deep graves can be found even as late as the Warring

States period in the Zhongshan culture of Hubei Province (530–314 BC), where the tomb of King Cuo was more than 17 meters deep. Thus these tomb types seem to express real differences in cultural patterns, and may well reflect religious beliefs as well as political, social and economic differences among the practitioners of these two burial styles. I refer to the two mortuary patterns as mound burials and deep burials.

It is on the basis of the above observations that I suggest that the assemblages from the Lower Xiajiadian graves at Dadianzi can shed additional light on feasting at graveside, especially when compared with those of the Late Shang at Anyang, in Shaanxi. In burials associated with the Lower Xiajiadian culture, wealth and status are expressed by the amount and richness of the grave goods, as well as the depth of the grave and the number of side niches. In these burials, the coffin tends to be located at the bottom of the grave pit, and food offerings are placed on niches or ledges hollowed out from the sides of the shaft above the coffin. The same variety of deep burials characterize the Shang Dynasty at the city of Anyang, though on a much larger scale. Instead of niches, long ramps on which human sacrifices were placed lead into the burial vault. The steps that lead into the burial chamber also contained funerary items. The largest excavated Lower Xiajiadian grave is eight meters deep, while a king's grave attributed to Wu Ding (a Late Shang king), reaches a depth of 13 meters.

But the grave type is not the only reason to connect Lower Xiajiadian with Late Shang. Decorative motifs on the pottery deposited in the deepest graves bear a strong resemblance to those found on Shang bronzes (Huber 1999). Furthermore, and most relevant for this chapter, the burial vessels in both cases comprise a suite of shapes that were apparently required for the graveside ritual. The common denominator in both funerary assemblages is a tripod vessel with pouring spout, known in China since ancient times as a container for warming wine.

Given that Lower Xiajiadian precedes Late Shang, it will be useful to consider this culture first. Although there is evidence that the dead were provisioned with food and drink in both cultures, notable differences appear to exist in the details of the feasting practices of the two cultures. These differences highlight specific dimensions of variability in the patterns of feasting that characterized early Chinese states. Anticipating the data presented below, it appears that the most striking difference between Shang and Lower Xiajiadian relates to the fact that drink appears to take precedence over meat as the feasting item of choice in Lower Xiajiadian. This is seen in the variety and elaboration of drinking vessels found in Lower Xiajiadian burials, while the consumption of meat is suggested by the presence of pig and dog bones. But no culinary equipment related to the consumption or serving of meat appears to exist. By Late Shang times, however, containers for meat, and perhaps mixed meat and vegetable dishes, had become nearly as elaborated as those for wine. Both of these container types proliferate through the Shang period in terms of quantity, variety, decoration, and costliness of production.



## LOWER XIAJIADIAN BURIAL ASSEMBLAGES

The Lower Xiajiadian culture is centered in eastern Inner Mongolia. Lower Xiajiadian sites are typically hill-top fortresses with extensive stone walls that are readily visible on the landscape. With the recent discovery of Dadianzi, our knowledge of Lower Xiajiadian culture has been greatly enhanced. This site contains an extensive cemetery that has been carefully excavated over the past several years. In addition to being one of the best examples and most thoroughly excavated Lower Xiajiadian sites, work at Dadianzi has also provided us with what we know about Lower Xiajiadian mortuary practices. A small amount of the associated town has also been excavated, with a few trenches cross-cutting the surrounding exterior wall (IACASS 1996).

Over one thousand burials were excavated in the Lower Xiajiadian cemetery at Dadianzi. The graves are laid out in rows. The burials differ in size ranging from graves just large enough for the body of the deceased, to a few that are up to five meters long and eight meters deep (Guo 1995b). Most of the burials are individual and have been classified as either small, medium, or large. Those designated as small have a length of about 1.7 meters, although there are two (M751 and M1213) that reach two meters long. These burials appear to be the minimum size necessary to inter the body. The individuals found in the small graves include all age categories. These graves contain no funerary offerings. Medium-sized graves are larger and deeper than the small burials, and sometimes have traces of wooden coffins. A few have second level niches in which grave goods were placed. The large graves are all longer than 2.2 meters, but their particular distinguishing feature is their depth. They range in depth from three to nearly eight meters. Only large graves were found to contain painted vessels, which are typically located in second level niches near the head or feet, often on both sides of the body. These graves may also contain personal items such as jewelry.

The assemblages from these tombs are described in detail in the report produced by the Institute of Archaeology (IACASS 1996). Pottery vessels that likely represent feasting equipment are found on the single or multiple ledges that are dug into the walls of the burial shaft approximately one to two meters above the body at the foot and sides of the grave. Clusters of vessels are found together in these niches, suggesting use in a particular feasting episode or ceremony. Dog and/or pig bones are also sometimes found in these wall niches.

In the larger tombs, vessels for liquids, often several different varieties, are always present. The most ubiquitous type is the *li*, a tripod vessel with short, fat, hollow legs that taper to a point (Figure 4.2) that often serves as a cover for other vessels, particularly jar forms with flat bases. The tripod vessels are often polychrome painted with patterns that foreshadow the designs found on later Shang bronzes. The assemblages from the medium-sized burials indicate that the basic



1. 鬲A III 1a (M 371:7)



3. 鬲A III 1a (M 305:3)

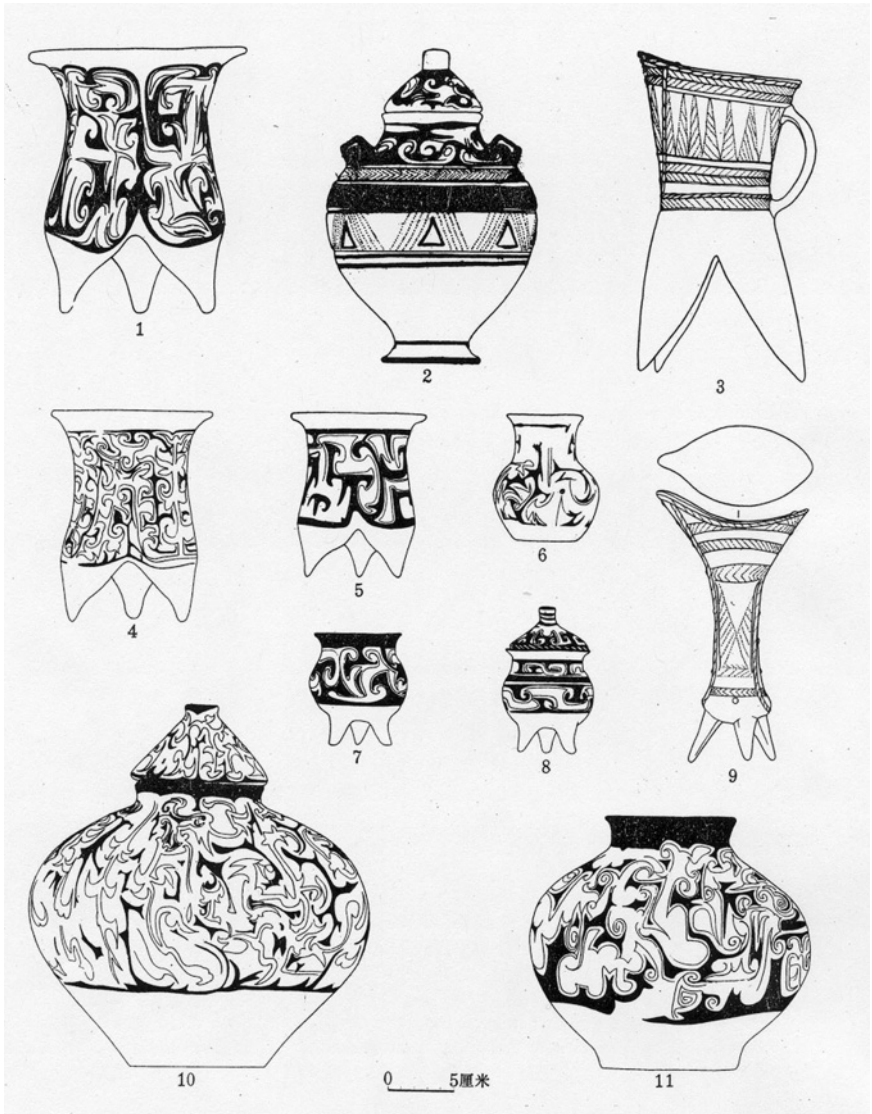


2. 鬲A III 1a (M 371:7)



4. 鬲A III 1a (M 838:1)

**Figure 4.2.** Examples of painted pottery *li* from Dadianzi (after IACASS 1996, Plate V).



**Figure 4.3.** Pottery shapes from graves at Dadianzi (after IACASS 1996, p. 205).

funerary set was the combination of a jar covered by the tripod *li*. A few additional vessel forms are also present in the larger tombs including footed vessels with pointed lids, jars with handles, and tripod bowls (Figure 4.3). Tall, thin vase-like containers (*gu*) may also be present (see examples in Figure 4.4, item nos. 7 and 10).

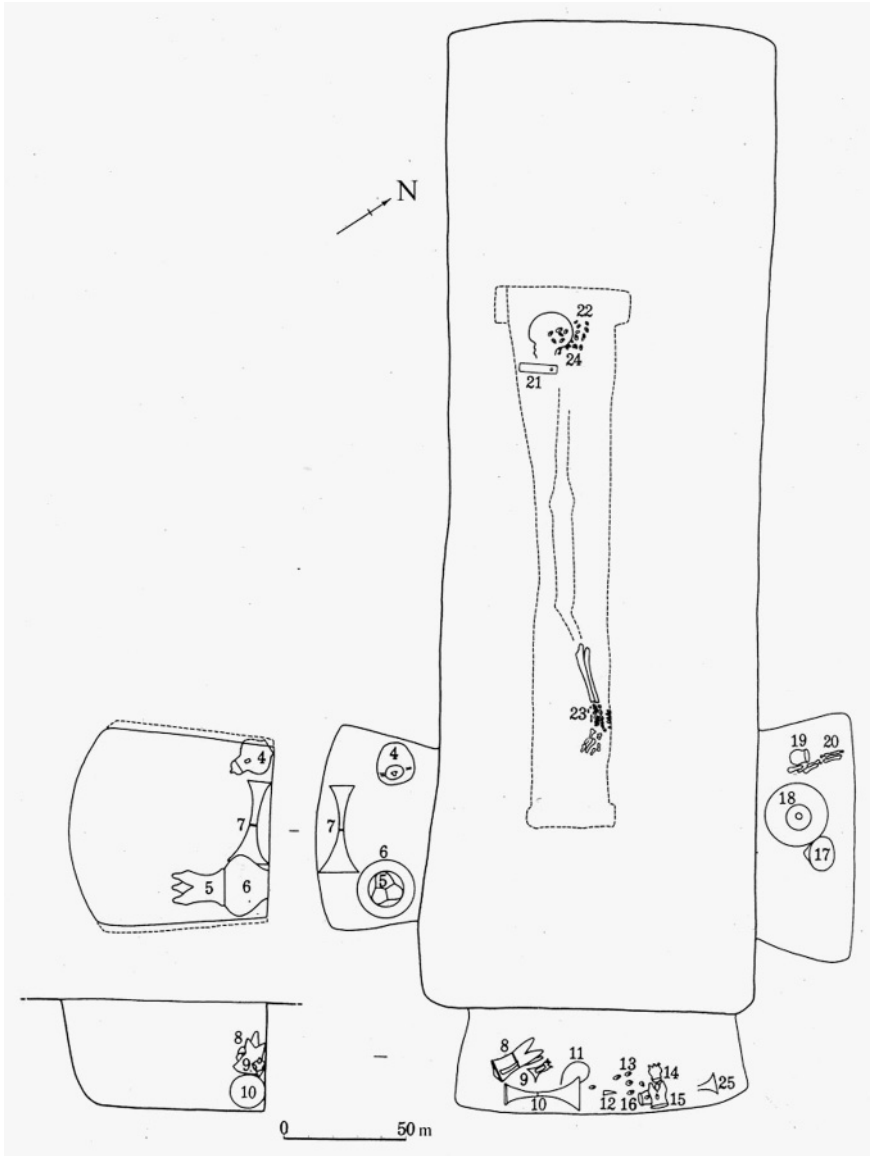


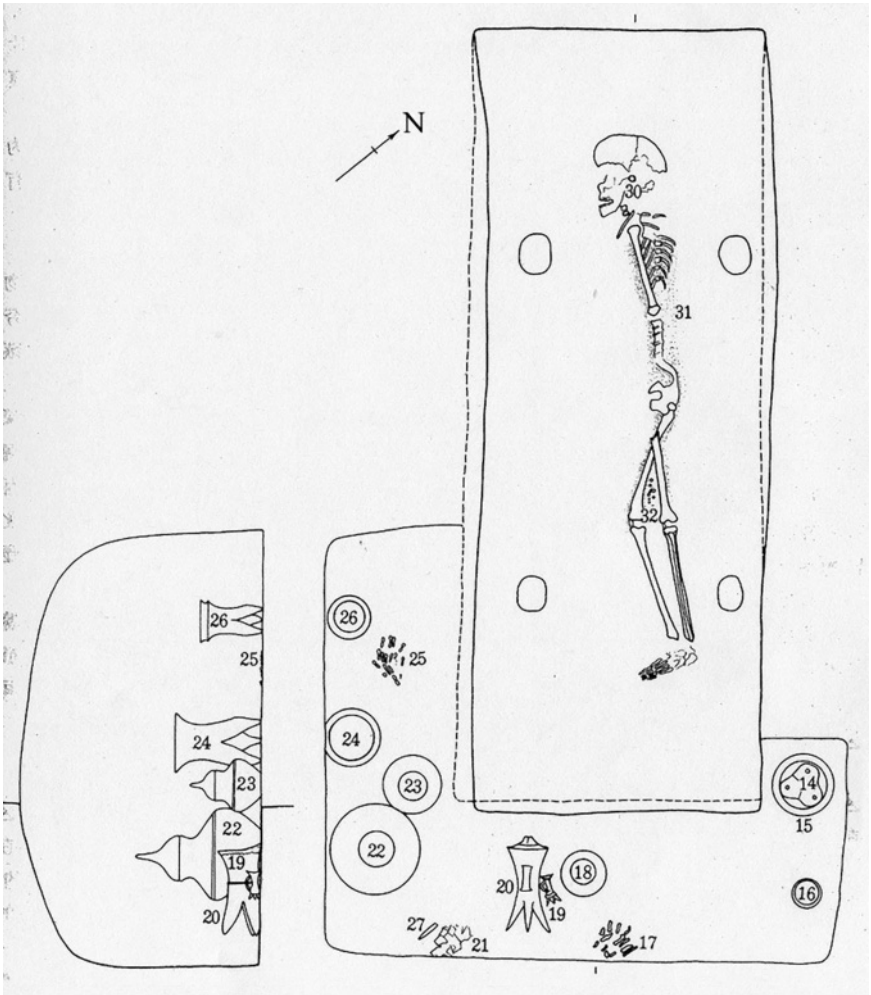
Figure 4.4. Plan of Dadianzi burial M726, with burial goods in niches (after IACASS 1996, p. 48).

It is clear that the minimum equipment needed for graveside feasts was a set that included a jar with tripod cover, a tripod pitcher, and a small drinking cup.

One example of a large grave (M726) containing three niches is illustrated in Figure 4.4. Three vessels were found in the niche on the right side of the body—a tall fluted vase (*gu*), a small jar with a cover, and a jar with a tripod *li* used as a lid. A cup and a lidded jar were found in the niche on the left side of the body, while at the foot of the burial niche was another vase, a *jue* wine vessel, and several smaller objects. The three niches may represent three separate feasting groups at the graveside, since each has its own set of containers. Another individual (M612) (Figure 4.5) was provided with an L-shaped wall niche that runs along the foot and left side of the burial shaft just above the level of the coffin. In this niche were a total of nine pottery vessels, including a large and a small wine pitcher, a jar with a *li* tripod cover, and a small jar at the foot of the burial, and two *li*, and a large and small jar with pointed lids to the left. A few animal bones were also indicated. Burial M905 (Figure 4.6) contained a continuous wall niche around the lower half of the tomb. This grave also had three sets of drinking paraphernalia, as well as two clusters of animal bones and a small pile of cowrie shells. At Dadianzi, all of the larger graves contain at least one *li*-covered jar and one wine pitcher. These pitchers were decorated with thin hatched triangles and bands of alternating hatched lines (see examples in Figure 4.7). Each pitcher has a handle, a spout, and tripod legs.

One reason for interpreting these sets of vessels as remnants of feasting activity at the grave, as opposed to containers for food and drink for the deceased in the afterlife, is that the *li*-covered jars are always standing upright, while the wine pitchers are always lain on their sides. These burials are undisturbed (many of the vessels are unbroken), so the orientation of these vessels must represent deliberate placement. The pitchers had therefore been emptied of their contents before being placed in the grave. Furthermore, the *li*, upside down and used as a cover for a jar, clearly contained nothing. This arrangement is obviously different in intent from what is found in the much later tombs of the Han era in which the food was arrayed on tables for the convenience of the dead and food and wine residue adheres to the containers (e.g., the Mawangdui burials [Qian 1981]).

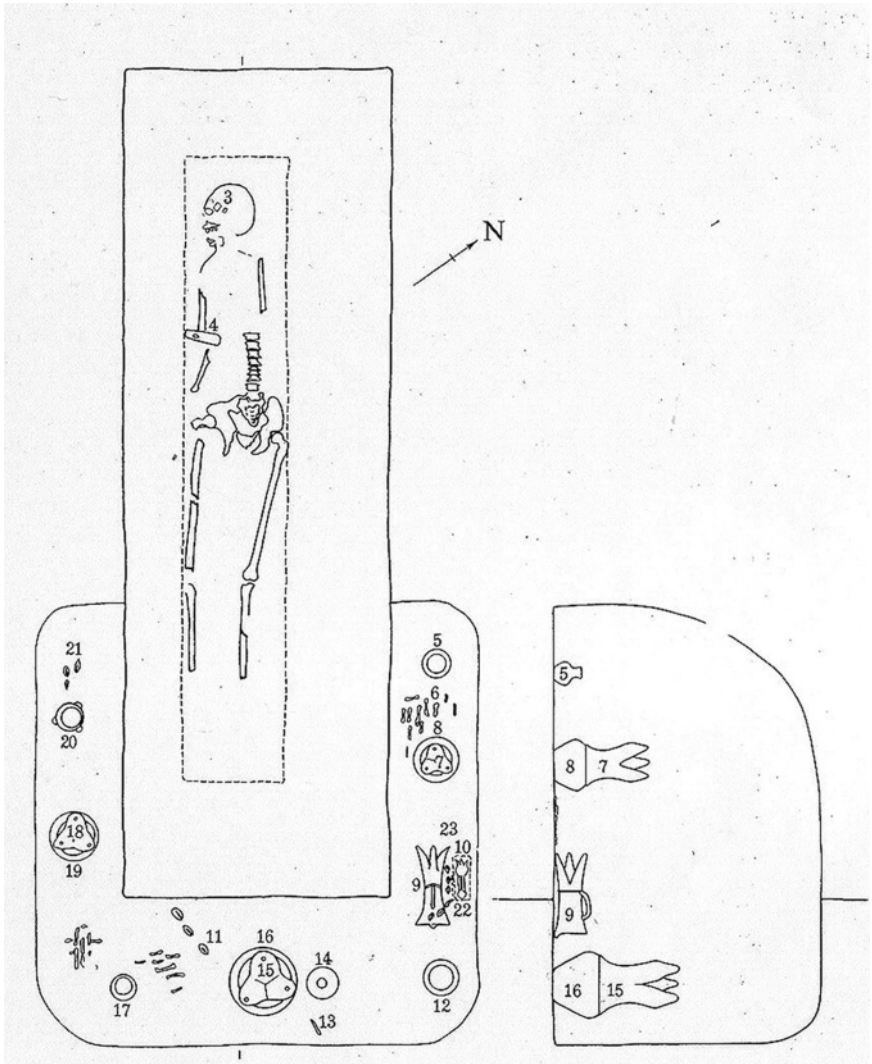
In the four trenches excavated in the residential section of Dadianzi, four houses and one feature were identified (IACASS 1996). Inside the houses, several different vessel types were found, including *li* tripods, narrow-necked jars, and jars with wide mouths. None of these vessels is painted. A few stone tools were also recovered, as well as several kinds of bone tools, including needles, awls, and projectile points. One particularly interesting discovery was a bone in which circular grooves had been cut into one surface in the same manner seen on oracle bones. It is far from the earliest uninscribed oracle bone as one has been unearthed at Fuhe, to the north of Dadianzi, that dates to possibly as early as 4000 B.C. (Guo 1995b). But these altered bones nevertheless suggest another interesting possible connection with the Shang. The material recovered in the trench excavations is



**Figure 4.5.** Plan of Dadianzi burial M612, with burial goods in niches (after IACASS 1996, p. 55).

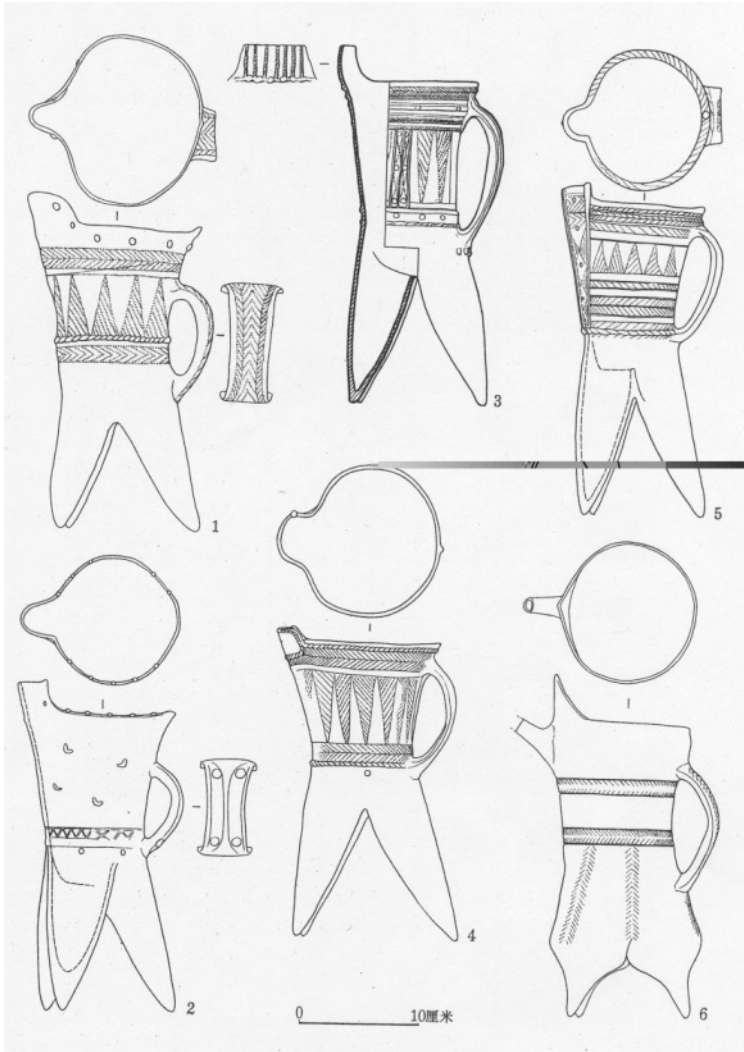
obviously residential debris, and it is interesting that similar tools and weapons are not found in the graves. This further suggests that the function of the grave goods was to create ancestors by means of a ceremony involving drink and meat, rather than to provide the deceased with equipment for the afterlife.

While some form of libations, as represented by the numerous jars and pitchers, were obviously included in medium and large-sized graves at Dadianzi, the only evidence for the inclusion of foodstuffs consists of animal bones. Pig and dog bones are found both in the wall niches and higher up in the tomb fill. In the largest



**Figure 4.6.** Plan of Dadianzi burial M905, with burial goods in niches (after IACASS 1996, p. 53).

and most elaborate graves, articulated bones are found, showing that whole legs and in some cases whole animals were deposited in the graves. Poorer graves may contain only inedible parts of the animal, such as the jaw or feet. There is thus a continuum from the richest to the poorest burials, ranging from the presence of whole animals to the complete absence of animal bones. The evident lack of meat



**Figure 4.7.** Decorated wine pitchers from Dadianzi (after IACASS 1996, p. 92).

containers may indicate that the meat was prepared by roasting, rather than cooked in pots. Unlike the wine, the meat does appear to have been a gift to the deceased rather than the remains of graveside feasting.

The Lower Xiajiadian evidence suggests that wine was imbibed or poured at the graveside, and that the elite, at least, utilized multiple sets of vessels for this



purpose. While meat was part of the mortuary ritual, it does not appear to have been consumed at the site. Thus it seems that while food is an important element of the Lower Xiajiadian burial rites, the level of consumption does not constitute a feast. There is no direct evidence that wine consumption at the grave filled the function of transforming the deceased into an ancestral spirit, but the similarities with Late Shang, where the testimony of the oracle bones is available, as well as earlier Neolithic evidence, suggests that this may have been the case.

## LATE SHANG DYNASTY FEASTING

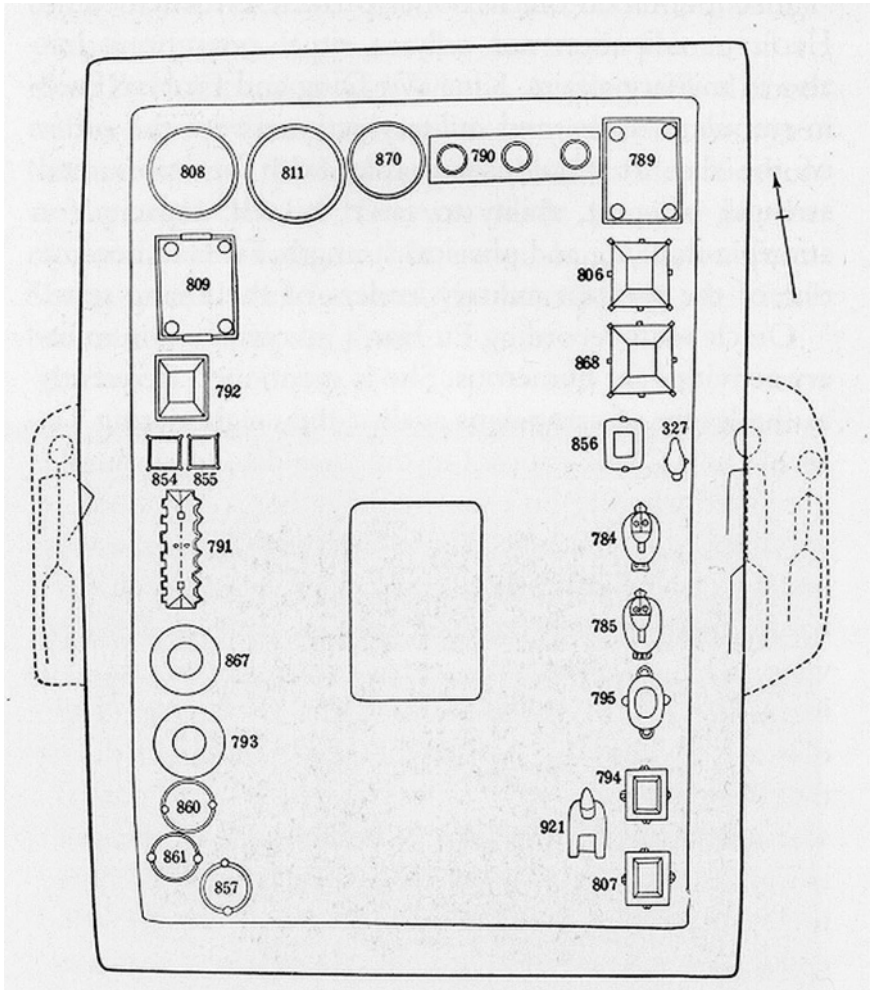
The Late Shang Dynasty also conducted feasting at graveside, but the food and wine containers were fashioned from costly bronze instead of ceramic. In terms of the burial assemblage, elaboration of both individual containers and the variety of shapes is quite astounding. Another change is that bronze containers for meat were present as well. No longer was it sufficient to lay a roasted pig or dog on a ledge in the grave. Lady Hao's grave even includes a bronze cooking stove, with three bronze cooking pots, perhaps for the preparation of "dishes" (mixed meats and vegetables) or the cooking of grain.

If the painted vessels with complex shapes of Lower Xiajiadian delighted the deceased, how much more honored must the Shang ancestors have been to receive their wine and meat in these elaborate bronze containers. The presentation was made important by the costliness of the serving vessels as well as the food and wine itself.

The importance of bronze vessels cannot be overstated. Nine bronze vessels inherited from the preceding Xia dynasty, symbolized the legitimacy of the Shang dynasty, and later the Zhou. These nine bronzes were the tangible evidence of centralized power. Perhaps several kinds of transformations were symbolized. The transformation from ore to molten metal to objects of beauty parallels that of the transformation of grain into wine into a state of intoxication, and from living animals to cooked meat to satiety.














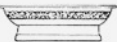



















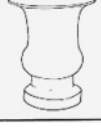


The sheer number of bronze vessels found in Late Shang burials is overwhelming. Only a few royal burials have been found intact, and none of these belonged to kings. But the richness of the queenly burials is impressive enough, even though the size of the queens' burials are presumed to be significantly smaller than those of the kings. For example, the tomb of Fu (Lady) Hao, a king's consort who became an ancestral spirit, was 4 × 5.6 meters in plan, and 7.5 meters deep. The personage buried in the tomb is known from inscriptions on many of the bronzes, designating her as Lady Hao. She is also mentioned in many oracle bone inscriptions, allowing many details about her life to be known (Linduff 2001; Zheng 1996).

The 1600 kilograms of bronze found in Lady Hao's tomb included 195 vessels (Figure 4.8). This was the first undisturbed Shang burial to be excavated; all the



**Figure 4.8.** Plan of Lady Hao's grave showing locations of the larger bronze vessels (after *Kaogu Xuebao* 1977/2 p. 61, fig. 3).

known kings' graves had been previously looted (Bagley 1999; Qian 1981; Thorp 1980). Not only the quantity and quality, but also the variety of vessels dedicated to the consumption of wine is highly impressive (Figure 4.9). Lady Hao's bronze vessels included 40 *jue* and 53 *gu*, both of which are known to have been used for the serving of wine. Food vessels are equally varied (see, for instance, Figure 4.10), but were fewer in number. Some of these were produced in matched sets, with up to ten bronzes in a set (Bagley 1999). These must have been planned in sets since each

WINE									WATER
jia	he	gu	zun	lei	hu	you (type I)	you (type II)	fang yi	pan
									
									
									
									
									

**Figure 4.9.** The varieties of vessel types used for wine in the Shang dynasty (after Wen 1980:5, drawing by Phyllis Ward).


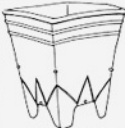


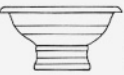






























FUNCTION	FOOD								
NAME OF VESSEL TYPE	ding	fang ding	li	xian or yan	gui	yu	dou	fu	jue
STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT									
POTTERY PROTOTYPE									
EARLY SHANG									
LATE SHANG									
EARLY ZHOU									
LATE ZHOU									

Figure 4.10. The varieties of vessel types used for food in the Shang dynasty (after Wen 1980:6, drawing by Phyllis Ward).



**Figure 4.11.** Large fang ding, probably a meat vessel (after Rawson 1996a:93).

mold for bronze casting was unique and could not be reused (Thorp 1980). Some of the sets were from Lady Hao's own store, as indicated by the inscriptions, but others may have been especially ordered by relatives. Most of the large containers were found in pairs. A pair of *fang ding* (square shaped vessels with four cylindrical legs) are particularly celebrated as they are among the largest ever found in a Shang tomb. Each one is 80 centimeters tall and weighs 118 kilograms (Figure 4.11).

Bagley (1999:197) estimates that of the 195 bronze vessels, 144 of them were related to wine. This suggests that, like the funeral services at Dadianzi, wine was perceived as far more important to the ancestors than meat. This is further underscored by Bagley's suggestion that of the 56 largest bronzes, only six of them appear to be food vessels (1999:197). The various shapes of wine vessels each had different functions. Some were used for storage, while others were for heating, diluting, pouring, and drinking the wine (Thorp 1980:52). Childs-Johnson (1995) describes the wine offering as "to pour out heated millet wine from the *jue* bronze vessels." A distinction between wine and food is evident in the placement of the bronzes, with wine vessels placed in the inner coffin, and meat containers located between the inner and outer coffins. The "wine" in early China is probably more appropriately referred to as ale (Anderson 1988) or "millet ale" (Keightley 1999:258)—at least it is clear that it was not made from grapes. An entire Shang industry was devoted to making this beverage. Keightley also suggests that "the offering of wine, whose fragrance and taste, like the smoke from roasting meat, was pleasing to the Powers" (Keightley 1999:258).

The bronze stove with three *zeng* steamers found in Lady Hao's tomb provides a unique window into food preparation. The soot on its legs demonstrates that it had been used. Although it has not been examined for food residues, presumably grains were steamed, rather than meats or dishes. Rice is still steamed in this way. The stove and steamers together weigh 113 kilograms (Qian 1981).

As for identifying the participants in the graveside ritual, it seems likely that those who would consider the deceased an ancestor would surely have been present. Since the purpose was to create or celebrate a new ancestral spirit, it is highly probable that only family members would have attended. Rawson (1996a:87) suggests that "the large number of different but set shapes suggests a formal meal, with prescribed foods and wines offered in a prescribed sequence."

One avenue to understanding the nature of the funerary feasts is an analysis of the graph *bin*, translated from oracle bone texts as meaning "to invite" or "to host." The graph depicts two persons kneeling on either side of a large vessel, "and appears to have involved the offering of a feast or banquet to a spirit" (Keightley 1999:260). The word "*bin*" was also used to refer to times "when the king entertained his supporters with banquets" (Keightley 1999:260). This implies other feasts for which there is no archaeological evidence. It is only possible to say that feasts for the ancestors are mentioned much more often than secular feasts, and that perhaps, given the scene the graph depicts, all feasts were religious in nature. By Period V (1105–1045 B.C.), divining by the king about feasting his supporters through the use of oracle bones had all but ceased.

Another clue to Shang mortuary ritual is derived from objects placed in the fill above the coffin. Two jade bowls, one white and one green, were found on top of the coffin in Lady Hao's grave. The white jade bowl was associated with three eating implements, two of bone and one made of bronze. Tang (1999:174) calls them knives, but the photograph in Rawson (1996b) clearly shows the bowls of narrow spoons. Did the King and perhaps two of Lady Hao's children share one final course with Lady Hao, as she became an ancestor? The fact that the graveside ritual was perceived as including the deceased is further demonstrated by a tomb in which a plate with cattle and sheep legs was placed near the mouth of the body (Tang 1999:176).

During the Late Shang both wine and food were part of funerary feasts, but the emphasis was decidedly on wine, to judge from the number and variety of wine-related vessels. Many of Lady Hao's bronzes bore traces of fine cloth, as if they had been wrapped up. It seems that after the feast, the dishes must have been washed, and the vessels stacked in the grave after washing. The graveside feasting was elaborate, and must have required the labor of many servants to make preparations as well as to tidy up afterwards. The various steps involved in the preparation of the wine, including heating, pouring, and consuming, must have been laid out for the officiant. In so important a ceremony as feasting to create an ancestor, the proper rituals would have had to be strictly observed.

It is interesting that ritual feasts were more common than banquets for allies. It seems that the politics of the Shang were so enmeshed in ritual that the ritual itself showed that the Shang kings were in control. Enormous amounts of energy were invested in divining about the ancestors, and keeping them supportive of the Shang state. Warfare was continuous, and trade, glossed as tribute, is evident in the artifacts of Shang. But ceremony appears to have been the secret weapon, keeping the rites was an end in itself.

## CONCLUSION

The gradual change in mortuary treatment in China, from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age, indicates that through various paths, feasts for the ancestors at the gravesite became the process through which the immediate and future beneficence of the deceased was insured. K.C. Chang demonstrates that in the *Zhou Li*, an ancient book describing many kinds of ceremonies, “food cannot be separated from ritual” (Chang 1977:11). Chang suggests that Chinese people are “preoccupied with eating,” and naturally the ancestors would be, too. In fact, David Keightley asserts that “the great wealth of ritual bronzes buried with dead elites was presumably provided so that the recently dead could continue their sacrifices to the more senior ancestors” (Keightley 2000:101).

In addition to graveside feasting, regular ceremonies were necessary to keep the attention of the ancestors and to seal their allegiance. Although secular feasting also occurred, less is known about these events, as they are mentioned infrequently on the oracle bones, and no archaeological evidence has been discovered. This is probably because the oracles bones were concerned with sacrifices that would be pleasing to the dead, not the living, and it was the responsibility of the king to discover what animals and how many would be acceptable to the spirits on particular occasions (Chang 1977:19).

Feasts for the dead were held for everyone at many Neolithic sites, although differential treatment is evident even in this early period. By the time of the Lower Xiajiadian, only some people (those buried in medium and large graves) were feasted, while others were interred without wine vessels or meat bones. It appears that by the Late Shang, ordinary people no longer became spirit ancestors. The differences noted between the mortuary rituals at Dadianzi of graveside feasting and Late Shang practices can be interpreted as emphasizing the royal ancestors (although it must be admitted that no non-royal burials, other than human sacrifices, are known from the latter period).

These changes are expressed in several specific ways. First, it is clear that wine was the most important element in burial rituals throughout the earlier periods, based on the relative number of containers for wine in comparison to food. The addition of food vessels in the Late Shang period indicates a new attention to meat

and other foodstuffs. One of the common topics of oracle bones is animal (and human) sacrifices. Perhaps the sharing of the food in the form of cooked offerings among the relatives at the gravesite was meant to remind the ancestor of family ties and obligations. The consumption of meat at the gravesite may have contributed to the creation of a sense of community among the descendants who would share in the hoped-for blessings from the new ancestor.

Second, by the Late Shang period there is no evidence of wine or food being given directly to the deceased. In Dadianzi, the wine was consumed during the burial event but meat on the bone was left for the deceased. In Shang, while the newly created spirit may have partaken of the essence of the wine and food through the insubstantial means of aroma and smoke, no food seems to have been left in the grave, only the cleaned vessels. This suggests a diminished sense of the corporeality of the deceased. More importance appears to have been attached to the bronzes (many of which were inscribed), than to their contents. Food was so important by this point that a bronze cooking vessel was the symbol of the state (Chang 1977:11).

From the Neolithic to the Late Shang, there is a shift in concepts pertaining to the dead and their role as ancestors. By the Late Shang, the power of the ancestors is believed to derive from the world of the spirits and the use of their powers to aid descendants is no longer automatically assumed. The food and wine offered to the dead function to keep the ancestral spirit attached to the living. The quote at the beginning of this chapter emphasizes this attitude. "O soul come back," begins the incantation, not "please go away and don't bother us."

Finally, the contexts of feasting multiply in Late Shang. Graveside feasting likely included only members of the immediate family, those who could expect blessings from the feast, though a huge retinue of servants and officiants must necessarily have been present as well. While the feast was elaborated for the sake of the ancestor rather than spectators, there undoubtedly must have been a highly visible procession to the grave site with servants carrying the food vessels and other offerings. Worship at the ancestral temple, built on the gravesite, took place according to the appropriate day in the ten day cycle, presumably with prescribed ritual actions performed by specialists.

The changes noted correspond to the different sociopolitical contexts of the Neolithic, the Lower Xiajiadian, and the Shang. Neolithic societies were socially differentiated but all the dead were treated as ancestors for the sake of the entire village or clan. Lower Xiajiadian society appears to have been ranked based on the differential treatment of the dead, with distinctions expressed in size and depth of the graves, as well as the number and elaboration of the funerary offerings included. During this period, only some of the dead were feasted, presumably those who had more influence and wealth. Late Shang burials follow this same pattern only on a scale several orders of magnitude grander. By this point, social stratification is so marked that only royalty are feasted and only the royal dead can apparently become spirits.



It is likely that the prosperity of the Shang royal lineage was construed as evidence that their ancestors were the most powerful. It became then imperative for the lineage to maintain their wealth and to display it in ritual ways. The royal ancestors were active contributors to Shang prosperity, and it was this prosperity that at once conferred the right to rule as well as demonstrated the power of the ancestral spirits. Changes in mortuary practices through time indicate that graveside feasting gradually became the prerogative of the elite, and finally, perhaps, only of the royal clans. Chang (1977) believes that the distribution of food resources underlay social stratification in the early state in China. Although that proposition cannot be demonstrated with the data relevant to feasting, it is certainly “food for thought.”

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**Part II**

**New World**

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## Chapter 5

# *To Dine Splendidly* Imperial Pottery, Commensal Politics, and the Inca State

TAMARA L. BRAY

*"... [the queen] was very fond of banquets and parties, and often invited the principal lords of Cuzco... giving them splendid food and abundant drink, and they could take home everything they had not eaten."*  
—Martin de Murúa (1962 [1590]:33).

This paper looks at the classic polychrome vessels associated with the imperial Inca state in terms of their functional significance and considers the role of these objects in the broader context of elite identity and empire building. The focus is on several dimensions of the ceramic assemblage not normally discussed in studies of Inca pottery including their significance from a culinary standpoint and the gendered associations of this category of material culture. Based on an empire-wide analysis of the imperial assemblage, I suggest that viewing Inca pottery as culinary equipment offers a window into the ways in which food, feasting, and gender figured in the negotiation of state power and imperial expansion.

To better understand how pots functioned as political tools in the Inca state, ethnohistoric and ethnographic information on Andean foodways is presented together with archaeological data on Inca vessel forms, patterns of distribution, and contexts of finds. The imperial state assemblage is then compared to the local vessel repertoire of a northern Andean polity that was incorporated into the Inca empire shortly before its demise. These different lines of evidence are used

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to draw functional inferences about Inca vessel forms, outline the features of an imperial Inca “haute cuisine,”<sup>1</sup> and consider the role of women in the development of the Inca state.

This paper takes as its point of departure the notion that food plays a prominent role in social activities concerned with relations of power. Cooking, cuisine, and, by extension, culinary equipment, constitute a basic medium of human social interaction. Food and feasting are increasingly recognized as having played a prominent role in the emergence of social hierarchies and the negotiation of power (Clark and Blake 1994; Dietler 1996; Gero 1992; Goody 1982; Gummerman 1997; Hayden 1990, 1996; Nielsen and Nielsen 1998; Wiessner and Shieffenhovel 1996). In the Andean context, the importance of reciprocity and hospitality as key components of Inca statecraft was first discussed by Murra (1980 [1955]). The labor services owed the state by local communities, which could range from cultivating fields to massive public works projects, were typically couched in terms of the reciprocal obligations of chiefly generosity. An important aspect of reciprocal labor obligations in the Andes was the understanding that the work party would be fully provisioned by the sponsor in terms of raw materials, tools, and food and drink (Murra 1980:97, 121–134).

In the present study, food, pots, and politics are seen as intimately linked. Rather than simply viewing Inca pottery as a signifier of the state, I approach it as an important point of articulation between consumption, identity, status, and political strategies of imperial state expansion and control. Neither a functional nor a symbolic analysis alone is adequate for understanding the significance of this distinctive artifact of imperial rule. Rather, it is suggested that the meaning and importance of imperial Inca polychrome pottery is bound up with its involvement in the political practices of the Inca state.

## POTTERY AS CULINARY EQUIPMENT

Pottery from archaeological contexts has not typically been analyzed for its active role in the construction of social relations or as culinary equipment (though see Blitz 1993; Johannessen 1993; Pauketat and Emerson 1991; Potter 2000, for recent exceptions). Studies of archaeological ceramics have, instead, tended to focus on aspects of style (or appearance) construed as emblematic of ethnicity across space and time (Wright 1991). While a few scholars have underlined the importance of pots as tools (e.g., Braun 1983; Skibo and Schiffer 1995), pre-historic pottery has received relatively little attention from either a functional or technological standpoint in comparison to, for instance, lithics.

As Wright (1991) has suggested, the dearth of such techno-functional studies may relate to generic associations of pottery with women, cooking, and the domestic sphere of activity. The unspoken assumption is that activities controlled by

women are not important to the study of larger social processes (see Hastorf 1991; Skibo and Schiffer 1995; Wright 1991). Occasionally, this underlying premise is stated outright, as in the following quote: “[Inca] architecture is directly symbolic of the state and the world that it represented [while] the distribution of pottery . . . suggests its relationship to the more mundane realm of state hospitality, reciprocity, and labor management” (Morris 1995:420).

Though the notion of separate public and domestic spheres may seem entirely natural to us, this particular form of social organization has not been proven universal across either time or space (see Brumfiel 1991; Wright 1991). As a firmly embedded element of Western ideology, however, it demonstrably pervades our thinking about all other societies, past and present. Consigning culinary concerns to the realm of the domestic, which is commonly understood as outside the realm of the active and the political, obscures the significance of cooking and food prestation in Inca statecraft. This great oversight has begun to be rectified in recent years in works focusing, for instance, on the significance of plant remains and paleoethnobotanical data for tracking sociopolitical change in the Andes (Hastorf 1990, 1991, 1993; Hastorf and Johannessen 1993) and the centrality of the kitchen in modern Andean contexts (Vokral 1991; Weismantel 1988).

The present study continues this trend by approaching Inca cooking and cuisine as a key cultural domain for understanding the Cuzqueño approach to statecraft. By placing cooking, cuisine, and culinary artifacts at the center of the present study, I hope to illuminate and engender another dimension of Inca statecraft. Contrary to Morris’s (1995:422) assertion that Inca ceramics carried “relatively minor and simple meanings [vis-à-vis] the overall style repertory of the ruling group and its system of power,” I believe that the imperial assemblage was an integral component of imperial state strategies of legitimation and control.

In analyzing Inca pottery as culinary equipment and as material symbols of the state, the intimate links between food, politics, and gender are highlighted. In what follows, I develop the idea that the Inca elaborated a specific elite, or “haute,” cuisine and a distinctive, and distinguishing, ensemble of ceramic cooking, service, and storage vessels as a conscious strategy aimed at creating visible differences between social classes. I also contend that the selection of culinary equipment as a medium for the material expression of class difference was deeply interlinked with the way gender was used by the state to model social hierarchy (see Silverblatt 1987).

The next section outlines the parameters of sixteenth century Andean cuisine and cooking practices in order to establish a culinary and functional context for the imperial Inca assemblage. The state ceramic assemblage is then compared to the local vessel inventory of the Caranqui polity of northern highland Ecuador. From a functional perspective, the Caranqui assemblage provides an informative contrast with the imperial one and offers insights into the degree to which culinary practices



and consumption patterns were linked to processes of imperial state expansion and the creation of visible social classes and class difference.

## ANDEAN FOODWAYS AND INCA HAUTE CUISINE

The importance and ubiquity of ceramic containers in the Andes is attested both by the archaeological record and scattered references found throughout the writings of the early Spanish commentators. Cobo, for instance, wrote that the average Indian's household furnishings consisted primarily of "pots, large jars, pitchers, and cups" (1964 [1653]: Bk.11, Ch.6, p.20). An earlier passage referring specifically to the northern highlands describes a typical household as follows: "In the second room of the house they [the Indians] have their storeroom full of large and small pots, some on top of the ground, others buried in the earth as vats for straining and preparing their wines" (Atienza 1931 [1575?]:52–53).<sup>2</sup>

Despite such useful observations, references to specific vessel forms and associated functions are decidedly rare in ethnohistoric sources. It is likely that the very commonplace nature of these objects, as well as the gender bias of the chroniclers, rendered them all but invisible. Fortunately, however, the culinary habits and subsistence practices of Andean peoples were apparently of more interest. The patterns of food preparation, consumption, and storage that can be reconstructed from the documentary record offers considerable insight into ceramic vessel requirements and use in the precolumbian Andes.

One of the principal sources I use for information on native Andean culinary practices is the Jesuit scholar Bernabé Cobo (1964 [1653]), who left detailed accounts of daily life in the Andes. Cobo arrived in Perú in 1599, moving to Cuzco in 1609 and travelling extensively in the highlands for the next several decades. He is considered by many to be among the most reliable chroniclers of Inca culture (Rowe 1946:194; Urton 1999:31). Other sources I rely upon include Fray Martín de Murúa (1962 [1590]), who provides useful information on Inca customs, Pedro de Cieza de León (1962 [1553]), one of the earliest and most observant of all the Spanish chroniclers, and Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala (1936 [1613]), an indigenous author whose impressive letter to the King of Spain is filled with illustrations of daily life that offer many insights into Andean culture. The ethnohistoric data are supplemented with modern ethnographic observations where these offer useful insights or clarification.

In what follows, I provide a synopsis of the ethnohistoric documentation pertaining to Andean culinary practices and habits. The information is arranged according to the major food categories comprising the indigenous diet. Each food category is considered with respect to methods of preparation, modes of serving and eating, and storage practices. The focus throughout is on habits and techniques that would have affected vessel usage.

## The Native Andean Diet

The basic Andean diet is summed up in the following passage written by an anonymous source in 1573:

Their usual sustenance is wine made of maize . . . , and some herbs which they call *yuyo* and potatoes, and beans, and cooked maize; their daily bread is any of these cooked with a little salt, and what they consider as a good seasoning to put in their stewed foods is red pepper (Anónimo 1965 [1573]:226, translated in Salomon 1986:73).

### Maize

Corn was by far the most highly esteemed crop in the Andes. Virtually every account of native subsistence lists maize as one of the main items in the pre-columbian diet (i.e., Acosta 1954 [1590]:109; Anónimo 1965 [1573]:226; Cobo 1964 [1653]:Bk.11, Ch.6, p.21; Bk.4, Ch.3, p.159; Garcilaso 1945 [1609]:Bk.2, p.48; Rodríguez Docampo 1965 [1650]:75). Cobo wrote that in Perú, the most common and universal form of bread was maize (Bk.11, Ch.6, p.20).

After it was dried, maize could be prepared in a number of different ways. One of the most common methods was boiling: “After drying the maize, it was frequently cooked by the indians with only water; the resulting dish was known as *muti* and it formed the dietary staple of the common people” (Cobo 1964 [1653]: Bk.4, Ch.3, p.160). The dried grains also formed a regular component of their customary stews (*ibid.*).

Maize could also be toasted: “They toast the maize in perforated clay casseroles, and they use it as bread, and this is the typical food they take when they travel . . . ” (Cobo 1964 [1653]: Bk.14, Ch.5, p.244.). Toasted maize was known as *cancha* (Garcilaso 1945 [1609]: Bk.2, p.177). It was often ground into flour that could be used in a variety of ways. Maize dumplings, or *huminta*, were typically added to stews (Cobo 1964 [1653]:Bk.14, Ch.5, p.244) and were considered a treat associated with festivals (Garcilaso 1945 [1609]: Bk.2, p.177). Dough balls could also be roasted directly on the coals (Cobo 1964 [1653]: Bk.14, Ch.3, p.161). Cobo notes that tortillas made from maize flour in Perú were toasted or cooked in clay casseroles set in the fire (*ibid.*). The Indians also had a type of maize called *pisancalla* that they toasted (like popcorn) until it burst and opened (Cobo 1964 [1653]: Bk.14, Ch.5, p.244).

One of the most important uses of maize in the Andes was for the production of *chicha*, or corn beer: “. . . they keep in their house no spirits, not even water, other than their wine or *chicha*, and as this lasts for such a short period, they make it quite frequently in quantities of four or six *arrobas*<sup>3</sup> each time” (Cobo 1964 [1653]: Bk.14, Ch.4, p.242). The elaboration of *chicha* was seen as one of the fundamental culinary tasks of Andean women and universally associated with the

female domain (Gómez Huamán 1966:35). The importance ascribed this activity is reflected in the strict dietary and sexual proscriptions applied to women engaged in its production (Tschudi 1918; Villagómez 1919).

Besides being the daily beverage of the local population, *chicha* was an important element of social and ceremonial gatherings where ritual drunkenness was often obligatory (Morris 1979; Rowe 1946:292; Salomon 1986:75–79):

The public banquets lasted a long time and participants would drink heavily at these feasts until they became inebriated . . . They would take turns offering each other *chicha* in the following way: the one who was offering would get up and go over to a member of the other group carrying two glasses of *chicha* in his hands, giving one glass to his counterpart and keeping the other himself, they would drink together (Cobo 1964 [1653]: Bk.14, Ch.5, p.245).

*Chicha* can be made in a number of different ways: “One very strong type, called *sora*, is made by first burying the maize underground until it sprouts; another type of *chicha* is made from toasted maize . . . But the most common type that the indians of Perú drink is made from masticated maize” (Cobo 1964 [1653]: Bk.4, Ch.4, p.162). Women chew a portion of the maize to be used and spit the masticated mash into jars of warm water. More grain is added to the jars and the mixture is then allowed to ferment to the desired strength (Cobo 1964 [1653]: Bk.4, Ch.4, p.162–163; Rowe 1946:292).

Cobo notes that the natives had more accoutrements for making and storing *chicha* than for any other purpose:

To produce, store, and drink this beverage, they had more instruments and vessels than they did for their foods. They use clay jars, the largest being four and six *arrobos*, as well as other smaller ones; they use a large quantity of large and small jugs, and three or four types of cups and glasses. (Cobo [1653] 1964: Bk.14, Ch.4, p.242).

In his Aymara dictionary, Bertonio (1879 [1612]) differentiates between vessels used to hold the masticated maize or quinoa used in making *chicha*, which he described as a small, wide-mouthed olla, and the jars in which the finished product (as well as water) were stored (noted in Tschopik 1950:202). It is reported that among the modern peasants of the Chucuito region, two jars are still employed for manufacturing *chicha*, one for fermentation and one for storage (Tschopik 1950:202). The latter has a narrower mouth and longer, more restricted neck than the former, features that facilitate closure and reduce the rate of evaporation.

## Potatoes and Other Root Crops

Cieza (1959 [1553]:44) states that “of the native foodstuffs, there are two which, aside from maize, are the main staples of the Indian’s diet: the potato . . . and another very good food they call quinoa.” Potatoes and other tubers (i.e., maca,

olluco, and oca), as well as quinoa, are the only cultigens that are native to the high altitudes of the Andes. Without these tubers, human occupation of these zones would probably have been impossible (Murra 1975:46).

Referring to potatoes, Cobo notes that “half the indians [of Perú] have no other staple” (1964 [1653]: Bk.4, Ch.13, p.168). Potatoes were so common in the Andean diet that one of the measurements of time employed prior to 1532 was equal to the length of time necessary to boil a pot of potatoes (Murra 1975:46). Potatoes could be eaten green, roasted, cooked, or in stews (Cobo 1964 [1653]: Bk.4, Ch.13, p.168). Those not eaten soon after harvest were preserved through a process of alternate exposure to sun and frost. The tubers dehydrated in this fashion were known as *chuño* and could be stored for many years. *Chuño* was used for thickening soups (Cieza de León 1959 [1553]:164) among other things. Cobo also mentions that a very fine flour could be made from rehydrated *chuño* by toasting and then grinding the bleached potatoes (1964 [1653]: Bk.4, Ch.13, p.168).

Other important tubers included ocas, ullucu, camote (sweet potato), and yuca (manioc). Ocas and ullucu, like the potato, are native to the cold heights of the puno. Ocas could be eaten raw, roasted, or boiled (Cobo 1964 [1653]: Bk.4, Ch.14, p.169). They could be dried in the same manner as potatoes for long-term storage (*ibid.*). Ullucu was valued for its medicinal properties. It was usually boiled to produce a decoction that was taken for relief of stomach and labor pains (*ibid.*:171). The sweet potato could be cooked and roasted like a fruit, stewed, fried, or made into preserves (Cobo 1964 [1653]: Bk.4, Ch.8, p.166). Peanuts, though not technically a tuber, were also known throughout much of the region and were usually eaten toasted (*ibid.*:167).

## Quinoa

The other important high altitude crop, quinoa, provided the basic grain for the highland populations. According to Cieza de León, quinoa “produces tiny seeds . . . of which they make drinks and which they also eat boiled, as we do rice” (1959 [1553]:44, 271; also Rodríguez Docampo 1965 [1650]:75). Quinoa was often cooked with herbs and *ají* to make a stew known as *pisqui* (Cobo 1964 [1653]: Bk.14, Ch.5, p.244). Cobo also notes that quinoa could be used to make *chicha* (1964 [1653]: Bk.4, Ch.4, p.162).

## Beans

Beans of various types, known generically as *purutus*, were another important element in the precolumbian diet. They could be soaked in vinegar and oil and eaten raw, dried for storage, or stewed or boiled (Cobo 1964 [1653]: Bk.4, Ch.27, p.174). They could also be toasted and ground into a flour and used medicinally in drinks or poultices (*ibid.*). Tarwi, also known as *chochos* and *altramuces*, was cultivated on a small scale for its seeds. Tarwi seeds are very similar to beans but

quite bitter and had to be soaked in water for several days prior to being eaten (Yacovleff and Herrera 1934–35:305).

## Red Pepper

Cobo states that after maize, *ají*, or red pepper, was the most widespread and highly esteemed cultigen in the Andean region (1964 [1653]: Bk.4, Ch.25, p.172). “*Ají*, prepared as a delicious salsa, is so pleasing to the indians that it makes anything edible, even wild and bitter herbs; they not only ate the fruit of this plant, but also the leaves, which they add to their stews like parsley or *yerbabuena*; they eat the *ají* raw and also preserve it in several ways: it can be pickled . . . , dried, or ground” (ibid:173).

## Salt

A universal and indispensable component of the native diet was salt. Atienza comments that “no matter how drab and humble the rest of their meal may be, they enjoy it as much as any luxury, as long as they can season it with *ají*, their principal spice, and salt to cool their body heat, and a little *chicha* to drink” (1931 [1575?]:67–68, translated in Salomon 1986:89). According to Cobo (1964 [1653]:Bk.3, Ch.4, p.112), the Indians recognized three different types of salt: sea salt, mineral salt, and salt collected from springs. The latter type was obtained by boiling the springwater in pots (ibid.). The Indians did not always add salt to their stews and vegetables, but when they ate, “they would put a cake of salt next to their plate that would serve as their saltshaker” (ibid:113).

## Meat

Meat was apparently consumed on a limited basis. Cobo (1964 [1653]: Bk.14, Ch.5, p.244) states that it was eaten only rarely by the common people, implying that elite members of society had greater access (see also Estrella 1988:313, 319; Guaman Poma 1936 [1613]:55; Gummerman 1991; Paz Ponce de León 1965 [1582]:237; Vokral 1991:76). Modern ethnographic evidence from the southern highlands indicates that camelid meat constitutes about ten percent of the campesino diet (Antunéz 1981:63). Archaeological evidence from the central sierra also suggests that commoners had some access to meat, though they apparently consumed poorer cuts than the elite (Sandefur 2001). While game animals such as deer, rabbit, partridge, and water fowl were reportedly abundant (Anónimo 1965 [1573]:220; Cobo 1964 [1653]: Bk.9; Guaman Poma 1936 [1613]:204–207), various sources suggest that hunting, and thus game consumption, was strictly regulated by the Inca (Cieza 1962 [1553]:400; Rowe 1946:217). Domesticated animals included dog, Muscovy duck, camelids, and guinea pig (*cuy*). Camelids and guinea pigs, which were by far the most common, constituted a regular component of most

Indian households, but the meat of these animals was usually reserved for meals that marked special occasions.

According to Cobo (1964 [1653]: Bk.3, Ch.4, p.113; Bk.14, Ch.5, p.244; also Acosta 1954 [1590]:136; Salazar Villasante 1965 [1565?]:132) the number of ways meat was prepared were fairly limited. Generally speaking, it was either stewed (typically in *locro* with *ají* and other vegetables), dried (as *charqui*), or barbecued. Roasting in an earthen pit oven (*pachamanca*) was also a common method of preparation.

### Miscellaneous Foods

Miscellaneous wild foods gathered by the native people added variety to their diets. Many types of fruits, either locally harvested or obtained through trade, were enjoyed by the highland population. Leaves of various plants, known generically by the term *yuyo*, were collected both as greens and for medicinal purposes (Rowe 1946:216). In both cases, the leaves were usually prepared by boiling. Fresh and dried fish were a common element of the native diet among those who lived near the sea or lakes (e.g., Estrella 1988:332–338). Cobo notes that dried fish was frequently used as “meat” to make *locro*, or stew (1964 [1653]: Bk.14, Ch.5, p.244).

### Inca Haute Cuisine

Various chroniclers of Andean culture offer hints as to what may have constituted Inca “haute cuisine,” though none address the matter directly. Guaman Poma (1936 [1613]:332), for instance, tells us that:

the [sapa] Inca . . . ate selected maize which is *capya utco sara*, and *papas manay* [early potatoes], . . . and llama called white *cuyro*, and *chiche* [tiny fish], white *cuy*, and much fruit and ducks, and very smooth *chicha* which took a month to mature and was called *yamor aca*. And he ate other things which the Indians were not to touch upon pain of death.

Murra (1960) notes that maize was generally accorded a much higher status by the Inca and their subjects than potatoes and other tubers, which actually formed the staples of the Andean diet. In probing the symbolic significance of this dichotomy, Ossio (1988:555) draws an interesting analogy between maize and the indigenous concept of *hanan* (upper, higher), on one hand, and potatoes and *hurin* (lower), on the other, that is based in part on Guaman Poma’s (1936 [1613]:336, 982) association of maize with Chinchaysuyu (the northern quarter of the Inca empire) and potatoes with Collasuyu (the southern quarter).

A description of the first Inca queen, Mama Ocllo’s, daily repast given by Murúa (1962 [c.1611]:29) provides further evidence of the elite connotations of maize in the Inca diet:

Her daily food was usually maize taken either as *locros anca* [seagull/hawk(?) stew] or *mote* [boiled maize kernels], mixed in diverse manners with other foods, cooked or otherwise prepared. For us these are coarse and uncouth foods, but for them they were as excellent and savory as the softest and most delicate dishes put on the tables of the monarchs of Europe. Her drink was a very delicate *chicha*, which among them was as highly esteemed as the fine vintage wines of Spain.

In general, the ethnohistoric sources convey the sense that maize was special, desirable, and even viewed as holiday food by the highland populations (Murra 1960:397).

Reports of royal gifts involving food offer further insight into the symbolic weighting of Andean dietary elements. The Inca ruler Atahualpa, for instance, is said to have sent llamas, cooked llama meat, dried ducks, maize bread, and vessels of *chicha* to Pizarro upon his landing at Tumbez (Coe 1994:214). Elsewhere it was reported that the royal food (*tupa cocau*) given by the Inca “to the people that he sent abroad,” consisted of a small bag of maize believed to be particularly nutritious because it came from the Inca himself (González Holguín 1952 [1608]:369). It is apparent from various sources that maize and meat were considered the food of the gods, and by extension, of the Inca. Ethnohistoric sources clearly state that the nobility ate more meat and maize than their subjects, who dined primarily on tubers and greens (Garcilaso 1945 [1609], Bk.2, p.124; Guaman Poma 1936 [1613]:55; Paz Ponce de León 1965 [1582]:237). Though maize was apparently consumed across the social spectrum, it does not seem to have been an item of everyday fare for the commoners (Coe 1994:220; Murra 1960), while access to meat seems to have been limited and fairly tightly controlled (Rowe 1946, 1982). The divide between the regular consumption of meat versus vegetables has been theorized as a fundamental marker of the division between social classes by some scholars (i.e., Goody 1982) and between men and women by others (i.e., Adams 1990).

In addition to the types of foods consumed, another aspect of Andean haute cuisine seems to have revolved around the concept of variety. According to González Holguín (1952 [1608]:238–239), the ability to prepare and serve either a variety of different plates in a single meal or to prepare a single meal using a variety of ingredients was key to the notion of “dining splendidly.” There are also hints that the amount of time invested in the preparation of foods, as in the case of the *yamor aca* mentioned above, the complexity of the dishes served, and the costliness of the ingredients used all figured into the equation of what constituted an elite repast. In sum, Inca haute cuisine does not appear to have differed radically from the baseline Andean diet in terms of elemental composition. Rather, it seems to have been defined on the basis of quality, quantity, and diversity of foodstuffs, and differences in modes of preparation, consumption, and disposal.

## ANDEAN CULINARY PRACTICES

A passage from Cobo offers this description of a typical Andean kitchen:

... they have inside their houses all the instruments necessary to grind, prepare, and cook their basic foodstuffs. Each house, no matter how small, had a hearth behind the door which consisted of a small, clay oven, no taller than one palm and closed on all sides save for a small mouth through which one stirs the fire; on the top part are two or three round holes on which they place the cooking pots (1964 [1653]: Bk.14, Ch.4, pp. 242–243).

In the review of sixteenth and seventeenth century materials presented above, boiling clearly stands out as the most common method of preparing food. Boiled foods were usually eaten in the form of stews or soups. Comments referring to such fare far outnumber any other references to prepared dishes. In Bertonio's Aymara dictionary (1879 [1612]), one vessel type, *chamillku*, is specifically defined as a "pot used for cooking stews."

Roasting seems to have been another fairly common cooking technique. The few available comments suggest that foods were typically roasted directly in the coals. According to Cobo (1964 [1653]:Bk.14, Ch.5, p.245) "... there was nothing but bad cooking and worse roasting over the coals, because they never even used spits." Parching or toasting was also an important culinary technique. Another vessel type listed in Bertonio's dictionary is defined as an "olla for toasting something" (cited in Tschopik 1950:203). A wide-mouthed, short walled vessel made specifically for toasting is still manufactured by the modern Aymara population of the Chucuito region (Tschopik 1950:206–207). Certain foods were simply toasted and eaten, but in other cases, parching constituted an intermediate step in the preparation of specific staples, most notable among them being maize flour.

As in most pre-modern cultures, food preparation was likely to have been a very time consuming activity. Many products required several stages of processing. Depending on the food, these steps might include drying, soaking, rinsing, mixing, parching or boiling, and reheating. Each of these stages could conceivably have required different vessel forms or sizes.

### Food Preparation

Vessels explicitly named in sixteenth and seventeenth century sources in connection with cooking and food preparation are listed in Table 5.1. Ollas (or pots) are mentioned with respect to stewing and boiling, casseroles named specifically in reference to toasting, and jugs, jars, and glasses in connection with *chicha* production and consumption. As noted earlier, Cobo indicated that the native peoples had more vessels and equipment for producing *chicha* than for any other



**Table 5.1. Vessel Types Explicitly Mentioned in Ethnohistorical Sources.**

Vessel (Spanish)	Vessel (English)	Culinary activity
Olla	Pot	Stewing; Boiling
Cazuela ( <i>Q.</i> chua)	Casserole	Toasting
Cazuelas de barro agujereadas	Casseroles, perforated	Toasting
Tinajas	Jars (large and small)	Chicha production
Cántaros; Cantarillos	Jugs (large and small)	Chicha production
Vasos y Tazas; Cantaricos	Glasses and cups (various sizes)	Chicha consumption
Platos ( <i>Q.</i> puco)	Plates	Serving

food preparation task, i.e., *chicha* production was the most elaborated culinary task in Andean cuisine.

In addition to those vessels specifically mentioned, it is possible to infer the presence or additional functions of several others from the data available on dietary habits and practices. Several foodstuffs, for instance, required soaking and washing. We may infer from this the need for both large- and medium-sized, unrestricted containers such as bowls or basins. Alternatively, we could posit an additional short-term storage function for the wide-mouthed cooking ollas. Similarly the production of salt may have required special basins or ollas to facilitate evaporation.

## Serving

Occasional remarks about the customary modes of presenting and eating foods provide further insight into vessel requirements. Cobo reports that the Indians typically ate twice a day, once in the morning and once in the late afternoon. Husbands and wives would sit back to back on the ground, with the wife facing the food and serving her husband on request (Cobo 1964 [1653]: Bk.14, Ch.5, p.245). Atienza notes that “. . . the men never eat from one plate with their women, and indeed would consider it a disgrace, and take it as such, if they were forced to do so” (1931 [1575?]:41–43, translated in Salomon 1986:76). At social gatherings and public feasts, Cobo reported that each family brought their own food and drink, though sharing was apparently an institutionalized practice. It was customary, for instance, when drinking *chicha* either ritually or socially to offer a toast to your companion or guest. This practice involved taking two tumblers and offering one to the person with whom you wished to share a drink:

. . . when a lord or lady goes to the house of another, to visit them, or see them, they must take . . . a jar of *chicha*, and coming to the place of the lord or lady they are going to visit they pour the *chicha* into two cups, and one is drunk by the person who visits, and the other drinks the *chicha* given him, and thus

they both drink. The same is done by he who is being visited, who has to get two other cups of *chicha*, and give one to the visitor, and drink the other one (Betanzos 1968 [1551]:55, translated in Coe 1994:207).

With respect to the types of vessels that comprised the native Andean table service, we have this valuable description from Cobo (1964 [1653]: Bk.14, Ch.4, p.243):

There are only two or three types of pieces that they use for this purpose: unglazed clay pots on which they used to carve various figures, the same as they did on jars and other vessels; plates made from dry calabashes, that were the size of small china plates, from clay, and from wood—those of wood are called *meca*, and those of clay they call *pucu*; and medium-sized ceramic casseroles that they call *chuas*. The table service of the noblemen and chiefs were made of silver and gold in former times.

Guaman Poma also provides an excellent illustration of the table service of the Inca nobility that represents a number of vessel forms remarkably similar to those found in archaeological contexts (Figure 5.1).

## Storage

Besides the importance of ceramic vessels in food preparation and serving, pots and jars were also used as storage containers in Andean households. Regarding the storage of food staples, Cobo offers the following:

The basic foods that they store are maize, *chuño*, and quinoa, since all three of these constitute their daily fare, though not everyone always has all of these items. They usually keep these products either inside their houses in large ceramic jars, or in a separate area designed for storage, or outside the house in small waterproof bins (Cobo 1964 [1653]: Bk.14, Ch.4, p.242).

The need for other short- and long-term storage vessels is implied by reference to certain culinary techniques mentioned above. Soaking beans, for instance, would have required the use of a vessel for a period of up to several days. Products made into preserves, such as *ají* and camote, presumably required longer term storage containers. The fermenting and aging of *chicha* required the use of storage jars from one to several weeks. Standard food preparation tasks used large quantities of water implying the presence of large water storage containers in the house compound.

The above review of sixteenth and seventeenth century references to Andean foodways and culinary techniques suggests the many ways in which pottery was used in the late precolumbian Andes. The diversity of tasks in which ceramic vessels were employed implies a corresponding diversity in the range of vessel



**Figure 5.1.** Illustration of the Inca ruler Huayna Capac's table service suggesting the range of different imperial vessel forms still remembered at the beginning of XVII century (Guaman Poma 1936 [1613]:369).

shapes. Cobo provides us with valuable insights into the native classification of the domestic pottery inventory in the following passage:

Nor did they make the same distinctions in earthenware that we use, but speak only of pots (*ollas*) and pitchers (*cántaros*), which they differentiate in terms of size (larger and smaller) and decoration (some have been sculpted with figures and designs); small, plain plates (*platillos*); and small shallow plates (*patenas*). The rest of their vessels correspond to the types that the Spaniards usually make from clay, which they [the Indians] made from silver, gold, wood, and dried calabashes; not even in their ancient sepulchers, in which they buried their dead with all forms of food and drink, does one find vessels other than the types referred to here (1964 [1653]: Bk.3, Ch.6, p.114–115).

This passage suggests that beyond gross morphological distinctions, the ethnoclassification of pottery revolved primarily around vessel size and the presence or absence of decoration. This observation on the emic organization of pottery corresponds with the definitions of vessel types provided by Bertonio in his Aymara dictionary (1879 [1612]). His definitions also rely primarily on the criteria of size and decoration in describing and differentiating between vessels. In addition, he defines a few vessels with respect to the foods with which they were generally associated.

These observations offer useful guidelines in interpreting the significance of ceramic variability in the archaeological record and working towards a culturally meaningful taxonomy of Inca vessel types. Cobo's statement also argues for the conservatism of the Andean pottery types and culinary patterns described above. In a sense it offers a justification for using the ethnohistoric record to interpret the archaeological one.

## FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF IMPERIAL INCA POTTERY

With the ethnohistoric backdrop of Andean cuisine in place, I now turn to the culinary significance of the imperial Inca ceramic ensemble. In what follows, I offer a functional analysis of the different vessel forms comprising the state pottery assemblage drawing upon both the ethnohistoric data and general studies of the mechanical performance characteristics of pottery (e.g., Braun 1983; Hally 1986; Henrickson and McDonald 1983; Smith 1985). Each Inca vessel category is analyzed in terms of its morphological attributes, physical properties, and patterns of use wear. The physical features, in conjunction with the culinary information found in the ethnohistoric sources, are used to suggest possible functional roles for the different vessel forms. The information presented above indicates that ceramic vessels were utilized in the following food-related activities: cooking, processing, fermentation, serving, eating, wet and dry storage, transportation of liquids, and washing. This task list serves as a baseline in discussing probable functions of imperial Inca vessel forms.

One of the basic assumptions of this paper is that the form of a ceramic container is strongly influenced by its intended function. The functional nature of pottery can be analyzed along several dimensions. These include shape, physical properties determined by attributes such as wall thickness and paste composition, patterns of use wear, and patterns of association or context. In Braun's (1983) discussion of "pots as tools," i.e., containers, he suggests that the mechanical performance characteristics of a pot, as with any tool, are determined to a considerable extent by its morphological and physical properties. The "performance characteristics" of a vessel, in turn, help to determine how well suited it is for a particular use (Hally 1986). Specific dimensions of vessel performance identified by Hally (1986) and utilized in the present study include vessel stability, volumetric capacity, overall size, ease of access to vessel contents, ease of removal of contents, tendency to spill, efficiency of heat absorption, heat retention, rate of evaporation, ability to close the orifice, and thermal shock resistance.

In my discussion of the imperial state ceramic assemblage, I adopt the Inca vessel shape categories defined by Albert Meyers (1975). In contrast to Rowe's (1944) typological and taxonomic classification of Inca pottery, which accorded primacy to surface treatment and decorative style in the fashion of the day (see Colton and Hargrave 1937), Meyers's classification scheme focuses principally on vessel form. Like Rowe, Meyers utilized the ceramic assemblage from the ceremonial-fortress complex of Saqsaywaman to construct his classificatory scheme. In this, he relies primarily on the published reports of archaeological materials excavated at the site from the mid-1930s through the early 1970s (Valcárcel 1934–35; Valencia 1970, 1975; Yabar and Ramos 1970). These reports describe the archaeological materials recovered in detail and are well illustrated.

The collection from Saqsaywaman has the advantage of being from the imperial capital. It also contains the full range of Inca vessel forms, comes from a well-documented archaeological context, and has a secure chronological position. While it is possible that undecorated or utilitarian pottery may have been under-collected and/or under-reported by the original investigators, it is worth noting that at least three of the vessel categories in Meyers's classification scheme (Forms 9, 10, and 12) are described as cooking vessels lacking in decoration and frequently exhibiting carbon on the exterior surfaces. Together, these three vessel types comprise 18 percent of the total assemblage (Meyers 1975:23).

In Meyers's system, the Inca ceramic assemblage is divided into seven formal classes: a) *aribalos*; b) narrow-necked vessels; c) wide-mouthed vessels; d) wide-mouthed pots (*ollas*); e) bowls with or without feet; f) shallow plates and bowls; and g) glasses. Each category contains from one to several forms. To each of these forms, Meyers assigned a specific number. In total, 14 distinct morphological types are recognized (Figure 5.2). I use Meyers's numerical designations to refer to the different Inca vessel forms throughout the remainder of this discussion.

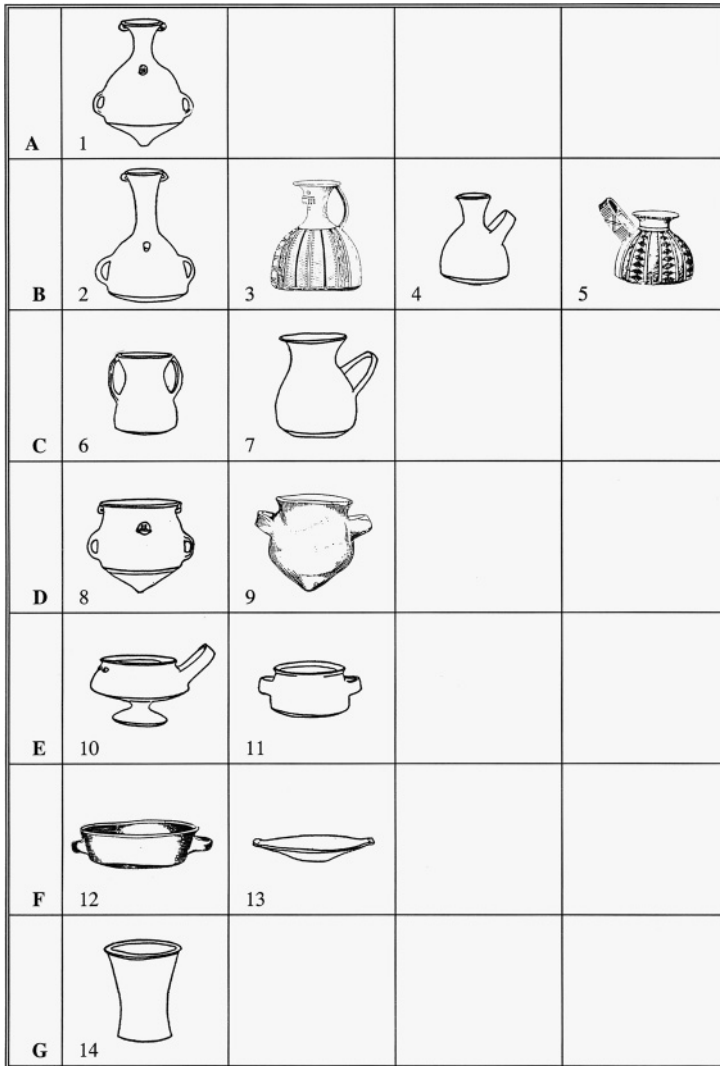


Figure 5.2. Inca vessel form categories (after Meyers 1975).

### Aríbalos

Meyers's Form 1 (Figure 5.3) is regularly referred to as the Inca *aríbalo*, a name first used by nineteenth century scholars and later made semi-official by Bingham (1915) with his publication of the Machu Picchu materials. While the



**Figure 5.3.** Inca aríbola (Form 1) (photo by author; reproduced with permission of The Field Museum, catalogue no. 1983.6.2728; 86 cm tall).

term may not be entirely appropriate with respect to its historical and descriptive connotations, it is nonetheless widely used and recognized. With its tall flaring neck, high pronounced shoulders, and conical base, the *aribalo* is probably the best known and most characteristic of the imperial Inca assemblage.

Most investigators assume that it was used as a container for *chicha* (D'Altroy 1992, 2001; Morris and Thompson 1985; Rowe 1944). This interpretation is supported by various morphological features of the vessel. The elongated shape indicates a concern with the efficient utilization of space characteristic of storage vessels. The tall, flared neck and restricted vessel orifice emphasize containment of vessel contents at the expense of accessibility. The flared rim and conical base would facilitate both the mixing of sediments and the pouring of liquids. The characteristic side handles and lug also suggest a carrying function. Direct evidence in the form of representational pottery and modern usage indicates how these features adapted the vessel to a container for the transport liquids (Figure 5.4). The proposed function of the *aribalo* as a storage container is further supported by contextual information from several highland sites (D'Altroy and Hastorf 1984; Morris 1967).

### Other Narrow-Necked Jars

The four vessel types included in Meyers's second category (B), the narrow-necked jar forms (Figure 5.5), are not nearly as common in the overall Inca assemblage as the *aribalo*. The morphological features of these vessels suggest that they probably served as containers for liquids. Their low centers of gravity and flat bases may indicate their use in more heavily trafficked areas and/or their regular placement on prepared (i.e., hard, flat) surfaces (Lischka 1978:227; Smith 1985:267, 277). Given the relative scarcity of the tall-necked vessels in this class (the short-necked, flat-bottomed jar—Form 5—being considerably more common than the other three types), it can be assumed that their function was restricted and their use perhaps limited to more extraordinary events.

### Wide-Necked Jars

The third class of vessels, the wide-necked jar forms with flat bases and one or two strap handles, are also relatively rare, though Form 6 (Figure 5.6) is more common than Form 7. Bingham (1979:162) recovered a fairly large number ( $n = 78$ ) of two-handled pitchers (Form 6) from Machu Picchu, one-third of which were reportedly associated with burials while the remainder came from the vicinity of the city. The investigator noted that, in general, this vessel category was "not as elaborately decorated as the dishes" (Bingham 1979:162). Examples of these wide-necked Inca jar forms have also been recorded at Ollantaytambo, Saqsaywaman, Isla del Sol, and Quito.





**Figure 5.4.** Ceramic effigy vessel depicting Inca individual carrying an aribola and holding a cup (21.5 cm tall). (Reproduced with permission of the Staatliche Museen du Berlin-PreuBischer Kulturbesitz, Ethnologisches).

Both of these vessel forms likely served as containers for liquids but the morphological differences between this class and the two previously mentioned suggest at least some difference in function. The larger rim diameters of the Class C as compared to the Class A and B vessels may reflect a greater concern with ease of access to vessel contents. Greater ease of access is often associated with



**Figure 5.5.** (a) Tall-necked, flat-bottom, ‘face-neck’ jar with vertical strap handle (Form 3) (photo by author; @The Field Museum, #1983.6.2642; 16 cm tall); (b) tall-necked flat bottom jar with oblique strap handle (Form 4) (photo by author; @The Field Museum, #1893.6.2856; 14.4 cm tall); (c) short-necked flat bottom jar with strap handle (Form 5) (photo by author; #1914–10–9–4; reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum; 14 cm tall).

a higher frequency of access events (Braun 1980; Smith 1985). The flat base could again be interpreted as evidence for intended use on prepared surfaces. The morphological attributes of the wide-mouthed jars suggest a possible decanting or serving function.

### Wide-Mouthed Ollas

Meyers’s Form 8 is a relatively rare type known primarily from the Cuzco area, though several examples have also been reported from Ecuador (Meyers 1976). Pardo (1939) refers to these vessels by the Quechua term *urpu*, which, according to a modern Quechua dictionary, denotes a large earthenware vessel used for the fermenting of *chicha* (Guardia 1980). The form is essentially that of a large, conical-based *olla*. In many ways it recalls a truncated, wide-mouthed version of the *aribalo* as it frequently carries the same types of polychrome decoration and likewise comes equipped with two side handles and a protruding lug on the front.

Most authors attribute a food processing function to this vessel, acknowledging its probable role as a container for *upi*, or unfermented *chicha*, during the process of *chicha* production (Fernández 1971; Meyers 1975; Pardo 1938, 1939). The morphological traits of this form, which include the large rim diameter, high, slightly converging vessel walls, and side handles, do not contradict this interpretation. But they could also suggest the utility of such a form for transporting dry foodstuffs such as maize or tubers in addition to the posited food processing function.



**Figure 5.6.** Wide-necked, flat-bottom jar with double strap handles (Form 6) (photo by author; reproduced with permission of The Field Museum, catalogue no. 1893.6.2886; 12 cm tall).

Meyers's Form 9 vessels are likely to have been Inca utilitarian wares. These round to conical-based ollas lack both decorative treatment and standardization of form—uncommon characteristics for the imperial state pottery assemblage. This vessel type is also frequently found with remnant carbon adhering to the exterior surface. While this vessel category is recorded by both Bingham and Valcárcel at the sites of Machu Picchu and Saqsaywaman, respectively, it is not likely that

the sherds of these vessels would be readily recognizable as Inca pottery outside of the Cuzco area (see Costin 1986 for detailed discussion of local utilitarian wares from the Inca period at Wanka sites in the central highlands). The various reports of miscellaneous or unidentified cooking wares from provincial Inca sites could refer to either this Inca utilitarian type or local varieties of cooking vessels. The morphological features of this vessel reflect a concern with containment (slightly restricted neck) and the suitability of the pot for suspension above a fire for cooking purposes (sharply rounded base, presence of handles) (Linton 1944; Smith 1985).

### **Pedestal-Base Pot**

In contrast to the nondescript character of the last vessel type, the pedestal-base pot (Form 10), which is also considered a cooking vessel, is a common and highly diagnostic Inca form. This vessel is known in the literature by a variety of names including “chalice” (Pardo 1939) and “beaker-shaped *olla*” (Bingham 1915). Diagnostic features include a hollow, flared pedestal base, a large strap handle obliquely attached to the vessel shoulder, and a simple applique design located on the shoulder opposite the handle that typically consists of a serpent figure or a pair of small protuberances. The footed *olla* is often equipped with a lid and frequently exhibits carbon residue on its exterior surface (Figure 5.7).

These vessels are reported in relatively high frequencies at nearly every site with an Inca component. The percentages could be skewed by the fact that this form may be more readily identifiable in a fragmented state than other vessel types though the same caveat would apply to a number of other Inca forms, as well. The footed *ollas* are found in grave lots as well as residential sectors, though those from burials sometimes lack evidence of usewear (Bray 1991:361–392). Morphologically, the slightly restricted form suggests a concern with containment. The relative flatness of the bottom portion of the bowl makes the form suitable for long periods of heating in the fire (Linton 1944). The strongly everted rim and the commonly associated potlids could indicate a concern with spillage or the use of these vessels as short term storage containers for perishables (Smith 1985).

The contrasts between this vessel and the preceding one suggest that these two types of cooking pots were either used for preparing different kinds of foods or in different methods of food preparation. Given that cooking vessels are probably one of the most conservative elements of any ceramic complex (Linton 1944), the ubiquity and uniqueness of the footed *olla* are highly significant. Its distribution is suggestive of the importance attached to a particular food category and/or food preparation technique vis-à-vis Inca or elite identity, and the extent to which the state succeeded in exporting or imposing its culinary practices.

The fact that it is the only cooking vessel elaborated in a distinctive state style suggests that the viand prepared in it must have been highly esteemed. Given the



**Figure 5.7.** Single-footed olla (Form 10) (photo by author; reproduced with permission of The Field Museum, catalogue no. 1893.6.2767; 12.5 cm tall).

importance the Inca attached to maize, it is possible that this vessel was associated with the preparation of a maize-based dish. Its typically small to medium size, together with certain diagnostic features, such as the large oblique strap handle and associated lid suggest individually-sized portions and a concern with portability. The sum of its features suggest that the single-footed olla may have figured in state obligations to provide *corveé* laborers with a fitting cooked (reheated?) repast.

### Deep Dish

The two-handled deep dish or *cazuela* (Form 11), is another common component of the Inca assemblage (Figure 5.8). This form usually carries polychrome painting, though a few undecorated examples were found at Saqsaywaman. This



**Figure 5.8.** Two-handled deep dish (Form 11) (photo by author; reproduced with permission of The Field Museum, catalogue no. 1893.6.2765; 11.5 cm tall).

was the third most common vessel form recovered at Machu Picchu, and half of those found were associated with burials. Bingham (1979:156) suggests that they were likely used as serving containers for soups and porridges. Fernández (1971:18) believes these vessels were manufactured explicitly for ceremonial drinking purposes. He notes that modern Quechua herdsmen in the Cuzco area buy authentic reproductions of these forms and use them at certain festivals for *chicha* consumption.

As an unrestricted form, the morphological features of the two-handled deep dish reflect concerns with access, visibility of contents, portability, and stability. These characteristics imply a high frequency of access, the manipulation of the contents with hands or utensils, frequent movement or transference of the vessel, and use in heavily trafficked areas and/or locations with prepared surfaces (Smith 1985). Its form suggests that this vessel may have been used as a serving container, or possibly in food processing tasks, though the presence of polychrome decoration makes the latter suggestion less likely. The directness of the rim seems to indicate a lack of concern with pouring properties or vessel closure.

### Plates and Bowls

Meyers's sixth class of vessel types includes both shallow bowls and plates. The flat-bottomed plate with short everted walls and two horizontal strap handles (Form 12), is a relatively rare form known primarily from the imperial heartland, though examples from the Titicaca region and southern Ecuador have been documented. This vessel category typically lacks decoration and probably belongs

to the domestic Inca assemblage. The unrestricted form and low walls suggest a toasting or parching function, or possibly heating for evaporation (Smith 1985:276).

In contrast, the other unrestricted vessel in this class, the shallow plate (Form 13), is one of the most frequently occurring vessel forms in the Inca state assemblage. These plates exhibit the greatest freedom of stylistic expression seen on any Inca vessel type. Decorative treatment includes both painted and plastic techniques. Meyers (1975:15) divides this vessel category into five sub-types based on the kind of handle present. The most common variety has a stylized zoomorphic head (typically a bird) as a handle with a pair of protuberances located on the rim opposite (Figure 5.9). Almost as common are plates that have simple opposing sets of double nubbins on the rim. Vertical and horizontal loop handles are also found, though these types are not as common. Plates lacking any type of handle elaboration have also been recovered but are much more rare.

The largest sample of shallow plates comes from Machu Picchu where they were the second most common vessel form recovered (Bingham 1979:132). Bingham reports that 60 percent of the approximately 300 specimens came from burial contexts in which they were frequently found in matched pairs. He refers to these vessels as “drinking ladles” and suggests they were probably used for consuming soups and stews. The morphological features of this form emphasize ease of access and handling, and reflect a lack of concern with spilling or spoilage. Additionally, the depth of the vessel, which averages only 2.6 cm, and the low angle of the walls indicate a lack of suitability for containing liquids. The morphology and decorative treatment of the Inca plates rather suggest that they may represent individual serving platters for solid or semi-solid foods, possibly meats.

## **Keros**

The last vessel form included in Meyers’s classification scheme is the tall cup with flaring walls commonly known by the Quechua name *keru* (Figure 5.10). This shape is reminiscent of earlier Tiwanaku forms and may represent the conscious use of anachronism by the Inca elite. The form was not limited to the ceramic medium and was probably more commonly produced in wood and metal. While it appears to us a natural form for drinking, its relative rarity and restriction to specific contexts suggest that it may have had a somewhat more specialized or limited function.

## **Posited Function of Inca Vessels**

Based on morphological considerations, the presence or absence of decoration, and the evidence for use wear (i.e., carbon and food residues), different functions have been posited for the different Inca vessel forms discussed above. These



**Figure 5.9.** Shallow decorated plate with bird-head handle (Form 13). (photo by author; reproduced with permission of The Field Museum, catalogue no. 1893.6. 3205; 11 cm diameter).





**Figure 5.10.** Tall cup or *kero* (Form 14). (photo by author; reproduced with permission of The Field Museum, catalogue no. 1893.6.2872; 13 cm tall).

functional interpretations are summarized in Table 5.2. Briefly, Inca Forms 9, 10, and possibly 12, are believed to represent cooking vessels; Form 8 fits the criteria of vessels used for food processing tasks, specifically fermentation, and may have also been used for transporting dry goods; Forms 1–4, 6, and 7 all exhibit characteristics typical of containers designed to hold liquids. Form 1 exhibits features that are also well adapted for the transportation of liquids, as well as either dry or wet storage. Forms 6, 7, and 11 (depending on its size) may represent serving

**Table 5.2. Functional Interpretation of the Inca Vessel Assemblage.**

Vessel form	Cooking				Serving/Eating		Storage		Transport (Liquid)
	Boiling	Toasting	Process	Ferment	Solids	Liquid	Wet	Dry	
1						×	×	×	×
2							×		
3							×		
4							×		
5							×		
6						×			
7						×			
8			×	×				×	
9	×								
10	×								
11					×	×			
12		×							
13					×				
14						×			

vessels; and Forms 13, 14, and possibly Forms 5 and 11, are likely to have been used as individual eating or drinking vessels.

While the imperial Inca assemblage does appear to contain several vessel types related to cooking and food processing activities, it is clear that the bulk of the distinctive state repertoire was dedicated to vessels intended to be used in serving and consumption contexts. This emphasis highlights the significance of commensal events in the eyes of the state and the contribution of the vessels themselves to the materialization of the idea of an Inca haute cuisine.

## DISTRIBUTION OF IMPERIAL INCA VESSEL FORMS

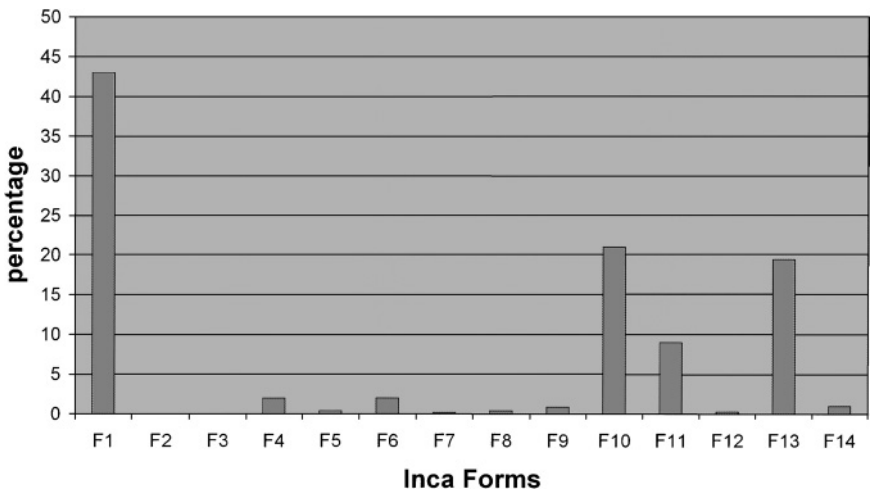
The patterned distribution of specific forms with respect to the imperial core (Cuzco region and Urubamba Valley) versus the provincial sectors of the empire provides added insight into the role of Inca pottery in imperial expansion. For this component of the study, I rely on a data base of imperial Inca pottery assembled over the past several years. This archive contains information collected through the photo-documentation of Inca pottery housed in museums in both North and South America, as well as Europe.<sup>4</sup> It also contains published information culled from archaeological reports of work conducted at Inca sites as well as the results of my own studies of archaeologically excavated Inca assemblages (Table 5.3 provides a list of archaeological sites and reports that have been incorporated). At present, the data base contains over 5000 records on Inca vessels from the length and breadth of the empire.

**Table 5.3. List of Sites and Published References Used in Distributional Analysis of Inca State Pottery.**

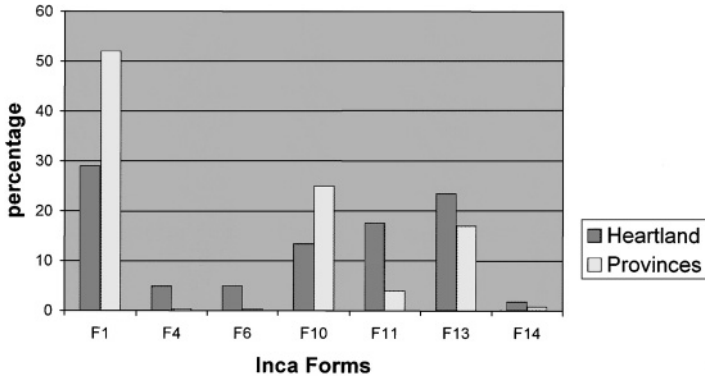
Sector	Site name	References
Heartland	Saqsaywaman	Franco and Llanos 1940; Valcárcel 1934–35; Valencia 1970
	Cuzco (general)	Pardo 1939, 1959 (gravelot); Sawyer 1966 (1 gravelot); Schmidt 1929
	Ollantaytambo	Llanos 1936
	Chincheró	Rivera 1976
	Machu Picchu	Bingham 1915, 1979; Eaton 1916
Cuntisuyu	Choquepunkio	McEwan Collection, Museo Inka, Cuzco
	Maucallacta	Bauer 1990
	Mt. Ampato	Perea Chavez, n.d.; Ampato Collection, Museo Santuarios Andinos, UCSM
	Chincha	Menzel 1966, 1971; Sandweiss 1992; Uhle 1924b
	Ica	Menzel 1971, 1976; Uhle 1924a
	La Centinela	Menzel 1966
	Inkawasi	Hyslop 1985
Collasuyu	Pachacamac	Uhle 1903; Uhle Collection, UMPAA
	Hatunqolla	Hyslop 1976, 1979; Julien 1983
	Titicaca	Bandelier Collection, AMNH
	Pallimarca	Ryden 1947
	Puno	Tschopik 1946
	Tiqischullpa, so. Titicaca region	Parssinen and Siirainen 1997
	Mt. Llullaillaco	Reinhard and Ceruti 2000
	NW Argentina (NOA)	Bennett et al. 1948; Bregante 1926; Calderari and Williams 1991; Debenedetti 1917; Fock 1961; Outes 1907; von Rosen 1924
	Pucara de Lerne, Prov. de Tucuman	Boman 1908
	Chicoana, Valle de Lerne, Prov. de Tucuman	Fock 1961
	La Paya, Valle Calchaquí, NOA	Ambrosetti 1902, 1907–08; Boman 1908; Bennett et al. 1948
	Chinchaysuyu	El Plomo
La Reina		Mostny 1955
Pucara Chena		Stehberg 1976
Huánaco Pampa		Morris 1967; Morris and Thompson 1985
Hatún Xauxa		D'Altroy 1981, 2001
La Plata		Dorsey 1901; McEwan and Silva 1989
Quito		Jijón y Caamaño and Larrea 1918; Jijón y Caamaño 1914; Meyers 1976; Stubel et al. 1889
El Quinche		Jijón y Caamaño 1914; Meyers 1976
Rumicucho		Almeida and Jara 1984; Almeida 1999
Tomebamba		Bamps 1879; Bray 1996; Idrovo 2000; Meyers 1976, 1998
Ingapirca	Meyers 1976	

While the completeness of each record varies, a range of information has been systematically collected for each vessel, including metric data; observations on paste, decorative treatment, manufacturing techniques, use wear; provenience data; and contextual associations. Though museum pieces often have incomplete provenience information, the home repository, collection history, donor information, and associated documentation typically allows for at least a general idea of the source of the materials. Archaeological collections, on the other hand, typically have good provenience information but do not offer the kind of metric and iconographic data recoverable from complete vessels. Combining information from both archaeologically recovered materials and museum collections within a single system offers the flexibility and comparative breadth for the investigation of a wide range of research questions.

In the present study, the aim was to ascertain at a gross geopolitical level whether differences might be discernible in the distribution of Inca vessel types in the imperial heartland versus the provinces. Logically we would assume that the political exigencies of the state were different within the imperial core from those in the provincial and frontier districts. Similarly, given the nature of imperial expansion, we would assume that the geographical boundaries separating allies from outsiders would have shifted through time. Figure 5.11 shows that the distribution of the different vessel types comprising the composite, empire-wide assemblage ( $n = 4383$ ) using frequency data obtained primarily from archaeological reports. The graph indicates that the *aríbalo* (Form 1) accounts for nearly half of the total number of Inca vessels in the sample. The single footed olla, the



**Figure 5.11.** Relative proportion of different Inca vessel forms comprising composite, empire-wide assemblage ( $n = 4383$ ).



**Figure 5.12.** Comparison of relative percentages of Inca vessel types found in Inca heartland versus the provinces.

shallow plate, and the two-handled deep dish, Forms 10, 13, and 11, respectively, are the next most common vessel types. Overall, these four vessel forms account for 92 percent of the assemblage.

Looking at the distribution of the most common forms in the imperial core versus the provinces, significant differences are noted in the relative proportions of vessel types from the two zones (Figure 5.12). The *aribalo*, for instance, comprises 52 percent of the total number of identifiable Inca vessels in the provincial districts in comparison to the core region, where *aribalos* constitute only 29 percent of the total assemblage. The only other vessels besides the *aribalo* that occur with any degree of frequency in the provinces are the shallow plate (Form 13) and the pedestal-base cooking pot (Form 10). These three forms would appear to constitute the minimal assemblage for any Inca-affiliated group or individual residing in the hinterlands.

The overall ratio of the four most common vessel types (*aribalos*, shallow plates, pedestal pots, and the two-handled deep dish) in the provinces is roughly 100:33:48:7. In the core area of the empire, the ratios between these four vessel types is somewhat more balanced (100:81:47:61). The biggest difference between the two regions is in the relative proportion of *aribalos* to other vessels and the significantly higher frequency of two-handled deep dishes (Form 11) in the heartland.

The fact that the *aribalo* occurs in higher proportions in the outlying sectors of the empire suggests that it was of particular importance to some aspect of the imperial expansion process. As mentioned earlier, this vessel form is generally associated with storage and the transport of *chicha*, a product elaborated by women. It has been generally determined that the Inca, following ancient Andean norms,

assumed the responsibility of providing food and drink for its *corvée* laborers (e.g., Morris 1982; Murra 1975, 1980; Rowe 1982). The disproportionate number of *aribalos* found in the provinces might indicate that state prestations of *chicha* was of greater importance in the outlying regions than in the core of the empire (see also Bray 2000). Given that the production of *chicha* was one of the principal tasks of Andean women, it links them to imperial strategies of organization and control in a fundamental way. I return to this point below.

The two-handled deep dish (Form 11), while a common element in the collections from Cuzco and vicinity, is relatively rare in the provincial assemblages. Outside of the Inca heartland, examples of this form have been reported at Hatunqolla, Hatún Xauxa, Pachacamac, Old Ica, La Centinela, Pallimarca, El Quinche, and Rumicucho. All of these sites were either administrative and/or religious in nature and likely housed individuals of some rank within the Inca political hierarchy. At Machu Picchu, the two-handled deep dish was equally common in both burial caves and residential middens, and was often found in association with the pedestal-based ollas (Form 10) in the former context (Bingham 1979:156). This fact, together with the range of sizes in which this vessel was made and its fairly limited distribution, suggest that it may have constituted an element of a higher status individual's personal dinner service.

The above information suggests that three vessel types in particular comprised the core of the Inca pottery assemblage. These are Forms 1, 10, and 13, the *aribalo*, the pedestal cooking pot, and the shallow plate. These three vessel forms are minimally present at all Late Horizon sites with evidence of Inca occupation. Functionally, this basic set likely represents the activities of *chicha* storage and transport, cooking (boiling), and eating (solid foods). The ensemble suggests that two, and possibly three, different food categories were involved as components of an elite repast. We also note that this basic Inca ceramic suite contains both communal and individual service elements. The archaeological evidence, thus, appears to correlate well with the ethnohistoric information on Inca haute cuisine insofar as the core suite of Inca vessels may be interpreted as functionally adapted to the distribution of *chicha* (Form 1), the consumption of meat (Form 13), and the cooking or reheating of maize kernels or a maize-based stew (Form 10).

## STATE VERSUS LOCAL CERAMIC ASSEMBLAGES

Comparing the Inca ceramic assemblage to the vessel repertoire of other highland populations provides additional insight into the extent to which differential culinary techniques and patterns of consumption figured in Inca strategies of statecraft. To this end, a summary review of the ceramic assemblage of the

Caranqui of northern highland Ecuador is presented. The Caranqui, who occupied the intermontane region immediately north of modern day Quito, were one of the last ethnic groups to be conquered by the Inca prior to the Spanish invasion. The distinct pottery assemblages of the Inca and the Caranqui suggests the extent to which culinary differences may have separated the rulers from their subjects in the Andean context.

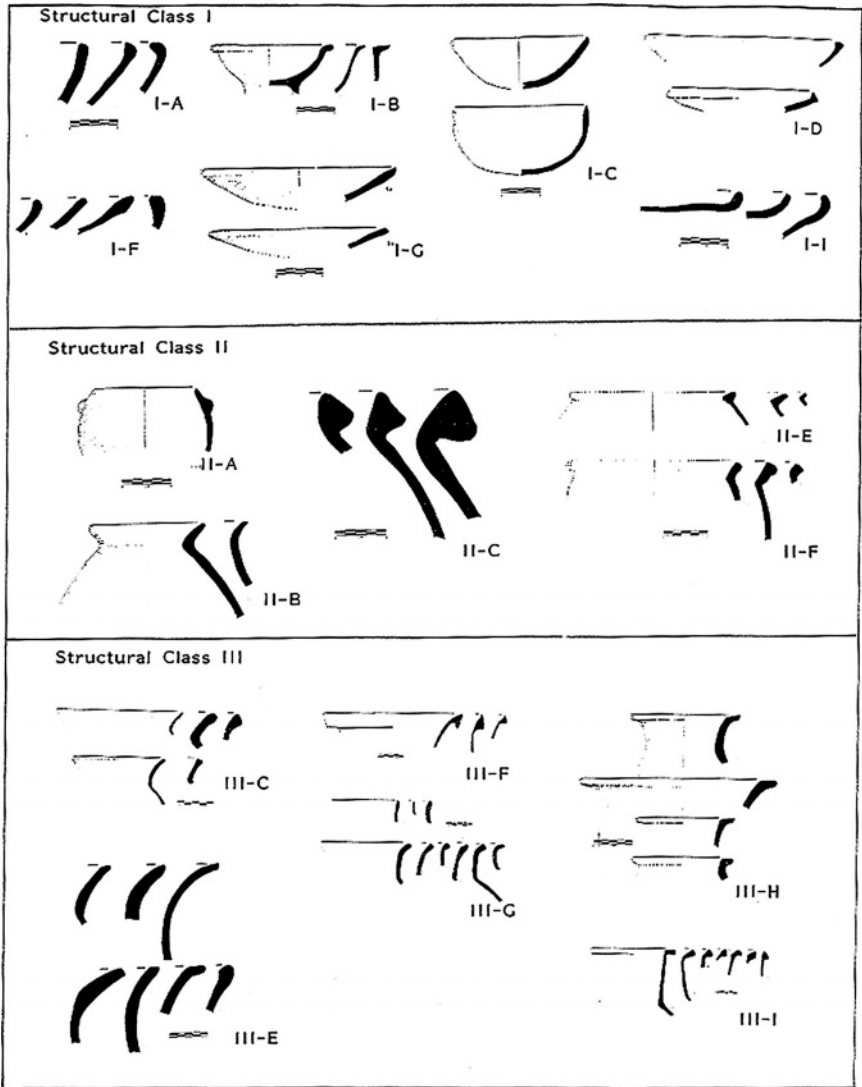
A total of 18 vessel forms were identified in the regional Caranqui pottery assemblage (Bray 1991, 1995a). The vessel typology is based on an analysis of rim and base sherds recovered from 67 archaeological sites in the southern half of the Caranqui region, combined with observations on complete specimens found in local and private collections. The geometric criteria of vessel structure and contour type were used to organize the vessel forms into three basic structural classes: simple unrestricted; simple restricted; and independent restricted (after Shepard 1980:224–248). Within each of these general structural classes, the assemblage was further sub-divided on the basis of rim form and orifice diameter into specific types (Figure 5.13).

Included under the heading of simple unrestricted vessels in the Caranqui inventory are deep bowls (Form I-A), ledge-rimmed bowls (I-B), simple bowls with either vertical or outleaned walls (I-C), shallow bowls with a symmetrically thickened lip (I-D), large basins (I-F), shallow plates (I-G), and large flat plates (I-I).<sup>5</sup> Within the class of simple restricted vessels is the spherical rimless olla (II-A), the flared-rim olla with sloping shoulders (II-B), the extra-large banded rim olla (II-C), the medium-sized olla with a short everted rim (II-E), and the wide-mouth olla with everted rim and elongated body (II-F).

Caranqui vessels included in the final structural category of independent restricted, or “necked,” vessels account for just over half of the total number of classifiable forms. The most common vessel type in the regional inventory is a cylindrical-necked jar that typically has a short, slightly flared rim (III-G). Other Caranqui forms in this class include the large flared-neck jar (III-E), the cylindrical-necked jar with articulated rim (III-I), the banded-rim jar with the slightly flared neck (III-F), the ledge-rimmed jar (III-H), and the short flared neck jar (III-C).

Detailed discussion of the physical characteristics, frequencies, and distribution of the Caranqui vessel forms are found in separate studies (Bray 1991, 1995a). The functional interpretation of the Caranqui ensemble is summarized in Table 5.4. As in the above analysis of Inca vessel functionality, the ethnohistoric record on Andean culinary practices establishes the parameters of vessel use.

In comparing the Inca pottery assemblage to that of the Caranqui people of the northern sierra, one notes a general similarity in overall composition. Both assemblages contain one or more vessels that are morphologically suitable for one or more of the culinary tasks identified in the ethnohistoric record on Andean dietary habits. In addition, both assemblages have vessel forms that meet the



**Figure 5.13.** Caranqui vessel forms arranged by Structural Class. (Class I: unrestricted vessel forms; Class II: simple, restricted vessel forms; Class III: independent, restricted vessel forms).

container requirements suggested by the tasks listed or implied in the ethnohistoric documentation, the only exception being the lack of an unrestricted vessel form in the Inca assemblage suitable for food processing activities.



Table 5.4. Functional Interpretation of the Caranqui Vessel Assemblage.

Vessel Type	Cooking				Serving/Eating		Storage		Transport (Liquids)
	Boiling	Toasting	Processing	Fermentation	Solids	Liquids	Wet	Dry	
I-A			×						
I-B					×				
I-C					×	×			
I-D					×				
I-F			×						
I-G					×				
I-I		×							
II-A	×								
II-B	×								
II-C				×					
II-E	×								
II-F							×	×	
III-C	×								
III-E							×	×	
III-F							×		×
III-G							×	×	
III-H							×		×
III-I							×	×	

The general correspondence between the ceramic assemblages of these two highland groups indicates similarities in food preparation, storage, and consumption practices. This suggests that, while the highly decorated and standardized Inca vessels may have had an ideological component, their forms were still linked to the functional requirements of widespread culinary patterns. Indeed, the morphological similarities in the north and south-central highland ceramic assemblages may reflect a generalized adaptation to a common Andean subsistence base that can be characterized as a maize-potato-beans complex. The large, necked storage vessels that likely served as *chicha* containers, and comprise the majority of vessel types in both the Inca and Caranqui assemblages may indeed be diagnostic of this particular food complex.

Yet, despite the general affinity, several notable differences also exist between Inca and Caranqui vessel assemblages. The unrestricted pedestal-base bowl, or *compotera* (Figure 5.14), for instance, a trademark vessel of the northern sierra, is absent from the Inca assemblage. The morphological features of the *compotera*, as well as ethnographic and archaeological data, suggest its use as a serving vessel for solid or semi-solid foods (Bray 1995b). The shallow plate (Form 13) is perhaps its closest counterpart in the Inca assemblage in terms of frequency, and functional and decorative attributes. The greatest differences between the two vessel types



**Figure 5.14.** Caranqui pedestal-base bowl or *compotera* from Jardín del Este, Cumbaya, northern highland Ecuador; note pitting in interior of bowl (photo by author).

correspond to the performance characteristics of containment, stability, and, perhaps, heat retention. The different concerns reflected in the physical properties of the two vessel forms may be related to differences in the type of food that was normally served. As noted above, the Inca plates appear particularly well-adapted to the presentation and serving of meat, while the *compotera* would readily accommodate the serving of boiled maize (*muti*) or stew.

In the Caranqui assemblage, the third most common vessel is a large, flat plate with short, incurving walls and a flat or slightly convex bottom (Form 1–I). The average diameter of these platters, which range between 16 and 50 cm, is 30 cm (Bray 1991:204). The interiors are usually slipped, while the exteriors are typically roughened by wiping. More of these plates exhibit exterior fire blackening than any other vessel category in the Caranqui inventory. The morphological attributes of this suggest that it was likely used for toasting or parching food over a fire. Given the elements of the Caranqui diet, the most likely candidate for toasting would be maize.

The Inca state assemblage contains no comparable vessel form. In fact, the only readily identifiable Inca cooking vessel is the single-footed olla (Form 10), a highly distinctive form that comprises one of the core elements of the official state assemblage. The fact that it is the only cooking vessel elaborated in a distinctive state style suggests the importance attached to the foodstuffs that would be prepared in these pots. Given the high regard in which maize was held by the Inca, it seems likely that the pedestal-base olla was associated with the preparation of a maize-based dish, albeit in a manner distinct from the Caranqui.

The contrast between the Inca pedestal olla and the Caranqui cooking platter with respect to degree of elaboration, size, and basic form indicates significant differences in cooking methods, quantities prepared, and value accorded to what was likely to have been the same foodstuff, i.e., maize. Salomon (1986:73–75) convincingly argues that maize was the primary cultigen of the northern sierra. He contrasts the abundance of maize in the north with the situation in the south-central highlands where potatoes formed the staple crop. Given the importance and degree of this difference, he suggests that one could characterize the two regions in terms of a “maize Andes” versus a “tuber Andes” (ibid.:74).

The differences observed in Inca and Caranqui cooking and serving vessels may reflect the differing subsistence bases of the Inca heartland and the northern sierra. It could be argued that the higher value placed on maize by the Inca is evident in the smaller and specially designed cooking vessels (Form 10). The method of preparation, which likely involved mixing with water and possibly other items, suggests a more careful husbandry of maize on the part of the Inca, while the generally smaller sizes of the footed olla suggest preparation in smaller quantities and the more careful, possibly individual, apportioning of the food prepared. Most important from the perspective of the state may have been the

demarcation of differences in methods of preparation and consumption of a valued foodstuff.

The lack of unrestricted vessel forms suitable for food processing tasks in the Inca assemblage, in contrast to their relative abundance in the Caranqui region, offers another indication of differences in either the types of foods being consumed, the methods of preparation, or, perhaps, the personnel employed in their preparation. The fact that a special Inca vessel was not created for such tasks might suggest it was considered either unnecessary or inappropriate to extend the ideological meanings embedded in state pottery to this realm of culinary practice.

## DISCUSSION

The intent of this paper has been to offer a better understanding of Inca pottery and its role in the dynamic processes of imperial state design. To this end, the Inca ceramic assemblage was examined in terms of its functional and culinary significance. Information culled primarily from ethnohistoric sources and ethnographic reports was used to draw functional inferences about Inca vessel forms and to outline the features of an imperial “haute cuisine.” Meat and maize were, by all accounts, the most highly esteemed foodstuffs in the Inca diet and likely comprised the basic elements of Andean haute cuisine in the fifteenth century A.D. The sum of the evidence, however, indicates that elite cuisine did not radically differ from the baseline Andean diet in terms of elemental composition. Rather, it seems to have been defined on the basis of quality, quantity, and diversity of foodstuffs, and differences in modes of preparation, serving, consumption, and disposal.

Food and feasting in the Andes has been considered critical to the consolidation of power (see Costin and Earle 1989; Gero 1990, 1992; Moore 1989; Morris 1982; Murra 1960; Rostworowski 1977:240–244). During the Late Horizon, the relationship between food and politics was manifest in the Inca elaboration of a specific ensemble of ceramic service, storage, and, to a lesser extent, cooking vessels. While stylistically distinct, Inca pottery functionally conformed to widespread Andean culinary and subsistence patterns. The production and distribution of a distinctive state pottery ensemble suggests a conscious strategy aimed at creating material symbols of social hierarchy and class difference.

The decision to encode such difference in culinary equipment is probably not accidental. The relationship between the rulers and the people who served them was to an important extent both mediated and materialized through the prestation of food and drink within the context of ritual commensality. In traditional Andean society, cooking and the production of *chicha*, both for everyday consumption

and for offerings to the *huacas* and ancestors, was the primary responsibility of women.

In a ground-breaking work on gender systems in the Andes, Silverblatt (1987) argued that women were integral to the construction of empire and the creation of social classes in the Inca state. As an Andean people, the Inca well understood the principles of sexual complementarity and gender parallelism that structured traditional social organization. In her study, Silverblatt demonstrates how the Inca, through the shrewd manipulation of Andean orthodoxy, transformed ancestral understandings of complementary difference into new systems of social hierarchy through the idiom of gender (1987:40–108).

By dividing the universe into separate gendered spheres, the Cuzqueños remained faithful to traditional Andean concepts while simultaneously incorporating the new reality of power (as opposed to prestige) differences and social classes. The gender parallelism of Inca ideology constructed the queen (*coya*) as the royal daughter of the Moon and placed her at the head of the empire's female subjects, mirroring the role of the *sapa* Inca, who as the Sun's son, reigned over the male citizenry (see Pachacuti Yamqui's (1927 [1613]:158) diagram of Inca cosmology). Given the ideology of sexual complementarity, the Inca queen was as essential as the king in the social and political configuration of Tawantinsuyu. According to historic sources, the queen, paralleled her husband the *sapa* Inca in nearly every regard, from the size and beauty of her palaces and temples, to the rituals she performed for specifically female deities, to the feasting of imperial subjects, to the veneration of her mummified remains after death (Silverblatt 1987: 40–66).

But women were also essential to the imperial project in another way that involved their simultaneous worship and imprisonment within the state institution of "chosen women," or *aclla*. Girls from throughout the empire were collected as tribute and placed in specially constructed buildings known as *acllawasi* wherein they performed labor for the state until such time as they might be chosen for sacrifice or given by the king as wives to imperial subjects. As Silverblatt (1987:91–92; see also Cieza 1959 [1553]:160) notes, the construction of an *acllawasi* to house the locally appropriated women was one of the first tasks undertaken by the state upon the conquest of a new territory.

According to the chroniclers, the work performed by the *acllakuna* included spinning, weaving, and the preparation of *chicha* and other special foods (Cieza 1959 [1553]:95, 192, 213; Cobo 1964 [1653]:172–174, 205; Guaman Poma 1936 [1613]:298–300; Murúa 1946 [1590]:248–255; Silverblatt 1987:81–108). It was the products of these women's labor, specifically cloth and corn beer, that underwrote the imperial project. In bestowing these most highly valued products of the chosen women's hands, the Inca obligated and ritually subordinated state subjects through the complex web of social relations engendered by the gift (see Mauss 1990).

But the role of the *aclla*, in particular, and women, more generally, in Inca statecraft went beyond simple exploitation. Gose (2000) argues that within the boundaries of the state, Inca domination was actually articulated through the female activities of cooking and brewing. This is most evident in the context of labor tribute and the reciprocal obligations of state hospitality. “When the Inca state presented itself as a benevolent proprietor towards its conquered subjects, offering them food and drink in return for tributary labor, it exercised power in a specifically female form” (Gose 2000:86). It accomplished this through the medium of the chosen women, who often served as the state’s hosts (Murra 1980:164). In the ideological construction of state reciprocity, authority was communicated in the feminine register. This is not to suggest that women and men necessarily shared equally in the material benefits of state largesse, as indicated in Hastorf’s (1991) important study on shifts in consumption patterns following imperial incorporation. Rather it underscores the fact that gendered roles and ideology were critically important in the calculation of state strategies and policy.

By placing cooking, cuisine, and culinary artifacts at the center of this study, we illuminate and engender another dimension of Inca statecraft. While warfare and conquest were clearly important (and stereotypically masculine) elements of Inca imperialism, so too were the female-controlled domains of cooking, serving, and feasting. Analyzing Inca state pottery as culinary equipment forces us to consider the ways in which gender systems, gendered tasks, and gendered objects were implicated in the imperial process. Such an approach necessarily complicates monolithic evolutionary explanations of the emergence of the state and social classes, and promises more nuanced and contextual understandings of the workings of precapitalist states and empires.

Viewing the imperial Inca ceramic assemblage as an instrument for the propagation of state ideology also takes us beyond the standard dichotomy of public versus domestic spheres of activities and their relative ranking (McGaw 1989). In the use of state pottery for culinary qua political purposes, the lords and ladies of the Inca nobility appear to have been drawing upon Andean ideologies of gendered activities, materially referencing the complementarity and power of both men and women in the construction of empire.

As Conkey and Gero (1991) note, there is potentially much to be gained from inquiring into the cultural and ideological meanings embedded in gendered activities such as cooking. Considering the political significance of cuisine brings the activities of food collection, preparation, processing, distribution, and consumption into the broader arenas of public and political life. As the Inca case suggests, the domestic and political realms are not necessarily everywhere and always divided, distinguished, and differentially valued. It may actually be that the principles, behaviors, and ideologies associated with the domestic sphere were

integrally and inextricably linked with the public and political realms of society throughout much of human history.

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## NOTES

- 1 The use of the term 'haute cuisine' here is not intended in the technical French sense but rather in the more generalized one suggested by Goody who uses the label to refer to "the development of a differentiated cuisine" (1982:98).
- 2 Except where otherwise noted, translations of passages cited are my own, T.L.B.
- 3 One arroba equals approximately four gallons.
- 4 The museums at which I have photo-documented holdings of Inca pottery include (*in North America*): American Museum of Natural History, New York; Field Museum, Chicago; National Museum of American Indian, Smithsonian Institution; National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution; University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia; Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana; Logan Museum, Beloit College, Wisconsin; Phoebe Hearst Museum, University of California, Berkeley; (*in South America*): Museo de Jijón y Caamaño, Catholic University, Quito; Museo del Banco Central, Quito; Museo del Banco Central, Ibarra; Museo de la Casa de Cultura, Latacunga; Colegio Miraflores, Latacunga; Museo de Colegio San, Ambato; Museo del Banco Central, Cuenca; Museo Municipal Crespo, Cuenca; Museo Inka, Cuzco; Museo del Instituto Nacional de Cultura, Cuzco; Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Antropología e Historia, Lima; Museo Nacional de San Agustín, Arequipa;

Museo Santuarios Andinos, Arequipa; Museo Arqueológico, Catholic University, Arequipa; and (*in Europe*): British Museum, London.

5 The original classification codes have been maintained here in order to facilitate correlation with the more extensive vessel descriptions found in Bray 1991.

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## Chapter 6

# *From Stew-Eaters to Maize-Drinkers* The *Chicha* Economy and the Tiwanaku Expansion

PAUL S. GOLDSTEIN

*They make chicha from a lot of things . . . with every nation accommodating to those seeds and fruits that their land produces in abundance . . . But the best chicha of all, the one that is most generally drunk in this land, and the one that, like a precious wine, takes first place above all the other Indian drinks, is made from maize.*

—Cobo 1890 [1653]:347

### INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I consider the close correlation of dramatic changes in culinary traditions with the political development of one of the New World's earliest expansive state societies. A comparison of Tiwanaku's ceramic assemblages with those of its antecedents, as well as settlement pattern and household archaeology and preliminary isotopic data on diet, suggest that the Tiwanaku phenomenon was accompanied by revolutionary new patterns in food, drink, and daily domestic life. In examining these changes in the Tiwanaku core region and in its peripheries my goal is to consider the intersection of shifts in culinary traditions with changes

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not only in domestic and political economy, but in the social and cultural realities and identities signified by quotidian daily life. I argue that radical culinary change was a crucial aspect of the incorporation of disparate peoples into the Tiwanaku civilization. The growth of Tiwanaku as a polity and a shared corporate identity was accompanied by three simultaneous and related phenomena: 1) the development and rapid diffusion of a hitherto unseen functional assemblage dedicated to preparing and serving maize beer, 2) the successful long-term colonization of maize-producing regions, and 3) the promulgation of a shared corporate identity among confederated ethnic groups and clans linked by a common ideology. This incorporation appears to have been largely consensual, rather than coerced, and the principal culinary factor was a mania for maize beer that took root everywhere Tiwanaku influence was accepted.

The archaeology of Andean states and empires has benefited from a flood of new research on Tiwanaku political and domestic economy. Much of the recent work has explicitly privileged household archaeology (Bermann 1994, 1997; Goldstein 1989, 1993a; Janusek 1994, 1999; Kolata 1993; Stanish 1989) and regional settlement pattern studies (Albarracín-Jordan 1996; Goldstein 2000a; Higuera 1996; McAndrews et al. 1997; Stanish 1992; Stanish and Steadman 1994) as our most reliable indicators of changes to the political economy. This emphasis represents a necessary departure from an earlier era's over-reliance on artifact styles to understand the expansion of state societies and the development of their political economies.<sup>1</sup> It is possible to take a good thing too far, however. Some discussions of Tiwanaku expansion have emphasized household continuity even in cases where there are dramatic changes in material culture. While it is a tenable position to downplay the political importance of emulative stylistic change, important assemblage changes in ceramic form and function (and the shifts in domestic lifeways that they represent) are sometimes dismissed along with stylistic shifts as not germane to significant social or political process (e.g., Bermann 1994:32, 252). The same tendency is evident in settlement pattern studies, which tend to see constancy of site location as the supreme indicator of cultural continuity, regardless of changes in material culture (Stanish 1992). One recent study even promotes a model of "status quo" simply because dramatic domestic changes in material culture, mortuary practice, and architecture are not matched by a major shift in settlement pattern (Higuera 1996).

When household and settlement studies do address widespread domestic assemblage change, it is often analyzed entirely in the context of state tribute extraction. Changes in the domestic economy—an extra spindle whorl here, an enlarged storage bin there—are evaluated first and foremost as markers of supra-household production to support state political economies. This is seldom the entire story. State hegemony is not simply a matter of tinkering with subject peoples' households in order to increase tribute. Participation in an expanding state brings with it an array of cultural changes that may relate only indirectly to the extraction of

tribute. Some of these, such as changes in family size and structure evident in the reconfiguration of household units (Bermann 1994), or the segmentation of craft production among enclaved ethnic guilds (Janusek 1999) have been addressed by studies in the Tiwanaku core region. In what follows, I argue that popular responses to developing state ideologies like that of Tiwanaku can have a complex transformative effect on cultural practices and identities. These identities, in turn, are structured and reified in daily social practice in the *habitus* of domestic routine (Bourdieu 1977, 1990), and specifically in new ways of thinking about food and drink.

## FOOD AND DRINK IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

The contributions in this volume all approach state political economy by examining the intrusion of political economy into one of the most important domestic routines of all—cuisine. If we accept that food and beverage choices can be sensitive indicators of political and cultural identities, the functional selections made in household pottery assemblages may be seen as direct reflections of those identities. If we accept that culinary choices are embedded in both the domestic and political economies, the growth of either hierarchical state institutions or supra-household corporate intrusions should also impact the household by modifying diet and culinary technology.

There can be no more fundamental change in cuisine than the introduction, acceptance, and social embedding of alcoholic beverages. The serving of food and drink at feasts large and small, like the exchange of gifts that often occur in the same contexts, are a form of commensal hospitality that can establish and maintain social relations (Dietler 2001:74). Drink is arguably the critical social lubricant in both formal and informal feasting contexts, simultaneously facilitating social interaction and reinforcing institutionalized status distinctions within a society (Abercrombie 1998). Drinking can play a significant economic role as well, and fermented beverages can be the *quid pro quo* for the mobilization of labor in small-scale societies ranging from Tarahumara agriculturists, to the Samia and Luo ironworkers of Kenya, to the chiefdoms of Cahokia. Indeed, feast-driven labor mobilization is so widespread that it can be regarded as a nearly universal pattern in traditional societies (Dietler 1990:366, 2001:79; Kelly 2001:355). Traditions of sponsored work-party feasting reinforce extant relations of production whether egalitarian or hierarchical. Characterized by the easy convertibility of surplus grain into drink, drink into public labor, and control of labor into individual prestige, feasting enables the emergence of social inequality. As wealthier or more powerful corporate groups promote larger and larger beer feasts, fewer and fewer participants can shoulder the growing burden of sponsorship (Dietler 1990:368).

Recently, researchers studying the origins of social complexity have argued for more attention to the role of individual and factional competition among corporate groups (e.g., Blanton 1998; Brumfiel 1992; Brumfiel and Fox 1994; Crumley 1995; McIntosh 1999). One discussion of chiefdom formation in Mesoamerica suggests that the adoption of alcoholic drink represents an important element of this process. Using carbon nitrogen isotope analysis to measure maize intake, Clark and Blake (1994) conclude that maize cultivation was relatively insignificant through the Early Formative period. Only in the Middle Formative (850–650 B.C.) was maize added to the diet in considerable quantities. In particular, one maize-based drink, *chicha*, appears to have played an important role in status differentiation. Based on concurrent changes in the ceramic assemblage, the low productivity of the cob varieties adopted, and the rarity of seed-processing implements, the authors suggest that maize was consumed in the form of an alcoholic drink (Clark and Blake 1994:28). Maize cultivation is thus seen as part of a package of foreign technology that was borrowed by local “aggrandizers” for personal advantage in competitive feasting (Clark and Blake 1994:25).

This form of chiefly competitive feasting follows the pattern described as “entrepreneurial” or “empowering” feasts by Dietler. Accepting that feasts are inherently political, Dietler (2001) describes empowering feasts as those where hosts or participants manipulate hospitality towards the acquisition and maintenance of symbolic capital (Dietler 2001:76). Empowering feasts may take place on a wide variety of scales, ranging from pots of beer shared among small groups of friends to the sponsorship of major life-crisis ceremonies and religious festivals. Hosts may be individual households, kinship units, or entire communities.

In the latter cases, there are usually certain individuals who act as managers and derive prestige from their role in successfully organizing and executing feasts that represent the group to outsiders; hence prestige accrues to both the hosting group as a whole and to certain influential individuals who can mobilize group activities (Dietler 2001:80)

In larger scale polities with institutionalized inequality, feasting behavior falls under the pattern described by Dietler as “patron role” feasts. While they embody the same idiom of reciprocal hospitality that operates in the relatively fluid social relations of empowering feasts, patron role feasts differ because they reify and legitimize fixed relations of asymmetrical social power (Dietler 2001:82). In what has been described as “exploitation beneath a mask of reciprocity” (Platt 1986:257), the Inca, for example, stimulated communal *corvée* on a grand scale, exacting labor taxation (*m’ita*) in a context of elaborate feasting, drinking, and sumptuary gift-giving (Godelier 1977; Murra 1980, 1982). The Inca, as permanent patrons, thus modified traditional Andean work-party feasting practices to the end of legitimizing imperial power. Thus the essential elements of an Andean administrative center under this “Inca mode of production” should include specific

facilities for largely political public feasting and drinking, as well as storage, transport, and command.

Most discussions of Inca style feasting concentrate on large-scale events that took place in public ceremonial contexts. At the Inca provincial center of Huánuco Pampa, Morris (1982, 1986; also Morris and Thompson 1985) documented the culinary paraphernalia necessary for ritualized hospitality on a scale commensurate with Inca administration. The ceremonial feasts and drinking sessions that accompanied *m'ita* labor required extensive storage and brewing facilities to supply large numbers of subjects. Brewing for these patron role feasts was assigned to state-supported enclaves of "chosen women" (*aclla*) established in attached institutions known as the *acllawasi*. Most importantly, the best-known Inca feasts took place in public locations under conditions of ceremonial display, in order to define and legitimize lines of patronage and fealty:

Though probably they were at least nominally religious, they were a way of establishing and maintaining a relationship between the leaders and the led. They were the chiefly generosity that could bring together political loyalty and the labor to till fields and build cities . . . the elaborate space provided along with the thousands of jars of beer represents one of the principal investments made by the Inca state at Huánuco Pampa. In terms of state-local relationships, this may even have been the key function . . . (Morris 1982:166).

Since Morris's work at Huánuco, other archaeological studies have also demonstrated the use of large-scale public contexts for Inca ceremonial feasting. In the Mantaro Valley, for instance, concentrations of large storage vessel sherds recovered near the ceremonial core of Hatún Xauxa suggest feasting ceremonies in public spaces of Inca provincial capitals (Costin and Earle 1989:710; D'Altroy 1981:83, 1992:174). Generally, then, our conception of Andean feasting is colored by the imperial model of Inca feasts that were provisioned by institutional brewers, took place in public contexts, and were closely associated with an extractive imperial political economy (see also Cook and Glowacki, this volume).

Nonetheless, the significance of *chicha* feasting to Inca society went beyond public political display. It should be stressed that the effects of a political economy with this much emphasis on *chicha* drink and feasting were not limited to an isolated public ceremonial sphere. With both a ceremonial and a financial reliance on maize as a medium for supporting followers, the Inca introduced the capacity for maize storage on a massive scale by building extensive storehouses at strategically located provincial centers. In regions that had had no central governance before Inca control, the new state-local relationship under the *pax incaica* and the demands of Inca political economy also brought major shifts in settlement to maize-producing lands from fortified highland sites (D'Altroy 1992:193, 214; Hastorf 1993). People brought into the Inca political economy had many ways to consume maize, and

work-party *chicha* drinking was only one of them. Whole cobs or shelled maize may have been a staple for the Inca armies because of its ability to be stored in bulk (D'Altroy 1992:174, 217) and alternate modes of preparation are likely. Provincial diet was clearly affected by the Inca conquest, and Hastorf found the ubiquity of maize to increase in Inca-contemporary domestic botanical remains. Carbon isotope analysis of vessel residues and human skeletal remains also bear out a decided shift to maize consumption in Sausa society under Inca control (Hastorf 1991, 1993:177). As Bray (this volume) suggests, the increasing importance of *chicha* and other maize-based recipes in Inca-contemporary cuisine is also reflected in the adoption of Inca culinary equipment, both in contexts of ceremonial feasting and daily life.

The Inca case reminds us that high profile public patronage feasts may be only the tip of the iceberg when we consider the society-wide transformative effect of feasting and imbibing. Despite the conspicuous public display of the great political feasts of Inca governors, it seems likely that the *chicha* drinking ceremony was far more pervasive, and that microcosms of similar feasting behaviors were frequently enacted at the smaller scales of community, and even household contexts. In what follows, I will suggest that the state level feasts of the Inca were the culmination of a history of increasing political value attached to maize and *chicha* in Andean societies that began with the expansion of Tiwanaku civilization into optimal maize producing regions.<sup>2</sup>

## TIWANAKU CULINARY EQUIPMENT IN THE CORE REGION

My thesis is that the Tiwanaku corporate ceramic assemblage arose from a rapid and dramatic shift in culinary and social practice some time between A.D. 350 and A.D. 600 at the type site of Tiwanaku. This change took place first in the core region of southern Lake Titicaca and spread shortly thereafter over a wide area of the south central Andes (Figure 6.1). This episode of rapid change followed a long and conservative sequence of Formative stylistic development that had seen relatively little change in utilitarian and serving vessel forms since the introduction of ceramics in the second millennium B.C. The result of this break was the emergence and rapid diffusion of not only a radically different Tiwanaku corporate ceramic style but also a new formal assemblage that was associated with a culinary and beverage tradition that was to survive through the Inca and Colonial periods and into modern times.

Formative pottery of the Kalasasaya style (also known as Tiwanaku I and dated between 400 B.C. and A.D. 100) represents the earliest ceramic style associated with the Tiwanaku site. The style includes a coarsely polished, deeply incised brownware and a burnished polychrome incised ware that has some similarities to contemporary fine wares of Pukara (Pucara) at the north end of the Titicaca Basin

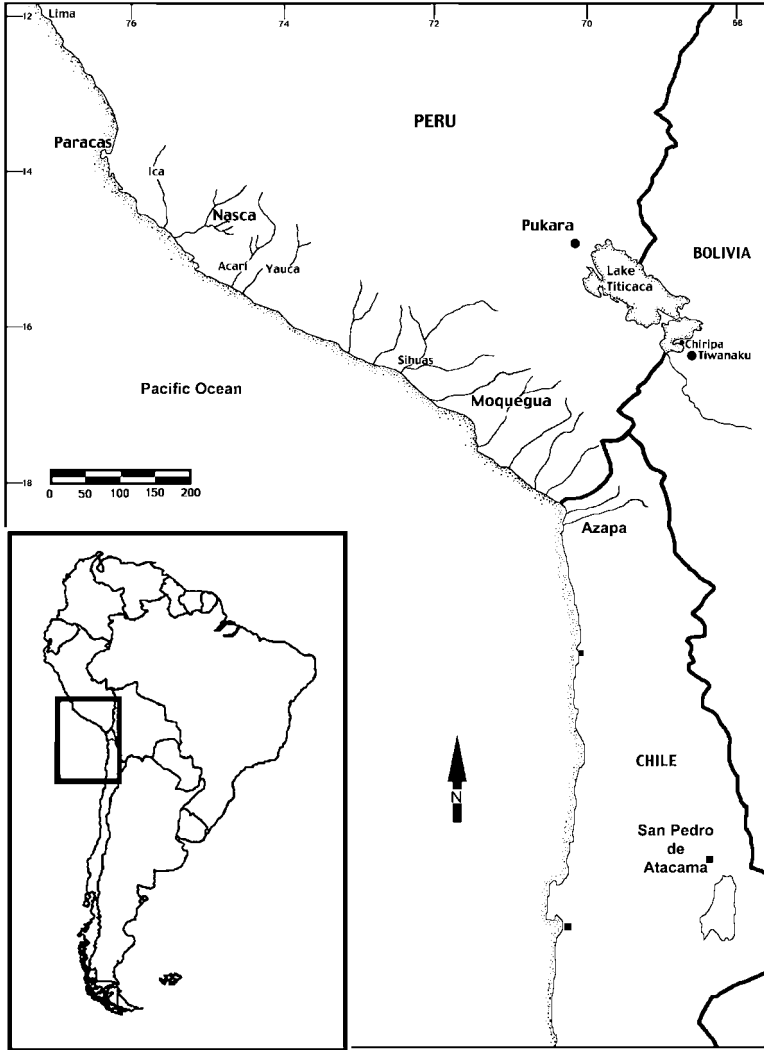


Figure 6.1. Map of south central Andes.

(Franquemont 1986; Kidder 1943; Ponce 1976). Typical Kalasasaya serving vessel forms include jars with globular or slightly flattened bodies, round bottom bowls with one handle, trumpets, and some modeled zoomorphic forms.

The subsequent Qeya style, originally described for the Qeya Qollu Chico cemetery on the Island of the Sun, but also known as Tiwanaku III at the Tiwanaku



**Figure 6.2.** Qeya style Tiwanaku vessels, Island of the Sun, Adolph Bardelier Collection, American Museum of Natural History (photo by author).

site, is typified by vessels of a soft, light brown ceramic paste (Figure 6.2). Serving vessel forms include libation bowls, bulbous bottom vases with interlocking black and white triangle motifs, and crude *incensario* forms. Qeya and similar Late Formative styles are found in only some sectors of the Tiwanaku site and in minimal numbers in nearby survey collections, suggesting that both site and hinterland were smaller and sparsely occupied during the Late Formative.<sup>3</sup> Ponce (1972) dated the Tiwanaku III/Qeya style to A.D. 100 to 375, although more recent reappraisal suggests a later span from A.D. 231 to 619 (Janusek and Alconini 2000). Throughout the Formative, the *altiplano* assemblages are dominated by low-fired globular *ollas* made in a variety of paste types. These unremarkable vessels are typical throughout the Formative, and account for as much as 91% of sherds in Late Formative levels below Tiwanaku's Putuni palace (Janusek and Alconini 2000).

In sharp contrast to these Formative styles, Tiwanaku's famed corporate ceramic style is remarkable for its standardization, its higher technical quality (denser pastes, impermeable slips, surface compaction, and higher firing), and its rapid diffusion, both at Tiwanaku and at sites throughout the Tiwanaku core region. The Tiwanaku style is characterized by red-slipped polychrome and reduced blackware serving vessels. The serving vessels are usually accompanied by hard-fired, sand-tempered utilitarian wares used for storage and cooking forms. Until recently, the Tiwanaku corporate style, subdivided into Classic and Decadent Phases (Bennett 1934), or Epocas IV and V (Ponce 1972), was believed to have begun at A.D. 350. Newer dates indicate that the Tiwanaku state style appeared ca. A.D. 500 and lasted for approximately 500 years. The style has been subdivided temporally



**Figure 6.3.** Tiwanaku period *keros* (upper row) and *tinajas* (lower row) Island of De Sun, Adolph Bardelier Collection, American Museum of Natural History (photo by author).

into Early IV, Late IV, Early V and Late V phases (Alconini 1995; Janusek 1994; Janusek and Alconini 2000).<sup>4</sup>

Characteristic throughout the Tiwanaku IV and V periods is the *kero* form, a flared drinking goblet used for imbibing maize beer. Although transitional forms of the *kero* have been identified in late Formative contexts at Lukurmata (Bermann 1994) and Tilata (Janusek and Alconini 2000; Mathews 1997), the *kero* form is uncommon in the Qeya style, and goblet-like drinking vessels are altogether absent from most Formative sites. In contrast, the *kero* and the related *tazón* (flaring bowl) and one handle pitcher serving forms *tinajas* become ubiquitous in domestic contexts during Tiwanaku IV and V (Figure 6.3). The same vessels are also standard mortuary furniture, and also appear in intentionally smashed offering contexts (Alconini 1993; Kolata 1993; Manzanilla 1992; Rivera Casanovas 1994).

Concurrent with the appearance of the *kero* and related serving forms, a unified assemblage of high quality utilitarian plainware vessels for cooking, storage, and liquid transport replaces the all-purpose Formative neckless *olla*. All of the Tiwanaku plainware vessels were executed in a high-fired sand or grog tempered paste that is far denser than Formative antecedents. Vessel surfaces were sealed by self slip, wiping or, rarely, simple polychrome painted decoration. While the



pear-shaped Tiwanaku *olla* may have arisen from the spherical neckless *olla* forms common throughout the *altiplano* in the Formative, the Tiwanaku *ollas* are designed with vertical rim, strap handles, and out-flaring lips, features better suited to pouring liquids. The *tinaja*, a completely new vessel form with a constricting shoulder, narrow cylindrical neck, thickened lip, and body strap handles suitable for rope slings, was introduced for liquid transport. Wide-mouthed tall vessels, known colloquially today as *chombas*, fulfilled in-place storage and fermentation functions.

It is interesting to note that despite the formal, stylistic and technical differences between Tiwanaku and Inca pottery, most of the new function-specific Tiwanaku vessel categories that appear ca. A.D. 500 have parallels in the Inca assemblage. Most significant here are the Tiwanaku *kero* and *tinaja*, which functionally resemble Inca wooden and ceramic *keros* (Meyers's [1998:353] Form 14) and the characteristic storage and transport vessels known as Cusco jars or *aríbolos* (Meyers's [1998:353] Form 1). We can infer from the prevalence of these functionally specific types, i.e., drinking goblets and narrow-necked liquid transport and storage vessels, that both Tiwanaku and Inca ceramic assemblages included substantial numbers of vessels dedicated to liquid consumption and transport (see Bray, this volume for Inca). Considering the absence of similar functional types in pre-Tiwanaku contexts, the sudden development and spread of this kind of specialized sub-assemblage in the second half of the first millennium suggests that it is not only the hallmark of a new ceramic tradition, but also be a signal of remarkable culinary, social, and political change that accompanied Tiwanaku expansion.

## TIWANAKU CULINARY EQUIPMENT IN THE PERIPHERIES

### San Pedro de Atacama

The town of San Pedro in the Atacama desert is located 105 km northeast of the modern city of Calama, Chile, at an altitude of 2430 m, and approximately 800 km south of the Tiwanaku site. A small number of Tiwanaku vessels were included as offerings in elite tombs in cemeteries in San Pedro's thirteen small agricultural oases, known as *ayllus* (Llagostera 1996). The few Tiwanaku vessels found in local museum collections are polychrome *keros*, *tazonas*, and small pitchers that correspond to Tiwanaku IV and V in the core region. There appears to be a high rate of repair in these imports, and no Tiwanaku utilitarian pottery is found in San Pedro. Moreover, trade pieces of the Isla Tricolor and black-on-red style of northwest Argentina have also been identified in many cemeteries in the Atacama region, and isolated examples of other unidentified styles are also found (Tarrago 1977:56–62). This diversity suggests that local elites continued to enjoy relatively open exchange relationships throughout the Tiwanaku period.

Both before and after the appearance of Tiwanaku imports, the vast majority of ceramic grave offerings were vessels of the local San Pedro tradition. In the San

Pedro III or Quito Phase (A.D. 400–700), these assemblages are dominated by local forms such as face neck bottles and incurving bowls in the black polished (*negra pulida*) ware that accounts for roughly 82% of the total funerary pottery in San Pedro (Tarrago 1976:61).<sup>5</sup> Further discussion of San Pedro culinary change must await excavation of household contexts. However, if serving vessels in tombs are typical, the Quito Phase inventory did not include any drinking goblet forms, suggesting that *chicha* drinking had not yet developed to the point of demanding specialized culinary equipment.

In the later Coyo phase (A.D. 800–1000), the San Pedro style continued with relatively few changes in style or technology. One of the few dramatic changes in the later San Pedro phase is the emulation of Tiwanaku *keros* in local red slipped or black “*casi pulida*” wares (Berenguer and Dauelsberg 1989:160). As no Tiwanaku-contemporary domestic site has yet been excavated, the frequency of these imitation *keros* in household contexts is not clear, although they are quite numerous in grave lots. This would appear to be an attempt to duplicate extremely rare original Tiwanaku *keros* with a functionally equivalent vessel form.

I would argue that the significance of this emulation of the *kero* form goes beyond mere stylistic influence. Rather, the adoption of the *kero* in the San Pedro ceramic assemblage suggests a new demand for specific vessels designed for functions that had not been worthy of specialized culinary equipment before exposure to Tiwanaku. This suggests that contacts between San Pedro and Tiwanaku, indirect as they may have been, highlighted the importance of *chicha* drinking in local feasting behavior. One interpretation might suggest that Tiwanaku contact catalyzed the competitive hosting of feasts by local elites, creating greater demands not only for beer itself, but also for specialized beer-drinking vessels.

### Cochabamba Tiwanaku

The Mizque, Capinota, Santivañez, Sacaba, Valle Alto and Central Cochabamba valleys of Eastern Bolivia lie approximately 400 to 600 km. southeast of the site of Tiwanaku, at elevations from 1800 to 2800 m (Higuera 1996). Unlike San Pedro, the region overall is considered extremely fertile and was a major area of agricultural production under Inca control. In the absence of household excavations, it is unclear whether the political economic relationship of Cochabamba to the Tiwanaku core region was one of direct administration, colonization, or hegemony through religious proselytizing or long distance trade. The low frequency and local association of most sumptuary Tiwanaku goods like tapestry tunics and snuff kits suggests that these were long distance trade imports for local elites (Browman 1997:232; Oakland 1986:245). On the other hand, Bennett (1936:353) noted that the burial offerings of ceramic *keros* and *tazones* at the Arani site were of exclusively Tiwanaku style, as are the grave offerings at Piñami (Céspedes Paz 1993:65). Oakland (1986:246) reports that Tiwanaku textile bags and bands from

Manzanani, Omereque and Perez were found in burial association with Tiwanaku pottery, suggesting interments by culturally Tiwanaku colonists or fully acculturated local populations.

As in both the Tiwanaku core region and San Pedro, Cochabamba ceramic traditions prior to Tiwanaku show little evidence of a specialized feasting sub-assembly. Formative pottery of the Eastern Cochabamba valleys was dominated by bowls, globular neckless *ollas*, and urn forms. *Keros* are not found, and although it is possible that urn forms were used for *chicha* fermentation, Brockington et al. (1995:123) believe there was no *chicha* production in this maize-producing area before 700 B.C., and only limited production thereafter. Once again, the Tiwanaku period appears to mark a watershed in the development of a function-specific ceramic kit for *chicha* production and feasting.

Further research is required on the typology, chronology, and relative frequency of Tiwanaku serving vessels, utilitarian plain wares, and local wares at Cochabamba domestic sites. Cochabamba Tiwanaku polychrome serving pottery has been described as a “derived” style of Tiwanaku, although pottery of classic Tiwanaku style is also found. Functionally, the assemblage includes the standard *kero*, *tazon*, and small pitcher forms known from the core region, and funnel-shaped *keros* with narrow “can’t-put-it-down” bases are considered characteristic for the Cochabamba region, although frequencies are not available from either mortuary or domestic assemblages. It appears that Tiwanaku pottery came to co-exist with contemporary regional styles like Omereque (also known as Mizque and Nazcoide), a polychrome with unusually opaque and colorful pigments, and local forms such as tripod vessels. Later Omereque pottery displays a strong Tiwanaku influence (Bennett 1936:387, 403; Byrne de Caballero 1984). Omereque and local gray ware pottery is commonly found in association with Tiwanaku wares in the Capinota and Mizque valleys (Higueras 1996). Other local styles include Yampara in the southern valleys and Mojocoyo in the east (Browman 1997:231; Ibarra Grasso and Querejazu 1986). Trade pottery of Cochabamba’s local styles appear in low frequencies at the Lukurmata and Tiwanaku sites (Bermann 1994, 1997; Janusek 1993:16; 1994:127; 1999:122–123).

Interpretations differ on the nature and intensity of Tiwanaku political economy in Cochabamba. Céspedes Paz (1993:65), citing the overwhelming adoption of Tiwanaku stylistic elements, the sheer quantity of Tiwanaku material culture, and the construction of administrative centers, suggests that direct Tiwanaku expansion began as early as A.D. 350, and was followed by full provincial incorporation after A.D. 750 (see also Anderson et al. 1998). Others point to continuity in local settlement patterns, Cochabamba Tiwanaku’s “derived” pottery style, and the presumed prevalence of Tiwanaku materials in mortuary, rather than domestic contexts, to support an interpretation of indirect trade and stylistic emulation of Tiwanaku by the region’s indigenous societies (Browman 1997:231; Higueras 1996; Oakland 1986:246).

In either case, the transformation of the ceramic assemblage in Cochabamba indicates profound change in culinary practice and a modification of the previous social order. This transformation was marked by the widespread adoption of Tiwanaku feasting practices, specifically the imbibing of *chicha* using a specialized ceramic assemblage borrowed from Tiwanaku models. Whether this took place in Inca-style provincial feasts sponsored by Tiwanaku hosts, or, as is likely in San Pedro, in feasts sponsored by local chiefs who merely adopted Tiwanaku forms, is not yet known.

### Azapa Valley, Northern Chile

The Pacific-draining Azapa valley of Northern Chile, and the neighboring Chaca, Camarones, Lluta, Sama, and Caplina valleys, all lie approximately 300 km west of the site of Tiwanaku at elevations ranging from sea level to 1000 m. Climate in the Azapa Valley region is temperate and hyper-arid, with virtually no precipitation. The distribution of both Azapa Tiwanaku sites and those of Cabuza,<sup>6</sup> a contemporary local style, shows a preference for floodplain areas optimal for maize agriculture in “sweet water,” or less mineralized valleys like the lower Azapa.<sup>7</sup> Azapa Tiwanaku and Cabuza sites concentrate near natural springs at Las Riberas and Saucache and large irrigable plains like Alto Ramirez, suggesting a preference for zones that were optimal for irrigated cultivation of maize, beans, fruits, and coca.<sup>8</sup>

The Azapa valley provides another example of a dramatic Formative/Tiwanaku break in ceramic assemblages consonant with adoption of different culinary equipment. Previous to the appearance of Tiwanaku vessels, the region’s Formative tradition, known as Alto Ramirez, consisted primarily of globular neckless or short-neck *ollas*, and included no drinking or serving vessels (Muñoz 1996).

Tiwanaku pottery in Azapa, also known in Chile as the Loreto Viejo style, corresponds stylistically to Tiwanaku IV and V in the core region and the Omo and Chen Chen styles of Moquegua. Azapa Tiwanaku polychrome ceramic *keros*, *tazones* and small pitchers, as well as wooden spoons, *keros*, pitchers, and serving vessels appear in mortuary sites in Azapa. Tiwanaku utilitarian *olla* and *tinaja* forms are found at a few habitation sites, but these cooking, brewing, and storage shapes were also adopted by households who used serving pottery of the Cabuza style. The later Cabuza fine wares emulated Tiwanaku *keros* and other serving forms in local pastes, with decoration in black over a purplish-red slip. Users of the Cabuza ceramics also emulated Tiwanaku practices such as cist burials in seated flexed position, and elements of the Tiwanaku textile style.

The most likely explanation of Azapa Tiwanaku occupation is as small enclaves of colonists from the Tiwanaku core region coexisting with a larger local population who emulated aspects of the Tiwanaku tradition. A recent systematic survey indicates that settlements and cemeteries affiliated with actual Tiwanaku

colonists were limited in number and size as compared to larger numbers of Cabuza and related sites (Goldstein 1996). Interpretations of this coexistence have ranged from a symbiosis of ethnic groups (Rivera 1985, 1991) to a vision of marked social stratification, with the Azapa Tiwanaku representing a powerful ruling elite (“cupola dirigente”) (Berenguer and Dauelsberg 1989:151). Higher status is attributed to Tiwanaku individuals based on the quality of Azapa Tiwanaku pottery and textiles and the presence of snuff tablets, spoons and four-pointed hats of elite Tiwanaku style associations (Berenguer and Dauelsberg 1989:151; Focacci 1981:70). The idea of enclaves of Tiwanaku ruling elite imposed on a Cabuza substrate could explain the wide adoption of Tiwanaku style and cultural practice. Specifically, the shift of the late Cabuza ceramic assemblage to include a set of brewing and serving vessels points to a marked increase in the importance of feasting and *chicha* drinking in indigenous populations after the arrival of Tiwanaku emissaries. As in Cochabamba, it is not yet known whether Tiwanaku colonial elites sponsored feasting events themselves, or whether local elites were spurred by Tiwanaku example to a competitive spiral of feasting.

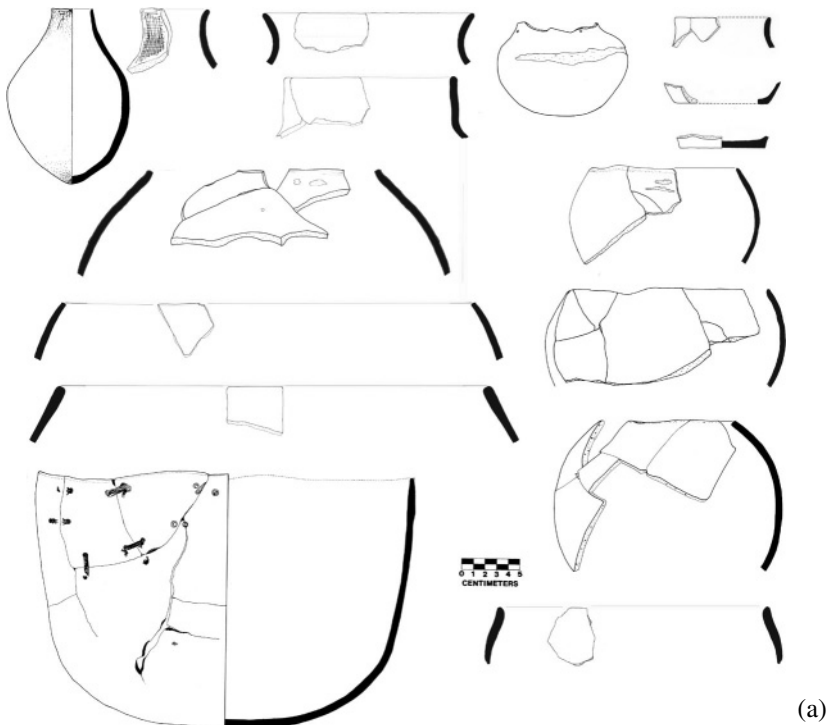
### Moquegua Valley, Southern Peru

The Moquegua (also known as the Middle Osmore) valley of southern Peru lies approximately 300 km west of the site of Tiwanaku and ranges in elevation between 900 and 2000 m. An optimal region for temperate agriculture, Moquegua provides the strongest evidence for expansive Tiwanaku colonization. In Moquegua, the radical changes in domestic assemblages between the local Formative ceramic tradition known as Huaracane and subsequent Tiwanaku assemblages also suggest major differences in the way indigenous Formative and Tiwanaku kitchens, households, and particularly, household and community beer halls functioned. Represented by 169 habitation components, the Huaracane domestic occupation was dispersed across tiny hamlets closely associated with small-scale floodplain agriculture (Goldstein 2000a). Much like the Early Formative Mesoamerican contexts cited by Clark and Blake (1994), Huaracane populations appear to have had only a minor and unspecialized interest in maize cultivation. Cob varieties of maize from Huaracane sites appeared noticeably smaller than those seen in Tiwanaku sites, and the available macrobotanical evidence recovered from site survey supports the view of a mixed farming and herding economy. Huaracane habitation sites also exhibited few large seed-processing tools like the *metates*, *batanes* and *manos* that are so numerous in Moquegua Tiwanaku sites.

The prevalent vessels of the Huaracane ceramic assemblage were globular neckless ollas, examples of which are usually soot-blackened (Figure 6.4a). This suggests the direct cooking of stews on hearths. There are no vessels in the inventory that are specifically suited for liquid storage, fermentation or transport (i.e., none

have strap handles, tall necks, or pouring lips). Shallow hemispherical bowls, unsuitable for drinking, are virtually the only serving vessel form (Figure 6.4b). The absence of drinking goblets or easy-to-pour storage vessels suggests that maize beer was not a major part of the cuisine, or at least that no formalized assemblage for brewing or imbibing existed.

Ceramic assemblages changed entirely with the arrival of Tiwanaku colonial settlement after A.D. 600 and the establishment of large enclaves at previously unoccupied locations in the valley. Two stylistic assemblages, termed Omo and Chen Chen, have been identified in Moquegua Tiwanaku corresponding to late Tiwanaku IV and V pottery in the Tiwanaku core region. Fifteen Moquegua Tiwanaku site components, covering nearly 30 hectares, have ceramics of the Omo style, while 55 hectares of habitation area and 10 hectares of cemeteries are characterized by Chen Chen style ceramics. In sites with both styles, fine serving vessels including *keros*, *tazones*, small pitchers, portrait vessels, zoomorphic censers and



**Figure 6.4.** Huaracane style vessels from the Moquegua valley Archaeological Survey project; a. globular neckless ollas, b. serving bowls.

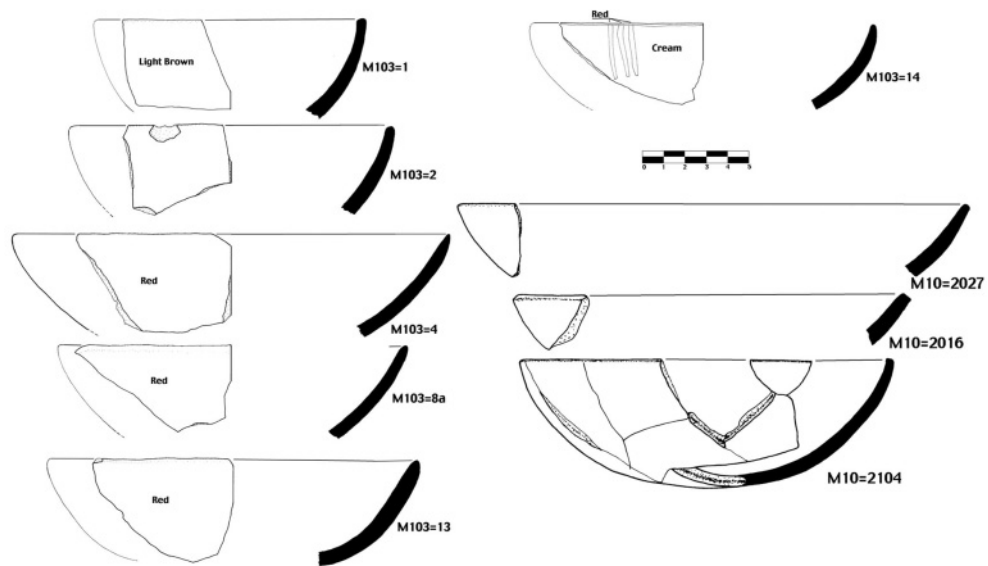
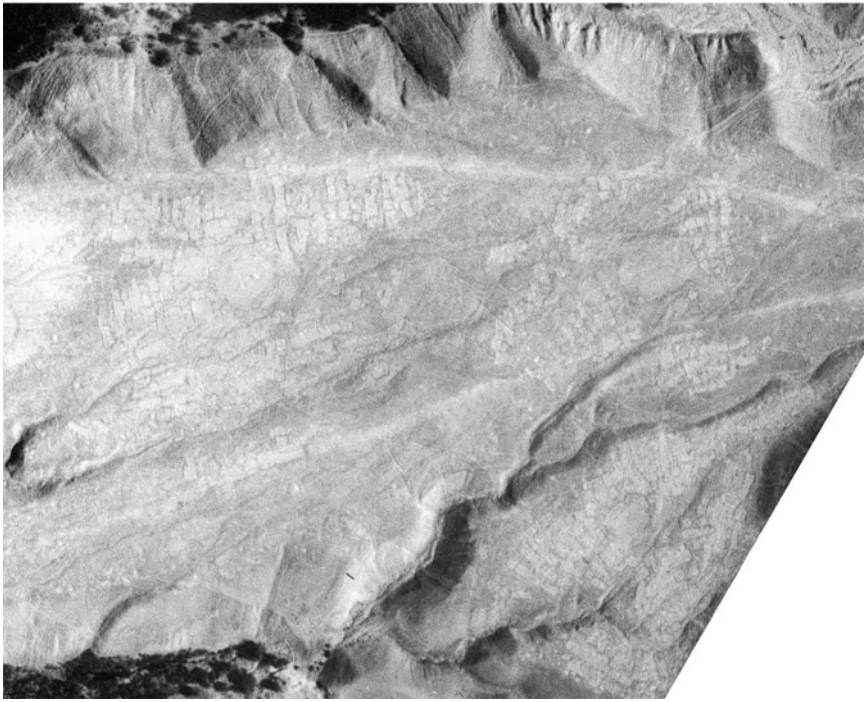
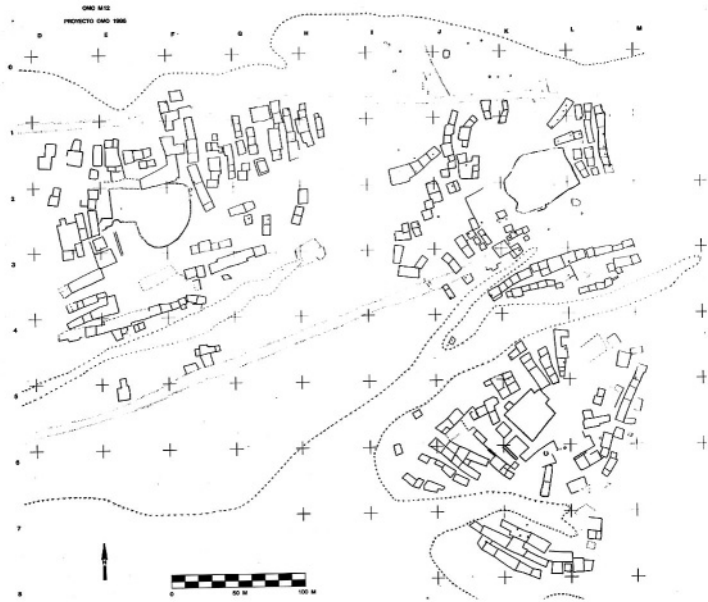


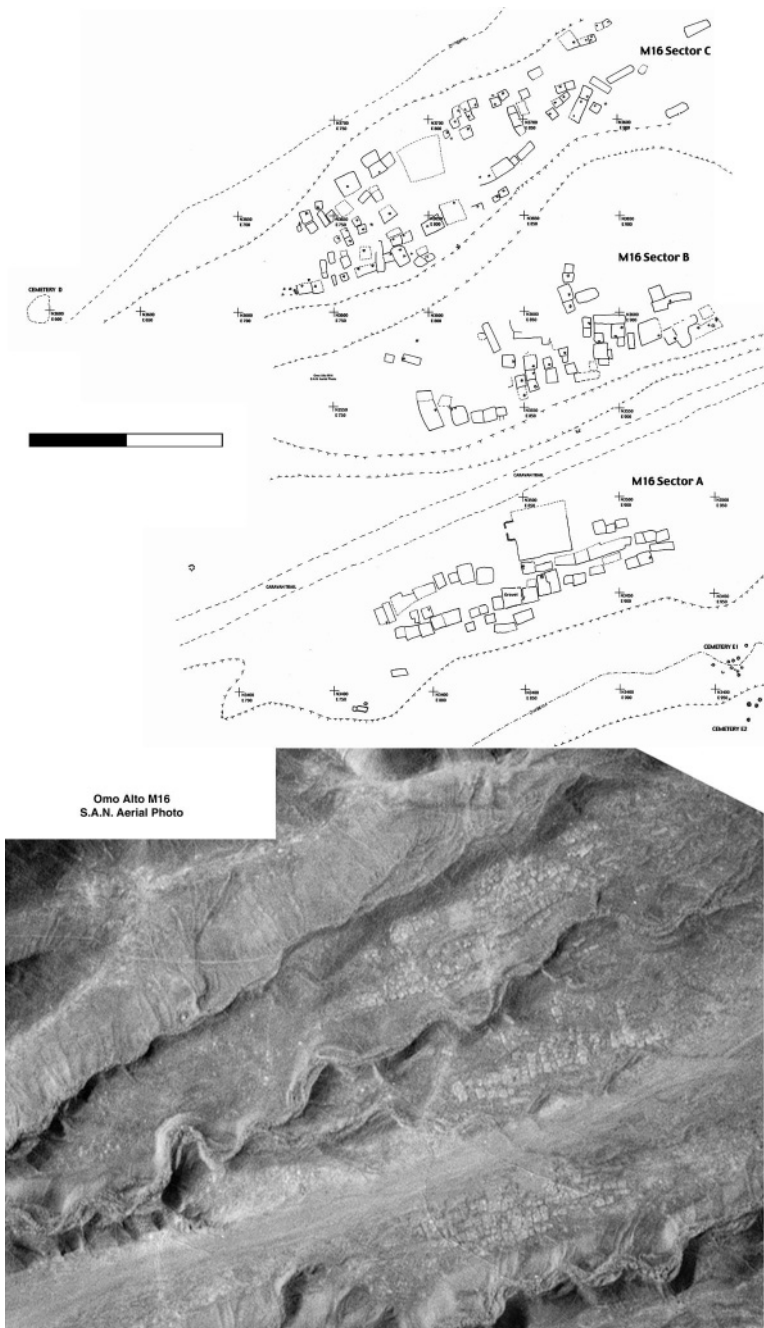
Figure 6.4. (Cont.)

(b)

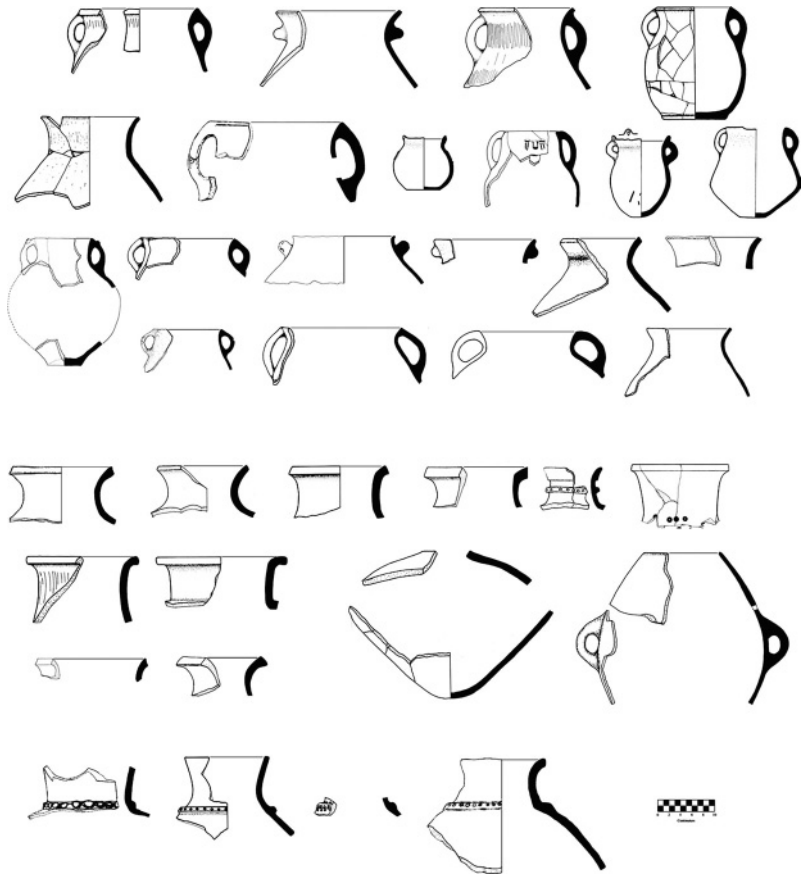


**Figure 6.5.** Layout and overview of Omo site M12 showing community plaza groups.





**Figure 6.6.** Layout and overview of Omo site M16 showing community plaza groups.



**Figure 6.7.** Examples of Tiwanaku tinajas from special Omo household complexes believed to represent *chicherías*.

jars are found.<sup>9</sup> Extensive household excavations at the Omo, Chen Chen, and Rio Muerto sites confirm that both ceramic and wooden *keros* and other serving vessels are ubiquitous in domestic, as well as mortuary contexts. In terms of plain wares, standard Tiwanaku utilitarian forms prevail in all Moquegua Tiwanaku household contexts, and indigenous vessel forms like neckless *ollas* are no longer represented (Goldstein 1989, 1993a, 2000a, 2000b).

Occupations at the Omo M12 site (Figure 6.5) and the Omo M16 site (Figure 6.6) consisted of freestanding multi-room buildings, arrayed around large plazas. These plaza-centered residential groups correspond to intentionally segregated *ayllu* communities. Although *keros* were found in every household, each community also included at least one household complex with numerous storage tinajas (Figure 6.7) and in-situ feature installations of *chicha* brewing *chombas* set



**Figure 6.8.** Examples of fancy Tiwanaku *keros*, portrait vessels, and incensarios from special Omo household complexes believed to represent *chicherías*.

into the floor. These *chichería* households also owned matched sets of particularly fancy *keros*, portrait vessels, or other fancy pottery (Figure 6.8). Elsewhere I have argued that these specific households were those that regularly sponsored *ayllu* level feasts that enhanced the solidarity of the social group and the prestige of its informal leadership (Goldstein 1993a, 2000b). Neither these part-time *chicherías* nor other household units at Omo M12 or M16 had independent patios or storage facilities.

In sites with Chen Chen style pottery, a ceramic assemblage that includes *keros* and large brewing vessels in every Moquegua Tiwanaku home supports generalized domestic usage of *chicha*. Because no dedicated *chichería* houses have yet been detected, it is difficult to speculate on the context of feasting activities beyond noting that some form of drinking ceremony was universally represented in all households. Concentrations of *kero* and *tinaja* sherds at sites found on hilltops and prominences throughout the Moquegua valley suggest that at least some informal

feasting and drinking took place at significant points on the landscape outside of town and temple. At least one of these sites, located on a distant hilltop in direct alignment with the Omo temple's gateways, appears to have had a long and substantial history of feasting activities.

As in later household clusters in the Tiwanaku core region, autonomous household clusters at the Chen Chen style sites were organized in patio groups, with associated storage units and roofed and unroofed activity areas. This suggests family-organized domestic production, and the amassing of surplus in response to increasing outside demands on the colonial household. Additional banks of stone-lined storage units were distributed throughout the Chen Chen style habitation sites, usually in association with large grinding stones, *manos*, and a profusion of stone hoes. This evidence suggests that maize was stored and processed beyond the demands of the household, and possibly exported to exchange partners in the highland Tiwanaku core. Nonetheless, it is yet unclear whether this exaggerated maize production indicates a centralized state tribute system of Inca scale or exchange relationships articulated through *ayllus* as corporate units.

## FEASTS, CUISINE, AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF DIETARY CHANGE

Research on ancient culinary practice and diet through vessel assemblages can offer only indirect insight into actual consumption. Vessels may be multifunctional. Similarly, the faunal and botanical record may be biased by preservation, or if consumption patterns were seasonal or eating and feasting took place outside of the settlement. For this reason, analyses of human bone chemistry can provide an important clue to the relative contributions of major food groups throughout the life of an individual.

In Moquegua, the distinction between Huaracane dietary lifeways and those of their Tiwanaku successors is manifest in skeletal biology. A series of Huaracane individuals from the "boot tomb" cemetery at Omo were included in a comparative carbon nitrogen isotope study with individuals from pre-Tiwanaku coastal sites and Tiwanaku skeletons from Omo (Sandness 1992). Results indicate that the Huaracane diet resembled that of Early Ceramic period individuals from other coastal sites (Owen 1993). Marine resources (fish, shellfish, and possibly algae) contributed as much as 23% to 50% of the diets of these Huaracane individuals. The carbon and nitrogen delta values of the Huaracane skeletal samples suggest substantial dietary quantities of C3 plant foods (approximately 50%) and/or animals grazing on C3 vegetation. Maize and C4 plants made only a minimal contribution to Huaracane diets, accounting for only 3% to 18%. Before the arrival of Tiwanaku and its emphasis on the *chicha* economy, maize was probably little more than a supplemental food in a diversified one-pot cuisine of neckless *olla* stews.

In contrast, analysis of Tiwanaku colonists associated with Chen Chen style pottery found that maize and C4 plants contributed between 46% and 76% of their diet (Sandness 1992:49). Moquegua Tiwanaku colonist's emphasis on intensive maize cultivation to support the *chicha* political economy was no longer a matter of occasional drinking and feasting but a monotonously regular part of the diet. It seems unlikely that this entire maize intake is attributable to *chicha*. Nonetheless, an examination of Tiwanaku culinary equipment fails to find any vessels specifically designed for popping, roasting, or toasting maize. This implies that Tiwanaku maize that was not consumed as *chicha* was either boiled on the cob, or, more likely considering the proliferation of grinding stones, ingested as some sort of porridge.

An interesting parallel with Inca maize cuisine is found when we examine the gendered nature of the *chicha* economy. The extraction of tribute from households under state political economies often was accompanied by accentuated household inequality. For the Inca, the chroniclers noted that women were often excluded from drinking and feasting occasions (Guaman Poma 1993 [1615]; Randall 1993:25). Among the Sausa of the Mantaro region, the previously balanced consumption patterns of men and women took on a decidedly gendered aspect with incorporation into the Inca political economy. Pre-Inca Wanka II skeletons showed no gender differences in carbon nitrogen isotope ratios, suggesting that both sexes participated equally in maize-concentrated feasting, and thus in ritual, community and political events (Hastorf 1991:150). In contrast, analysis of 21 Inca-contemporary Wanka III individuals found a marked difference (mean delta C values of  $-16.41$  for females vs.  $-14.18$  for males, with higher delta N values for the males). While both males and females exhibit better access to maize than their pre-Inca ancestors, the male diet was considerably more enriched in maize and meat than the female. Thus, even though *chicha* and other maize foods may have been produced by females, as is ethnographically common in the Andes, Wanka III males enjoyed significantly better access to maize products, as well as meat (Hastorf 1991:152; Murra 1982:256).

A comparison of the Omo carbon nitrogen isotope results for males and females also showed significant gender differences. (Sandness 1992:42), suggesting that Moquegua Tiwanaku males may have disproportionately enjoyed both feasting and *chicha* drinking, and the political empowerment that it implied.

## CONCLUSIONS

Considering the role of drinking vessels and the importance of drinking ceremony in the integration of the Inca state, it is not surprising to find that the proliferation of the *keru* and plainware liquid transport and storage vessels coincides with the rise of Tiwanaku both as a complex urban site and as an expansive state. Yet while some Inca and Tiwanaku *chicha* drinking practices and elements of ceramic assemblages appear similar, there are important distinctions. Notably, *keros* and

*tinajas*, though ubiquitous in domestic contexts, are **not** prevalent in use contexts within Tiwanaku temple structures (Goldstein 1993b). Likewise, Tiwanaku sunken court temple complexes do not demonstrate specialized facilities for brewing and consuming maize beer comparable to the Inca *acllawasi*. Tiwanaku temples are characterized instead by assemblages that emphasize *incensarios* and *sahumarios* (censers), vessels used for offerings, rather than for drinking ceremonies. When *keros* do appear in Tiwanaku public architecture, notably in the ceramic offering discovered in the Akapana pyramid, it is in the context of sacrifice, rather than commensal toasting (Alconini 1995; Kolata 1993).

The absence of *keros* and drinking paraphernalia in temple use contexts suggests that Tiwanaku temple ceremonies may have been quite distinct from drinking ceremonies carried out at the household and corporate levels. This contrasts markedly with the public ceremonial nature of Inca patron role feasts like those at Huánuco Pampa, which are closely associated with public architecture. If Tiwanaku commensal drinking took place in the home and in community settings, we may conclude that Tiwanaku did not fully develop the redistributive patron-role feasts of the Inca state-sponsored model. Accepting the politically charged nature of feasts, this suggests that the Tiwanaku diaspora relied on intermediate levels of social organization, rather than unitary state governance, for its articulation. The decentralized nature of Tiwanaku feasting suggests that Tiwanaku's *chicha* economy was not part of a fully developed centralized political economy, but a system run through a heterarchy of *ayllu*-like corporate groups operating within a loose confederative state.

In a comparative case, Moore (1989) details the physical and contextual correlates of *chicha* production at the Chimú provincial site of Manchan. Because Chimú was a state-level society, by analogy to the Inca state, Moore expected to find evidence of specialist producers, like the Inca *mamakuna* (female temple servants) or the *chichero* (male *chicha* maker) reported on the central coast. Instead, he found that *chicha* production at Manchan took place in non-specialized household contexts, similar to ethnohistoric *chicha* production in *ayllu*-organized communities (Moore 1989:691). Equipment was widely distributed throughout residential barrios, and there was no evidence of specialized institutional settings for *chicha* production. Nonetheless, the intensity of household *chicha* production varied at Manchan. One perfectly ordinary household, for example, had a production capacity of 513 liters, a supply estimated to have been sufficient for 171 people (Moore 1989:688)! The implication that ordinary households in Andean states, rather than specialized institutions, might produce and serve *chicha* in quantities so far above household needs could help to explain three of the most puzzling aspects of the Tiwanaku phenomenon.

First, as compared to other proto-empires worldwide, Tiwanaku's *ayllus* individually or collectively embarked on adventures of expansion and colonization in distant peripheries remarkably soon after the consolidation of the Tiwanaku core region. The coalescence of the Tiwanaku corporate style in the core region was

completed shortly after A.D. 500—merely a century before the Tiwanaku diaspora extended itself to the lowlands. This represents a remarkably quick transition from state formation to state expansion. Considering the high costs of transporting bulk carbohydrates in the Andean highlands, it is unlikely that resources from these peripheries could have had a significant impact on Tiwanaku core region subsistence. Instead, I argue that *chicha* played an important role in a pluralistic society whose political economy was based on competitive hospitality. As Bernabe Cobo tells us:

They make *chicha* from a lot of things. . . . Some *chichas* are made from *ocas*, *yucas* and other roots, others of *quinoa* and *molle* fruit. The Indians of Tucuman make it from *algarrobas*, those of Chile from *strawberries* (?) . . . From the way they refuse to drink pure water, it seems that all the inhabitants of America have conspired against it. But the best *chicha* of all, the one that is most generally drunk in this land, and the one that, like a precious wine, takes first place above all the other Indian drinks, is made from maize (Cobo 1890 [1653]:347, my translation).

In a setting where political status revolved around the ability to attract followers through the sponsorship of empowering feasts, the introduction of drink would trigger an ever-tightening spiral of factional competition. As each *ayllu* or individual sponsor vied to provide the best drink available, competition would have mandated *chicha* brewed with the uniquely high sugar content of maize, a cultigen that can best be grown at lower elevations than the Tiwanaku core region. Tiwanaku expansion abroad and political growth at home were both largely fueled by the accelerated cycle of political feasting that came about with the introduction of maize beer.

A second puzzling distinction of Tiwanaku expansion from Inca imperialism is the absence of evidence for overt military conquest and unitary rule. Nonetheless, Tiwanaku agricultural colonists, traders, or at least the new concepts and values associated with Tiwanaku, were tolerated or even welcomed by indigenous populations in maize-growing regions. This “soft” variety of state expansion is puzzling when compared to the overt exercise of military power that characterized Inca imperialism. The Inca, for instance, developed an extensive network of storage facilities for maize to support their armies. Tiwanaku developed no such infrastructure. This difference implies a new emphasis among the Inca on maize varieties and recipes suited for military and migratory logistics.

The archaeological record indicates that Tiwanaku pursued a model of expansion that combined sumptuary craft skills, an attractive ideological system, and excellence in salesmanship with long-standing communal values under a flexible, rather than monolithic state system. Once the Tiwanaku type site became known as a metropolitan center, an aura of cultural superiority certainly would have smoothed the way for Tiwanaku agents. However, it is becoming clear that the emergence of the Tiwanaku site as a metropole and the rapid diffusion of the

Tiwanaku formal ceramic assemblage in maize-growing regions occurred almost simultaneously. Perhaps some of the cachet of the Tiwanaku phenomenon lay in its association with feasting and innovative alcoholic beverages. This culinary cachet depended on access to a wide variety of maize types, an efficient and attractive ceramic assemblage for brewing, storing and serving, and a fully integrated social context for imbibing. The “proof of the pudding” is that the culinary and beverage traditions of Tiwanaku were not only tolerated, but also actively emulated by indigenous peoples throughout the south central Andes. In many instances, pre-Tiwanaku culinary equipment was replaced by dedicated *chicha* drinking vessels like the *kero*, *tazonas* for porridge, and sturdy brewing and storage *tinaja* vessels where none had existed before.

Dietler (1990) has observed that once societies have integrated alcoholic beverages into their economic production and social reproduction, they seldom reverse the trend and these beverages often become increasingly important. For centuries following the Tiwanaku collapse, maize beer remained a powerful draught. Late Intermediate Period artifact assemblages all continue to include large liquid transport and storage vessels and *kero*-like serving goblets. South central Andean culinary equipment never reverted to the days of the neckless *olla* stew pots, and new variations of the basic culinary equipment for *chicha* making persisted through Mollo, Churajón, Chiribaya, Maytas, and San Miguel post-Tiwanaku ceramic traditions. This suggests that *chicha* drinking remained important in a wide variety of post-Tiwanaku Andean political economies and feast sponsorship continued to be a critical political rite and right for local, regional, and state-level leaders of the Inca, Colonial, and modern era. *Chicha*'s long-term role as the lubricant of south Andean political economy and its powerful grip on the south Andean consciousness is one of Tiwanaku's most remarkable legacies.

## NOTES

- 1 Most discussion of the advent of state pottery has focused on ceramic style as communication and of stylistic change as a marker for culture change. While pottery, *is*, of course a stylistic medium, those non-functional stylistic components that might be called “isochrestic” represent only one aspect of pottery-related decision making (Sackett 1990).
- 2 As Cook and Glowacki (this volume) elaborate, feasts and drinking bouts in the “Inca mode” can also be inferred for the provincial administration of the Wari empire of Peru's Middle Horizon (A.D. 540–900) (see also Isbell 1987:86; McEwan 1990:104; Schreiber 1987).
- 3 Qeya pottery is more common on the Island of the Sun and at Lukurmata, Iwawe, and other sites close to the lakeshore (Bermann 1994; Burkholder 1997; Mathews 1992, cited in Janusek and Alconinini 2000; Mujica 1978; Wallace 1957).
- 4 Janusek and Alconinini (2000) describe the ceramic changes of this Formative/corporate Tiwanaku break in the following way:

“The most notable innovations in ceramic wares point to the increasing importance of feasting and ceremony in the Tiwanaku heartland. Cooking vessels changed least from the Late Formative



period, but a major innovation included the production of taller, higher volume *ollas* (*k'auchi*), presumably for cooking and boiling larger portions. These became increasingly common throughout the Tiwanaku period. More striking was the appearance of large, durable vessels (*urpu* and *makacha*) for storing liquids such as water and *chicha*. *Tinajas* specifically for storage were rare during the Late Formative, became common during the IV phase, and increased in importance in the V phase. Large *ollas* and voluminous *tinajas* would have been most useful in producing and storing large quantities of food and drink, and so point to the increasing importance of feasts after A.D. 500 and again after A.D. 800. Even more striking was the production and widespread use of a wide range of elaborate serving and ceremonial vessels. . . . Most ubiquitous were *keros*, *tazons*, and *vasijas*, but a number of special serving types, including *escudillas*, *cuencos*, and *fuentes*, were more selectively distributed across the two valleys (Katari and Tiwanaku). The former apparently served both everyday consumption and periodic feasts, while the latter were limited to either specific groups or special ceremonial occasions.”

- 5 The *negra pulida* style may have some relationship to Tiwanaku blackware (Browman 1980:117; Tarrago 1984; Thomas et al. 1985).
- 6 Pottery of the locally-made Cabuza tradition may appear in Azapa as early as A.D. 380, predating the arrival of the Tiwanaku style ceramics (Berenguer and Dauelsberg 1989:147–148; Dauelsberg 1985), although most absolute dates place Cabuza somewhat later (e.g. Focacci 1983; Muñoz 1983; Schiappacasse et al. 1991:52).
- 7 Systematic full coverage survey of the middle Azapa Valley (Goldstein 1996) found 54 sites with Azapa Tiwanaku or Cabuza sherds. Of these, 15 sites produced both styles, 27 produced only Cabuza, and 12 produced only Azapa Tiwanaku fragments. There were only three confirmed habitation sites with Tiwanaku household material culture predominant, encompassing an aggregate area of less than five hectares.
- 8 Coca, perhaps of a variety cultivated only in the dry western valleys, only appeared in Azapa after the Tiwanaku arrival (Molina et al. 1989:47) the possibility of its cultivation perhaps being a significant economic attraction for the Tiwanaku state.
- 9 Most fine wares were red-slipped, with polychrome painting in black, white, orange and gray-blue. Reduced black ware pottery comprises up to 40% of the fine serving vessels in the Omo style, but is not found in the Chen Chen assemblage.

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## Chapter 7

# *Pots, Politics, and Power* Huari Ceramic Assemblages and Imperial Administration

ANITA G. COOK AND MARY GLOWACKI

In this paper, we assess early state feasting practices associated with the Huari of Middle Horizon Perú: We consider the types of food and drink served and consumed by the political elite of the Huari state, the ceramic vessels that mediated this process, and the architectural spaces in which such activities occurred. Our goal is to reveal how feasting figured in the negotiation of identity, status, power, and prestige among Huari administrators and between administrators and subjects. Additionally, we wish to show that such practices occurred under certain circumstances in prescribed architecture with selected ceramic assemblages that underscored imperial Huari rule.

The Middle Horizon (A.D. 540–900) Huari empire of the central Andes is the focus of our study. Huari is one of the least known Andean polities and has confounded researchers since the first references to it were published by the Spanish soldier, Pedro Cieza de León 1986 [1553], in the early colonial era. The site of Huari was only rediscovered by archaeologists in the 1950's. Prior to this time, Huari materials tended to be mis-classified or confused with those of Tiwanaku, a contemporary rival polity centered in the *altiplano* of modern day Bolivia (see Goldstein, this volume). Since the early 1970s, archaeological investigations have greatly advanced our knowledge of the Huari empire. With the growing amount

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of data available, one subject we may now usefully consider is the role of feasting in the rise of the Huari state.

This paper will examine the ways in which feasting is believed to have generated power among Huari political elite. While different forms of feasting have been identified in Andean prehistory (i.e., Gero 1992; Moore 1989), we focus on the kinds involved in entertaining and honoring other elite and in reciprocating laborers, a practice noted in the case of the Inca (see Bray, this volume). We explore whether evidence from several important Huari sites supports an interpretation of Huari feasting and discuss the implications of our findings with regard to current views of Huari imperial administration. Although Inca administrative feasting has been used as a model by various Huari scholars, we first consider the Huari data presented here on its own terms. We concentrate on discerning Huari feasting through the analysis of certain types of Huari architecture and identify the main vessel forms that comprised the Huari imperial ceramic assemblage. To conclude our study, we compare our findings of Huari feasting to that of the Inca. Since the Huari are believed to have laid the foundation for Inca statecraft, our comparison offers insights into the evolution of Andean imperialism as played out in the context of ceremonial eating and drinking.

## HUARI IMPERIALISM

Pottery and architecture form two of the most durable elements of the archaeological record and can provide us with important information on civic and ceremonial activities. Although a great deal of attention has focused on ceramics as a medium for assessing chronology and ethnic affiliation, few studies have explored pottery as culinary equipment or as an important component of the pomp and ceremony of elite events in any great detail (see Dietler and Hayden 2001; Junker 2001).

A key aspect to understanding Huari culinary wares is to unravel the question of Huari imperial cuisine. To accomplish this, we require detailed faunal and floral analyses as well as residue analysis of ceramic vessels, which would establish the types of foods consumed and their preparation and consumption patterns. Such studies are in their infancy though recent work at both coastal (Cook and Parrish 2003) and highland sites will soon provide much needed information on this subject. In the absence of such data, however, we can still infer the nature of Huari elite cuisine based on our knowledge of Inca food practices (see, for example, Cobo 1890–1895 [1653], Book 14, Chapter 5), and even those of contemporary traditional highlanders (e.g., Gade 1967:120–121, 1975:76).

Additionally, we examine the architecture where we believe state sponsored administrative activities were carried out. The buildings in which these events most likely took place were open patios flanked by narrow chambers referred to

as “patio groups”. Present at both the capital city of Huari and provincial sites, these patio groups are considered a signature of Huari imperialism. At the Huari capital, various patio groups have been excavated, revealing associated artifacts. These data serve as the basis for comparison of excavated patio groups at hinterland sites where feasting is also believed to have been practiced.

Throughout much of Perú, the Middle Horizon is marked by evidence of Huari presence in the form of material culture and special function architecture (Cook 2001; Isbell and McEwan 1991). The Huari state began as one of a number of small regional confederacies during the Early Intermediate Period (370 B.C.–A.D. 540) (Lumbreras 1974; Menzel 1964). Known stylistically as Huarpa, it grew into a full-blown state early in the Middle Horizon circa A.D. 600. The site of Huari, situated in the Huamanga basin near the modern city of Ayacucho, served as the capital of the Huari state and later empire (Figure 7.1). It is one of



**Figure 7.1.** Map of Peru showing major sites referred to in the text. Dots signify modern cities, triangles represent archaeological sites (drawing by Abelardo Sandoval).



the largest prehispanic architectural complexes in the entire Andes with an urban center of three square kilometers. The center of the city comprised numerous multi-story building compounds, some of which measured as much as 100 meters in length. At the height of its occupation, Huari may have had as many as 70,000 residents (Isbell 1984:98, 1986:191, 1988:168–169, 171, 173; Isbell et al. 1991: 24, 51).

The Huari initiated imperial expansion sometime between A.D. 600–700, creating an empire that endured until at least A.D. 1000 (Isbell and Cook 2002; Schreiber 1992:77–78), and possibly longer. Ice core data from central Perú (Thompson et al. 1985) indicate that a major drought affected various parts of the Andes during the sixth century A.D. This may have led the Huari to seek arable land and fertile pastures beyond Ayacucho. As Glowacki and Malpass (1998) have suggested, the drought in the highlands may have led to an increase in ceremonial offerings to *huacas* and ancestors and more feasting, both strategies are believed to have been aimed at gaining greater access to and control over water sources. On the south coast, drought conditions varied from valley to valley, as indicated by differences in settlement patterns and foodways. Research at two sites suggest that drought was more severe in some areas than in others. In the lower Acarí valley, where people switched from wild and cultivated plants to a greater reliance on marine resources during this period, the drought does appear to have had an appreciable effect (Valdéz 1994a, 1994b). On the other hand, in the Ica valley just two drainages north of Acarí, archaeological evidence indicates no major shifts in cultivation practices during this period (Cook and Parrish, 2003) and no appreciable increase in emphasis on marine resources. Despite the different localized effects of this drought, by A.D. 650 the Huari polity appears to have expanded into much of what is now highland and coastal Perú.

## HUARI IMPERIAL POTTERY AND FEASTING ASSEMBLAGES

### Decorated Wares

While various scholars have contributed to the initial identification and classification of Huari pottery (e.g., Bennett 1953; Lumbreras 1959; Rowe, Collier, and Willey 1950), Menzel's (1964, 1968, 1977) research has provided the basic framework for the majority of ceramic studies that have since followed. In the most simplified terms, Menzel, whose analysis focused on decorated wares (as opposed to plainwares), recognized several pottery styles and corresponding vessel forms. These were divided into two chronological periods, or epochs, both of which had various sub-phases. Within each epoch, she also identified a secular, or "non-ceremonial" style as well as a highly elaborated "ceremonial" style.

The secular styles of the first Middle Horizon epoch are known as Chakipampa and Okros, while that of the second epoch, which is characterized by a diversity of sub-styles, is known as Viñaque. The specific ceremonial pottery styles from the earlier epoch are known as Conchopata and Robles Moqo, while those of the later period are referred to as the Atarco and Pachacamac styles. Since Menzel's study, various Huari scholars have helped refine this classification scheme and offered assessments of the relationship between the Huari styles and vessel forms (e.g., Brewster-Wray 1990; Cook 1994; Glowacki 1996a; Knobloch 1983; Wagner 1981). This work allows us to now begin to examine the concept of Huari imperial feasting.

Another of Menzel's major contributions to Middle Horizon studies was her analysis of the distribution of Huari pottery styles throughout Perú. Based on the available data, she proposed that Huari represented an empire comparable to that of the Inca. The presumed imperial expansion was thought to have occurred in phases evidenced by the presence of particular pottery styles. For example, during Middle Horizon Epoch 1 (A.D. 540–700), the first phase of Huari expansion, the Huari presence in the northern, central, and southern sierra is recognized by finds of Okros pottery (Glowacki 1996a:388, 391, 479–480; Lumbreras 1974:195), whereas on the coast it is indicated by Chakipampa pottery (Menzel 1964:68). These distinct ceramic styles possibly represented separate Huari contingents that were dispatched to different territories. In Epoch 2 (A.D. 700–800), during the posited height of Huari imperialism, state presence is inferred based on the presence of Viñaque pottery in the highlands, and Atarco and Pachacamac pottery of the south and central coasts, respectively. According to Menzel (1964: 36, 69), the introduction of these ceramic styles is associated with the establishment of new centers of Huari influence and power during the second wave of expansion.























Recent excavations in the Ayacucho valley at the site of Conchopata (Isbell and Cook 2002) sheds new light on the nature of Huari expansion. While the data generated by this project are still under study, it is possible to make a few preliminary observations at this point. First, our traditional thinking about the significance of the styles purportedly representing different waves of Huari expansion is undergoing revision because at least one of the coastal ceremonial wares (Pacheco Robles Moqo) has been found at Conchopata, which necessarily alters the timing and sequence of expansion events. Second, the sheer number and diversity of styles found at Conchopata has raised questions regarding where this pottery may have originated, its contemporaneity, and its relative chronological position. The Conchopata ceramic assemblage is being carefully analyzed to assess whether the wares present were locally produced or imported. This is particularly important given the widespread practice of making local copies of Huari heartland imperial assemblages (Isbell 1977:83, 120; Menzel 1964:67–68; see also Glowacki 1996b:11).

## Service Vessels

In the Huari heartland, the Robles Moqo and Conchopata styles include many of the oversized serving vessels that we associate with feasting activities (Cook 1994; Menzel 1964). Included in this category of over-sized vessels are urns (Figure 7.2, D7), tumblers (Figure 7.2, G17, and face-neck jars (Figure 7.2, A1). Other forms like the modeled llama effigy vessels and the double-chambered drinking vessels are also produced in this style and are similar to Inca *pacchas*, or ritual vessels through which liquids flowed in intricate patterns. The Huari form typically consists of a drinking cup connected to a human or animal effigy (Figure 7.2, I20, I21). Though somewhat uncommon, these are the most elaborate Huari ritual drinking vessels, with the liquids first circulating through the body of the effigy before actually being drunk from the cup.

In other styles we find a great variety of presumed drinking vessels including lyre-shaped cups (Figure 7.2, G14), regular straight sided cups (Figure 7.2, G13), tumblers (Figure 7.2, G16), and banded tumblers (Figure 7.2, G15) also referred to as *keros* (a term originally used for Inca drinking cups made of wood but now commonly applied to Middle Horizon vessels of the same shape) as well as the ubiquitous Huari bowl, which may have served both as a food and beverage container (Figure 7.2, E, F). Overall, drinking vessels, thought to comprise part of the basic Huari feasting assemblage, have been found mainly in open patio areas at the center of patio groups. The sites where these vessels are found may well have constituted principal Huari political centers. Such administrative hubs are where governors would presumably have conducted the affairs of state, including the sponsoring of feasts and the oversight of state rituals—activities that would have required the vessels comprising the Huari imperial assemblage (Cook 2000).

On the coast, where Huari influence on local ceramic traditions is clear, there are a few sites that stand out for the elaborateness of the pottery recovered. The oversized vessels of the Robles Moqo style that characterize these sites exhibit elaborate iconography depicting various cultigens, animals, anthropomorphic elements, and architecture. Robles Moqo style vessels were identified at Huari and Conchopata in the highlands, and at the coastal site of Pacheco in the Nasca valley where the most representative examples have been found (Menzel 1964:21). Just two drainages north at the site of Maymi in the Pisco valley, regular- and oversized vessels as well as effigy pots have been found with elaborately modeled and painted surfaces. While the baroque style at Maymi appears to have been developed independently by resident ceramic specialists, these potters were obviously well aware of highland Huari vessel shapes and iconography. Many of the urns, face neck jars, bowls, cups, *keros* and tumblers recovered at Maymi have explicit Huari analogues (Anders 1990; 1994).

<p>A</p> <p>Oversized and regular Face Neck Jars</p>	<p>1</p> 	<p>2</p> 	
<p>B</p> <p>Large Necked Jars with flat bases</p>	<p>3</p> 		
<p>C</p> <p>Small Necked Jars</p>	<p>4</p> 	<p>5</p> 	
<p>D</p> <p>Oversized Urns</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Small Oversized</p> 	<p>7</p> <p>Large Oversized</p> 	
<p>E</p> <p>Regular Straight sided bowls</p>	<p>8</p> 	<p>9</p> 	<p>10</p> 
<p>F</p> <p>Regular incurving/concave bowls</p>	<p>11</p> 	<p>12</p> 	
<p>G</p> <p>Cups</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Cup</p> 	<p>14</p> <p>Lyre Cup</p> 	<p>15</p> <p>Keros</p> 
<p>H</p> <p>Composite forms/effigies</p>	<p>18</p> 	<p>19</p> 	<p>16</p> <p>Tumblers</p> 
<p>I</p> <p>Composite forms w/cups</p>	<p>20</p> 	<p>21</p> 	<p>17</p> <p>Oversized</p> 
<p>J</p> <p>Miniatures</p>	<p>22</p> 		

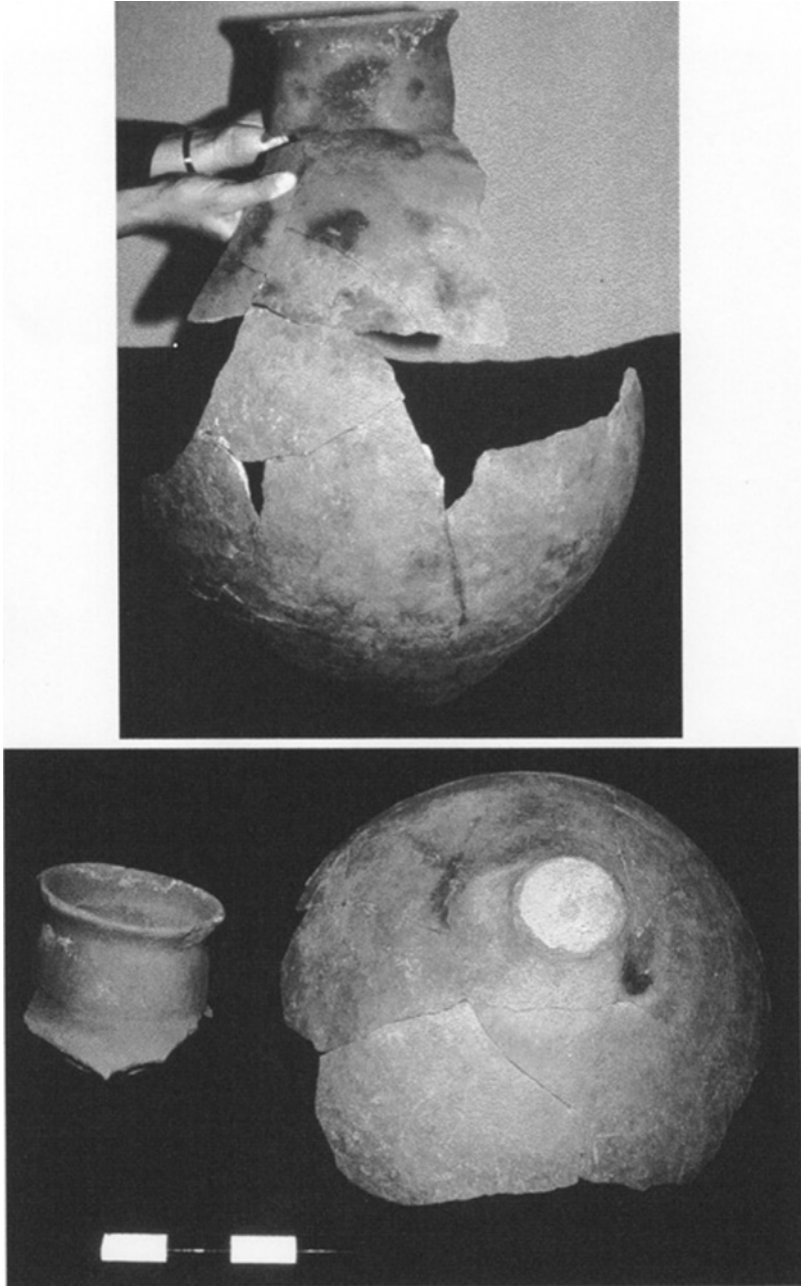
**Figure 7.2.** Chart of the imperial Huari assemblage indicating the principal food preparation and serving vessels associated with feasting behavior: A) oversized and regular face neck jars; B) and C) examples of tall and short necked serving jars; D) oversized service urns; E) and F) individual sized bowls for food and drink; G) drinking cups, keros, and tumblers; H) effigy containers; I) effigy cups; J) miniature bowls that mimic the shape and design layout of oversized urns (figure produced by Abelardo Sandoval).

## Cooking and Fermentation Vessels

In addition to the service ware for food and drink, there is evidence at Huari administrative centers of cooking vessels related to banquet preparations. At present, the best information we have on Huari food preparation vessels comes from Huari (Ayacucho) and Pikillacta, which was the administrative center for the southern sector of the Huari empire. Data from Pikillacta is important because the Cuzco basin, where the site is located, was probably one of the most extensively occupied Huari territories outside of Ayacucho. Christina Brewster-Wray's (1990:225–267) analysis of pottery from Moraduchayuq, an important sector of the Huari administrative center in Ayacucho, established a basic typology for vessel function. This morphological typology was used to interpret the vessel assemblage from Pikillacta. Excavations and subsequent ceramic analysis revealed that almost half of all vessels found at this site were jars, approximately half of which were wide-mouthed forms and the majority of which were undecorated (Glowacki 1996a:330, 770–773). These jars were classified as “regular”-sized and “large”-sized, and are similar to the “small” and “large” categories of jars identified at Moraduchayuq by Brewster-Wray (1990:257–258). Based on their morphological characteristics and ethnographic analogy, the unsooted, regular-sized wide-mouthed jars are believed to have been used primarily in the serving of beverages and the preparation of *chicha molle* (which does not require boiling), while the sooted ones are thought to have been employed in cooking (Glowacki 1996a:301–302). The large wide-mouthed jars were found to be very similar to jars used today in the southern highlands for the preparation of *chicha*, as documented by Chávez (1984–85: 163, 169, 200–201), and are thought to have served this same function. These jars, known as *rakis*, have rim diameters that range from 40–55 cm. This range of variation corresponds to that observed in the large wide-mouthed jars from Pikillacta (see also Sillar 2000).

Excavations at the site of Pikillacta support our interpretation of the function of the *raki*-like Huari jars. McEwan (1984:122, 127) identified an area believed to have served as a temporary kitchen during the site's construction. The plastered floor of this kitchen had numerous small round pits, one of which contained a large ceramic jar broken off at the shoulder; the neck and rim were found inside the vessel. Except for the neck, which was incurving and constricted, the vessel resembled the *raki* (Figure 7.3). As Craig Morris (1979:25) notes, *chicha* is still today commonly fermented in narrow-necked vessels that also serve as temporary service jars. As described by Chávez (1984–85:163, 169, 200–201), the method of fermenting and storing *chicha* using a pit to support the jar is still employed today; it not only counter-balances the outward pressure of the liquid when the vessel is filled, thus preventing the jar from cracking, but also keeps the beverage cool, since *chicha* is best served fresh.

While fragments of wide-mouthed jars from Pikillacta were excavated from hearths associated with patio galleries, the majority of these vessels were recovered



**Figure 7.3.** Chicha jar from Pikillacta recovered from postulated temporary kitchen associated with construction of site. (photograph courtesy of Gordon McEwan).

from the site's principal trash midden. Fragments of pottery from the patio galleries have been matched to ones from the same vessels found in the trash midden, indicating that trash was likely removed from these areas and transported to the exterior of the site where it was discarded. These data suggest that food preparation for feasts was carried out in the patio chambers with the remains subsequently discarded elsewhere. The high percentage of similar jar forms at other Huari sites may point to a similar pattern of use.

### **Huari Feasting Equipment**

While there were probably many different types of feasts organized by the Huari elite that would have required different sets of vessels, a core feasting assemblage common to both the heartland and the provinces has been identified, which includes the following: (1) vessels used in beverage preparation, particularly large wide-mouthed jars (Figure 7.2, B); (2) vessels for beverage consumption, namely cups, tumblers, and *keros* (Figure 7.2, G); (3) vessels for beverage service, such as elaborately decorated, large face neck jars and urns (Figure 7.2, A, D); (4) vessels for the consumption of food and possibly also drink, particularly single serving size bowls (Figure 7.2, E, F); (5) vessels for food service, such as large bowls (Figure 7.2, E10).

These vessel forms, to some extent, transcend ceramic style, since different regions employed both Huari and local ceramic styles to different degrees. As earlier stated, at key administrative nodes, particular styles and forms were probably essential. For example, at Pikillacta, Chakipampa pottery represents approximately eight percent of the collection, suggesting that the Huari elite must have found it necessary for certain administrative events carried out there. Instrumental neutron activation analysis (INAA) of Huari pottery from the site indicates that despite the relatively small quantity of Chakipampa pottery recovered from Pikillacta, at least several specimens were manufactured in the Ayacucho region and exported to this southern provincial center (Glowacki 1996b:7). In contrast, INAA indicates that Okros pottery, the predominant Pikillacta ceramic style that represents almost 60 percent of the collection, was locally produced (Glowacki 1996b; Montoya et al. 2001). As will be discussed below, Okros vessels, particularly bowls, seem to have had a separate and distinct function from Chakipampa vessels.

### **INCA FEASTING PRACTICES**

As indicated earlier, various scholars have relied on the Inca model to help interpret Huari administrative practices. Our knowledge of imperial Inca practices is derived both from archaeological excavations and the accounts of early colonial

chroniclers. Based on this information, our understanding of Inca administrative feasting can be summarized as follows. The Inca nobility sponsored feasts in order to fulfill their obligations of reciprocity to *corvée* laborers as well as other administrative elite and dignitaries for services rendered the state. Inca state sponsored feasting was a form of asymmetrical reciprocity, which occurred between someone of considerable power and wealth (in this case, representatives of the Inca state), and another of lower social status and economic means (such as the citizenry and lower ranking administrators) (Rostworowski 1977:240–244). As Inca tribute was mostly paid in the form of labor, Inca administrators relied heavily on collective gatherings and on occasions when tribute in the form of goods was collected. The requirements of reciprocity dictated that large feasts be held at different times of the year in various parts of the empire to ensure cooperation and goodwill at all levels. Inca feasting, thus, functioned to maintain the facade of reciprocity and obligate labor tribute in order to ensure the continued operation of the state.

Inca state sponsored feasts were held in open plazas, while food preparation was carried out in the narrow chambers that flanked them (Garcilaso de la Vega 1987 [1609]:185; Molina 1943 [1573]:35–37; Morris and Thompson 1985:59, 79, 90). The standard meal for the denizens of the Inca state likely consisted of soup or stew that was eaten from semi-deep plates and small cooking pots (Cobo 1890–1895 [1653], Book 14, Chapter 5). This type of food may have been served to the laborers attending state sponsored feasts but it probably was not the sort of cuisine principally partaken of by the elite. Solid foods, such as tubers, fruits, and roasted meat may likewise have been served during feasts but they would not necessarily have required receptacles for their consumption (see Bray, this volume, on Inca haute cuisine).

During Inca state feasts, eating was generally followed by the heavy consumption of alcohol (Cummins 1988:143; Garcilaso de la Vega 1987 [1609]:320, 363). Maize and other products of tribute were used for the provisioning of state feasts. Corn beer or *chicha* was brewed in the flanking chambers by women known as *acllas* as part of their labor tribute. *Chicha*, which could also be made from tubers, grains, berries or fruit, is a fermented beverage with a long history of ceremonial use in the Andes (Hastorf 1991; Hastorf and Johannessen 1993; Morris 1979; Moore 1989; Rowe 1946). In the case of the Inca, imperial service wares were employed in the ritual consumption of *chicha*. Large jars known as *aríbalos* were used to serve *chicha* while tall cups called *keros* were the choice drinking receptacles. Commoners drank from ceramic *keros*, while the elite utilized carved wooden, silver, or gold ones (Rowe 1946:221). We inevitably rely upon the Inca example for a fuller picture of Andean feasting behavior in imperial contexts, yet it is also important to look at the Huari phenomenon on its own terms. This requires a contextual consideration of the archaeological remains associated with Huari feasting activities.



## HUARI IMPERIAL ARCHITECTURE

We begin this discussion with a brief description of Huari imperial architectural units that may have served as the focus of feasting activities. In a series of ground-breaking papers on Huari administrative structure, Isbell (1986; 1987: 170–171; also Isbell et al. 1991:51, 1989) proposed that the presence of large open spaces called “patios,” which were surrounded on all four sides by one or more narrow galleries with benches, was a hallmark of Huari state expansion in the highlands. These structures, which formed the central administrative sector of the Huari site known as Moraduchayuq, appear to have been later incorporated into provincial sites for the purposes of administration. This room type had been earlier recognized and posited as an area for ceremonial activity (Rowe 1963:14) but its standardized form and repetition in groups only came fully to light during excavations at the capital city of Huari in the late 1970s. The Huari site of Pikillacta in the south highlands near Cuzco serves as the best example of the replication of patio groups in the provinces (McEwan 1984, 1991), though other Huari sites also include this type of architectural element (Anders 1986, 1989; Glowacki 1998; Isbell 1977; Schreiber 1978; Topic and Topic 1984; Williams 2001:71).

### Architectural Signatures of Huari Feasting in the Heartland

We use the concept of state sponsored feasts to interpret the assemblages of the Huari elite. These assemblages typically include large quantities of serving vessels, namely bowls of adult single serving size as well as significant numbers of oversized vessels; drinking vessels, namely tumblers and shorter-walled vessels; and substantial quantities of both necked and neckless jars for the preparation, service, and storage of beverages (Brewster-Wray 1990; Isbell and Cook 1987; Moore 1989; Schreiber 1992). The pattern of large-scale food consumption is exemplified at the Huari heartland administrative compound of Moraduchayuq and at the nearby site of Conchopata. The excavations conducted at both Ayacucho sites represent the clearest patterns of dining and serving wares known in patio groups in or around the Huari capital.

The Moraduchayuq sector was built during Middle Horizon Epoch 1B, the period of the first wave of Huari expansion, and continued in use through Epoch 2, during the height and subsequent decline of Huari. A study of the function of the patio groups at Huari (Brewster-Wray 1990) provides a Middle Horizon model for examining the two new patio group complexes recently identified at Conchopata in the Ayacucho Valley. This is the first time an intra-valley comparison can be made between two cities in the Huari heartland as all other patio group complexes are found in the provinces.

Based on an architectural analysis of the Moraduchayuq structures, several attributes have been identified that appear to characterize buildings dedicated primarily to state sponsored feasting activities. These include the presence of large open unroofed patios for receiving guests and a high percentage of open patio to roofed gallery space (Brewster Wray 1990:170). Brewster-Wray (1990) presents a brief but important comparison of the size of Inca plazas and Huari patio groups. At Huánuco Pampa, an Inca provincial site, there are two large plazas (one measuring 9350 sq m and the other 2000 sq m) that represent 78 percent and 61 percent, respectively, of each enclosure. At Jargampata, a Huari site in the San Miguel valley just 25 kilometers east of Ayacucho excavated by Isbell in the mid-1970s, open patio and roofed gallery compound sizes are much smaller (c. 400 m<sup>2</sup>) than at Huari but still contain 75 percent open patio space as opposed to 25 percent roofed gallery space (Brewster-Wray 1990:170). When Isbell (1977) suggested that the patio group at Jargampata represented a feasting locality, his interpretation was based on the high percentage of individual serving vessels (e.g., bowls and cups) recovered there since no other comparable Huari architecture was yet known.

In the late 1970s, Brewster-Wray excavated several two and three-story patio groups within the Moraduchayuq sector of Huari that were smaller (i.e., 42 to 101 sq m in size) than those found at Jargampata and Huánuco Pampa. The percentage of open space in Moraduchayuq patio groups was calculated as 31 percent if the galleries were two stories high, and 27 percent if they were three stories high. Either way, the patio groups in the Moraduchayoq sector of the capital have higher percentages of roofed to open space in comparison to later examples of Inca state feasting contexts. The site of Huari includes numerous patio and gallery units, many of which are larger than those analyzed by Brewster-Wray, though they await detailed mapping and excavation. Recognizing that Huari patio groups vary in size, we nonetheless believe that the differences between them relate to scale rather than function.

Moraduchayuq is interpreted by Brewster-Wray (1990:393–395) as having been a residential sector for administrative personnel where the ceremonial feasting of laborers and dignitaries was conducted. Based on the archaeological evidence from the site and inferences gleaned from archaeological and documentary records of Inca state administrative practices, Brewster-Wray inferred that the patios were the focus of feasting activities while the side chambers were reserved for food preparation and storage. This interpretation was based on the high percentages of serving vessels recovered from the patio areas. Approximately 70 percent of the ceramic assemblage from these areas consisted of bowls and cups, an amount significantly greater than normally associated with ordinary domestic household activity. Of the serving equipment recovered from the patios, 80 percent of the items were identified as bowls, while cups made up the remainder. Brewster-Wray

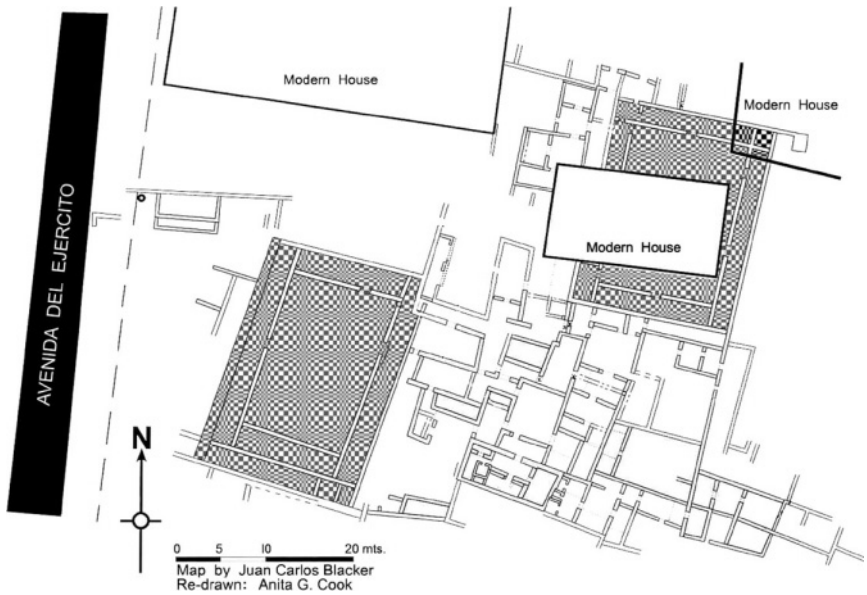
concluded that the patio groups did not function exclusively as areas for staging state sponsored feasting but rather represented the residences of Huari administrators who were engaged in state level hospitality in the form of feasts, though on a different scale in comparison to the Inca.

These early studies suggest important patterns in Middle Horizon feasting as a form of administrative hospitality. Differences in patio size and ceramic assemblages suggest two different types of feasting activities. Basically, it appears that the larger patios were the loci of state sponsored feasting while the smaller ones were associated with elite residences where smaller scale festivities took place as well as various other daily activities. This distinction holds important implications for the recently excavated patio groups at Conchopata.

From 1998 to the present, excavations at Conchopata have revealed a completely new and unparalleled picture of the nature of Huari heartland settlements (Cook and Benco 2002; Isbell and Cook 2002). Conchopata was originally thought to have been a Middle Horizon site dedicated primarily to ceramic production that was abandoned by A.D. 800. Our current understanding based on recent work is that Conchopata residents comprised a cross-section of the Huari urban population and included elites of different rank, artisans, and religious specialists, all of whom were likely involved in the commissioning and production of the highly decorated, oversized urns and jars. At Conchopata, it is becoming clear that major politico-religious ceremonies were staged in circular and D-shaped temples, while feasting and related economic activities having to do with state administration took place at patio group complexes. Recent excavations at this site also make it clear that, next to Huari, Conchopata was the second most important site in the Ayacucho valley during the Middle Horizon.

Two patio groups have been identified at Conchopata (Figure 7.4). These are Structures 98 and 112, the former located just ten meters to the northeast of the latter. The total area encompassed by Structure 112 is 532 sq m. The associated open patio occupies 41 percent of the total space, while the covered gallery accounts for 59 percent of the building. In contrast, Structure 98 has a total of 450 sq m, 61 percent of which consists of open area while 39 percent represents covered galleries. Of these two units, Structure 98, although smaller in size, has a large patio that more closely corresponds to the proportional dimensions expected of a feasting hall.

The materials recovered from the two patio groups indicate that the architectural unit 112 was built first, yielding ceramics belonging to the early Middle Horizon (MH1B) as well as a large utilitarian urn that was likely used to store water (Figure 7.5). Structure 98 produced a painted oversized serving urn that has an associated radiocarbon date of A.D. 780+/-60 (Isbell and Cook 2002) and pertains to later times (Figure 7.6).

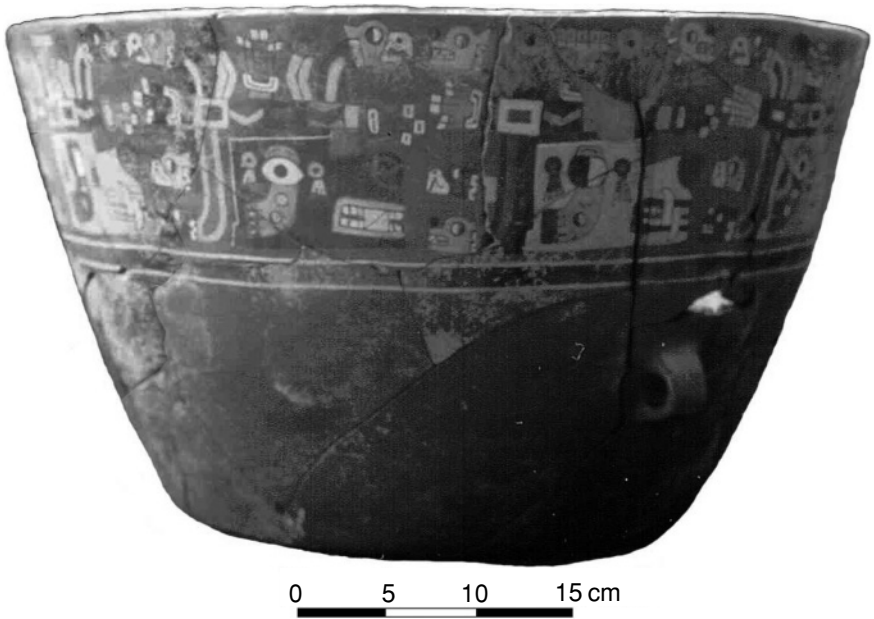


**Figure 7.4.** Map of the north central part of Conchopata with patio and gallery Structure 112 to the west and Structure 98 to the east (drawn by Juan Carlos Blacker).

A preliminary analysis of the ceramic assemblage from the patio area of Structure 112 yielded a total of 343 classifiable vessel forms. Of the forms in this assemblage, 65 percent represent serving vessels, including bowls (49%), cups (7%), and oversized bowls and plates (9%); 33 percent represent cooking, storage, transport, and brewing equipment; and the remaining 2% comprise miniature vessels. Structure 98 had 59 identifiable pots and evidences an even more dramatic asymmetry in terms of functional categories. In this assemblage, 75 percent of vessel forms were serving related, including regular bowls (66%) and cups (8.5%); 23.5 percent represented cooking, storage, transport, and food preparation equipment (of which 8.5 percent were plates); and the remaining 2% again consisted of miniature vessels. The overall ceramic distributions at Conchopata require further study but the ceramic assemblages associated with the two patio groups support our interpretation that these spaces were used for supra-household feasting activities. Both structures also produced small quantities of ceramic tools as well, the locations of which suggest that these spaces may have been used for production activities between feasting events. We can also posit that the oversized and undecorated urn found next to the doorway in Structure 112 may also have been related to either food preparation or the interim activities. Carbonized maize was recovered



**Figure 7.5.** Conchopata Structure 112 with oversized plain urn found in situ in patio area. (photograph courtesy of William Isbell).



**Figure 7.6.** Oversized decorated urn from patio of Conchopata Structure 98.  
(photograph by Anita Cook).

from soil samples taken in the southeast gallery of Structure 112, suggesting that the storage and processing of maize, perhaps for the preparation of *chicha* beer, was a likely activity at some point in the history of the building as well.

### **Huari Feasting in the Provinces**

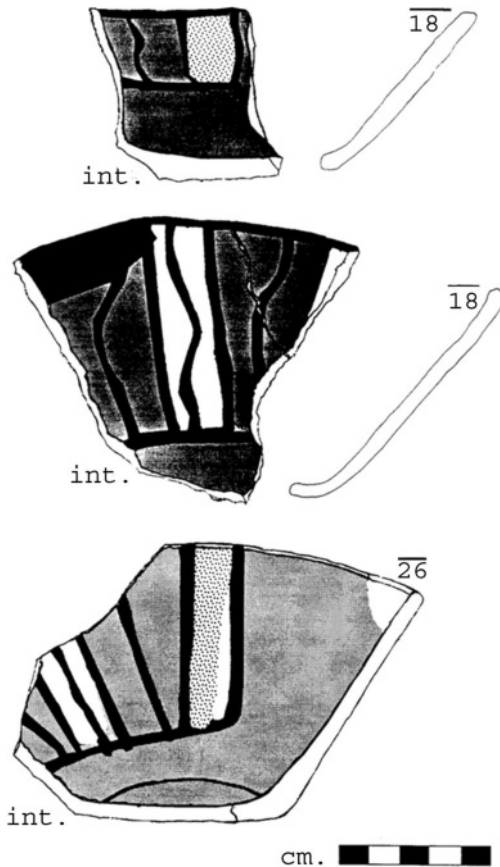
This portion of our discussion focuses on the ceramic assemblages found at four highland Huari sites that offer evidence similar to that found at Moraduchayuy for ceremonial feasting activity. Despite differences in the ceramic styles from each site, which is the likely result of underlying local influences and political change through time, the outlines of a common functional assemblage are discernible. Together, the vessels comprising these assemblages are indicative of supra-household feasting.

Just beyond the limits of the capital city of Huari are two other important Huari architectural complexes. The first of these is Jargampata, a site located 20 kilometers east, which comprises a conglomerate of rooms built up in an additive fashion and an irregular rectangular compound containing a large patio group

(Isbell 1977:17, 33, 35). Investigations carried out at the site indicate that it was constructed early in Middle Horizon Epoch 2 during the second wave of Huari expansion. According to Isbell (1988:183–184), Jargampata was occupied by an administrative elite who sponsored ceremonies that entailed feasting. This interpretation was based on the types and quantities of pottery associated with the site's single patio structure. High frequencies of serving vessels (more than 50 percent of the assemblage) comprised primarily of bowls together with smaller number of cups, and low frequencies of cooking vessels (less than one-third of the assemblage) consisting of both flared neck and neckless jars, were recovered from the patio, while evidence for food preparation was found in the side chambers. These vessel frequencies contrast with those recorded for ceramic refuse from the residential areas of the site where serving vessels ranged from 40 to 45 percent and cooking vessels ranged from 25 to 30 percent of the assemblage (Isbell 1987:183–184). While the percentage differences are slight, they were the first quantitative indicator of Huari state feasting at a provincial site, and have since been supplemented by other more convincing data sets.

Fifteen kilometers northwest of Huari is the Middle Horizon site of Azángaro. This is a large rectangular architectural enclosure divided into three equally-sized sectors (Anders 1991:168–171). It was occupied from Middle Horizon Epoch 2 through the period of Huari state decline (Anders 1986:633–634). The south sector of the site contains two areas of irregular architecture, one of which is made up of multiple clusters of rooms that each share a single patio (Anders 1991:169–171, Figures 3, 13, 15). Based on the high percentages of serving vessels in this sector, Anders concluded that it was associated with ceremonial eating and drinking of an administrative nature (1986:270, 1991:190–192). She found that serving vessels, specifically bowls and cups, represented approximately 68 percent of the assemblage as compared to cooking, brewing, storing, and transport vessels, which represented 30 percent of the assemblage. Overall, serving bowls comprise more than 50 percent of the site's assemblage, while cups represent less than five percent (Anders 1991:189, Table 6).

Pikillacta is the largest and earliest Huari provincial complex in the Andes. Excavations at the site (McEwan 1984, 1991) have produced similar evidence for feasting activity as seen at the other Middle Horizon sites described above. The pottery from Pikillacta was analyzed by Glowacki (1996a). In the ceramic study, she found a high percentage of serving vessels among those that could be confidently classified (1 percent cups and 31 percent bowls) associated with patio groups, and evidence of food preparation in the flanking chambers. Of the patio groups that generated pottery ( $n = 8$ ), five contained from 70 to 90 percent serving vessels consisting primarily of single-serving sized bowls (Figure 7.7). Overall, only a handful of tumblers and short cups were identified and it is interesting to note that less than one percent of the site's entire pottery collection consisted of conventional drinking vessels (see Glowacki 1996a:762).



**Figure 7.7.** Pikillacta bowls recovered from both the Sector 2 patio groups and the site's principal trash midden. (drawing by Mary Glowacki).

The Huari site of Huaro, located 17 km southeast of Pikillacta, has likewise produced data that support the idea of supra-household feasting in association with patio group architecture. Preliminary excavations by Julinho Zapata and Mary Glowacki (Glowacki 1998) identified a large concentration of ceramic remains from the one known area of the site with patio group architecture. A high proportion of the materials recovered, estimated at between 80 and 90 percent, were serving vessels, i.e., single-serving sized bowls and cups. In addition, an elaborately decorated oversized serving jar of the Conchopata tradition was recovered in association with these bowls and cups (Figure 7.8), while in nearby chambers evidence for food preparation and storage was found including fire hearths and utilitarian vessels such as undecorated wide-mouthed jars. In contrast to Pikillacta,





**Figure 7.8.** Huaro oversized face neck jar (height 1.5 m) recovered from the excavated patio group at the administrative complex of Qoripata at Huaro. (photograph by Mary Glowacki).

Huaro produced a higher percentage of cups (Figure 7.9), but these were still far fewer in number than the single-serving sized bowls recovered there. These and other data suggest that this sector of Huaro may have functioned in an administrative capacity.

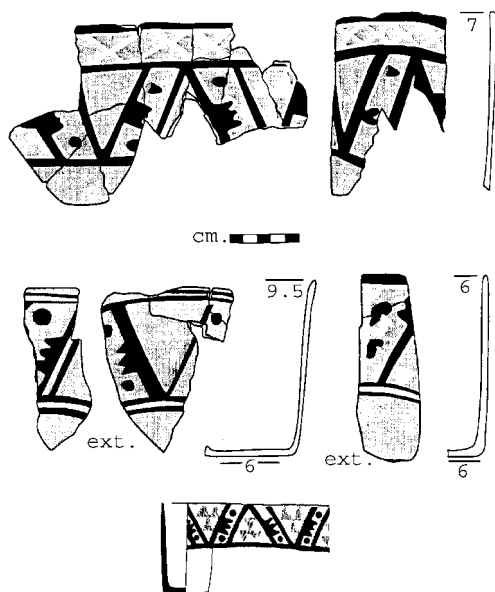


**Figure 7.9.** Huaro drinking cups recovered from the excavated patio group at the administrative complex of Qoripata found in association with the oversized face neck jar in Figure 7.8. (photograph by Mary Glowacki).

## DISCUSSION

As initially stated, the primary goal of this paper was to outline the nature of Huari state feasting practices in light of the rapidly growing body of Huari archaeological data. We have found that Huari feasting patterns appear to have been quite similar to those described for the Inca in some respects, and we posit that state-sponsored hospitality and other aspects of Huari statecraft laid the groundwork for the later rise of the Inca state.

It is easy to imagine, for example, how Huari oversized urns and jars evolved into the Inca *aríbalos*. Some *aríbalos* were so large that they could not be lifted but rather were simply tilted on their conical bases in order to pour. As noted, large conical-based *chicha* jars have also been recovered at Huari archaeological sites, further linking Huari and Inca oversized serving vessels. Bray and Cook (1997) have argued that the *aríbalo* form is historically derived from the Huari face neck jar, which is one of the hallmarks of the Middle Horizon assemblage. The similarities between Huari tumblers, lyre cups and ceramic *keros* and Inca *keros* offer additional evidence of historical continuities with regard to Andean



(after Chavez 1985)

**Figure 7.10.** Huaro and Pikillacta tumblers showing repetitive designs. Vessels in upper half of figure were recovered from the excavated patio group in Qoripata; those in lower half are from the site's main trash midden. The small roll out drawing (after Chávez 1985) shows the same vessel design on a tumbler from Pomacanchi in the Department of Cuzco; this object was found in association with a Wari burial containing a variety of other grave goods.

feasting practices and equipment. These cup forms were the ultimate elite toasting vessel and are typically decorated with designs that repeat around the entire vessel (Figure 7.10) (Cummins 1985:3; Glowacki 1996a:289). Clearly, the political message behind the use of these vessels and their decorative imagery had some common basis.

While there are many similarities that can be observed between Huari and Inca imperial feasting equipment, our comparative analysis also reveals discernible differences. For example, the percentages of different Huari vessel types in presumed feasting assemblages differ from what is found for the Inca. There simply are not enough conventional Huari drinking vessels from the feasting contexts discussed to consider them the sole Huari drinking vessels. Did the Huari employ other types of vessels for drinking, or was drinking perhaps less emphasized in Middle Horizon statecraft?

If administrative feasting practices were comparable between the Huari and the Inca, perhaps comparable feasting etiquette, specifically that of sequential

eating and drinking, also applied. If this is true, could single serving size bowls have been employed by Huari elite to serve both food and drink to their laborers? Bowls are the perfect form for accommodating both liquids and solids. If those drinking were seated or squatting, as in traditional Andean ceremonial fashion, bowls could be rested in the lap or on the knees between sips. Because of their shape, they would have been grasped by both hands and only half filled in order to be lifted to the mouth without spillage.

Huari bowls tend to be of fair to average quality as compared to Huari drinking vessels, which tend to be of finer quality. They also show simpler and more repetitive designs in comparison to drinking vessels, which typically display more complex imagery. This suggests that bowls were made in mass quantity for large numbers of people, who would not expect to be served on the “good” state china, nor to be distinguished from one another by unique drinking vessels as would be the case with the elite. Moreover, it is more economical to supply one vessel versus two to large numbers of people, making the bowl an efficient feasting vessel, especially when factoring in a high breakage rate, if ceremonies were to become raucous or ritual smashing of vessels were to occur.

Among the Wanka of the Mantaro valley in the central highlands, bowls appear to have been used both as eating and drinking vessels from the Late Intermediate Period through early colonial times (Costin 1986:234). This indicates that the use of a single vessel for eating and drinking was known to early complex societies of the precolumbian Andes, and suggests that the Huari could have engaged in a similar practice.

In contrast to the pattern of a high bowl to cup ratio, which may be indicative of administrator-laborer feasting, a high ratio of tumblers and short cups to bowls, may signal more elite-oriented feasting as potentially illustrated at Cerro Baúl, a Huari provincial site located in the Moquegua valley of southern Perú. Here, large numbers of tumblers, cups, and urns were recovered in the context of patio group architecture. This find has been interpreted by Feldman (1989) as a single feasting episode of reciprocal toasts between elites. Recent work in the Ayacucho Valley, particularly at the site of Conchopata, as well as at Cerro Baúl, indicates that drinking cups of various sizes and shapes (e.g., lyre cups, tumblers, and ceramic *keros*) were employed in patio activities. Differences in the quantity and nature of Huari imperial wares at distinct Huari sites suggests that the elite residents held higher rank and greater responsibility vis-à-vis the local population.

Cups occur in the archaeological record in lower frequencies but they are often found in pairs in excavated contexts. Some of the most elaborate forms involve composite effigy vessels that are usually double chambered with a human or anthropomorphic figure attached. Painted ceramic effigy figures (Cook 1996) with four cornered hats and elite tunics provide an example of a special vessel form potentially involved in toasting behaviors (Figure 7.2, I20). The figures depicted

often grasp a cup with both hands in a toasting gesture, as seen in Figure 7.2, I21. In modern feasting contexts in the Andes, the host of the event typically toasts each participant in turn, drinking from one vessel while simultaneously offering a second to the guest. This practice is noted in early colonial accounts and is likely to have considerable antiquity. Guaman Poma, for instance, illustrates Cuci Uanan Chire-Inga, son of Lloque Yupanqui, holding one *keru* to his mouth and lifting his other hand with a second *keru* to toast the sun (Guaman Poma de Ayala 1956: [1613]:109). If such toasting protocol was commonplace at state feasts, the lower number of elite drinking cups is more easily explained.

Lastly, our analysis reveals that our interpretations of Huari feasting must ultimately rest on the Huari archaeological data. In compiling the data for this study, we were surprised to discover that in many respects, we know much more from an archaeological standpoint about Huari state feasting than we do about the Inca. While the chronicles provide us with fascinating descriptions of Inca ceremonialism, there is, in fact, little detailed information about Inca feasting practices. Moreover, a survey of the literature indicates that few Inca archaeologists have tackled the issue of imperial feasting through actual excavation. For example, whereas a number of Huari patio groups have been excavated, measured, and compared in an attempt to assess Huari feasting practices in administrative contexts, the same kind of analyses have not been undertaken at Inca administrative sites. We know that Huari patio groups come in an array of different sizes and arrangements, and that they were sometimes embedded within large rectangular enclosures as seen at the provincial sites of Azángaro and Pikillacta. Contextual information suggests that such enclosures also functioned as work and temporary storage space at different times of the year. The fact that they seem to have functioned as feasting halls at other times suggests the flexible use of space. It is unclear whether the same held true for the Inca.

In examining the evidence for Huari state feasting, it is clear that food and drink-related activities were fundamental to imperial expansion in the Middle Horizon. Serving vessels found in association with patio structures suggest that Huari administrative feasting in the provinces was modeled after activities at Moraduchayuq and Conchopata and that it was already an established pattern in the heartland that was being applied in the hinterland. Since it was successful at home, it appears to have been replicated in the provinces during the subsequent phases of Huari expansion. The appearance of terracing and other extensive agriculture works in the provinces suggests that corn, and probably *chicha*, was integral to Huari administration. We would argue that feasting was used to establish footholds in provincial areas and suggest that the asymmetrical reciprocity enacted within the context of ceremonial eating and drinking was an essential ingredient in laying the foundations for the construction and management of the provincial Huari centers.

## CONCLUSIONS

We still have much to learn about how feasts figured in the commensal politics of state-level societies that eventually reach imperial proportions. In this paper, we explored the architectural and ceramic evidence from the Peruvian Middle Horizon to gain some insight. The Huari evidence suggests an emphasis on the type of lavish hospitality associated with royal courts and the pomp and ceremony of kings and queens. This type of unbalanced reciprocity is what Dietler (2001:82–83) includes under the rubric of “patron-role feasts,” in which hospitality is used to legitimize the asymmetry that characterizes institutionalized power relations. But the Huari example also includes aspects of Hayden’s notion of “tribute feasts” (2001:58), which are supposedly more common in the context of chiefdoms and early states. Such events are characterized by very large gatherings in which huge amounts of food are consumed. Rituals honoring deities or ancestors are part of these festivities. The concept of the Andean state-sponsored feast that we envision here has state administrators and elites sharing some of the accumulated state surpluses while insuring that plenty remains for themselves. In the Andes, it seems that feasting may be less about wealth redistribution in the classic (see Polanyi 1957; also Sahlins 1972) sense of the term and more about the rituals of regeneration and succession that would include some of the characteristics of tribute feasts.

In the Huari case, it is easy to discern the large quantities of enormous urns and jars made by skilled artisans and often painted with extraordinary care. These lavish vessels boast control over various types of labor and knowledge. Differential access to wealth is conveyed through the ability to commission large-scale production of imperial feasting wares and through access to the resources required to provide the food and alcoholic beverages that filled these oversized containers. The presence of large and beautiful non-portable vessels make economic wealth visible, while the large amounts of food and drink required to fill these containers leave little doubt about access to agricultural and pastoral resources. The esoteric subject matters portrayed in the iconography of these vessels also makes clear that the commissioners and/or producers of this category of material culture were privy to knowledge of a restricted nature.

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## NOTE

1 Huari's total archaeological zone covers approximately 15 square kilometers.

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## Chapter 8

# *Feasting at Home*

## Community and House Solidarity among the Maya of Southeastern Mesoamerica

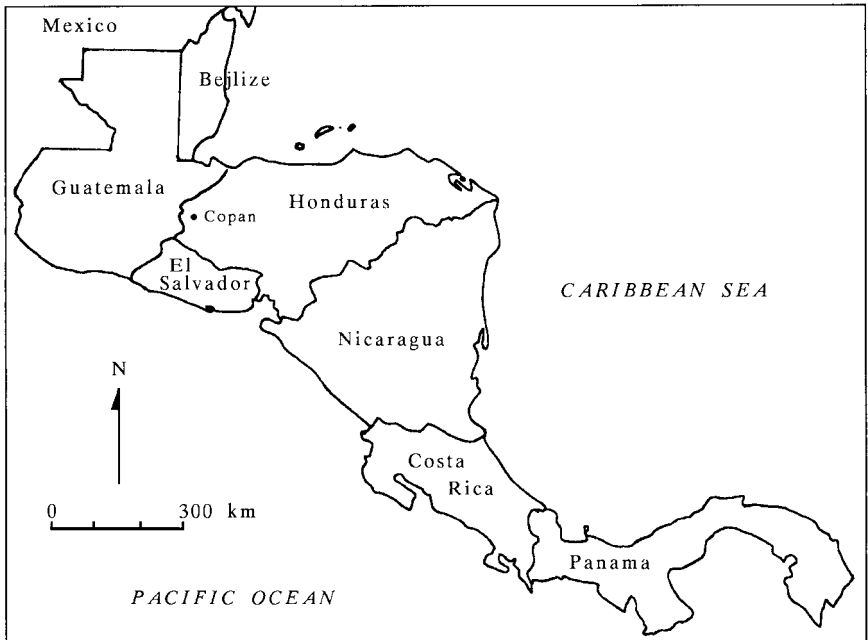
JULIA A. HENDON

While there is a considerable amount of information available relating to feasting in small-scale societies lacking permanent institutions of political authority (e.g., Kahn 1986; Kan 1989; Young 1971), and on how feasting could lead to the development of these institutions (Clark and Blake 1994; Hayden 1996), relatively few studies have focused on the role of feasting in complex societies whose members potentially had more varied options for signaling social status and prestige. In this paper, I examine archaeological evidence from the Late to Terminal Classic period Maya settlement in the Copan valley, Honduras (Figure 8.1) to determine how feasting may have figured in the politics of complex societies in Mesoamerica. I begin with a discussion of what is known of Mesoamerican feasting practices based on the ethnohistoric documentation, including the sixteenth-century writings on the Maya of Diego de Landa, Bishop of Yucatan (Tozzer 1941; see Restall and Chuchiak 2002), and the sixteenth-century compilation of information on Aztec culture known as the *Florentine Codex* (Sahagún 1953–1982). I then move to a consideration of the ceramic and architectural data recovered from several elite patio groups in the Copan valley. After assessing vessel functions and reviewing the Copan assemblage's functional groupings, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the spatial distribution of these groupings in the elite compounds as they

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**Figure 8.1.** Map of Central America showing the location of Copan.

relate to feasting. The analysis highlights the importance of agency, practice, and the symbolic construction of value in deciphering the connections between power, social status, and feasting activity in the context of a Maya kingdom.

## ON THE NATURE AND ROLE OF FEASTING

The repetitive and cyclical nature of feasting often appears to be structured in relation to an ordered socio-temporal framework, such as a religious calendar or the human life-cycle. But the true impetus behind much of its cyclicity is the reciprocal nature of the social relations created and reinforced through these events – one cannot be just a guest but must also be a host at some later time. Probably the best known cycles involving feasts in Mesoamerica are the elaborate state-sponsored festivals tied to the Mesoamerican calendars and dedicated to particular deities (see Durán 1971; Tozzer 1941; Sahagún 1953–1982, Book 2). But important events in the lives of people at all levels of society, such as birth, baptism, ear-piercing, marriage, pregnancy, death, and other life-stages, also required feasts to mark the occasion.<sup>1</sup>

Landa offers some important, if slightly confusing, information on the social rules governing hospitality among the Maya. He appears to make a clear distinction between feasts sponsored by high status individuals and those that involved kinfolk (by implication, lower status families) celebrating life-cycle events. He writes that aristocratic feasting protocol mandates that guests reciprocate by hosting a comparable event later but that family-sponsored feasts are not subject to the same rules. Yet the reason he gives for many of the elite-sponsored feasts is the celebration of life-cycle events. He notes that family events “do not oblige the guests to give a feast in return, except that if a hundred persons have invited an Indian to a feast, he also invites them all when he gives a banquet or marries his children” (Tozzer 1941:92). Landa further notes that “they have strong friendships and they remember for a long time these invitations although they are far apart” (Tozzer 1941:92).

It seems that, rather than recording a clear-cut distinction between “elite” and “family” feasts, Landa is trying to capture two aspects of Maya, and more broadly, Mesoamerican, mutual knowledge: first, that the reciprocal nature of hospitality was recognized throughout society,<sup>2</sup> and second, that high ranking families manipulated this social fact for purposes of constructing social distinctions in status and identity (see Pohl and Pohl [1994] for a different interpretation). Thus, for people invited by a (lower-status) family to celebrate a life-cycle event, the invitation was perceived by guests and hosts as creating an aspiration but not an obligation to reciprocate when one’s own family had an appropriate event to celebrate. However, such aspirations, if widespread and reinforced through socialization, are voluntary only on the surface. As in the case of the gift, seeming voluntary reciprocity is really obligatory (Mauss 1990). The obligation to reciprocate becomes more overt in the model of appropriate aristocratic behavior because those of high status are supposed to incarnate more fully the attributes of an ideal and morally upright person (see Kan 1989; Sahagún 1953–1982, Book 6). So strongly was this duty felt by high ranking people in Maya society that “if one of the guests should die, his household or his relations were obliged to repay the invitation” (Tozzer 1941:92).

Feasts are about the creation and maintenance of networks of social relations among individuals and groups (Kan 1989). Through the provision of food and drink, hosts repay old social debts and create new ones. Societies in which feasting is important may use such events to reinforce social solidarity but they are just as likely to use it to shame and out do their rivals, as in the case of “fighting with food” or “food-giving-to-shame” among the Goodenough Islanders (Young 1971:207). New Aztec rulers, as part of their installation, invited rulers of both allied and enemy polities to an elaborate feast (Sahagún 1953–1982, Book 8:65–65). Playing host to enemies or rivals can be a way to show one’s superiority but it always carries with it the possibility of social disaster or political betrayal.<sup>3</sup> Feasts were times when there was supposed to be enough food for all (Roys 1967:137). Guests could shame their hosts by disdaining their hospitality or finding it wanting in some way.

“But if some were not well satisfied, nor happy, nor content, with the chocolate, the food, the flowers, and the tobacco . . . they . . . ran away angry. . . . Thus, oppressed and troubled, they went to seat themselves . . . in their [own] houses” and it was up to the host to try and make amends and entice the aggrieved guests back to his house (Sahagún 1953–1982, Book 4:118).

Feasts are also a vehicle for exchange (Mauss 1990; Thomas 1991). Hosts and guests give each other material goods, often in large quantities. The food and other items given away may far surpass the amounts of food consumed at the event. As part of their inaugural feast, Aztec rulers provided rich gifts of clothing and weapons, as well as food and drink, to all their guests, including their enemies (Sahagún 1953–1982, Book 4:118; see also Book 2:passim). Maya nobles “at the end of the repast, were accustomed to give a *manta* to each [guest] to wear, and a little stand and vessel, as beautiful as possible” (Tozzer 1941:92). Here Landa’s distinction between the feasting practices of elites and those of lower status may be most relevant in that it suggests a difference in the quantity and quality of things given away. However, if we accept that Mesoamerican peoples at all levels of society shared an ethic of reciprocity and hospitality, then Mauss’s ideas on the social obligation of the gift would suggest that even guests at “family” events would not go home empty-handed.

Feasting requires people to commit significant resources, labor, and time towards the event, often well in advance. Landa simply tells us that “often they spend on one banquet what they have earned by trading and bargaining many days” (Tozzer 1941:92). For a marriage feast, “the ashes were prepared, ground cacao was prepared, flowers were secured, smoking tubes were purchased, tubes of tobacco were prepared, sauce bowls and pottery cups and baskets were purchased” (Sahagún 1953–1982, Book 6:129). Such requirements create a “behind the scenes” aspect to feasts since not all of those expending time, effort, and resources are going to be as visible during the event itself or gain equal amounts of credit. This may affect households or social groups differentially, but it is often gender that seems to be the most common factor in this “on stage/behind the scene” distinction.

For Aztec feasts, Sahagún (1953–1982, Book 6:129) tells us that “maize was ground; leavening was set out in basins. Then tamales were prepared. All night they were occupied; perhaps three days or two days the women made tamales . . . That which transpired in their presence let them sleep very little.” Since so much of feasting revolves around cooked or prepared food, it also, when one looks at ethnographic and historical accounts of such events, draws heavily upon the time and labor of women. Yet the degree to which women share in the political benefits or social credit gained through a successful feast is only sometimes commensurate with their input (Lederman 1993; Weiner 1976; Young 1971). Thus questions of who benefits from such events must take into account not just the push and pull among different social groups (whether households, lineages, or status groups) but also between men and women.

Through feasting and the rituals of giving and receiving, honoring and shaming, and creating and resolving indebtedness, we have not only a mechanism for the maintenance of relative equivalencies among groups but also for the creation of relations of dominance and subordination. Reciprocity does not necessarily put people on an even plane but may serve to palliate, even as it reinforces, a rigid stratification (Keating 2000). Aztec rulers gave gifts to their subordinates and to their enemies and the Maya elite made sure no guest went home empty handed. Did the purpose of such interactions shift from one-upmanship among relatively equivalent individuals or groups to the mystification of exploitative relationships between upper and lower classes? Certainly the Inka case, one of the best studies of state-level feasting, shows us that such events were embedded in a rhetoric of reciprocity that would seem a deliberate cover for gross inequities (Morris 1993).

We have less information than we would like on the psychological and sociological effect of being wined (or “beered”) and dined in an atmosphere of reciprocity and congeniality when one has no choice about being a “guest” and when such events clearly and definitively serve to reinforce one’s subordinate position. But I would agree with Kan (1989:12) that seeing such ceremonies solely as a “form of false consciousness or a symbolic resource pragmatically manipulated by actors (especially those with power)” may blind us to the ways that all participants find meaning in the practices that constitute sociopolitical relations. The ethic of reciprocity constrained or shaped Inka views of *mit’a*-connected feasting as much as it provided a way of reinforcing loyalty, ensuring obedience, and extracting resources from subordinates.

In focusing on societies with permanently institutionalized social hierarchies, it is necessary to consider the greater range of relationships to be created or reinforced through practice. As the examples from Landa and Sahagún show, the “state”, or the centralized political authority, was not the only source of feasts nor the only group interested in the effects of this practice. Nor are relations between the state and its citizens, or between upper and lower classes the only ones of importance. In what other contexts does feasting become important?

Pohl and Pohl (1994:140) have argued, based on Landa’s comments, that elite sponsorship of feasts created “circles of consumption [that] also served to define eliteness by excluding the commoners.” While I agree that feasting cycles of this sort would have been a focus of elite energy, the organization of Maya social groups into Houses argues for the importance of feasts that cross-cut status lines as well. The House is “a corporate group maintaining an estate perpetuated by the recruitment of members whose relationships are expressed in the language of kinship and affinity and affirmed by purposeful actions” (Gillespie 2000:467). Houses include individuals and families of different status who help support House activities and agendas (Chance 2000; Gillespie and Joyce 1997; Hendon 2001; Joyce 2000b).

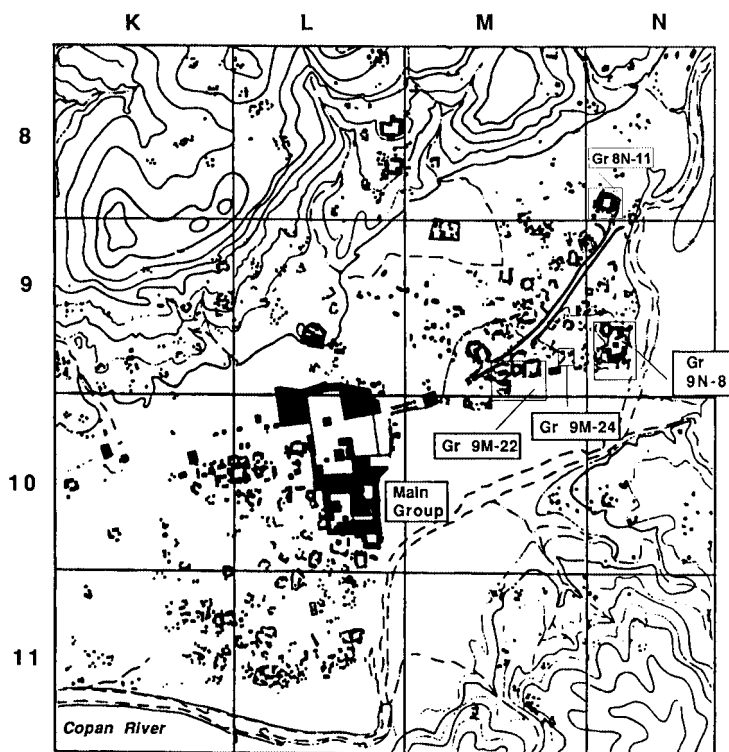


As is the case in many aspects of Mesoamerican society, obligatory reciprocity was given divine warrant by likening it to the reciprocal relations that should exist between gods and people (Sahagún 1953–1982, Book 1:33). Making offerings of food to the gods was commonplace. In many Maya writings, the term for a corn cake, or *tamale* (often translated as “bread”), is a synecdoche for food since it indicates both the offering of bread and of other kinds of food, such as meat. This same term becomes a metonym for the more general notion of making an offering, regardless of its edibility or its nature (Bill 1997; Bricker 1991; Love 1989; Taube 1989). Many deity images were shaped out of a dough made of maize, amaranth, or other foodstuffs. Edible plants and animals, such as maize and deer, were deified and people, especially elites, tried to adopt the sacred identities of these species (Bill 1997; Pohl 1983). It can be seen that in Mesoamerica, all the components necessary for feasting to be considered a practice approaching Mauss’s total social phenomenon and providing a way of creating and reproducing social identities, political structure, and power seem to be present.

## PREHISPANIC MAYA ELITE FEASTING

In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss evidence for the presence of feasting among the Maya elite living in the Copan valley, Honduras, from A.D. 650–1000 using archaeological data gathered from multiple years of excavation and research conducted in this region. The Copan River, in western Honduras, creates a series of linked mountain valleys situated at 600 meters above sea level. The largest valley was home to a centralized polity dominated by a dynasty of paramount rulers. Monumental architecture and art together with hieroglyphic texts make it clear that, at least in terms of written and visual expression, the inhabitants followed the Maya pattern of the Classic period. Nevertheless, substantial numbers of polychrome vessels and figurines imported from the Comayagua, Ulua, and Naco valleys, and similarities between Copan valley and central Honduran storage vessels, indicate that the people of Copan maintained important connections with their eastern neighbors as well (Longyear 1952; Viel 1993a, 1993b).

Settlement in the Copan valley during the peak Coner phase (ca. A.D. 650–800) occupation was centered around a collection of monuments and massive religious, governmental, and residential buildings built for and used mainly by the rulers of the Copan polity during the Classic period and known to archaeologists as the Main Group (Figure 8.2). Surrounding the Main Group is a densely settled ring of elite residential compounds, occupation of which continued til at least A.D. 1000, into the Ejar phase, a point marking the end of centralized rule (Viel 1993a, 1993b; Willey et al. 1994). The data used in this study, which includes architectural and artifactual information, derives from this sector, which is more fully reported on elsewhere (Hendon 1987, 1988, 1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1997, 2000, 2002).



**Figure 8.2.** Map of the Copan Valley showing the Main Group, the elite residential zone, and the residential compounds discussed in the chapter.

Settlement around the rest of the valley was more dispersed and home to lower status members of the society (see Gonlin 1993; Webster and Freter 1990; Whittington and Zeleznik 1991).

### Architectural Evidence

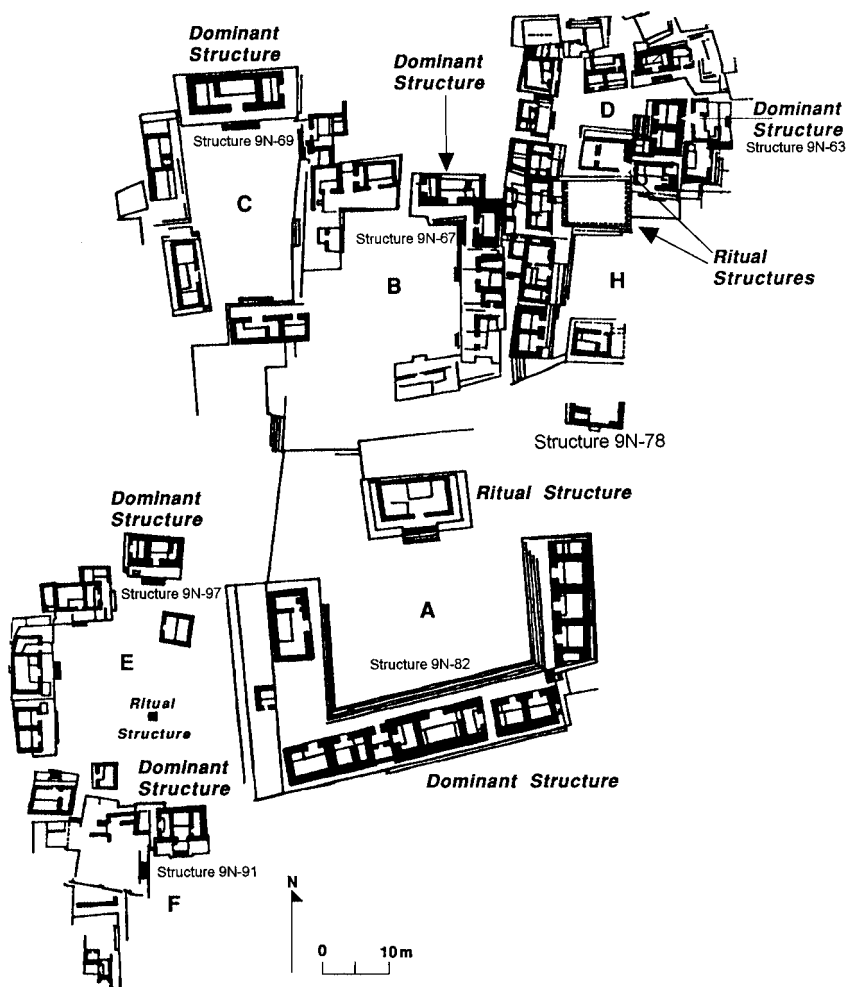
The elite residential compounds surrounding the Main Group take the common plan of Maya residences and expand upon it (Willey and Leventhal 1979). The smallest unit is the patio group comprised of residences, temples, and storage and work areas that face inward onto a paved patio. In some cases, this is the sum total of the compound. In other cases, the compounds are made up of multiple patio groups that have attached themselves to one another or have grown up around a central core over time. One of the largest such compounds, Group 9N-8, contains at least 14 distinct patios (time and the river have destroyed several making the original

count uncertain). Other compounds contain two or three patio groups. Because each patio group maintains its inward orientation, even in the largest compounds, the sense is that of a set of separate units joined together but retaining their own internal cohesion, both spatially and functionally. Nevertheless, there are signs of cooperation between units such as in the construction of stairs, the shared use of space between structures to deposit trash, and the use of one building to define the edges of two other compounds (see Hendon 1991; Sanders 1986, 1990a, 1990b, 2000; Webster et al. 1998; Willey and Leventhal 1979).

The large, multi-patio compounds are the physical manifestations of the estate of the Houses which inhabited them. The presence of multiple residential patios, each the locus of a similar range of domestic activities, indicates that many of the Houses had a multi-level sense of social cohesion, first with their patio group and then with the compound as a whole. At the same time, as argued below, spatially distinct compounds were also linked together by social ties as smaller Houses allied themselves with larger ones. House identity was based on descent, marriage, residence, adoption, and shared ritual practices (Gillespie 2000). Differences in social status among compounds are suggested by variation in burials, building construction, and the distribution of status markers such as jewelry and other body ornaments (see Hendon 1991; Gonlin 1993). Differences in social status appear within the larger compounds as well.

Although all members of the same corporate entity, the residents of the smaller and less elaborated patios within the large multi-patio compounds would have constituted the lower ranking portion of the House. The Houses were defined as much by their “estate” as by their individual members or particular kinship configuration. The physical houses, the group-owned ritual paraphernalia, the regalia, and the wealth were the property and heirlooms of the overarching social entity, not the individuals who comprised the living members of the House at any given point in time. The presence of multiple burials within compounds, usually below the patio floor or within the buildings themselves, some of which contain objects of value, such as jade or shell jewelry, or finely made pottery vessels, speaks to the connection between living and dead House members.

In most patios, one structure stands out in terms of its better construction, more regular design, and decoration, which may include paint and large-scale sculpture (Hendon 1987, 1992a, 2001). These “dominant structures,” while still residential, are clearly associated with important members of the social group in residence and thus were a focus of events and interactions aimed at creating and maintaining House identity and prestige. In addition, several patios have special structures used for ritual practices, although the widespread distribution of vessels, figurines, and *candeleros* used in rituals suggests that ritual activities occurred within residences as well. Figures 8.3, 8.4, and 8.5 show the layout of Groups 9N-8, 9M-22, and 9M-24, the three compounds discussed in this chapter and indicate the location of dominant and ritual structures.



**Figure 8.3.** Group 9N-8, one of the largest compounds occupied by a high-ranking House, with dominant and ritual structures indicated.

In this discussion of feasting, I draw on the results of my long-term project studying the elite settlement in the Copan valley. I use analyses of the architecture and of the form and distribution of artifacts recovered from these three House compounds that were excavated from 1980–1984 by the Proyecto Arqueológico Copán Fase II. As noted above, Group 9N-8 had at least 14 patios, which have been designated A–M. Patios A–F, H–K, and M were excavated. Patios A and B share a raised artificial platform that puts them at a slightly higher elevation

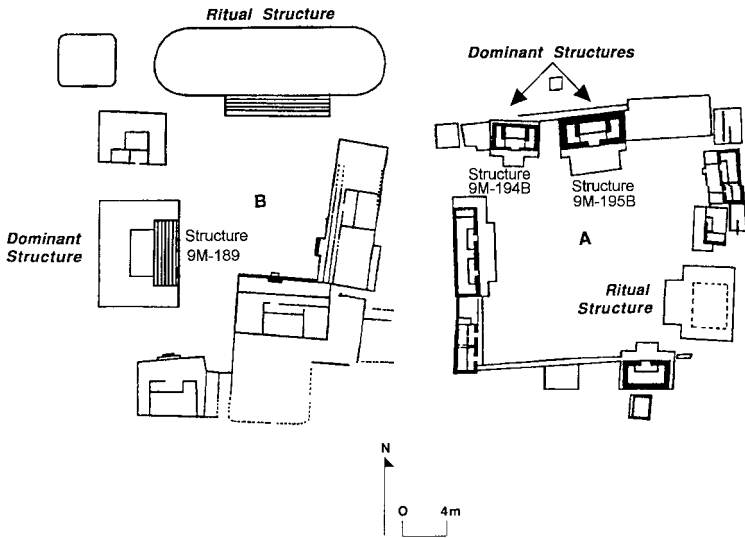


Figure 8.4. Group 9M-22 Patios A and B with dominant and ritual structures indicated.

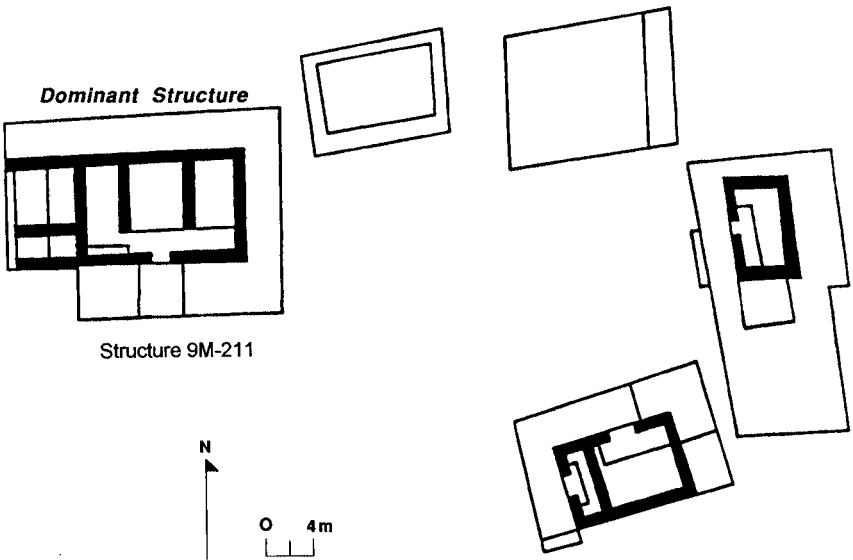


Figure 8.5. Group 9M-24, a single patio compound, with the dominant structure indicated.

than the adjoining patios. Group 9M-22 is a three patio compound, two of which (Patios A and B) were excavated (Figure 8.4). Group 9M-24 is a single patio group (Figure 8.5).

## Ceramic Evidence

The excavation of the compounds emphasized horizontal clearing of the buildings and open spaces of the compound, with careful attention paid to archaeological context. This methodology resulted in a very large collection of artifacts and ecofacts. To investigate the spatial distribution of activities, I created a subset of this material by selecting deposits that could be identified as use-related primary contexts or middens from Group 9M-24, Patios A and B of Group 9M-22 and Patios A-F, H, I, K, and the central platform supporting Patio A and B of Group 9N-8. Use-related primary contexts (other than burials and caches) were identified by their stratigraphic position below and unmixed with collapsed construction and in contact with horizontal construction surfaces (floors) as well as by the intact (i.e., either whole or broken but reconstructable) nature of many of the artifacts. Middens were recognized by their lack of wall fall, a rich and varied inventory of cultural material and bone, the presence of ash, carbon, or other signs of burning, and, to a lesser extent, reconstructable artifacts.

The artifacts included in the analysis are divided into ten broad categories: (1) lithics (chert and obsidian); (2) ground stone (mainly manos and metates used for maize grinding); (3) stone ornaments (jade, obsidian, other kinds of greenstone); (4) ceramic rimsherds (body sherds were not classified, only counted); (5) bone; (6) shell; (7) turtleshell; (8) other ceramic artifacts (such as *candeleros*, flasks, and spindle whorls); (9) figurines/whistles (many of which were imported from the Uluá, Naco, or Comayagua valleys); and (10) whole ceramic vessels (mostly from burials and caches). Rimsherds make up the largest single artifact category, accounting for 51.6 percent of the total number of objects (40,739 rims out of 78,945 artifacts).<sup>4</sup> The ceramic analysis, reported in full in Hendon (1987), involved three steps. The first step was to determine the probable function of vessels based on form and surface treatment. Then functional groupings of artifacts were created based on the associations among vessel forms and other artifacts. Finally, the distribution of these functional groups within individual patios, among the patios of a single compound, and between compounds was considered.

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VESSEL FORM AND FUNCTION

The variation in surface treatment and form of the Copan vessel assemblage has been used to create a classification scheme using a variation of the “type-variety” system widespread in Maya archaeology (Viel 1993a, 1993b; Willey

et al. 1994). Because the Proyecto Arqueológico Copán Fase II's procedure was to record both type and form information for each rimsherd (unless the piece was too small or too eroded to identify), I was able to treat the two as separate variables. The surface treatment distinctions were subsequently collapsed into two large categories: 1) plain (exhibiting simple surface treatment only, such as smoothing, slipping, or incising) and 2) fancy (more elaborate surface modification through the use of multiple colors of slip or paint often in combination with modeling or incising). The plain/fancy division seems a more useful distinction than the commonly used utilitarian or domestic vs. ceremonial or elite designations often found in the literature on Maya ceramics. Cylinders used as cache vessels, clearly a ceremonial use (see below), are often plain in surface treatment, while fancy wares are not restricted only to the elite.<sup>5</sup>

Interpretation of the function of a vessel form may be based on a theoretical analysis of the relationship between form and function which suggests that certain forms and physical properties represent a more efficient solution to certain requirements of function. The interpretation can also be derived more empirically from analogy with actual form-function correlates found in modern pottery-using societies. I have used both approaches.

Ericson et al. (1972) have compiled a list of theoretical "primary functional categories" for ceramic vessels, all of which reflect their use as containers. The list includes cooking, other food preparation, storage, carrying and transport, and aids to environmental exploitation. Storage varies along two dimensions: length of time stored (long-term and short-term) and kind of material stored (wet and dry).

Based on these criteria, Ericson et al. developed two contrasting sets of formal properties, which they called "Stability Choice A" and "Stability Choice B." The former results in relatively short, open, and unrestricted vessels with a larger mouth area than basal area. Although such vessels are more stable because of their lowered center of gravity, they are harder to pour from and their contents evaporate more easily. Access to the vessel interior is easy and the ratio of surface area to volume favors heat distribution. It is expected that cooking vessels and vessels for the storage of materials over the short- and long-term would tend to fall into this category.

Stability Choice B incorporates some opposite factors. Height of the vessel increases at the expense of mouth size. This change results in a higher center of gravity and more difficult access to the contents, but better control over pouring and less evaporation. Stability may be improved by increasing the area of the base relative to the area of the mouth. These factors will yield tall restricted vessels. Vessels for the short- and long-term storage of liquids will favor this form.

The basic distinction made by Ericson et al. (1972) between relatively short and open (unrestricted) vessels (Stability Choice A) and relatively tall and restricted vessels (Stability Choice B) is borne out by Henrickson and McDonald (1983) who tested these hypothetical formulations using a geographically and temporally diverse set of cross-cultural comparisons. They also demonstrated the existence of

a recurring set of broad functional groups: cooking, food serving or consumption, dry and liquid storage, and water transport.

Research on pottery use among twentieth century Maya provides another source of insight into ancient vessel function. In his study of Yucatecan Maya pottery, Thompson (1958) listed three main functional groups of clay vessels: cooking vessels, water containers, and ceremonial items (food serving and eating dishes, he found, were generally made from gourds rather than clay in this area). For highland Guatemalan Maya, vessels were divided into transport, storage (both subsumed under water containers by Thompson), cooking, serving, and ceremonial types (Reina and Hill 1978:24–25).<sup>6</sup>

In Yucatan and Guatemala, *comals* and a large deep bowl or basin are used for cooking. Additional cooking vessels reported from Guatemala include a smaller pot with an open mouth and an hourglass profile, a shallow flat-based pan used for frying, a larger globular vessel with a restricted opening used to steam *tamales*, and a sort of colander or sieve used in preparing maize (Reina and Hill 1978: 26–27; Osborne 1975:319). Transport and storage vessels are generally jars. Water-carrying jars are smaller to facilitate carrying and to cut down on spillage. Canteens are made in imitation of the gourd *tecomates* often used for the same purpose (Thompson 1958:117–119, 120–136; Reina and Hill 1978:25–26). Another common storage vessel is the large basin, which is usually the same form as the cooking pot but larger in size. This form is used to hold water for cooking and washing, mixing and preparing food, and general short-term storage, especially of maize or beans (Thompson 1958:117–119; Reina and Hill 1978:26).

As noted above, serving vessels in Yucatan are rarely made of clay. The one exception, a small bowl, is apparently used more for ceremonial food offerings than for actual eating (Thompson 1958:105–107, 146). Pottery vessels are commonly used in Guatemala, however, for eating and serving. Reina and Hill (1978:27) discuss three forms: a small drinking cup or pitcher (*batidor*), an open bowl with out-flaring rim and a flat base, and a larger pitcher with a globular body, spout, and vertical handle that is used to hold and serve liquids (see also Osborne 1975:316).

Ceremonial forms, a category not considered by Ericson et al. (1972), are an important addition to the range of vessel function categories. They are mainly used to burn incense (Thompson 1958:109; Reina and Hill 1978:27) in household ritual observance and curing ceremonies (see Tozzer 1941:104ff.). Reina and Hill (1978:27) have argued that “[f]ar from being recent innovations, the majority of the basic vessel forms are solutions to functional needs of great antiquity. The basic utilitarian assemblage was in existence at least as early as the Middle Preclassic and has continued, with some slight modifications, to the present time.”

### Functional Groupings of Copan Vessel Forms

Based on the theoretical formulations and the traditions of Maya pottery reported by Thompson and Reina and Hill, we should expect to find a set of



relatively open and low-walled (although not necessarily small) containers for cooking, food preparation, and short-term storage of dry materials. A second group of vessels should be taller and have more restricted openings for the storage of liquids over the short or long term. Water transport containers will be smaller than long-term storage jars that do not have to be moved as often. Such jars may also have everted rims. A third group will consist of vessels for serving and eating food. These will be relatively open and, in the case of those used for eating, relatively small. Finally, given Maya ritual practices, we would expect a set of ceremonial vessels in which offerings were put or resins, such as *copal*, or other materials were burned.

Vessels in the Copan ceramic assemblage fall into the following form categories: *comals* (clay griddles); *calderos* (very large, deep basins); plates with three legs; straight-walled and flaring-walled dishes; hemispherical bowls; tall cylinders; censers, some cylindrical and some in the form of ladles; three-pronged braziers; globular jars with everted rims divided into three sub-categories (large-necked with rim diameters greater than 30 cm, medium-necked with rim diameters between 20 and 30 cm, and narrow-necked with rim diameters less than 20 cm); small jars with straight necks; and small jars with in-curving openings (Hendon 1987, 1988). Although not all vessel types found in twentieth century Maya pottery traditions discussed above are present at Copan, those that are may be coordinated with the functions given earlier. Table 8.1 correlates the Copan vessel forms with the functional categories described above. One ceremonial use not reflected in twentieth century Maya pottery traditions is that of the cache vessel. The Copan Maya often used plain cylinders, sometimes with a flat lid, for this purpose, especially in deposits in the Main Group (Strömmsvik 1941). Within residential compounds, decorated serving vessels were sometimes used instead, perhaps reflecting the role of rituals in commemorating House solidarity through caches placed in residences.

The next stage of the analysis involved the determination of whether functionally related vessel forms were found together in the deposits excavated from the compounds. If this were the case, it might be possible to consider where specific activities were more commonly conducted. Principal components analysis and cluster analysis were used to compare the occurrence of vessel forms from the different archaeological deposits (Hendon 1987:390–412). *Manos* and *metates* were also included in this analysis as they comprise an integral part of Mesoamerican food preparation and thus serve as an additional indicator of such activity. Both analytical techniques yielded similar groupings.

Based on these results, the forms were merged into the following three functional groups: 1) food preparation, including artifacts related to cooking, maize grinding, and short-term storage, 2) ritual, food serving and eating, and 3) long-term or large-scale storage (see Table 8.2 and Figure 8.6a; b). The first group consists of *comals*, portable stoves (three-pronged braziers),<sup>7</sup> *calderos*, small but plain bowls and dishes, small jars with restricted openings, and *manos* and *metates*. The second

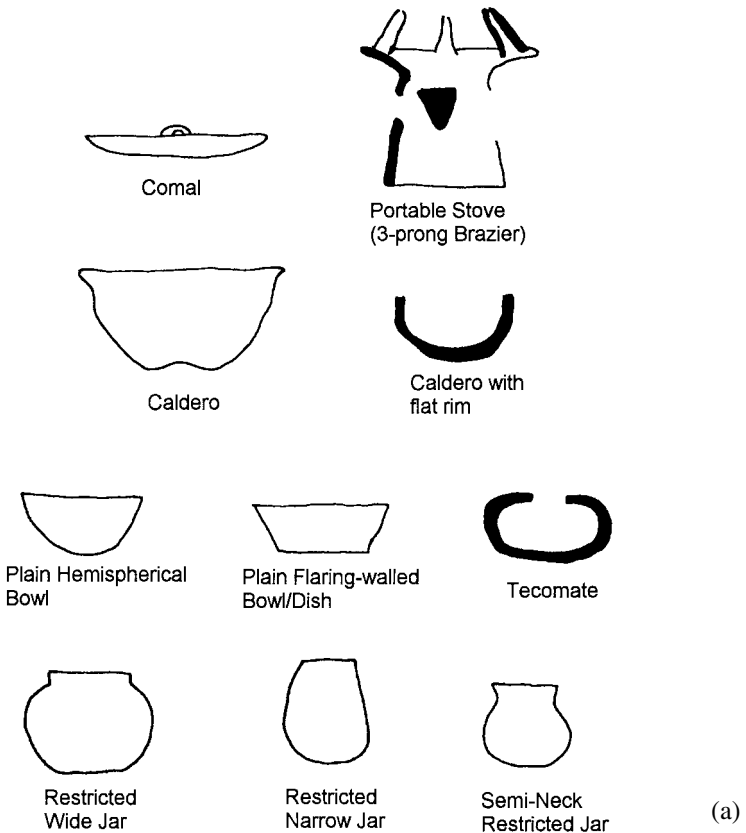
**Table 8.1. Functions of the Copan Vessel Forms on the Basis of Formal Properties and Ethnographic Analogy.**

Function	Forms	Other evidence
Cooking	Comal Caldero Three-pronged brazier	Signs of heat exposure, association with manos and metates
Food preparing	Caldero Plate (plain) Hemispherical bowl (plain)	
Food serving and eating	Plate tripod (fancy) Bowl/dish (plain and fancy) Straight-walled dish (plain and fancy) Hemispherical bowl (fancy) Flaring-walled bowl/dish (plain and fancy) Cylinder (fancy)	Scenes painted on vessels or murals showing Maya nobles eating and drinking from similar vessels
Ritual	Cylinder (plain) Cylindrical censer and lid  Ladle censer	Evidence of exposure to heat; presence of plain cylinders and cylindrical censers in caches at and the elite residential area
Long-term storage	Jar (large, medium, and narrow-necked) Jar straight-necked	Presence of lime in some jars
Short-term storage	Restricted neck jar	
Water transport	Jar narrow-necked Jar straight-necked	

**Table 8.2. Composition of the Three Functional Groupings of Copan Vessel Types.**

Functional grouping	Ceramic vessels	Other artifacts
1. Cooking, maize grinding, food preparation, and short-term storage	comal, 3-prong brazier, caldero, plain bowls and dishes (hemispherical, flaring-walled, straight-walled)	mano, metate
2. Ritual; food serving and eating	<i>Ritual</i> : plain cylinder, ladle censer, cylindrical censer <i>Food serving</i> : fancy cylinder, bowls and dishes (hemispherical, flaring-walled, and straight-walled), plate	figurine, whistle, candelero
3. Long-term or large-scale storage	narrow-, medium-, large-, and straight-necked jars	

group includes artifacts known to have played an important role in religious rituals at both the household and state level—the two kinds of censers; plain cylinders; figurines; whistles; and *candeleros* (Figure 8.6b). This group also includes elaborately decorated vessels used to serve and consume food and drink, such as fancy cylinders, plates, bowls, and dishes, all of which were important in the context of feasting.<sup>8</sup> Since much feasting, according to Landa (Tozzer 1941), had a strong religious component, this association makes sense. The third and last group is comprised of large jars that differ mainly in the diameter of their opening and which were used to transport and store a variety of liquids and solids (Figure 8.6b). In terms of the total number of rimsherds, storage forms make up one-third, ritual and food service forms almost one-third, and food preparation vessels one-quarter of the total sample (Table 8.3).



**Figure 8.6a.** Vessel forms and functional groupings: (a) Functional Group 1: Cooking, food preparation, and short-term storage.



Plate



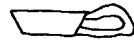
Fancy Hemispherical Bowl



Fancy Flaring-walled Bowl/Dish



Fancy cylinder



Ladle Censer

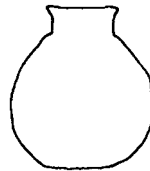


Plain Cylinder



Cylindrical Censer

(b)



Narrow-necked Jars



Medium-necked Jar



Large-necked Jar

(c)

**Figure 8.6b.** Vessel forms and functional groupings: (b) Functional Group 2: Food serving and ritual; and (c) Functional Group 3: Long-term storage.

**Table 8.3. Percentage of the Total Rimsherds in the Database that Fall into the Three Functional Groupings of Ceramic Vessel Forms.**

Functional grouping	Representation in the database
1. Cooking, food preparation, and short-term storage (excluding manos and metates)	26.6%
2. Ritual, food serving and eating (excluding figurines, whistles, and candeleros)	31.8%
3. Long-term or larger-scale storage	33.6%
Total of the ceramic rims in the database accounted for:	92.0%

All three types of activities are represented in all patios studied (Hendon 1991, 1997). This redundancy underscores both the residential nature of the area and the involvement of the residents of each patio in activities related to social life and the maintenance of group identity through ritual and special events. Some suggestive differences in the relative importance of cooking/food preparation and ritual/food serving are evident, however, within patios and when patios are compared to one another.

## **SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF FEASTING AND ITS RELATED ACTIVITIES**

The prevalence of fancy food serving forms, food preparation vessels, and storage jars raises the possibility that the members of the elite Copan Houses did more than just eat ordinary meals with their immediate family members. In the final part of this analysis, two questions are posed. First, do particular buildings within a patio show a notable concentration of feasting activities? Second, do particular patios within the multi-patio compounds of Groups 9N-8 and 9M-22 show any special emphasis on feasting?

### **Buildings within Patios**

The first question is the hardest to address because not all structures necessarily have trash or in-situ deposits clearly associated with them and when they do, such deposits may not contain large numbers of artifacts. Rather than consider all structures individually, I focus on the dominant structures to see how they might differ from the rest of the buildings in their patio (see Hendon 1987:456-514, Tables 6.49-6.61 for a comparison of deposits associated with all structures). Dominant structures are of interest here because they are considered to be the residences of the most prominent members of the House who had connections with and responsibilities towards the central ruling power of the Copan state. The residents of Patio A of Group 9N-8 were thought to have particularly close ties

to the ruling Copan lineage, an idea supported in part by hieroglyphic inscriptions associated with Structure 9N-82, the dominant one within that patio (see Fash and Stuart 1991; Stuart 1992). Patios A-F of Group 9N-8 each have a dominant structure as well. Patio H, despite the good quality of its architecture, does not. Patios I and K were only partially preserved and are not considered here. Patio A of Group 9M-22 has two structures, 9M-194B and 9M-195B which have the architectural characteristics and location of a dominant structure while Patio B has one, Structure 9M-189. Group 9M-24, despite being much smaller and having only one patio, has a dominant structure, 9M-211.

The deposits associated with dominant structures, for those patios that have one, are generally not as rich in quantities of artifacts as those associated with other structures in the patio (Hendon 1991). This pattern has also been noted for the dominant structure of Group 8N-11, a compound of comparable status to Group 9N-8 excavated more recently (Webster et al. 1998). As can be seen in Table 8.4, deposits associated with dominant structures contain at best 12 percent of the total occurrence of artifacts that make up the functional vessel groups in each patio. In most cases, the frequency is much lower. A comparison of deposits associated with different buildings within each patio, including the dominant structure, confirms that the distribution of the functional vessel groups (as measured by the frequency of rimsherds, manos, and metates) is not the same for all buildings in a patio after such factors as unequal total numbers of artifacts or volume of deposits excavated have been taken into account (Table 8.5). All comparisons produced significant chi-square values (probability of occurrence under the null hypothesis less than or equal to 0.05) except for Patio A of Group 9N-8.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 8.4. Percentage of the Rimsherds from Each Functional Vessel Grouping in Each Patio that Are Associated with a Dominant Structure.**

Dominant structure <sup>a</sup>	Cooking and food preparation	Ritual and food serving	Storage
●Group 9N-8			
Patio A: Structure 9N-82	7.3%	6.5%	5.4%
Patio B: Structure 9N-67	0.4	0.3	0.4
Patio C: Structure 9N-69	9.7	13.8	9.8
Patio D: Structure 9N-63	3.5	3.7	5.7
Patio E: Structure 9N-97	1.3	1.7	0.8
Patio F: Structure 9N-91	7.7	11.9	8.9
●Group 9M-22			
Patio A: Structure 9M-194B	1.0%	0.6%	1.7%
Structure 9M-195B	1.7	0.6	0.7
Patio B: Structure 9M-189	0.3	1.2	0.7
●Group 9M-24			
Structure 9M-211	4.4%	10.0%	6.0%

<sup>a</sup> Defined based on the architecture, not the associated artifacts. Patio H of Group 9N-8 is not included because none of its structures matched the architectural criteria for a dominant structure.

**Table 8.5. Chi-Square Values for the Comparison of the Occurrence of the Functional Vessel Groups in Deposits Associated with Individual Structures in Each Patio.**

Group and patio	Chi square	DF	Probability
●Group 9N-8			
Patio A	26.89	20	0.138
Patio B	107.23	32	<0.001
Patio C	95.58	24	<0.001
Patio D	1381.31	36	<0.001
Patio E	58.13	24	<0.001
Patio F	24.64	8	0.002
Patio H	212.32	36	<0.001
●Group 9M-22			
Patio A	204.49	56	<0.001
Patio B	144.15	52	<0.001
●Group 9M-24			
The single patio	112.99	20	<0.001

Of particular interest is why a chi-square value is significant or not for a particular sample. This requires some evaluation of the contributions of the different variables to the deviation from the expected distribution. Such information cannot be derived from the chi-square statistic itself, which does no more than indicate the existence of relationships. It can be obtained, however, from calculation and comparison of the standardized residuals.<sup>10</sup> Standardized residuals may be positive or negative in value. The positive or negative value may be used as an approximation of how much the actual quantities of the artifacts deviate from the expected quantities.

The deposits associated with dominant structures, in most cases, contain a greater than expected occurrence of artifacts related to the first two functional groupings, cooking and food preparation, and ritual and food serving, despite the generally small number of artifacts in these deposits. In addition, one nearby structure or area appears to serve as an additional food preparation loci (Hendon 1987:488–539). I interpret the chi-square results as indicating that dominant structures are both like and unlike other residences. They are similar because they are only one of several residences with evidence of food serving or preparation. Thus, dominant structures do not monopolize these activities. They are different, however, because they show a more restricted range of activities than other residences, with little evidence, for example, of craft production (see Hendon 1997; Widmer 1997).

### **Patios within Multi-Patio Compounds**

The second question concerns whether all patios within a multi-patio compound are the same in terms of the frequency of rims related to feasting. To address

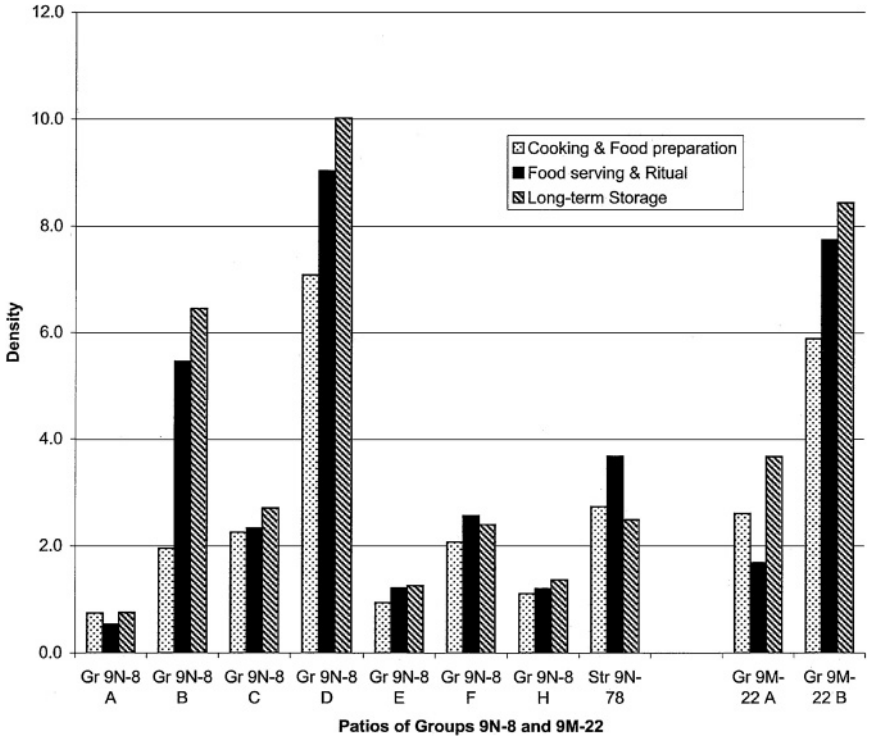
**Table 8.6. Density of Functional Vessel Groups in the Patios of Groups 9N–8, 9M–22, and 9M–24 Based on the Volume of Trash Deposits in Each Compound.**

Residential compound and patio or structure	Cooking and food preparation storage	Food serving	Long-term and ritual
●Group 9N–8 (volume = 165.7 m <sup>3</sup> )			
Patio A	0.7/m <sup>3</sup>	0.5/m <sup>3</sup>	0.8/m <sup>3</sup>
Patio B	2.0	5.5	6.5
Patio C	2.3	2.3	2.7
Patio D	7.1	9.0	10.0
Patio E	0.9	1.2	1.3
Patio F	2.1	2.6	2.4
Patio H	1.1	1.2	1.4
Structure 9N–78	2.7	3.7	2.5
●Group 9M–22 (volume = 261.8 m <sup>3</sup> )			
Patio A	2.6/m <sup>3</sup>	1.7/m <sup>3</sup>	3.7/m <sup>3</sup>
Patio B	5.9	7.8	8.4
●Group 9M–24 (volume = 57.2 m <sup>3</sup> )			
The single patio	16.6/m <sup>3</sup>	24.9/m <sup>3</sup>	16.5/m <sup>3</sup>

this question, I looked at differences in the distribution of the functional vessel groups among patios rather than individual structures. The trash deposits from each patio in my database have been merged to give the total occurrence of rimsherds belonging to the three functional vessel groups. Since the volume of material excavated varies considerably from one patio to the next, Table 8.6 and Figure 8.7 present the density of sherds belonging to each functional group rather than the number. The densities for each residential compound have been calculated by dividing the number of sherds in each functional group in each patio by the total volume of trash deposits in the compound as a whole. Included in Table 8.6 and Figure 8.7 is information about Structure 9N–78, a small platform built on the raised platform supporting Patio A but outside of that patio's confines. Structure 9N–78 lies between Patios A and H but faces towards Patio A (see Figure 8.3).

The lowest density of rims occurs in Patio A of Group 9N–8. Much more substantial densities are found in the patios adjacent to Patio A, suggesting how the House members of Patio A may have met their needs for enough food and drink to host a successful feast. Patios B and D to the north and Structure 9N–78 exhibit notably higher densities than any other patios in Group 9N–8. The dominant structures of Patios B and D also tend to have fewer food preparation and serving vessels associated with them than one would expect, based on the standardized residuals. The high density of food preparation and food serving/ritual sherds associated with Structure 9N–78 is especially striking given that this is just one platform, not a whole patio, and may have been the primary locus for food preparation for Patio A.





**Figure 8.7.** Density of the functional vessel groups in each patio in trash deposits.

The densities shown in Figure 8.7 for Group 9M-22 exhibit a similar pattern. The larger and more prominent Patio A, has lower densities than its neighbor, Patio B. At the same time, it is clear that overall, the densities in Group 9M-22 are greater than those for Patio A of Group 9N-8 and most comparable to those of Patios D and B. Excavations in Group 9M-22 provide a basis to suggest that residents of smaller Houses were as eager, if not more so, to participate visibly in status enhancing feasting activities than residents of larger, wealthier households and that such participation was subject to a less hierarchical and centralized form of control. I have argued elsewhere (Hendon 2000) that the desire of smaller groups to make their wealth more visible than those of larger groups led to the construction of free-standing storage structures. Food preparation and food serving vessels are associated with a number of structures or open areas in each patio of Group 9M-22. Patio B in particular shows an emphasis on food preparation and cooking that is exceeded only by Patio D in Group 9N-8. The Group 9M-22 House was involved

in as much, if not more, feasting than their larger neighbors in Group 9N-8, who were potential rivals and allies but were also wealthier and of higher rank, making direct competition difficult.

Group 9M-22 is connected to a raised and paved walkway that runs from the Main Group to the west into the elite residential area, terminating in a large, walled courtyard that forms part of Group 8N-11 (Webster et al. 1998). A small spur leading towards Group 9M-22 juts off from the main walkway joining this major House and the Main Group (see Figure 8.2). This physical connection may represent social ties between Group 9M-22 and its more impressive neighbor to the north, Group 8N-11, or directly to the Main Group.<sup>11</sup> Such ties could have included the provision of food to support the Group 8N-11 House in its feasting of important rivals such as the Group 9N-8 House, participation in such feasts, and the hosting of return feasts back in the Group 9M-22 compound.

Thus, at both levels of comparison, buildings within patios and patios within compounds, we see not only the presence of food serving and ritual vessels and paraphernalia used at feasts, but also of cooking and food preparation vessels, vital to the preparations leading up to a feast. The greater densities of these two functional groups in the patios surrounding Patio A of Group 9N-8 seem to me to demonstrate that the residents of Patio A were able to draw on a wide circle of House members to prepare and supply food and materials, but that they did not enjoy exclusive rights to the role of host. Reciprocal feasting within the large compound of Group 9N-8 may have been important not only as a way for the House as a whole to compete with other Houses. With so many patios, the Group 9N-8 House was both larger and more diverse than most of the other high-ranking Houses around the Main Group, making the retention of group solidarity especially challenging. Sponsoring feasts in celebration of life-cycle events or as part of a temporal religious cycle may therefore have been equally important for the renewal of internal social ties.

## MAYA FEASTING AND THE CONTESTED SOCIAL ORDER

The distribution of pottery vessels and other kinds of material culture suggests that feasting and its social consequences were important to noble Houses as part of their competition for prestige and political control. The two high ranking Houses comprising Groups 9N-8 and 8N-11 pursued different strategies to achieve the same ends. Group 9N-8 built in an area with a long history of occupation and expanded internally over time from the core of Patio A. Residents of each patio, and especially of Patio A, were able to draw on the residents of other patios in their compound for help in provisioning and hosting feasts. Since food preparation, especially maize grinding and cooking, are principally the responsibility of women

in ancient and modern Mesoamerica (Hendon 1997), the burden of such help would fall heavily on women in the patios around Patio A. These women were responsible not only for preparing the food needed for their own group's meals and social events but also for supplying the women of Patio A with much of the food they needed to make their feasts successful.

Group 8N-11, based on survey and partial excavation, is a compact compound with only one residential patio, a walled courtyard where the walkway ends, and a number of adjacent mounds that do not form a coherent plan<sup>12</sup> (Fash and Long 1983: Maps 15-16; Webster et al. 1998). Its residents, although of comparable status to those of Group 9N-8's Patio A, had not expanded their compound in the same way, suggesting that they were a less populous House. Instead, they may have reached out to people in smaller, less powerful Houses, such as those living in Group 9M-22, forming alliances which provided them with resources and labor and using the raised walkway as a way of inscribing the connection permanently on the landscape.

The raised walkway also connects Group 8N-11 and, more indirectly, the entire eastern residential zone with the Main Group. We have much less data with which to address the question of the presence, scale, or location of feasting in the political center of the polity. Both Baudez (1991) and Miller (1986) have argued that the Main Group was the setting for elaborate processions and displays by members of the ruling House tied to significant anniversaries or other occasions. It seems reasonable to suggest, based on Landa and other colonial period accounts of state-sponsored ceremonies, that such events involved food and drink as offerings and as part of feasts. Assuming such events did occur, they would have served to reinforce loyalties between ruler and subject elite while reproducing the hierarchical relations meant to encompass all members of the polity. But the data from the elite living outside of the Main Group show that even if royalty did sponsor such events, they had no monopoly over this sort of hospitality.

Feasting and gift-giving by noble Houses allowed them to compete among themselves for status and to reproduce, under the guise of voluntary assistance and participation, the internal stratification within the House and to test the existing social order among Houses. Different strategies, resulting from the varied histories of Houses and the decisions of House members, were pursued by two of the highest-ranking Houses, Groups 9N-8 and 8N-11. Another strategy may have involved maintaining relations with the more rural dwelling members of the society.

While a full discussion of rural involvement in feasting is beyond the scope of the present study, finds of locally-produced fancy ceramics for food serving and eating in small rural patios indicates that people living there did use such vessels (Webster et al. 1998). Their presence suggests that family-sponsored life-cycle feasts were important to lower-status rural folk. Although most rural settlement consists of small households, there are several large compounds comparable in

size and scale to those near the Main Group (see Ashmore 1991; Fash 1983; Whittington and Zeleznik 1991). Perhaps here we have yet another strategy used by high ranking Houses who, for historical reasons yet poorly understood, lived outside of the elite inner zone and built ties with their rural neighbors.

While elite feasting serves as a way of reinforcing hierarchy within the House in a spirit of mutual help and cooperation, and possibly between the ruling House and all others, it also becomes a vehicle for competition. The success of these events, both as reproducers of existing social relations and as a way to alter such relations, depends heavily on the labor and contributions of all House members or allies. Women's participation in particular was crucial to these events. Not only would they have had primary responsibility for food preparation but they would also have produced at least some of the items used as gifts. Evidence of textile production is widespread in Groups 9N-8 and 9M-22 (Hendon 1997). It was also an important element of women's work in more rural areas (Freter 2000). As weavers, food preparers, coordinators of these activities, and hosts, female members of elite Houses not only enacted their gendered roles but also embodied the complementarity that gave these roles their social and symbolic weight (Hendon 1997, 1999).

Feasting in complex, non-imperial societies thus does serve, as Kan (1989) suggested, to reproduce the sociopolitical order. It makes visible and validates certain relations and roles while masking others. Core beliefs about gender, wealth, status, and family help shape the meaning given to these events. But the sociopolitical order that is reproduced emerges as a dynamic one with plenty of room for negotiation and maneuvering among the elite and, probably, the lower status rural families as well. While the political order encoded in hieroglyphic texts carved on behalf of Maya rulers may have recorded the existence of an enduring and unchanging system revolving around a single ruling dynasty, with all relations of political power or status defined solely in relationship to that ruler (see Schele and Mathews 1998), the activities in the surrounding elite compounds reveal a different picture. By combining material remains of feasting with written and visual information on the symbolic meaning of food, the importance of reciprocity, and the role of gender in determining productive roles, we can see that political power, social identity and status, and control of prestige or wealth items were subject to perpetual renewal and renegotiation.

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## NOTES

- 1 Baptism does not refer to the Christian rite adopted after the conquest but to the indigenous custom of a ritual washing of the infant soon after birth. Ear-piercing was one of several bodily modifications (hair-cutting, lip-piercing) which marked a child's progress towards adulthood (Joyce 2000a).
- 2 Guests at a wedding feast, according to Sahagún (1953–1982, Book 6:129) not only received gifts but brought them as well, the quality of which was determined in part by their social status and wealth: “And the women came bearing . . . maguey fiber capes [used by lower status people]; some of them, coarse maguey fiber capes; some of them small capes; and we poor people grains of maize.”
- 3 Violation of the norms of hospitality and of proper behavior by guests and hosts plays a role in two important collections of Maya mythic histories. Mistreatment of guests is central to the parallel episodes in the *Popol Vuh* in which two pairs of twins are invited by the Lords of Xibalba (the Underworld) to come into their realm and compete against them in a ballgame. In both cases the Lords fail to behave like proper hosts, resulting in the death of one pair of twins and, later, the destruction of the Lords' power (Tedlock 1996). Several versions of the Book of Chilam Balam, Maya-authored texts written after the conquest, attribute the fall of the city of Chichen Itza to the treachery of a Mayapan noble at a banquet. The texts are confused and the events quite possibly apocryphal but it is clear that the behavior violated social and political norms (Roys 1967:137, Appendix C).
- 4 These numbers are intended only to give a sense of the preponderance of rimsherds as a category, not to imply that one rimsherd is somehow the equivalent, for instance, of one bone awl or metate.
- 5 A complete list of the types in each category may be found in Hendon (1987:314–317, Table 5.8). For those familiar with the Copan ceramic sequence, the local and imported polychrome types or groups (Copador, Chilanga, Caterpillar, Gualpopa, Ulua, etc.) and Surlo fall into the fancy group while Casaca Striated, Zico, Sepultura, Reina Incised, Raul Red, and others fall into the plain group. Archaeological research at Copan continues and new ceramic types have doubtlessly been defined and old ones reclassified.
- 6 It is interesting to note that in both studies, the authors are confident of the close association between vessel form and function. “Although some forms are almost general-purpose vessels, the majority fit into only one of the above groups” (Reina and Hill 1978:25). “There is a close correlation between vessel use and shape except in the case of the water basin and cooking pot. The distinction between the uses for these 2 very similar shapes is often no longer made” (Thompson 1958:146).
- 7 Readers familiar with Maya ceramics will note that the object illustrated in Figure 8.6 may seem to resemble the class of ceramic vessels known as three-prong censers and usually assumed to have had a ritual purpose. Those interested in the detailed argument as to why the Copan examples are not three-prong censers should see Hendon (1987:335–339, 1988).
- 8 Narrative scenes on vessels and stone sculpture from some Maya sites actually show plates, cylinders, and small containers in use by people of high status or by deities to serve or consume food and drink (Reents-Budet 1994) as do some vessels in the Ulua polychrome tradition (Joyce 1993).

- 9 The relatively small probability value for Patio A, despite its failure to satisfy the standard of  $p = 0.05$ , is nevertheless suggestive of less distributional uniformity than expected. As Scheps (1982:844) has said about similar significance levels in another analysis, “[w]hile this is not statistically significant (for most), its relative strength may be indicative of matters of anthropological interest worth pursuing.”
- 10 Since the degrees of freedom is greater than 1 for this analysis, I adhered to the rule of thumb that all expected frequencies should be greater than one and only 20 percent should be less than or equal to five (Reynolds 1977:9). Standardized residuals were calculated by subtracting the expected from the observed frequencies and dividing the result by the square root of the expected frequency (Reynolds 1977:11–12).
- 11 Webster et al. (1998) have argued that occupation in both groups continues after AD 850 when centralized political control, based at the Main Group, seems to have broken down irretrievably.
- 12 One must be cautious about inferring the layout of the actual structures from the survey maps since excavation of residential compounds almost always changes one’s understanding of the size and spatial arrangement of the group (see Hendon 1992b).

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## Chapter 9

# *Aztec Feasts, Rituals, and Markets*

### Political Uses of Ceramic Vessels in a Commercial Economy

MICHAEL E. SMITH, JENNIFER B. WHARTON,  
AND JAN MARIE OLSON

Some of the most vivid written accounts of Aztec society describe exclusive gatherings where the emperor hosted other kings and nobles in elaborate ceremonies consisting of sumptuous meals, theatrical rituals, formal speeches, and luxury gift-giving. These and other feasting events were important parts of Aztec political process. As in nearly all ancient complex societies, Aztec political feasts involved the use of a variety of distinctive ceramic serving vessels, allowing archaeologists to document aspects of ancient feasting. But unlike some of the societies described in this volume, neither the production nor the distribution of these feasting vessels appear to have been under the control of the state or the elite. Nearly all Aztec ceramic wares were manufactured by independent producers, and they were exchanged as commercial commodities in the marketplace.

The Aztec economy was the most highly commercialized economy of the ancient New World, and this had implications for the uses of ceramic vessels in political feasting. The Aztec economy consisted of two contrasting sectors: an open

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commercialized market sector, and a politically-controlled sector involving land, labor, and state finance. The market sector consisted of practices and institutions centered on a system of marketplaces found in virtually every town and city. Several forms of money were in regular circulation in these markets and at least two types of full-time entrepreneurial merchants could become quite wealthy from their trading expeditions. Most of these commercial activities were conducted outside of direct state control, and the overall volume of exchange was much higher than what the evidence suggests for the earlier civilizations of Mesoamerica (Smith and Berdan 2003). This dynamic and open market sector coexisted with a political sector that consisted of a system of city-states and an overarching empire. Within Aztec city-states, land and labor were under strict centralized political control. Nobles owned the land and rights to the labor of commoners, while kings extracted tribute from their subjects to finance both government institutions and the lavish lifestyle of the ruling elite.

Whereas the feasts of the nobility were associated with the political sector, the ceramic vessels employed in these feasts were obtained through the market sector. The Aztec state did not control the production, distribution, or consumption of ceramics. Even the fanciest and most valuable serving vessels were sold in the markets, available to commoners (Blanton 1996; Hodge and Minc 1990). As a result, the same types of elaborately-decorated polychrome vessels used at the highest level of imperial feasting could also be used for meals in commoner households. The one major exception to this pattern was a complex of distinctive ceramic vessels recovered in offerings at the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan. These objects, by far the most complex and elaborate of Aztec ceramics both aesthetically and symbolically, may have been manufactured under state control solely for placement in these offerings. These were the only true “state ceramics” in Aztec society, but they were not used for feasting or other kinds of activities by anyone outside of the Sacred Precinct of Tenochtitlan.

## AZTEC POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

At the time of Spanish conquest in the early sixteenth century, Aztec central Mexico was divided into a mosaic of city-states, most of which were subject to the Triple Alliance empire centered at Tenochtitlan (Berdan et al. 1996; Smith 1996). Although the surviving documentary sources are heavily biased toward the empire and its capital, the *altepetl*, or city-state, was the most important polity for local administration and regional political and economic dynamics (Lockhart 1992; Smith 2000). As we discuss below, feasting played important roles at both the imperial and city-state levels, although documentary descriptions of the latter are far less abundant.

The Aztec population was divided into two social classes—nobility and commoners. The Aztec nobility, a hereditary group, owned the land and controlled city-state government. There was considerable variation in wealth and power among the Aztec nobility, based upon the political level of the city-state and the closeness of kinship ties to kings. The top nobility lived in large, sumptuous palaces, whereas the lowest nobles probably lived a life little different from many commoners. The nobility was endogamous and marriages that crossed city-state lines were the norm. The class interests of the Aztec nobility transcended city-state and imperial organization and nobles from independent polities cooperated with one another to preserve and promote their power and privileges. Elite-sponsored feasts of the type Dietler (1996) calls “diacritical feasts” were a primary mechanism for the interaction and cooperation of nobles from diverse city-states.

Most Aztec commoners were members of residential units called *calpollis*. In contrast to earlier views of the *calpollis* that suggested communal land ownership and kinship-based membership, more recent research on Nahuatl-language documents by Lockhart (1992), Carrasco (1976), and others, shows that that nobles exerted control over the land and labor of the *calpollis*. The commoner class exhibited internal variation in wealth and power determined more by residence and tribute requirements than by kinship.

Everyone in Aztec society, except the Mexica emperor, paid tribute of some form. Tribute consisted of goods (agricultural and manufactured) and labor service. All commoners were subjects of a noble. Nobles paid tribute to their king, relying upon the labor of their commoner subjects to obtain or produce their tribute goods. Kings also paid tribute to other kings, either the rulers of more powerful polities, or else directly to the Aztec emperor.

The Aztec market sector—based upon commercial exchange—coexisted with the state control of land and tribute.<sup>1</sup> Almost every settlement, from the imperial capital to the smallest village, had a marketplace. Low-order markets met periodically (every five days in the Aztec calendar) and offered the basic necessities. Markets in city-state capitals might meet either periodically or daily, while the highest-order markets in large cities met daily. A diverse array of commodities were offered for sale in the markets (Berdan 1985; Hodge 1992; Smith 2003). Commercial exchanges were conducted using several forms of money. Individual cacao beans served for minor purchases, while cotton textiles of a standard size were used for larger purchases. Other forms of currency included gold dust and T-shaped copper “money axes” (Berdan et al. 2003; Hosler et al. 1990; Rojas 1998).

Several types of professional merchants worked out of the marketplaces (Berdan 1988; Rojas 1983). The famous *pochteca* (guild-organized long-distance traders) undertook lengthy and profitable expeditions, and often ran the major markets, where they served as judges. Less well documented were the regional merchants who undertook shorter journeys and often specialized in key commodities such as salt, cacao, and slaves (Berdan 1988). Finally, many sellers in the markets

were petty vendors, trading in craft goods and agricultural products produced by their family.

Both sectors of the Aztec economy—state-administered and market—expanded and intensified greatly in imperial times (A.D. 1428–1519). During this period the empire came to incorporate much of northern Mesoamerica, the power of the Mexica rulers grew, the capital city Tenochtitlan expanded, there was an acceleration of public rituals centered on the Templo Mayor, and there was an increasing abundance of imported luxury goods arriving in the capital through mechanisms of tribute and commerce. The role of ceramic vessels within this vibrant social and economic context is the subject of the present chapter.

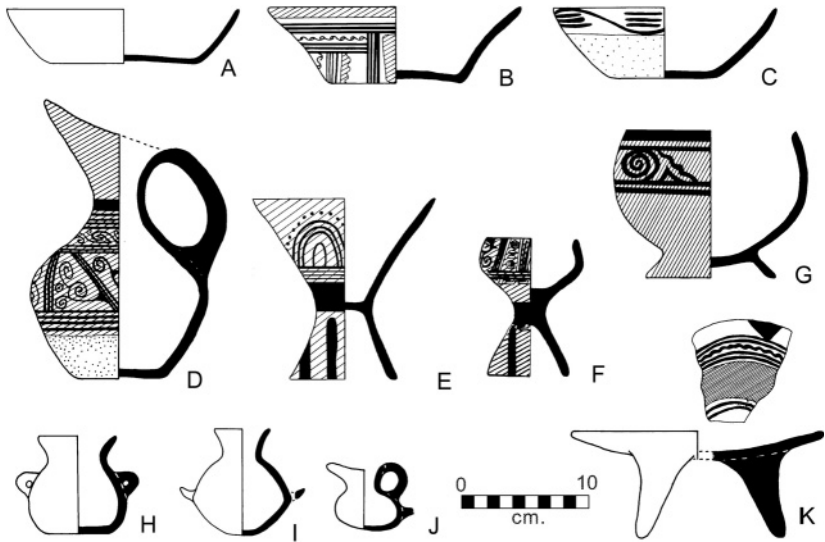
## AZTEC CERAMICS AND SOCIETY

### A Functional Approach to Aztec Ceramic Vessels

Although archaeologists have been studying and publishing on Aztec ceramics for a century (Batres 1902; Boas and Gamio 1921), there are few studies that approach this material from a functional perspective. Brumfiel (1991) has used relative frequencies of cooking jars and tortilla griddles to investigate changing patterns of women's domestic activities in the Basin of Mexico, and Smith has used frequencies of different vessel forms to examine various household activities and conditions in Aztec-period Morelos (Olson 2001; Smith 1996, 2002; Smith and Heath-Smith 1994). In another important contribution, García Chávez et al. (1999) describe a form-based classification of Early and Late Aztec ceramics from Tenochtitlan. Most archaeologists, however, have used Aztec ceramics to date sites and to study production and exchange. Art historians, who have concentrated on whole ceramic vessels, have analyzed these using an aesthetic and symbolic framework, limiting their attention to a few outstanding individual pieces (e.g., Bonifaz Nuño and Robles 1981; Heyden 1987; Pasztory 1983).

To investigate the uses and sociopolitical significance of ceramic vessels, however, archaeologists must develop and apply methods of functional analysis (e.g., Henrickson and McDonald 1983; Lesure 1998; Smith 1985). This requires the use of classifications based upon form and the application of a variety of techniques of functional inference for vessel forms. We have begun to apply this kind of approach to the archaeological ceramics of Morelos (Olson 2001; Smith n.d.a, n.d.b) and to the study of ceramic vessels in the pictorial codices (Wharton 1999). But until there are more studies of Aztec ceramic collections from a functional (or at least form-based) perspective, our interpretations must remain somewhat provisional in character.

Smith (n.d.a, n.d.b) has proposed a form-based functional classification of Morelos Postclassic ceramics that consists of six major categories, each of which has numerous constituent functional types. The six categories are: **servicing**



**Figure 9.1.** Aztec serving vessels from sites in Morelos. a–c) bowls; d) pitcher; e–f) cups; g) goblet; h–j) miniature vessels; k) tripod plate (from Smith n.d.b; drawings by Benjamin Karis).

**vessels** (bowls, plates, cups, pitchers, and miniature vessels); **kitchen vessels** (jars, griddles, basins, grinding bowls, and ladles); **ritual objects** (censers, figurines, sculptures, and a variety of small ceramic objects such as bells, whistles, and pipes); **production tools** (spindle whorls, spinning bowls, molds, and sherd scrapers); **other domestic items** (a catch-all category); and **special offering vessels** (various effigy vessels, polychrome bottles, and archaic vessels found only in buried offerings). In this paper we focus on serving vessels, and we employ the following subclasses of that category: drinking vessels (pitchers and several types of cups or goblets), bowls, tripod plates, and miniature vessels. Examples of these forms of serving vessels from Smith’s excavations in Morelos are illustrated in Figure 9.1. These functional interpretations are based upon the physical attributes of the vessels, information in the ethnohistoric sources, and analogies with the traditional ceramics of modern Mesoamerica. Further elaboration of this form-based approach to the Aztec-period ceramics of Morelos can be found in two unpublished studies (Smith n.d.a, n.d.b).

### The Absence of Aztec State and Elite Pottery

The high level of commercialization of the Aztec economy and the role of ceramic production and exchange within that economy produced a situation in which no specific class or style of ceramic vessels (with one exception, discussed below) were strongly linked to the state or to the elite class.



For purposes of our analysis, we define state pottery as ceramic vessels that are: (1) produced and/or exchanged under state control; and/or (2) distributed or consumed in contexts that advanced the political agenda of rulers or elites. The elaborate polychrome jars and other vessels distributed by the Inca state provide an example of state pottery. These vessels are common in the Cuzco area (Bauer 1999; Rowe 1944), but have a more limited distribution in provincial areas, where they are found at Inca administrative centers like Huánuco Pampa or Hatún Xauxa and in provincial towns and villages at the residences of local rulers (Bray, this volume; see also Malpass 1993; Morris and Thompson 1985). Although recent fieldwork has shown that Inca-style polychrome jars were manufactured in several places in the provinces far from Cuzco, the evidence suggests that production and distribution were both under state control (D'Altroy and Bishop 1990; Hayashida 1999). Morris's excavations at Huánuco Pampa, although only very incompletely published, suggest that Inca polychromes were used in state-sponsored feasts in which local rulers were wined and dined by Inca officials (Morris 1979, 1998; Morris and Thompson 1985).

There was no Aztec equivalent to Inca state pottery. The fanciest ceramics in general circulation—in terms of their elaborate polychrome decoration—were Cholula polychromes (Figure 9.2) (Lind 1994; McCafferty 1996a; Noguera 1954), the only type of serving ware the Mexica emperor Motecuhzoma would reportedly use for his meals (Díaz del Castillo 1963:226). These ceramics were manufactured in a variety of places in the Puebla/Tlaxcala region (Neff et al. 1994) and traded widely throughout central Mexico (Smith et al. 1999b). Their production was probably overseen by local nobles (Pohl 2003), and there is no evidence that the Aztec empire controlled, or even influenced, their production or distribution.

Several types of ceramic vessels manufactured in Tenochtitlan and other parts of the Aztec imperial core (the Basin of Mexico) are found in the imperial provinces, but all evidence points to their exchange through commercial channels rather than state-controlled networks. The most common type, Aztec III Black-on-Orange, was manufactured in a number of areas of the Basin of Mexico (Hodge et al. 1993), and provincial peoples obtained such wares from several distinct production centers (Smith et al. 1999b). The frequency of this ceramic type outside of the Basin exhibits an exponential fall-off curve with distance (Smith 1990), a pattern consistent with commercial exchange processes. This and other Basin of Mexico types (e.g., Texcoco fabric-marked salt vessels, Xochimilco polychrome jars, and Chalco polychrome plates) occur in both elite and commoner domestic contexts in Morelos, which is another indicator of the operation of market exchange (see below). Documentary sources list ceramic vessels among goods for sale in Aztec markets, and there is no indication in the written sources that ceramics were manufactured by attached specialists as was the case for luxury goods such as featherwork, lapidary products, and stone. There is a special category of ceramic

vessels, however, that can probably be considered Aztec state pottery—the highly elaborate vessels placed in offerings at the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan.

### Elite Pottery: Excavations of Houses in Morelos

The modern Mexican state of Morelos, located immediately south of the Basin of Mexico, was the former home of two tributary provinces of the Aztec empire. Excavations at a number of sites in Morelos focusing on the houses of nobles and commoners provide evidence suggesting that “elite pottery” is not a valid category for Aztec central Mexico. Smith has excavated at the urban center of Yau-tepec in central Morelos, a city-state capital (Hare and Smith 1996; Smith et al. 1999a), and at the town of Cuexcomate and the village of Capilco—both in western Morelos (Smith 1992, 1993, 1994b). One of the principal questions guiding the research at these sites focused on the identification of the social and economic activities of elites and commoners.

In our research we have used clear and obvious distinctions in architectural size and quality to identify elite and commoner houses, and our ceramic data come from middens associated with both types of houses. While we have found evidence for social variation within the commoner and elite classes, for purposes of this paper we consider only the aggregate categories of elite and commoner to investigate the association of particular ceramic forms or types with social class (for further information, including discussion of intra-class variation, see Olson 2001).

Many discussions of ancient elites note the contrasting patterns of domestic artifacts which define them as a separate group of people participating in distinctive and often exclusive activities (for example, see the papers in Chase and Chase 1992; LeCount 1999). This implies privileged access to objects used for the display of status. In Morelos, however, Smith’s residential excavations do not reveal any artifact categories with exclusive elite or commoner associations (Olson 2001; Smith 1999; Smith and Heath-Smith 1994). The fact that imported and high-value ceramics and other objects (including greenstone jewelry and bronze needles) were not limited to elite households suggests that these items were purchased through markets rather than through reciprocal exchange relationships between elites. Hirth (1998) argues that this lack of exclusive elite associations is a marker of the operation of markets, with the implication that elites did not monopolize or control the distribution of ceramics and other goods. Smith (1999) modified Hirth’s general argument and presented data from sites in western Morelos that conform to the expectations of the market model (for ethnohistoric documentation of the prevalence of markets in Postclassic Morelos, see Smith 1994a; 1999; n.d.b). This same pattern is also found at Yau-tepec (Olson 2001).

Although there were some sumptuary rules in Aztec society,<sup>2</sup> commoners were not forbidden to purchase expensive and valuable items in the markets. For



**Figure 9.2.** Cholula polychrome sherd. Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History (Catalog No. 30.0/6082) (photograph by Michael E. Smith).

example, the most elaborately-decorated ware at these sites—the imported Cholula polychromes (see Figure 9.2)—occurs in low frequencies in almost all excavated contexts, elite and commoner. Although commoners could and did purchase expensive items, their ability to obtain such goods was limited by their purchasing power. Olson (2001) has identified a number of individual ceramic types (mostly imported and decorated bowls) that show statistically significant differences in frequency between elite and commoner houses. In the general vessel categories under discussion here, the major differences between elites and commoners are that elite middens contain more serving vessels and fewer ritual objects than commoner middens (Table 9.1). There was little difference between elites and commoners in overall access to imported vessels. The data in Table 9.1 are provisional summaries based upon middens from the Atlan (A.D. 1300–1440) and Molotla (A.D. 1440–1550) phases. There is one elite residence in each phase (unit 512); the Atlan phase has eight commoner houses and the Molotla phase has five. More detailed data and analyses may be found in Olson (2001).

Although we initially expected that decorated vessels used to serve beverages—i.e., cups, goblets, and pitchers—would be more common in elite contexts, the Atlan phase showed the reverse pattern, and the Molotla phase witnessed only a minor predominance in elite contexts (Table 9.1). Only a few rare

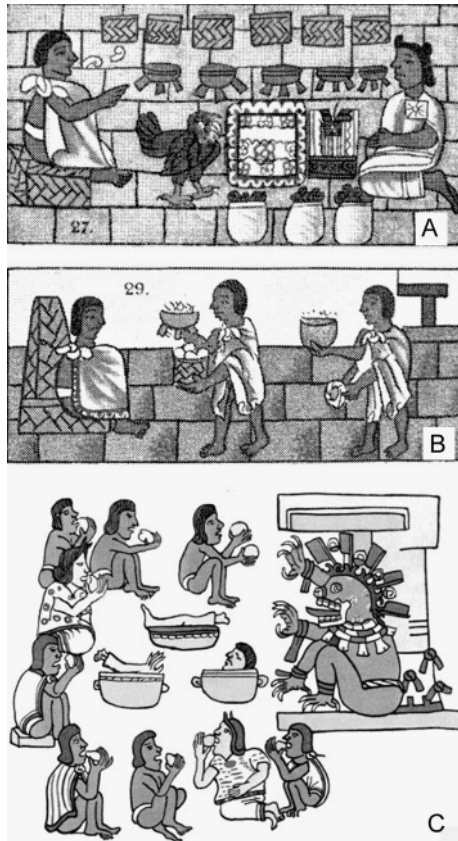
**Table 9.1. Elite/Commoner Comparisons of Vessel Types, Yautepec.**

Category	Atlan phase		Molotla phase	
	Commoner	Elite	Commoner	Elite
<b>Major Functional Classes (% of total ceramics)</b>				
Serving Vessels	44.7	49.2	39.6	42.5
Kitchen Objects	37.3	39.6	35.2	45.2
Ritual Objects	8.7	5.7	10.0	5.2
Production Objects	4.4	3.1	6.8	3.8
Other Domestic Objects	4.0	2.1	6.7	1.5
Total Vessels and Objects	4,827	1,305	5,687	1,419
<b>Serving Vessels (% of total serving)</b>				
Cups and Pitchers	4.8	2.6	6.5	7.5
Bowls	93.4	96.5	90.2	90.7
Miniature vessels	1.8	0.9	3.3	1.8
Imports	19.6	19.7	15.3	15.5
Type B5 Polychrome bowls	0.6	2.2	0.0	0.3
Number of Serving Vessels	2188	644	2393	612

polychrome bowl types (types B5 and C4) showed elite associations. These are rare types of Tlahaica polychrome bowl with complex geometric decoration that may have been imported from eastern Morelos (Smith n.d.b). We do not believe, however, that these two types were used in feasting or other special elite events to any greater extent than other, more abundant, types of polychrome bowls. A methodological problem in the study of ancient feasting behavior comes into play here: it may be difficult or impossible to distinguish feasting behavior from regular consumption behavior from the intermingled remains of these activities in domestic middens. The main conclusion that we wish to emphasize from these observations is that there are no decorated or imported ceramic wares consistently associated with either elite or commoner residences.

## AZTEC FEASTING

Documentary descriptions of Aztec society suggest that competitive feasting was an important part of political and social dynamics at all levels, from the integration of subordinate kings within the Aztec empire to celebrations marking life cycle events and other social occasions in commoner households. The Mexica emperors invited the kings of both subject and enemy states to elaborate celebratory events such as coronations, funerals, and temple dedications conducted in Tenochtitlan



**Figure 9.3.** Aztec feasting scenes: a. preparation for a merchant's banquet (Sahagún 1950–82, Bk.9, plate 27); b. presentation of food at a banquet (Sahagún 1950–82, Bk.9, plate 29); c. ritual feast with human sacrifice and cannibalism before an image of the death god Mictlantecutli (*Codex Magliabechiano* 1983, p. 73).

out of public view (Figure 9.3a, b). As described in the works of Durán and the other chroniclers, these events included gift-giving, human sacrifices and other rituals, speeches, theatrical presentations, and the consumption of food and drink (Smith 1986). Brumfiel (1998) has shown that one of the purposes of these imperial celebrations was to engage the loyalty and support of the nobility of the Basin of Mexico for the imperial enterprise of Tenochtitlan. In this imperial endeavor, reciprocal gift giving was a key component (Zorita 1963:188–189). These events resemble the competitive Philippine feasts described by Junker (1999:313), with the difference that the resultant “community cohesion and social rank differentiation” in the Aztec feasts accrued to the high nobility alone rather than to the entire

community or polity. These events, with their emphasis on inequality between ruler and vassal lords, appear to pertain to Dietler's (1996:96–97) category of the "patron-role feast."

Documentation of the nature and content of Aztec political dynamics at the city-state level is much less abundant compared to the imperial level (Hodge 1984, 1997; Lockhart 1992; Smith 2000). We are not familiar with sources that discuss the practice of political feasting by local kings, although this lack may derive from the nature of the available sources. Sahagún gives numerous examples of feasting in connection with commoner life-cycle events and special celebrations such as the sacrifice of an enemy soldier captured by a household member. Sahagún (1950–82:Bk.4:117–124) contrasts the elaborate etiquette, special foods, and sumptuousness of feasts among the nobility with the simpler, poorer feasts held by commoners, which suggests that the former can be categorized "diacritical feasts" in Dietler's (1996:98–99) scheme. The feasts hosted by city-state lords involved the use of exclusive cuisine and styles of consumption that create and reinforce distinctions in social status (see also Douglas and Isherwood 1979). In the Aztec case, these exclusive practices did not include the forms and types of ceramic vessels used, however.

Another type of social event resembling political feasts in some ways was the ritual feast. Although most "secular" feasts at all levels involved some sort of ritual activities, special meals on specific ceremonial occasions had a more strongly religious orientation than a political or social one. Beyond the simple offering of food and drink to the gods at temples and shrines, many ceremonies included specific consumption of food and drink at temples as a specified part of the celebration. For example, worship of Mictlantecuhtli and other death gods sometimes involved the consumption of human flesh in and around the temple (Figure 9.3c), and worship of the pulque deities included heavy consumption of that drink (Nicholson 1991; see Figure 9.4a). At these ritual feasts the gods, in their guises as sculptures or other sacra, were participants.

Nearly all documentary descriptions of Aztec feasts mention the consumption of *pulque* (or *octli*) and cacao. *Pulque* is a fermented beverage produced from the sap of the maguey plant. Although a number of early writers, particularly Sahagún (1950–82) and other missionaries, state that *pulque* was forbidden to all but the elderly, it seems clear from both pictorial and written sources that *pulque* was consumed quite often at Aztec rituals and feasts. This consumption went beyond the specific ceremonies dedicated to the pulque gods (Nicholson 1991). According to Patricia Anawalt (1993:34), "*pulque* was used in contexts the Aztecs regarded as legitimate far more often than Sahagún implies when in his proselytizing missionary mode. Indeed the ritual use of *pulque* may have been almost a commonplace event in Aztec society."<sup>3</sup> Cacao was also consumed in both rituals and feasts (Coe 1994; Coe and Coe 1996). Cacao drinks were made in several varieties, almost all of which had some kind of narcotic effect. Most discussions

of *pulque* and cacao use among the Aztecs stress their ritual use, iconography, and associations with myths and deities (e.g., Anawalt 1993; Coe 1994; Coe and Coe 1996; Gonçalves de Lima 1956; Nicholson 1991; Taube 1993). The study of the social contexts and implications of these drinks, however, is still in its infancy.

John Pohl (1998, 1999, 2003) has assembled information on Postclassic political feasting in the Mixteca-Puebla area, where elaborate polychrome vessels were used in conjunction with painted codices and murals to establish and maintain alliances among independent city-states. The mythological and social contexts of these feasting events—and the vessel assemblages employed (Lind 1994)—differ among the three linguistic groups of the Mixteca-Puebla area: the Zapotecs of Mitla and the Valley of Oaxaca, the Mixtecs of the Mixteca Alta, and the Eastern Nahuas of Puebla and Tlaxcala. It is uncertain whether the processes discussed by Pohl operated in the Western Nahua area (the Basin of Mexico and Morelos), however. There were major differences in social organization between the Eastern and Western Nahuas (Chance 2000; Lockhart 1992:102–110), and the ceramic assemblages in the latter area differed from those of the Mixteca-Puebla area in several important ways, in particular the suite of vessel forms, including serving ware, was different; decorated ceramics were far less elaborately painted; and the complex, “Mixteca-Puebla style” polychromes (such as Cholula polychrome) were far less frequent in the Aztec heartland. Chalco polychrome, the only Mixteca-Puebla polychrome type manufactured in the Basin of Mexico (Neff et al. 1994; Séjourné 1983), constitutes a low-frequency decorated ware in most of the Aztec heartland, where simpler decorated styles like Aztec black-on-orange and redwares predominated.

## Ceramics Used in Aztec Feasting

The most abundant source of information on ceramic vessels used in feasting contexts are the Aztec codices. Additional pictorial information can be found in the illustrations accompanying Spanish texts such as those of Fray Diego Durán (1967); in architectural murals and friezes such as those at Cholula (McCafferty 1996b), Tepotzlan (Nicholson 1991; Seler 1990–98b), and Tlaxcala (Pohl 1998); and in the iconography of artifacts such as the Bilimek *pulque* vessel (Taube 1993). Overall, these depictions tend to fall into one of three categories: 1) state-sponsored public religious ceremonies, 2) elite banquets hosted by the ruler, and 3) domestic celebrations. Based on supporting evidence from the ethnohistoric texts, all three categories of events included music, dancing, gift-giving, incense burning, drinking, and consuming an assortment of foods.

As pictured most often in the codices, festive events involved the consumption of alcoholic beverages, meat stews, tortillas and tamales, and cacao.

The choice of food and beverages was often dictated by the type of event being celebrated, as was the selection of appropriate serving vessels. Several varieties of food were restricted to either certain social classes—e.g., cacao and the elite—or specific celebrations—e.g., amaranth dough and various monthly feasts. Other foods were more commonplace within Aztec society, such as tamales and tortillas, but still played an important role in ceremonial activities by their very nature as a staple good (Coe 1994; Ortíz de Montellano 1990).

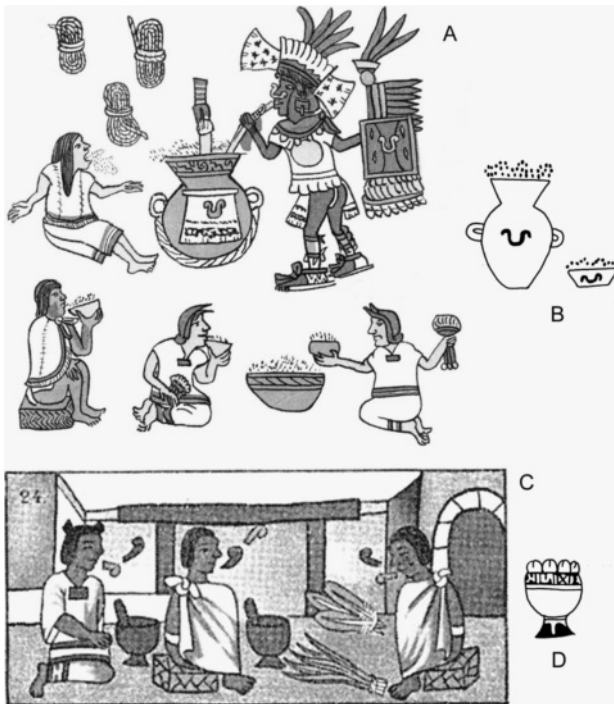
In the codices, food was depicted in a variety of serving vessels ranging from durable ceramic and stone to perishable basketry and gourds. For the most part, each type of food was associated with its own diagnostic vessel, which greatly facilitates the identification of foodstuffs in the iconography of the codices, murals, and sculpture and allows for the creation of functional typologies of vessels recovered archaeologically. Primary categories to be discussed below include pulque jars and bowls, cacao goblets and jars, shallow serving vessels, and tripod bowls.<sup>4</sup>

### Pulque Jars and Bowls

In the codices, jars used for the preparation and serving of *pulque* were most often depicted as large, narrow-necked, double-handled, rounded-bottom ollas stabilized on what appear to be coiled rope stands. The most diagnostic characteristic that immediately identifies the vessel as a *pulque* container is the crescent shaped *yacametzli* symbol, representing the *pulque* god's nose ornament (Figures 9.4a, b) (Codex Magliabechiano 1983:85; Codex Mendoza 1992:f.61r; Códice Tudela 1980:70). It is unclear, however, how often the *yacametzli* symbol was actually applied to the vessel itself (either as an appliqué or painted decoration). Perhaps it was merely a method of identifying *pulque* jars in the codices. We know of only one such ceramic vessel with a painted *yacametzli* element, which is on display at the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City. Stone tripod vessels with vertical flanges known as “winged *pulque* vessels” also have large *yacametzli* elements similar to the depictions of such vessels in the Codex Mendoza (folios 46r, 65r); several of these are also on display at the Museo Nacional (see also Bankmann 1984:317).

In other codices, however, the *yacametzli* is not apparent, and *pulque* jars are distinguished from other ollas by a flowing concentration of dots representing *pulque* foam at the mouth of the jar (Figure 9.4a, b; cf., Sahagún 1950–82: Bk.1, pl. 42). This froth also appeared at the top of special forms of *pulque* serving vessels and bowls (Codex Mendoza, folios 61r, 70r), and occasionally spewing out of the mouth of the drinker (Codex Magliabecchiano, p. 85). Froth was also depicted foaming from the mouths of cacao serving vessels, but it usually appeared as mounded at the top of the vessel rather than overflowing the sides and can for the most part be clearly distinguished from the foam associated with *pulque* (cf., Codex Magliabecchiano, pp. 67, 68, 72).





**Figure 9.4.** Ceramic drinking vessels as depicted in the Aztec codices: a. ritual *pulque* feast with a *pulque* jar with the *yacameztli* symbol (out of which a *pulque* deity is drinking through a straw) and *pulque* drinking and serving bowls (*Codex Magliabechiano* 1983, p. 85); b. *pulque* jar and drinking bowl with the *yacameztli* symbol (*Codex Mendoza* 1992, folio 61r); c. cacao goblets with stirring sticks (Sahagún 1950–82, Bk.9, plate 24); d. cacao goblet (*Codex Mendoza* 1992, folio 68r).

Several specially shaped *pulque* vessels were reserved for ceremonial and ritual use. These included the “stone rabbit vessel” or *ometochtecomatl* depicted in the Florentine Codex (Sahagún 1950–82: Bk.4, plate 12), ceramic and stone winged *pulque* vessels of the same name, and the Bilimek *pulque* vessel. The rabbit vessel emphasized the close symbolic relationship among the moon, rabbits, and *pulque*, and was reserved for special celebrations on Two Rabbit, an important day in the 260-day calendar (Anawalt 1993; Nicholson 1991). The “two rabbit vessel” was also closely related to the winged *pulque* vessels depicted on cloaks in the *Codex Mendoza* (folios 46r, 52r, 65r; also Anawalt 1993) and found elsewhere archaeologically (Bankmann 1984). The imagery carved on the Bilimek vessel, which includes a representation of a winged *pulque* vessel collecting the liquid pouring from the breasts of the goddess Mayahuel, associated *pulque* with the souls of dead, sacrificed warriors, and the night sky (Taube 1993).

*Pulque* was usually drunk from small ceramic bowls with either round or flat bases (Figure 9.4a, b). As with the jars, these were most often depicted with irregular foam overflowing the rim of the vessel. Only occasionally and most often in Codex Mendoza (folios 61r, 65r, 71r) was the *yacametzli* symbol associated with the bowl. In other examples, the codices relied for the most part on the context of the situation to identify *pulque* bowls. During ritual occasions, celebrants were frequently depicted each with their own bowl sitting or cavorting around a centrally placed *pulque* jar (cf., Codex Magliabecchiano, p. 85; Codex Tudela, p. 70). A much earlier depiction of drinking bowls, presumably for *pulque*, is illustrated in the Bebedores mural at Cholula dating to the Early Classic (McCafferty 1996a; 1996b). In the Codex Mendoza (folios 70r, 71r), the *pulque* bowl was used to convey drunkenness, particularly as a socially unacceptable behavior.

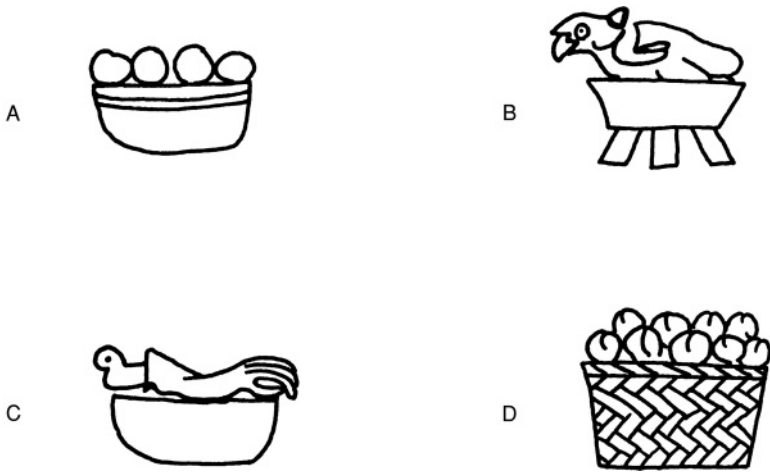
Ollas and bowls frequently appear in the codices in a variety of contexts not identified with *pulque* or drinking. Generally, these vessels are easily identified by the context, their lack of either the *yacametzli* symbol or characteristic foam, or by other contents. Sahagún makes mention of sacred cups which held chocolate, and special tortoise shell cups for the elderly (1950–82, Bk.8, p.28). Ollas were frequently depicted in tribute lists with a variety of contents other than *pulque* in the Codices Mendoza and Osuna (1947), and in situations of either food preparation or storage.

### Cacao Goblets and Gourd Bowls

Along with the *pulque* jars and bowls, another readily identifiable vessel in the codices are cacao containers (Figure 9.4c, d). Most often they are depicted as high quality, decorated goblets with a characteristic froth at the mouth of the vessel that is distinguishable from *pulque* foam by its rounded shape (Figure 9.4d; cf. Codex Tudela, pp.55, 58, 59, Codex Magliabecchiano, pp. 67, 68, 72). Cacao bowls and goblets were frequently identified as being made of painted or varnished gourds (Sahagún 1950–82, Bk.8, p.40; Codex Mendoza, folios 68r, 47r, 39r), but could also be made of stone or ceramic (Berdan and Anawalt 1997:219; also Figures 9.1g and 9.9).<sup>5</sup> Gourd vessels in general were polished, burnished, varnished, and painted. They appear in a variety of shapes and size to be used as drinking vessels, *atole* vessels, jars, and for drinking cacao (Sahagún 1950–82, Bk.10, p.78). The Florentine Codex frequently depicts goblet-shaped vessels in feasting scenarios, especially among merchants (Sahagún 1950–82, Bk.9, pl. 24), although the beverage may not always have been chocolate. (Figure 9.4c).

### Serving Bowls

Apart from containing beverages, bowls were used to serve a variety of foods. The most frequent depictions of bowls show them filled with tamales, often held by individuals in a manner similar to *pulque* bowls at feasting events, or as a



**Figure 9.5.** Ceramic serving vessels as depicted in the Aztec codices: a. serving bowl with tamales (*Codex Magliabechiano* 1983, p.69); b. tripod serving bowl with cooked turkey (*Codex Mendoza* 1992, folio 68r); c. serving bowl with human flesh (*Codex Magliabechiano* 1983, p.72); d. basket with tamales (*Codex Mendoza* 1992, folio 68r).

tribute item to either a god or dead king (Figure 9.5a; cf., *Codex Tudela*, pp.3, 58, 72, *Codex Magliabecchiano*, pp.69, 72, *Codex Michoacan* (1980), folios 20, 35; Durán 1971, pl. 12). Other food items depicted in bowls included maize kernels or ears, meat from wild game and fowl (Figure 9.5b), and human flesh (Figure 9.4c; cf., *Codex Huemantla*, *Codex Mendoza*, folios 61r, 68r; Durán 1971, pl. 8, 12; *Codex Ramírez*, pl. 26). These vessels could also be used as sauce bowls and stew containers (Berdan and Anawalt 1997:164), often with meat depicted prominently at the mouth of the vessel (Figure 9.5b; cf., *Codex Mendoza*, folios 61r, 68r).

The majority of the bowls are shallow with round bottoms and seldom decorated. Variations upon this basic portrayal include bowls with wide, flat bases; tripod and footed bowls and plates; and larger earthenware basins with handles. These types of vessels seem to have been widely available in the marketplace. The Florentine Codex offers the following description of these marketplace offerings “[there were] . . . bowls—wooden bowls, polished ones, reddish ones, offering bowls, merchant’s bowls, white ones, black bowls; . . . sauce bowls—incised, sauce bowls which have been polished; frying sauce bowls, frying bowls” (Sahagún 1950–82: Bk.11, p.83). Sahagún also refers to “. . . flat cooking plates, and sauce vessels, and earthen cups, and everything [made of] earthenware.” (1950–82: Bk.9, p.69). Other earthenware vessels described in the document include ollas, jugs, braziers, incense burners, and griddles used in the preparation of foods and feasting activities.

Standardization in serving wares did not follow any discernible pattern in the codices. The Florentine Codex depicts both tripod and shallow bowls for sale at market and in use for feasting, although it appears as though individual serving dishes or sauce bowls were mostly footed vessels. In most of the codices, tamales seem to have been served in shallow bowls, except in the Xicotepec Codex (Stresser-Péan 1995) and Durán (1967), while meat dishes, both human and game, tended to be served in tripod vessels, although this is by no means a consistent association.

### Discussion of Aztec Feasting Vessels

The majority of the vessels depicted in feasting scenarios in the Aztec codices are related to the activities of drinking and serving food. With regard to form, the most common containers are *pulque* jars, round-bottomed bowls, shallow bowls, tripod-footed bowls, and goblets. Some of these vessel forms can be readily identified with known archaeological examples. For example, distinctive ring-based goblets from several Aztec sites (Figures 9.1g, 9.9) correspond closely to the cacao serving vessels in the codices. Unfortunately, most of the vessels in the codices lack distinguishing characteristics (beyond their shape) such as surface treatment or decoration to identify these wares as appropriate for elite use or at specific festal events. Archaeological serving vessels such as simple bowls or tripod plates (Figure 9.1a–c, k) could have been used in both feasts and everyday meals. Two of the most common and distinctive archaeological serving vessels—polished red pitchers and biconical cups (Figure 9.1d, e)—are only rarely depicted in the codices, making it difficult to determine whether these were used for *pulque*, cacao, or some other beverage.

The kinds of vessels shown in feasting activities in the Aztec codices are similar to feasting wares from other cultures. As suggested in other chapters in this volume, vessels used in feasting generally include some combination of high quality production and finish, intricate stylistic elaboration, religious or other meaningful iconography, evidence of foreign importation, an emphasis on serving-related forms, and an emphasis on drinking vessels (see also Arnold 1999; Dietler 1990, 1996; Gero 1992; Junker 1999; Reents-Budet 1998; Reents-Budet et al. 2000).

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL DEPOSITS OF WHOLE VESSELS

Because of the difficulty of identifying feasting events from the ceramics in domestic middens, the clearest archaeological evidence for Aztec feasting comes from special caches or offerings where collections of whole ceramic vessels were deposited. Most of the offerings that have been recorded to date seem to contain the remains of feasting activities, although the offerings at the Templo Mayor of

Tenochtitlan contain a very different kind of ceramic vessel. In this section we review the major published examples of ceramic vessel deposits from Aztec sites, starting with the Templo Mayor.

## Imperial-Level Ritual: The Templo Mayor Offerings of Tenochtitlan

The offerings found at the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan are the most spectacular and well-known Aztec deposits ever excavated (López Luján 1994, 1998; Matos Moctezuma 1999). Heyden (1987) notes that these deposits contained fewer than 100 ceramic vessels and objects out of several thousand total items. Unfortunately, there is no published catalog or systematic study of the ceramics. We have reviewed existing publications on the Templo Mayor offerings (e.g., Batres 1979; Broda et al. 1987; Heyden 1987; López Luján 1994; Matos Moctezuma 1988; 1989; Nagao 1985; Román Berrelleza and López Luján 1999) and general books on Aztec art (Bonifaz Nuño and Robles 1981; Longhena 1998; Matos Moctezuma 1990; Pasztory 1983) to assemble a list of nearly 40 ceramic vessels that have been illustrated and described adequately for a basic functional classification. A classification of these vessels is provided in Table 9.2. These data are very incomplete, since they are heavily biased in favor of unusual and fine objects that are illustrated in publications. Nevertheless, they do give an idea of the vessel assemblages of the Templo Mayor offerings. Figure 9.6 illustrates a few of these vessels.

The striking thing about the Templo Mayor vessels, apart from their “extraordinary quality” (Heyden 1987:109), is that many are unique forms not found in other Aztec archaeological deposits (Leonardo López Luján has remarked

**Table 9.2. Vessel Types in Templo Mayor Offerings**

Category	#vessels	%
<b>Censers:</b>	22	31.9
Long-handled censers	12	17.4
Braziers	6	8.7
Effigy censers	4	5.8
<b>Special Offering Vessels:</b>	47	68.1
Tlaloc vases	3	4.3
Other effigy vessels	5	7.2
Polychrome bottles	3	4.3
Musical Instruments	7	10.1
Sculptures	26	37.7
Antiques	3	4.3
<b>Total</b>	69	100.0



**Figure 9.6.** Sketches of ceramic vessels from offerings at the Templo Mayor: a. Tlaloc jar (after Bonifaz and Robles 1981, pl. 54); b. effigy jar (after Bonifaz and Robles 1981, pl. 77); c. miniature effigy censer (after López Luján 1994:257); d. ceramic drum (Matos 1989:144) (drawings by Benjamin Karis).

on the absence of domestic ceramic forms in the Templo Mayor offerings; personal communication, 1999). Long-handled censers are the most common form. Compared to other such censers found at Aztec sites, the Templo Mayor examples tend to have much fancier polychrome painted and modeled decoration. The unique forms are the effigy censers and a variety of other special offering vessels. The various effigy vessels are particularly interesting. The lack of these forms in other Aztec deposits, coupled with their resemblance to forms common at the ancient cities of Teotihuacan, Tula, and Monte Alban, suggest that they were produced as part of the Mexica state program of invoking the art of past imperial cities and

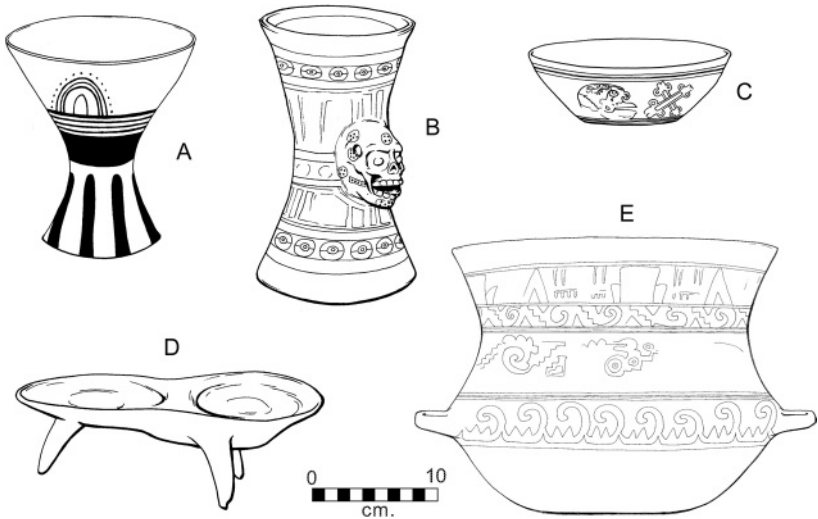
cultures to promote their own legitimacy as imperial rulers (Umberger 1987, 1996). This interpretation is strengthened by the presence of a Thin-orange vessel from Classic-period Teotihuacan and an Early Postclassic plumbate jar (probably from Tula) in a burial at the Eagle Warriors House adjacent to the Templo Mayor (López Luján et al. 2000; Román Berrelleza and López Luján 1999). Other vessels in the Templo Mayor offerings include polychrome bottles with elaborate iconographic messages relating to sacrifice and fertility (Seler 1990–98a), and various unique and puzzling polychrome vessels.

This assemblage of special offering vessels may qualify as Aztec state pottery. Although we do not yet have data on their production characteristics apart from the heirloom Teotihuacan Thin-orange pot (see López Luján et al. 2000), it seems reasonable to suggest that they were produced under state direction, specifically for the Templo Mayor offerings. This interpretation is based on the symbolic importance of the Templo Mayor, the absence of such vessels at other sites and deposits, and their high aesthetic and technological quality. There is little evidence that any of these vessels were used in feasting.

### **Imperial-Level Feasting: The “Volador” Deposit**

In 1937, Eduardo Noguera excavated an offering at the possible location of the volador ritual near the Templo Mayor. In the volador ceremony several individuals, whose feet were tied to long ropes wrapped around a tall pole, leapt off the pole to “fly” in circles as the ropes unwound. The offering consisted of approximately 1,000 ceramic vessels and a stone sculpture placed in a stone-lined chamber. The excavation was never published in detail, although three decades later Noguera (1968) published a brief account in which he speculated that the deposit derived from a ceremony marking the “New Fire” event that was celebrated every 52 years and accompanied by the breaking and discarding of household possessions. Most of the ceramics from this deposit are now curated in the Museo Nacional de Antropología; photos of 897 vessels have been published by Solís and Morales (1991). Additional vessels from the Volador deposit, now in the collections of the Field Museum of Natural History, are illustrated in McVicker (1992).

The composition of the Volador vessel assemblage resembles neither domestic ceramic assemblages nor the contents of archaeological deposits more securely linked to the New Fire ceremony (e.g., Elson and Smith 2001). In fact, this collection is notable for the predominance of serving vessels (96% of all vessels), the majority of which ( $n = 542$ ) are polished redware drinking cups with flared walls (Figure 9.7a). Bi-level oval tripod plates produced in Aztec III black-on-orange ware (Figure 9.7d) are also common in the volador deposit. There are also a small number of highly elaborate white-based polychrome vessels, including three tall cups with modeled skulls (Figure 9.7b) and several large urns (Figure 9.7e). Two types of simple bowls with painted skull-and-crossbones designs are also



**Figure 9.7.** Sketches of ceramic vessels from the volador offering: a. flaring-wall redware cup (after Solís and Morales 1991:175); b. tall white-based polychrome cup (after McVicker 1992:45); c. redware polychrome bowl (after Solís and Morales 1991:80); d. Aztec III black-on-orange bi-level tripod plate (after Solís and Morales 1991:26); e. white-based polychrome basin (after Solís and Morales 1991:292). (Drawings by Benjamin Karis).

present: polychromes on a red base (Figure 9.7c) and polychromes on a white base (Figure 9.8). The most likely functional interpretation of the volador vessels is that they were used in some kind of feasting event involving the drinking of *pulque*. The lack of pitchers is surprising, however. Finely-made polished redware pitchers are found with redware drinking cups in Aztec domestic middens. The Volador collection also contains some imported vessels, including a group of bowls from Morelos that may have been manufactured specifically for a Mexica patron and/or for the event with which this deposit is associated (Smith n.d.b), and an heirloom Classic-period cylindrical vessel.

The presence of skull imagery in the volador deposit points to some of the possible symbolic associations of Aztec feasting. In Aztec iconography, death images—particularly skulls and/or crossed long bones—were linked to themes of health, curing, fertility, and renewal. Images of bones often invoke the Tzitzimime, sky-dwelling creatures that had both malevolent and beneficial attributes, and/or the goddess Tlazolteotl (Durand-Forest 1988; Klein 2000; Pohl 1998; Taube 1993). *Pulque* also had iconographic associations with both death (particularly the souls of dead warriors) and agricultural fertility (Anawalt 1993; Nicholson 1991; Pohl 1998; Taube 1993). The presence of death imagery on the bowls in the Volador deposit suggests that these may have served as *pulque* vessels, and it suggests





**Figure 9.8.** White-based polychrome bowl with skull-and-crossed-bones motif. Reproduced from McVicker (1992:54); used with permission of the Field Museum of Natural History (Catalog no. 240969).

fertility and renewal as two of the symbolic associations of *pulque* consumptions at feasts.

The original context of the Volador deposit was either inside the Sacred Precinct (south of the Templo Mayor), or within Motecuhzoma's palace (Susan T. Evans, personal communication, 1999) which is located next to the Sacred Precinct. Either of these contexts would suggest that the offering reflected an officially-sanctioned imperial event of some sort. We see little support for Noguera's association of this deposit with the New Fire ceremony, and there is no evidence linking it with the volador ceremony for which it is named; rather, it strongly appears to contain the remains of an episode of imperial feasting.

### Provincial City-State Feasting: The Coatetelco Ballcourt Deposit

Coatetelco is a small Late Postclassic urban center in western Morelos excavated by Raúl Arana Alvarez (1984). Under the steps of a platform that formed one side of a ballcourt he found an offering of over 100 ceramic vessels. These and other ceramics from the site are described in Smith (n.d.b). Serving vessels predominate in this collection as well. The most abundant forms are incurving polished redware drinking cups (Figure 9.1f) and miniature vessels (Figure 9.1h–j).

The painted ceramics in this deposit—local Tlahuica polychrome and polished redwares of uncertain origin—do not have identifiable iconographic elements. A goblet probably used for drinking cacao (Figure 9.9) was found in a nearby burial at Coatetelco. The ballcourt deposit may reflect a public ceremony involving feasting at a minor provincial city-state center. The activities may have been sponsored by the local city-state king but they were almost certainly unrelated to imperial Aztec practices.

### Other Vessel Deposits in Morelos

We also present data in Table 9.3 on 44 ceramic vessels from three Postclassic burials at Xochicalco (Hirth 2000), and 25 vessels from a series of intrusive Postclassic burials excavated at the predominantly Classic-period site of Las Pilas in eastern Morelos (Martínez Donjuan 1979). The vessels from these deposits are described in Smith (n.d.b). Four caches of ceramic vessels excavated at Cuexcomate comprise another context included in Table 9.3; two of the caches were located beneath ritual dumps and two were found under patio areas of residential patio groups (Smith 1992:251–53). Table 9.3 also includes information on Late Postclassic domestic ceramic inventories from Yautepec for purposes of comparison (the Yautepec data are mean frequencies for the Molotla phase, based on estimates of the minimum number of vessels in midden deposits).

**Table 9.3. Vessel Types in Selected Contexts in Mexico City and Morelos**  
(% of All Vessels).

Category	Templo Mayor	Volador	Coatetelco Ballcourt	Xochicalco Burials	Las Pilas Burials	Cuexco. Caches	Yautepec Domestic
<b>Major Functional Classes (% of total ceramics)</b>							
Serving Vessels	0	96	75	64	92	100	41
Kitchen Objects	0	2	2	14	4	0	38
Ritual Objects	32	1	9	0	0	0	9
Production Objects	0	0	13	23	0	0	6
Other Domestic Objects	0	0	1	0	4	0	6
Special Offering Vessels	68	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Vessels and Objects	69	897	164	44	25	10	7106
<b>Serving Vessels (% of total serving)</b>							
Cups and Pitchers	–	64	33	7	0	0	7
Bowls	–	15	13	82	96	90	90
Tripod plates	–	19	0	0	0	0	0
Miniature vessels	–	1	54	11	4	10	3
Number of Serving Vessels	0	862	123	15	23	0	3005

## Comparison of Vessel Inventories

The vessel inventories reviewed above (Table 9.3) can be divided into four types of deposit. First, the Templo Mayor offerings stand out as unique in their emphasis on special offering vessels; the ritual objects also include unique pieces such as large ceramic sculptures of warriors. The second group, the two sets of burials and the Cuexcomate caches, share an emphasis on serving vessels, most of which are bowls. The burials also contain some kitchen vessels and, at Xochicalco, production tools (for spinning cotton), both of which provide a level of similarity with domestic deposits. Third, the Yau-tepec domestic deposits, not surprisingly, have a wide range of functional categories. Most of the serving vessels are bowls, but polished redware cups and pitchers are also a consistent, if rare, part of domestic ceramic inventories at all excavated Postclassic sites in Morelos, not just Yau-tepec. Finally, the volador and Coatetelco ballcourt deposits stand out with high frequencies of serving vessels, including large numbers of polished redware cups probably used for *pulque*.

The ceramics in the Volador and Coatetelco ballcourt deposits fit some attributes of the profile for feasting ware: well-made and elaborately decorated vessels with an emphasis on drinking vessels. The Volador deposit contains more of the feasting characteristics than Coatetelco: there are foreign imports, and there are fewer non-serving vessels; also, more than half of the serving items at Coatetelco are miniature vessels (mostly small jars and basins) whose use and significance are uncertain. The combination of ceramic “feasting attributes” and the public locations of the offerings suggest that these deposits derived from public, state-sanctioned feasting activity at the imperial and city-state levels. The caches of bowls at Cuexcomate, found in patio contexts, could be the remains of household-level feasting, since Sahagún (1950–82, Bk.9, pp.40–41) notes that organic remains from ritual offerings—perhaps the remains of feasts—were sometimes ritually burned and buried in domestic courtyards.

What is interesting about the specific vessels included in the Volador and Coatetelco ballcourt deposits is that nearly all are basic domestic forms. The flaring redware cups from the Volador deposit are a consistent, if low-frequency, part of domestic assemblages at most Aztec sites in Morelos and the Basin of Mexico, whereas the incurved cups from Coatetelco are commonly found in domestic deposits in western Morelos. Sherds from probable cacao cups (Figure 9.9) are a rare but consistent part of domestic inventories at Yau-tepec but not at Cuexcomate or Capilco, suggesting a possible association of these vessels with political centers. The bi-level tripod plates in the Volador deposit (Figure 9.7b) are rare in Morelos (Smith 2001, Table 1), but they are a basic part of domestic inventories at Aztec sites in the Basin of Mexico. There is no evidence that the production or exchange of any of these vessels were under the control of the empire or of local city-states. The Volador deposit does contain a few unusual non-domestic vessels—several large



**Figure 9.9.** Polished redware goblet—probably for cacao—from a burial at Coatetelco (vessel CV-163 in Smith 2001; rim diameter 15.0 cm.) (photograph by Michael E. Smith).

polychrome basins (Figure 9.7e) and three tall polychrome goblets with modeled skulls (Figure 9.7d)—and these could have been linked to state control; they are rare or non-existent in domestic contexts. The imported Morelos polychrome bowls in this deposit are unique varieties not in common use in Morelos. They were probably not obtained through marketplace exchange but perhaps through state tribute channels.

## DISCUSSION

### The Ceramics Used in Aztec Feasting

Although feasting was an important activity in Aztec society at all levels, from the highest imperial elite down to the poorest peasant family, it has proved very difficult to identify in the archaeological record. The remains of elite and commoner feasts held in domestic settings at sites in Morelos are mixed in

with the remains of regular repetitive household consumption events and a host of other household activities. The strongest candidates for feasting deposits are the ceramic vessel offerings from the Volador and Coatetelco ballcourt deposits. Although the context of these offerings suggest that they pertain to imperial and city-state level activities, respectively, nearly all of the vessels are basic domestic Aztec ceramic forms. The frequencies of vessel types differ greatly from domestic deposits, of course, but the only non-domestic vessels are a few unusual polychrome basins and goblets in the Volador deposit. As research continues on the identification of vessel function based upon the codices and other information, our ability to identify feasting in contexts apart from whole vessel deposits will increase.

### **Ceramics and Politics in a Commercialized Economy**

Apart from the unusual vessels in the Templo Mayor offerings, “state pottery” does not appear to have been a relevant category in Aztec society. Neither the Aztec empire nor its constituent city-states played much of a role in controlling the production or distribution of ceramic vessels. Similarly “elite pottery” is a not a relevant category for the Aztecs. Elites and commoners used the same basic kinds of vessels in their homes. Elites had higher frequencies of serving vessels, and higher frequencies of key individual ceramic types—particularly imports and painted wares—as expected from comparative data (Smith 1987). But with the possible exception of two very rare polychrome types at Yauhtepec, no categories of ceramics or other objects show exclusive elite associations. Most elites were wealthy and may have had exclusive access to certain perishable luxury items such as the fanciest cotton clothing, feather art, and perhaps choice types of restricted food. But in the realm of the non-perishable goods recovered archaeologically—ceramics, obsidian, groundstone, needles and jewelry of copper/bronze, jewelry made from greenstone, rock crystal, shell and obsidian, and faunal remains—there are few if any exclusively elite items.

The Aztec data suggest a situation quite distinct from that found in several other early empires described in this volume, where “state pottery” and “elite pottery” seem to be useful concepts that are identifiable archaeologically. We have suggested that one of the primary reasons for the distinctiveness of the Aztec pattern is the extensive development of commercialized exchange and market behavior in the Aztec economy. As in other early states, Aztec elites and commoners alike engaged in a variety of feasting activities, and these accomplished important social goals at a number of levels, from the commoner household to the provincial city-state to the empire. But most of the ceramic vessels used in these feasts were purchased in the markets, not distributed by the state or by elites. As a result, feasting vessels did not stand out as a distinctive group of objects with state or elite associations.

Aztec feasting vessels were commodities (Appadurai 1986; Miller 1995; Smith 2003) bought and sold along with more mundane products like cooking pots, obsidian tools, and salt in the commercialized arena of the marketplace. In comparison with some early states, the commodification of Aztec feasting wares makes the archaeological identification of these vessels more difficult, and it changes the nature of the sociopolitical implications that can be drawn from the presence of feasting wares in particular archaeological contexts. Although feasting vessels at Aztec sites tell us less about the specific political and social strategies of the state, they nevertheless provide important insights into the intersection of politics, stratification, and the commercial sector of the economy.

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## NOTES

- 1 Discussions of the Aztec economy are sometimes hindered by an assumption that "the economy" must have been either politically dominated or else open and commercial in orientation. This simplistic notion, one of the harmful legacies of Karl Polanyi's pervasive influence on studies of Mesoamerican economies (Chapman 1957; Polanyi et al. 1957), should be discarded. Our portrayal of two co-existing sectors classifies the Aztec economy with a number of other ancient (pre-capitalist) economies in which both commercial exchange and state control were important (e.g., Abu-Lughod 1989; Day 1987; Kuhrt 1998; Storey 1999; Subrahmanyam 1994; Udovitch 1970).
- 2 Among the few explicit sumptuary rules described in historical sources (Durán 1994:209–210) are the following: that only the king and top advisor could wear sandals in the palace; that only nobles could inhabit multi-storied (or perhaps raised) residences; that specified items of jewelry and luxury clothing were restricted to certain status grades; and that only nobles could wear cotton garments. The prevalence of cotton production and textiles in Aztec central Mexico (Berdan 1987), however, casts doubt on the actual application of the latter proscription.
- 3 The following quote from Durán (1971) is probably closer to the truth than Sahagún's moralizing statements about *pulque*: "and there was an ancient law prohibiting anyone, under pain of death, to drink *pulque* unless he had children to restrain him and guide him [home from a feast] if he became intoxicated so that he would not fall into a river or a hole or have a mortal accident" (Durán 1971:309).
- 4 In addition to the ceramic vessels discussed here, basketry containers seem to have been widely used for serving non-liquid food such as tamales, grain, and small game at feasting events or in presenting tribute to the gods or rulers (Figure 9.5d) (Codex Magliabechiano 1983:32, 67; Codex

Mendoza 1992: f68r; Codex Ramírez 1979:lams. 18, 20; Codex Telleriano-Remensis 1995: f.29v; Codex Vaticanus 1979: f.72v; Códice Tudela 1980: 14, 60; Durán 1967: pl. 8; Sahagún 1950–82, Bk.9, p.35). The Florentine Codex described tamales as being served in baskets (Sahagún 1950–82, Bk.9, p.35) and this seems to have been the method for containing larger amounts of food from which celebrants or guests would select individual portions. The association between vessel forms in the codices and archaeological vessels is a topic of ongoing research by the authors, and only very preliminary suggestions are made in this paper.

- 5 In the Mixtec codices from Oaxaca, vessels for serving cacao differ in form from the Aztec examples. The Mixtec cacao vessels are small narrow-necked tripod containers (Coe and Coe 1996:95). These had distinctive eye-like decorative motifs on the body which have a similar counterpart in the Codex Borgia (1976).

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**Part III**

**Concluding Remarks**

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## Chapter 10

# *Clearing the Table*

## Some Concluding Reflections on Commensal Politics and Imperial States

MICHAEL DIETLER

Early in her chapter, Julia Hendon poses a question that I believe lies at the heart of this volume and underscores the importance of the themes explored here to the archaeological investigation of state power, and indeed to archaeology as a whole. After noting that the political importance of feasting has become increasingly recognized by archaeologists working on societies that lack permanent centralized institutions of political authority, she asks “What role might feasting play in societies that have developed such institutions, are no longer small in population or community size, and have acquired the means to produce more permanent markers of social prestige on a relatively substantial scale?” I emphasize this question because it seems to me to expose a highly dubious assumption shared by many archaeologists: that is, once symbols of political power and status have become “materialized” and authority has become institutionalized, that somehow stability and permanence have been achieved and the work of relational micro-politics is made redundant and unnecessary. This is, of course, the dream and the ideological projection of every state apparatus: a kind of institutional fetishism that displaces contingent relations between people into stable relations between people and permanent reified “objects.” But nothing could be farther from the truth. The nasty little secret of history is that states and empires are very fragile, volatile, and transitory—far more so than their buildings and monuments. They are a fluid

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*process* rather than a durable thing, and they depend upon constant hard work in the micro-political struggles of negotiation and legitimation to survive and operate. Crucially, governments must constantly reproduce a degree of consent in their populations, whether in the form of credible authority or cynical acquiescence, in order for the ephemeral idea of a state to persist. Material monuments and institutions provide arenas (of variable effectiveness) for this interpersonal activity to be carried out, but they do not replace it or make it redundant. Hence, practices such as feasting are every bit as important to the operation of states as they are to other forms of political organization.

For this reason, focusing upon the “commensal politics” (Dietler 1996, 2001) of imperial states, as this book does, provides a useful means of unsettling some implicit assumptions lodged in the lingering hidden teleologies of shopworn evolutionisms that still plague much archaeological interpretation, thereby forcing scholars to think seriously about the practices by which power is crafted and exercised and the ideological strategies and tactics that are deployed in imperial situations. It forces attention onto issues of political practice, process, and agency rather than simply structure and typology. Commensal politics is, of course, by no means the only set of practices that is significant in this domain, but it is very commonly a centrally important one that merits serious consideration in rethinking our understanding of early states and empires. To be sure, this fact has not been ignored entirely in earlier works, and indeed several Inca specialists in particular were pioneers in emphasizing the importance of feasting in the Andean political economy (e.g., see Morris 1979; Murra 1960). But what characterizes recent approaches to these issues, aside from their increasing visibility in a broader range of contexts, is a concern for a nuanced, detailed understanding of precisely how commensality operates politically (in addition to the current volume, see, for example, Clark & Blake 1994; Dietler 1990, 1996; Dietler & Hayden 2001; Hayden 1990, 1996; Moore 1989; Potter 2000).

A thorough exploration of commensal politics, meaning the ways in which the shared consumption of food and drink is marshaled in the negotiation of power, has several heuristic implications. In the first place, it should lead to an expansion of the analysis of politics and power beyond simply the narrow top-down model of “what the state does” (politics with a capital P, as it were). Such an approach should illuminate how politics, more broadly conceived as a relational phenomenon encompassing all activities concerned with power, permeates society and social life at all levels. It should also enrich interpretive possibilities by expanding our analytical focus to explore the role of consumption as a political practice and by highlighting the importance of ritual as an active force in this domain. Finally, it should move attention in the analysis of food beyond the restrictive traditional consideration of calories, crops, and subsistence to the crucial symbolic dimensions of food that are key to its political manipulation. Moreover, under Tamara Bray’s impetus, this volume offers the additional challenge of explicitly linking commensal politics to

the study of ceramics. This is intended both as a means of solving the significant methodological problem of identifying the operation of commensal politics in the archaeological record and of contributing to a creative revitalization of traditional archaeological approaches to ceramic analysis. Hence, for all these reasons, this challenging volume has the potential to provoke new questions and insights.

Rather than undertake the redundant task of summarizing chapters that speak very clearly and distinctively for themselves, my remarks will be confined to the consideration of a few themes that seem to me to link the chapters into a coherent and productive whole.

## CERAMICS

Let me begin with the most obvious common element: by explicit design, ceramics are clearly a major point of departure linking all the chapters. Most of the authors express strong dissatisfaction with the limitations of regional traditions of ceramic analysis in their respective research areas. They call for close attention to the “function” (meaning utilitarian function) of ceramics in the belief that such information can move interpretation beyond the general concerns with chronology and patterns of distribution that have marked past research. How one goes about defining and dealing with the issue of function is, of course, a crucial test of the utility of such pleas. Several of the authors (e.g., Bray, Cook and Glowacki, Goldstein, Hendon, Smith et al.) rely upon an analysis of vessel form as a key to the utilitarian function of vessels, and this often necessitates a radical reworking of traditional ceramic typologies that rely primarily upon decoration and fabric as diagnostic criteria. The chapters of Bray and Hendon offer perhaps the most detailed formal analyses linking form and function. Both employ evaluations of task efficiency, grounded in somewhat different classificatory schemes, to divide their particular ceramic repertoires into broad functional classes. It is, of course, important to recognize that technical efficiency is not a universal standard (but rather such evaluations are always a culturally constructed product of particular technical systems) and that the relationship between form and utilitarian function is inherently complex (Dietler and Herbich 1998; Lemonnier 1986). However, the classifications proposed are generally plausible and useful tools for grappling with the relationship between local ceramics and foodways. Fortunately, most of the authors also have at least sporadic pictorial and/or textual evidence concerning ceramics and food processing and consumption that serves to bolster the plausibility of their interpretations (see Bats 1988 for another exemplary study of this type). This is an important first step in the attempt to discern the traces of commensal politics, and one that may also be aided significantly by physico-chemical analysis of vessel contents as these techniques are improved and, it is hoped, more widely deployed.

However, an important feature of this volume is that the authors also move beyond a simple functional analysis (or correlation of form and function) by integrating these data into an examination of patterns of context and association for their ceramic assemblages, and this proves to be a rich (and essential) source of interpretive insight for using ceramics to discern evidence for feasting and commensal politics. Indeed, as noted earlier, a close contextual analysis is one of the crucial features of new efforts to deal with consumption in general, and feasting in particular. Hence, for example, Cook and Glowacki offer a compelling comparative analysis of the association of different functional classes of ceramics with particular architectural spaces at Huari heartland and provincial sites to point out both similarities to, and differences from, later Inca patterns, thus enabling a subtle interpretation of the role of feasting in Huari imperial expansion. Similarly, Smith, Wharton and Olson employ a comparative analysis of several different Aztec consumption contexts to reveal both different modes of feasting in Aztec society and the distinctive role of ceramics in the Aztec political economy. Sarah Nelson uses a close analysis of the relative position of vessels with different functions in Chinese graveside rituals to argue for shifts in the relative importance of wine and meat in funerary feasts and the ritual function of funerary inclusions of comestibles from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age. Paul Goldstein undertakes an illuminating comparative analysis of ceramic vessel forms and consumption practices in the Tiwanaku core area and four peripheral regions to suggest a very prominent role for feasting in what he suggests may have been a “soft” form of Tiwanaku state expansion.

It is important to emphasize that in each of these quite different cases (and in the equally interesting other chapters that I have not described), what provides the crucial interpretive potential is the combination of ceramic functional analysis with a comparative analysis of consumption contexts. The comparative analysis yields the most compelling results when it combines both spatial and temporal dimensions: that is, when it examines historical changes over a complex social landscape. Moreover, this kind of contextual analysis is most effective when it encompasses multiple scales of analysis, from the detailed consideration of ceramic (and faunal and botanical) patterns from individual domestic spaces and residues, refuse deposits, and ritual structures to regional aggregate patterns. As the chapters in this volume and other recent work on consumption and feasting suggest, posing questions about commensal politics, and other practice-oriented issues, requires a certain methodological ingenuity and ambition. It is clear that innovative strategies of contextual analysis are required to meet the challenges of new interpretive approaches, and these are still being developed. The search for a relational connection between ceramics, commensal politics, and the operation of imperial states that motivated this volume has certainly produced some intriguing examples of methodological novelty that are by no means an insignificant part of what this book has to offer.

## FEASTING

As I noted earlier, one of the implications of a focus on feasting as a political activity is that it should serve to challenge conceptions of politics as simply a top-down model of state command and subject compliance. This, of course, depends upon a nuanced theoretical understanding of feasting as a complex ritual of commensality. There are many forms of feasting with different symbolic logics and it is an activity that permeates social life (Dietler and Hayden 2001). It is not enough simply to demonstrate that states used feasting as part of their political strategies. It is crucial to ask what kinds of feasting were being utilized and how they functioned politically in order to really advance understanding of political practices and processes. It is also crucial to recognize that, even in highly centralized states, the central authorities would not have been the only individuals or groups mounting feasts—virtually all households and social groups would do so, but according to rather different logics and with different scales and effects.

Nearly all the authors were able to demonstrate a prominent role for feasting in state politics, usually with an attention to variations in different regional practices within imperial territories. Moreover, the differences in the ways that feasting operated in the different imperial states represented in the volume are illuminating in their collective richness. Many of the chapters in this book do tend to focus almost exclusively on the feasting activities of central state entities or elite classes. In part this is undoubtedly because these are usually the easiest to detect archaeologically, given their relative scale and frequent association with monumental architecture that has attracted the most archaeological attention. However, several authors have succeeded in treating a broader range of feasting practices. Stuart Smith's chapter, for example, although it deals less with feasting than with foodways in general, intentionally focused outside the domain of the imperial court to examine what effect shifting state boundaries and centers of power actually had on the daily life and identity of people in a frontier zone between Egypt and Nubia. Smith, Wharton and Olson, although noting the difficulties of identifying feasting activities archaeologically among the Aztecs, cite documentary evidence in noting that feasting was "an important activity in Aztec society at all levels, from the highest imperial elite down to the poorest peasant family" (a feature also explored in some detail by Hendon for the Maya). Moreover, they were able to specifically identify the utilization by the endogamous nobility of both "diacritical" feasting (in which a distinctive style of consumption simultaneously marks boundaries between social classes and solidifies identities within those classes) and "patron-role" feasting (in which repeated generous hospitality is used to maintain asymmetrical social relationships within a symbolically constituted single "commensal community;" see Dietler 2001). Interestingly, in stark contrast to the situation of diacritical feasting among the Inca analyzed by Bray, among the Aztecs, there was no category of elite ceramics and pottery did not play a role as one of the elements marking

diacritical elite consumption. This is a very useful caveat for archaeologists to heed: despite its evidentiary importance to modern scholars, pottery may have had relatively little significance in marking social status in many contexts. Susan Pollack presents data from the Early Dynastic Period in southern Mesopotamia to illuminate a similar distinction between two different political uses of food by the state. On the one hand, both graphic representations of feasts and funerary ceramic data are used to convincingly argue that a privileged group within these societies used commensal practices to construct and sustain a distinctive and hierarchical sense of (elite) identity (in other words, this would be a quite early manifestation of a more widespread mode of commensal politics identified elsewhere as the “diacritical feast” pattern). She also mentions the simultaneous operation of what may be identified as “patron-role feasts” in which relations of hierarchy and subordination are instilled through the sentiments of social debt stemming from the practice of generous hospitality to social inferiors. Cook and Glowacki also were able similarly to identify distinctive patterns of “administrator-laborer feasting” and “more elite-oriented feasting” on the basis of relative representation of certain vessel forms in different architectural contexts.

Hence, these and the other chapters go well beyond simply identifying the presence of feasts: they attempt to explore the various ways in which feasting operated in their respective societies and the ramifications of such practices. Goldstein’s chapter offers an intriguing example of how such an approach can lead to a radical rethinking of the politics of imperial expansion, shifting the emphasis from directed conquest and the power of a centralized state to the agency of multiple competing corporate groups operating independently of any state design.

One feature that is perhaps not sufficiently developed in some of the chapters is the fact that feasts are a particular form of ritual activity, with the concomitant understanding of the political dimension of rituals. In Sarah Nelson’s otherwise very interesting chapter on funerary feasts in early China, for example, the insistent dichotomy between enlisting the aid of the dead and forming alliances with the living in her discussion of the function of feasts is a little puzzling. Surely, both are possible at the same time. The broader literature on feasting shows that feasts are usually polysemic in their meanings and functions, and, like most rituals, they play simultaneously to multiple audiences. Hence there is no inherent contradiction in a feast that is both directed at the dead and speaks to an audience of the living. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine a funerary ritual that had no relational import for the living. Moreover, as Abner Cohen (1979) has noted, the most emotionally compelling and effective political symbols are precisely those which are not overtly political but rather tend to have an ambiguous “bivocality” melding intense personal experience of existential identity issues with broader structures of power. Funerary rituals are an obvious example of this kind of fusion.

Given its crucial importance to the central theme of the book, one brief comment on consumption is also necessary here. Susan Pollack is quite right to insist

that consumption must be treated integrally with a consideration of production. However, I am afraid I must differ with her assertion that “consumption is only the end result.” I am quite possibly misreading her intention here, but, if taken literally, this statement conflates a micro-temporal sequence with a causal chain and negates a couple of decades of research on consumption that have transformed economic analysis within the social sciences in general (e.g., see Douglas and Isherwood 1979; Miller 1995). One need only recall Sahlins’s prescient statement that “the exploitation of the American environment, the mode of relation to the landscape, depends upon the model of a meal that includes a central meat element with the peripheral support of carbohydrates and vegetables” (Sahlins 1976:171). As he pointed out, the entire structure of agricultural production and articulation to world markets would change dramatically if we ate dogs or horses, both of which are entirely edible. It is the cultural construction of proper consumption, with its symbolic taboos and valuations, that determines production, not vice versa. Hence, in many ways consumption is analytically prior to production rather than being simply an end result. All of this is to underline the significance of treating consumption rituals, such as feasting, seriously as a significant structuring feature of the political economy, as I believe the articles in this volume, including Pollack’s, do quite convincingly. Obviously, this should not be to the neglect of production: both processes are enmeshed in a complex recursive relationship that should be a consistent target of analysis.

## FEASTING AND LABOR

In thinking about relationships between consumption and production, an excellent point of departure is an event that combines them both: the mobilization of labor through commensality. And one common theme linking many of the papers is precisely the dependence of states upon feasting for the mobilization of labor. This is a manifestation of a widespread phenomenon in pre-monetary economies where labor is not a marketable commodity: the “work-feast” was a nearly universal practice among agrarian societies because it was one of the only means possible of mobilizing large numbers of workers across familial lines, aside from slavery (see Dietler & Herbich 2001 for a detailed analysis of this practice). Moreover, it operated at all levels of society, serving as a crucial means of organizing interhousehold flows of labor and, sometimes, of labor exploitation. Although state rulers and institutions often had recourse to a form of the work-feast known as *corvée* in which participation was obligatory (as a form of labor tribute) rather than voluntary, it was still necessary to conduct the labor exchanges in the idiom of commensality that governed other non-obligatory forms of work-feast: that is a meal or drinking party hosted by the beneficiary of the labor project. Coercion is a poor tool for maintaining long-term labor cooperation, and rulers who failed to honor

this code of symbolic exchange would find it increasingly difficult to maintain the authority of their right to corvéé labor or to count on work being done properly by those participating. Any stable long-term system of labor tribute must rely on the continual production of consent—which means operating through and playing upon the same practices that have symbolic resonance within the population as a whole. Hence, there is very good reason to view corvéé labor simply as a variant of the work feast in which the composition of the labor force is pre-determined by an ideology of obligation and authority.

In this vein, the chapters by Pollack and by Cook and Glowacki offer some very interesting comparative views of such labor mobilization practices in the quite different contexts of Mesopotamia and the central Andes. Both suggest that certain ceramics of simple quality and standardized form (beveled rim bowls and goblets in the case of Mesopotamia and bowls in the case of Huari) are probably indicative of mass production serving vessels for the commensal provisioning of workers. Pollack also suggests that the Mesopotamian evidence indicates a shift from food to drink as the main object of consumption. Her further interesting suggestion that “the distribution of food in compensation for labor . . . implies a radical restructuring of certain aspects of food-related practices and their place in social relations” seems somewhat less credible, given the historical ubiquity of the work-feast as a labor mobilization practice and the close relationship of corvéé labor outlined above. Much hinges upon whether workers had actually become entirely dependent for their daily subsistence upon state patronage, or whether the texts she cites are simply referring to the provisioning of workers on the occasions when they were engaged in state corvéé projects, and this is somewhat unclear. In any case, one of the key features of the use of commensality as a labor mobilization device is precisely that it is not like wage labor: instead, it acts as a form of symbolic metaproduction, constituting and euphemizing labor exchange and exploitation in terms of the basic commensal unit. Hence, the idea suggested by Pollack that people were suddenly laboring for “impersonal institutions” and that “intimacy or kinship” had ceased to be relevant affective relational frameworks would seem questionable in the absence of some further clarification and evidentiary support. Nevertheless, the very attempt to explore the link between ceramics, commensality, and labor in this fascinating case opens some novel questions and research directions that should prove quite fruitful for Mesopotamian archaeology.

## **GENDER**

Another theme raised by most of the chapters is the consideration of gender in the link between commensal politics and the state. This is an important issue, although by no means an easy one to deal with archaeologically. Most of

the chapters note a tendency for women's productive and culinary labor to be a major factor underwriting the consumption rituals of commensality in which men tend to be the primary actors and beneficiaries. Whether one views this gendered asymmetry that sustains systems of feasting as exploitation or not hinges upon a subtle contextual consideration of the question posed by Clark for the Kikuyu of Kenya: are women "controllers of resources or themselves resources controlled by men?" (Clark 1980:367). This question, in fact, derives from and delineates a perceptual rift in feminist scholarship. One view tends to emphasize and valorize the crucial role women play in the operation of the overall political system, and the effective relational or structural power this implies. For example, Bray and Hendon emphasize the complementarity of male and female roles in Andean and Mayan ideology and the essential role of female labor in enabling state politics. The other position tends to emphasize the disparity of labor and overt political agency, leading to a position in line with Marx's observation that women probably constituted the first exploited class. In many cases, exploitation does seem to be a justifiable analytical conclusion, but this is by no means a pattern about which it is possible to generalize in a simple way. Nor, indeed, need these two perspectives be mutually exclusive, all encompassing judgements. For example, in some societies there is a more balanced, or even male dominated, pattern of labor in the production of feasts (although this generally does not extend to the preparation of daily meals). Furthermore, women may share in the status and political benefits from their labor by being members of an influential household or lineage. Their labor (and male dependence upon it) may also be overtly recognized and valued, and women may even derive considerable categorical and individual status from their central role in the furnishing of hospitality or in maintaining commensal relations with the gods (Gero 1992; March 1998).

One feature which was less emphasized in these chapters is that gender as a cultural category of social identity is nearly everywhere marked, reified, and naturalized to some extent through feasting practices. In fact, gender is one of the most common categorical distinctions made through food/drink-related practices in general, albeit in a wide variety of culturally specific ways (Bacon 1976; Child et al. 1965; Counihan and Kaplan 1998; Dietler 1990, 2001; Gefou-Madianou 1992; Herbich 1991; McDonald 1994). Such categorical boundary marking at feasts may be based upon various permutations of symbolic diacritica, including: (1) spatial distinctions (i.e., segregation or other structured differential positioning of men and women while eating), (2) temporal distinctions (such as order of serving or consumption), (3) qualitative distinctions (in the kinds of food, drink, or service vessels men and women are given or are allowed to consume), (4) quantitative distinctions (in the relative amounts of food or drink served to women and men), or (5) behavioral distinctions (i.e. differences in expected bodily comportment between women and men during and after feasting, including such things as permissible



signs of intoxication, talking while eating, reaching for food, serving or being served, withdrawing from the meal first, etc.) (Dietler 2001). Obviously, such distinctions are often difficult to detect archaeologically; but an awareness of their significance may lead to their recognition in contexts where such evidence might have been overlooked. Moreover, the presence of pictorial or textual evidence, of the kind that is frequently available for imperial states, can present dramatically improved possibilities for understanding how gender roles and categories were defined and represented in the realm of commensality.

In any case, the chapters in this volume make a concerted effort to effectively insert a much needed consideration of gender into the relationship between commensality and state politics.

## CONCLUSION

The collective contribution of this volume lies in its stimulating demonstration of both the exciting promise and the often frustrating difficulties of using commensality as a way of understanding politics in ancient states and empires. The chapters emphasize the need for methodological ingenuity in tackling the analysis of rituals of consumption, and they effectively show how ceramics, in particular, can be turned from more traditional uses, such as markers of chronology and exchange, to explore the complexities of commensal politics. They offer many provocative insights into the negotiation of power relations and the process of politics in ancient states that point the way toward transcending traditional ways of understanding states and empires based upon structure and typology. Clearly, much work remains to be done to develop these initial forays into the realm of commensality, politics, and imperial states, but they already constitute a rich, intriguing, and promising contribution.

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**Part IV**

**Epilogue**

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# *Feasting and the Practice of Stately Manners*

JOAN M. GERO

The essays in this volume on “culinary equipment” give cause to celebrate; indeed, they comprise a little feast of their own! Here is a timely venue that rescues ceramic assemblages from their century-long appointment as chronometric indicators and puts them firmly back into the hands of people, connects them to their intended contextual functions. This discussion offers us a chance to revisit the idea of the *political meal* as a marked event in people’s everyday lives, and (more the focus of these brief comments) to see it as a social practice and process which, in its regular reiteration, creates and renews the very context that it serves.

We are asked by these papers: what makes some dining occasions “splendid”? The assumptions are of a special event: that we bring out the “good china” and lay a fine table as it were. Surely this is part of it. Some discussions in this volume take up the elaborate etiquette of the feast as a singular set of behaviors that differentiate this meal from daily food consumption. I would add that a “splendid” meal is also had in splendid company, that *who* you eat with is as important as *what* you eat or what you eat it *on* and *from*. In fact, this aspect of splendid dining especially catches my attention, viewing feasting as a gathering of eaters and drinkers who may share cultural assumptions and ideologies across a broad spectrum of issues, yet who are divided by emergent class and status differences, sometimes across significant divides of wealth and obligation. All these defining features still focus

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on feasts as events, circumscribed by their specific characteristics which are neither explained nor derived.

So the task I set myself here is to see feasting less as a singular event and instead as a regularly occurring social practice, one that is involved and evoked at many points in the intensification of power relations between rulers and ruled. Feasts generally seek to accomplish the shared participation of persons of different ranks, and these persons are brought together in a single setting that intensifies the very socio-political divides that it also bridges and subverts. *How* this 'bringing together' is accomplished is another question, and indeed we would like to listen in on the conversations that accompany decisions to attend or not attend feasts! It would be most instructive in different settings to learn how people rationalize their attendance or absence at such occasions, what pressures are brought to bear on specific participants—and by which arguments—and especially so since participation may signal willing alliance with the power group that sponsors the occasion. But for now we leave these interests as context-specific ruminations. In the mixed gatherings of a feasting context, the activities and the expectations of everyday living are manipulated and changed to throw class difference into high relief and to require new responses to the differences between people. That is, feasts produce, reiterate and exaggerate the emergent social order in a context that alters everyday practice.

It is important that feasting occasions are symbolically and practically set apart from the unself-conscious routines of kin and neighborly interactions. Others (e.g., Dietler 2001; Gero 1992; many of the chapters in this volume) have already noted the differences that mark feasting occasions as "splendid": the quantity of food and drink is excessive, the food and drink is often special in being exotic or reserved for specific occasions, the vessels of preparation and service are specially marked, different adornments are worn, and the contextual setting for the gatherings is often a specially designated space. Alcohol, always served at feasts, is a special marker since it is not consumed daily, or at least not in the same quantity and quality as at a feast, and since it goes bad quickly, it is tightly associated with the other "feasting practices."

But the point here is not to specify but to derive, observing how the combination of variously stuated people and ritually designated behaviors come together at feasts as a means of structuring new recursive class-based behaviors. In this view, feasting should be seen as a primary origin of etiquette, serving as the context for, and the context in which, social practices relevant to living in class society are evoked, wealth and alienation side-by-side, new rules formulated and followed: how to act with people who control more resources than you do (your "betters")—especially where this is an unaccustomed relationship among previous equals—and how to act with your "inferiors" to whom you are beholden and on whom you depend for labor and services. In societies where these categories of relation are newly emergent, it is critical to resolve the issue: what's appropriate

to each degree of relation? Surely the beneficence of the host/donor must be writ large and recognized by the many, but at the same time everyone's trustworthiness and commitment to the social order must also be demonstrated.

Feasts may be seen as a primary public context in which people learn to behave in a state-like manner, by learning or repeating one's status and rank vis-à-vis others who may previously have been regarded simply as kin or neighbors, and then by performing this (new) rank in a witnessed context such as being required to reiterate a specific order of eating and drinking. Gender roles are similarly performed publically and with hierarchical implications (observing that one gender, usually women, eats separate from, or later than, or different victuals from, the other gender, usually men). Ironically but centrally, after a little feasting practice, one (everyone!) can pretend that it *was* just "practice" by imbibing one's way back to equality.

So instead of seeing feasts as events, I prefer to see them as a *context-renewing practice*, where producing feasts at the same time produces social outcomes that encourage their existence. Yet while this general feature of feasting might hold true, the experience of participation in the feast is always and necessarily from a particular perspective, in rank and in gender and surely as citizens of a particular social or regional or occupational group. Feasts present a unique occasion to celebrate together and experience a commonality, all the while asserting the distinctions of social identity that are increasingly dividing that commonality. Feasts provide common social experiential references in time and space for an increasingly dispersed, segmented and hierarchically arranged social body. Feasts create and intensify the microcosm of social and political and economic complexity that agriculturalists, producers, kin and neighbors must grow accustomed to under conditions of intensifying social complexity and power consolidations. One gets used to what it means to be a citizen, to the multiple social roles and identities within communities.

Like other critical practices that help forge new social relations, one learns these lessons with the body, underscored in sensuous ways. The exaggeratedly physical qualities of feasting, of eating to surfeit, and drinking to—and sometimes past—inebriation, coincide with the importance of the body's *feeling* one's social position to know it better. Like sex, which is also apparently used for ritual enactments of social relations in some contexts (Gero 2003), feasting requires participants to place themselves near and among certain people while keeping a distance from, or a specific physical attitude towards, others. We are thus reminded that establishing a new social order, or modifying social relations, is not for minds alone, not merely something to be mentally re-formulated, but rather something that must be undertaken in the flesh, experienced in the person, and practiced under various social circumstances.

The practice of feasting, then, has a fundamental role to play in the building of power relations, not only for the elite individuals who seek to consolidate control



and cooperation, but also for the less powerful and powerless. It is often in feasting that participants produce the societies that sponsor them.

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# Index

- Amarna, 50  
Ancestors, 65–69, 77, 80, 84, 85–88, 131, 196  
Anyang, 66, 70–71  
Askut, 39, 41, 45, 48, 49–57, 60  
Aswan Dam, 49  
Atacama Desert, 151–152  
Azapa Valley, 153–154  
Aztec  
  culinary equipment of, 8, 234–235  
  economy, 234–237, 240  
  elite, 235–236  
  feasting, 9, 204–206, 234–236, 242–250, 253–255, 258–259  
  imperialism, 4, 243  
  markets, 235–237, 239–240  
  pottery, 237–243, 245–260  
Badawy, Alexander, 49  
Banquets, 22–24, 33, 47, 54, 85, 86, 98, 179, 204, 205, 243, 245  
Beer, 29, 54, 84, 97–98, 144, 152, 155, 165  
  and women, 97–98  
Beveled-rim bowls, 29–30  
Beverages, fermented, 8, 9, 29, 47, 48, 68, 71, 78–79, 81, 84–85, 96, 97–98, 101–102, 105, 113, 142, 144–145, 165–166, 182, 244–246  
*Blumentopfe*, 29–30  
Burials  
  Aztec, 256–257  
  and commensality, 26–27, 72, 76–81, 85, 87, 275  
  early Chinese, 65–86  
  Burials (*cont.*)  
    and grave goods, 26–27, 66, 70–85, 149, 151–152, 156, 256–257  
    Huari, 193  
    Kerman, 49  
    Maya, 209  
    Mesopotamian, 26–27, 35n.6  
    royal, 24, 25, 27, 34n.6, 80  
    of sacrificial victims, 66, 71, 86  
    Shang, 80–87  
    in Tiwanaku hinterland, 151–154, 156, 162–163  
    Zhou, 70  
  Caranqui region, 95, 126–131  
  *Chicha*, 97–98, 101–102, 103–105, 111, 113, 117, 125, 128, 142–143, 145–146, 151–156, 160–166, 179–182, 188, 195  
  Commensality  
    graveside, 26–27, 72, 76–81, 85, 87, 273  
    politics of, 2–3, 9–10, 18–20, 32–34, 163, 271–275  
    state-sponsored, 33, 121, 131, 163, 181–182, 196  
    types of, 19, 26, 33, 145, 196  
  Conchopata, site of, 176, 177, 183, 185–188, 194  
  Consumption, 19, 31–32, 34, 80, 87, 94, 162, 206, 271–273, 275–276  
  Copan  
    architectural elements, 207–212, 219–226  
    feasting at, 219–226

Copan (*cont.*)

- polity of, 202, 207–208, 219
- pottery, 212–226

Cuneiform texts, 21

Cylinder seals, 3, 23

Dadianzi, 68, 70–78, 84, 86, 87

Dawenko, 68–69

Drinking straws, 22–23, 25, 247

## Egyptian state

- fortresses, 40–43, 49–54
- frontiers, 39, 40–45, 57–59
- imperial ideology, 58
- imperial policy, 39–40, 55
- pottery, 45–49, 50, 55
- relations with Nubia, 39–45, 50–54, 57–60
- temple towns, 44

Emulation, 51, 152, 153, 154, 165

Fast food, 17, 21, 31

## Feasting

- archaeological evidence for, 22–27, 45–48, 72–87, 145–146, 175–181, 183–195, 202–226
- attendants, 22–24, 33
- competitive, 5, 144–145, 152, 155, 164–165, 204–205, 224–226, 242–243
- documentary evidence for, 66, 85, 182, 202, 242–250
- elite, 25, 33, 47, 173, 194, 204–207, 217–226, 235–236
- equipment, 2, 24, 27, 45, 48, 49, 52, 66, 71–72, 152, 160–161, 177–178, 181–182, 192–196, 217–219, 244, 245–250
- etiquette, 25, 47, 194–195, 205, 244, 284–285
- food stuffs, 26, 48, 54, 58, 71, 78–80, 85–87, 144–147, 182, 244–250, 273
- and funerary practice, 7, 21–22, 26–27, 49, 65–80, 76–88
- and gender relations, 6, 22–24, 131–132, 225, 226
- and life-cycle events, 203–204, 224, 225, 242, 244
- musical accompaniment, 24, 25, 47–48, 54, 245

Feasting (*cont.*)

- protocols, 22–25, 47, 194–195, 204
- public, 25, 54, 58, 66, 145–146, 163
- religious, 45, 47, 85, 203, 244, 245
- as ritual practice, 21, 71, 85–87, 160–161, 203–206, 217–218, 244, 274–275
- visual images of, 22–25, 47–48, 243, 245
- and work parties, 144, 182, 194, 276–277

## Food

- Andean, 96–102
- and culture, 17–18
- ethnohistoric information on, 96–107, 126
- in exchange for labor, 28–32, 94, 182, 276–277
- fighting with, 8, 19, 204
- and gender, 2, 5–6, 53, 56–57, 97, 132–133, 163–164, 205, 225, 226, 277–279
- and identity, 3, 9, 40, 115, 142–144, 151–163, 172
- as offering, 207, 225, 244
- political economy of production, 20
- and politics, 3, 17–20, 94, 142–144, preparation, 21, 32, 34, 52–53, 85, 97–104, 205, 225
- production, 20
- rations, 18, 21, 27–32, 33
- redistribution, 28–32, 47, 163, 196
- and ritual, 19, 86, 98, 117, 217–218
- as semiotic device, 18
- and social hierarchy, 2–3, 47, 49, 94–95, 131, 144, 204–207, 224–226
- and states, 17, 32, 40, 45–49, 54, 93–94, 115–116, 131–132, 142–147, 163–164, 172–173, 177–181, 203

Frontiers, 7, 39–43, 45–60

## Gebel Barkal (see Napata)

## Gender

- and culinary practice, 6, 53, 56–57, 93–95, 132–134, 162–163, 225, 226
- and the state, 5, 95, 131–134, 162–163, 277–279
- studies in archaeology, 4–5

Gilgamesh, Epic of, 26

Haute cuisine, 7, 54, 94, 134n.1, 101–102, 131

- Hierkonopolis, 46  
 Hongshan culture, 70  
 Household archaeology, 143, 151  
 Huari  
   architecture, 173–174, 177, 179, 183  
   feasting, 172–173, 181–182, 192–196  
   pottery, 175–181, 184–195  
   site of, 172, 174–175, 183–184  
   statecraft, 172–175, 192–196  
 Hyksos, 43, 51
- Identity  
   imperial, 40, 172
- Imperialism  
   Egyptian, 39–40, 58–60  
   Huari, 173–176, 181–182, 183–196  
   Inca, 93–94, 131–134  
   Tiwanaku, 142–144, 163–166
- Inca  
   feasting among, 145–147, 173, 182, 184, 192, 195, 206, 239  
   foodways, 97–103, 162  
   pottery, 93–94, 107–131, 146, 150, 177, 192, 239  
   statecraft, 93–95, 123–125, 130–131, 145–147, 173
- Isotopic analysis, 145, 147, 162–163
- Jewish dietary laws, 19
- Kerma, 43–45, 51, 56–57, 60  
 Keros, 118, 149–156, 160–161, 163–166, 177, 182, 192, 195  
 Khafajah, 27  
 Kush, 43–45, 51, 60
- Lady Hao, 66, 80–81, 84–85  
 Lagash, 26
- Maya  
   feasting among, 204–206, 217–226  
   residential architecture, 208–212, 219–226
- Mesopotamia, 17–18, 20–34  
 Moquegua, 155–163  
 Motecuhzoma, 239, 255
- Napata, 44, 51, 55  
 Nubian state  
   artifacts at Askut, 50–53  
   Nubian state (*cont.*)  
     C-group, 41, 44, 56  
     Egyptianization of, 51  
     fertility figurine, 53  
     pottery, 45–57
- oikos*, 28, 32, 33  
 Oracle bones, 65, 66, 80, 85, 86
- Paleobotanical analysis, 3, 155, 188  
 Pottery, see also Vessels  
   amphorae, 47, 109–111  
   Atarco, 176  
   Aztec, 237–243, 245–261  
   caches, 215, 250, 256–258  
   Caranqui, 95, 126–131  
   Chakipampa, 176, 181  
   early Chinese, 71–78  
   Conchopata, 176–177, 190–191  
   Egyptian, 45–49, 50, 54–57  
   fine ware, 45–47, 49, 52, 55, 147, 154  
   functional significance of, 4, 94, 109–121, 126–131, 213–219, 237–238, 245–250  
   funerary, 26–27, 49, 71–78, 149  
   gendered associations of, 94  
   Huari, 176–181, 185–196  
   Inca imperial, 93–94, 107–131, 146, 150, 177, 192, 239  
   Kalasasaya, 147–148  
   mass-produced, 29–30, 32, 48, 194  
   Mojocoyo, 153  
   *negra pulida*, 151  
   Nubian, 45–57  
   Okros, 176, 181  
   Omereque, 153  
   polychrome, 93–94, 113, 116–117, 147, 149–150, 151, 153–154, 207, 235, 238, 239, 241–242, 245, 252–255  
   production, 48–49, 185, 235, 239  
   Qeya, 148, 149  
   Quitor phase, 151  
   Robles Moqo, 176, 177  
   smashes, 149, 163, 194  
   Tiwanaku, 148–162  
   Viñaque, 176  
   Yampara, 153  
*Pulque*, 244–248, 261n.5

- Reciprocity, 94, 204–207  
 Residue analysis, 3, 85, 147
- Senwosret III, 42, 58
- Shang dynasty, 65–70, 86  
   bronzes, 71, 80–86  
   burials, 80–86
- Tenochtitlan, 235, 237, 239, 250–255
- Thebes, 43, 47
- Tiwanaku  
   burials, 151–154, 156, 162–163  
   colonization, 143, 152–155, 161, 162, 164, 165  
   political economy, 142–144, 161, 162–166  
   pottery, 147–162  
   site of, 147, 148, 151, 163, 165  
   statecraft, 142–144, 152, 161, 163–166
- Trade enclave, 52
- Ur, Royal Cemetery of, 24, 25, 27, 34n.5
- Uruk period, 20, 27, 28
- Vessels  
   ceramic, 22, 24–27, 29–31, 45–57, 55–58, 68, 69, 71–78, 103–121, 128–194, 214, 238–256  
   cooking, 46, 49–50, 52–53, 54–57, 60, 69, 97, 103–104, 114–116, 121, 130, 149, 155, 160, 166, 179–181, 186, 189, 214
- Vessels (*cont.*)  
   ceramic (*cont.*)  
     drinking, 22–24, 68, 69, 71, 76, 104–105, 118, 120, 147, 149–152, 154–155, 160–161, 163–166, 192–194, 238, 247–248, 253–256  
     serving, 32, 46, 50, 52–53, 55–57, 60, 69, 71, 78–79, 104–105, 111, 113, 117, 120–121, 128–130, 147–149, 152, 154–156, 177–178, 184, 186, 189, 214, 241–242, 246–250, 253–256  
     storage, 46, 48, 49, 50, 52–53, 55–57, 98, 105–107, 111, 128, 146, 149, 156, 166, 187, 214  
   metal, 24, 27, 48, 66–85  
     bronze, 66–68, 70, 71, 72, 80–85  
   for rations, 29–31, 116  
   tripod, 71, 72–74, 76, 153, 215, 238, 249–250, 261n.5
- Wasters, ceramic, 48
- Xia dynasty, 69–70, 80
- Xiajidian period, 65, 68,  
   burials, 70–80, 87  
   fortresses, 72
- Zhou dynasty, 66, 69–70, 80
- Zooarchaeological analysis, 3