The archaeology of the Tequila valleys of central Jalisco (figure 4.1) is ripe for a shift in perspective, after five decades of approaches that either eschewed political organization altogether or relied on older political economic models that associated power with the monopolization of resources. The editors of this volume instead ask us to consider the evidence for political strategies that contradict one another and are not resolved (Fogelin 2011)—political strategies whose contradictions presented opportunities for the powerful to negotiate the authority to rule and allowed followers to rationalize their decision to follow. After considering past research into political strategies in western Mexico, I discuss recent analyses that associate different types of formal built space in the Tequila valleys with conflicting political strategies by virtue of their spatial characteristics as well as iconographic and archaeological evidence. Despite their strategic associations, the architectural forms share close proximity, even physical integration, that suggest that the same elites were practicing both strategies at different times. I follow this with a consideration of ethnographic data that help to elucidate how the balance between these conflicting strategies may have changed over time. I round this out with a discussion of the major foci for conflict and how both elites and nonelites could have navigated these issues.
Past Research into the Political Organization of the Late Formative/Early Classic

Western highland Mexico (the modern states of Jalisco, Colima, and Nayarit) is one of the regions of Mesoamerica that has been most negatively affected by the shamanism model discussed in Kurnick’s introductory chapter. Peter Furst (1966) introduced the model in the mid-1960s as an alternative to what he stated was the strongly secular approach used at the time to interpret the ceramic figures looted from the shaft tombs of the western states (ca. 300 BCE–500 CE). According to Furst, the hollow figures that populate museum and private collections worldwide depict an all-pervading shamanism enacted through peyote-induced animal transformations (e.g., Furst 1972, 1974, 1975). The academic and nonacademic influences on this model have been dissected elsewhere (Fikes 1993; Klein et al. 2002), but these critiques have made disappointingly limited headway among academics or museum exhibitors. Yet empirically speaking, the shamanism model always broke upon the shoals of local data. Interpretations of the shaft tomb figures in terms of Mesoamerican...
beliefs and practices had been made since at least the 1940s (Bernal 1949; Corona Nuñez 1955; Toscano 1946). Furthermore, other interpretations of the proposed shamanic features are more in accordance with what we know of Mesoamerican ethnography, archaeology, and belief systems that avoid the imprecision of the shaman concept (Beekman in preparation).

Alternate explanations for the emergence of complex societies in western highland Mexico emerged in the 1980s, stemming primarily from archaeological fieldwork that found substantial public architecture associated with the shaft tombs. Phil C. Weigand’s archaeological research in central Jalisco took a decidedly political economic perspective and associated the emergence of complex society there with the availability of obsidian and other less prominent minerals (e.g., Weigand 1985a). He became particularly interested in obsidian as a potentially strategic resource whose access, production, or exchange may have been under political control (Spence et al. 2002). Weigand and other researchers however have recorded the presence of several dozen easily accessible quality obsidian sources within the Tequila valleys alone (Esparza López 2004, 2008; Esparza López and Ponce Ordaz 2005; Weigand et al. 2002); direct control over sources would have been impossible. The highly expedient nature of lithic technology in the region (e.g., prismatic blade technology was not adopted until the Postclassic Period [900–1600 CE]) also argues against any special production techniques that might have been monopolized.

Mark Miller Graham (1998) was the first art historian to incorporate the updated archaeology into his interpretations, and he brought more current approaches to iconographic analysis to bear on the hollow figures. He argued that political elites may have associated themselves with agricultural fertility and success, drawing upon a familiar Mesoamerican political formula in which political elites claimed the position of exclusive mediator between humans and the supernatural (Houston and Stuart 1996; Joyce 2000).

I initially drew upon this perspective in my studies of the symbolism of the public architecture of central Jalisco (Beekman 2003a, 2003b). The guachimontón temple groups are distinctive circular arrangements of usually eight rectangular platforms facing a circular patio with a central round altar or pyramid. As in many areas of Mesoamerica (e.g., Joyce 2000; Sugiyama 1993), the architecture represents the Mesoamerican cosmos. The patio symbolizes the current world, the shaft tombs occasionally beneath the surrounding platforms vividly represent the underworld, and the central pyramid (sometimes the base for a vertical pole) was a link to the heavens (Kelley 1974; Beekman 2003a). I further interpreted the guachimontones as representations of a form of maize known to have emerged in western Mexico around the Late Formative Period.
In accord with these interpretations, ceramic dioramas looted from the shaft tombs depict the architecture of the site as places of public performance, particularly feasting and a maize ceremony associated with the central pole (Beekman 2000, 2003a, 2003b; Butterwick 1998). In sum, there is good reason to see the guachimontón form as a highly sacred space appropriate for public ritual. As the argument goes elsewhere in Mesoamerica, those elites who controlled such spaces through the possession of sacred knowledge could claim to be the mediators between humans and the supernatural. A Classic Lowland Maya ruler could reasonably make this claim, as only a single royal dynasty held power at any one time. The situation in the Tequila valleys was considerably more complex and should lead archaeologists in other areas to reassess current assumptions about a royal monopoly on sacred authority on the one hand, and the room for resistance possessed by commoners on the other.

**THE TEQUILA VALLEYS OF CENTRAL JALISCO**

During the Late Formative and Classic Periods (300 BCE–500 CE), social complexity in the Tequila valleys accelerated in a manner not seen in neighboring areas of western highland Mexico. The local environment is distinctive for its concentration of both extensive farmland and lakes or wetlands around the Tequila Volcano. The region experiences a strongly dichotomized rainy season and a dry season that focused most agricultural activity into the period from June through November (Beekman and Baden 2011). Fish and fowl associated with the Laguna Magdalena and wetlands provided other subsistence opportunities throughout the year. Out of a hazily understood Middle Formative base of family tombs and burial mounds, the Teuchitlán culture emerged (see figure 4.1). The ceremonial centers known from the Tequila valleys include residential architecture, ballcourts, circular temple groups known as guachimontones, and deep shaft and chamber family tombs occurring as isolates or in cemeteries (figure 4.2).

In a companion piece to this chapter (Beekman in press), I analyzed the spatial characteristics and performance activities associated with each type of formal architecture in terms of the exclusionary and corporate political strategies defined by Blanton et al. (1996). In their original model, the former strategy seeks to aggrandize a family, dynasty, ruler, etc. through the expression of difference, using myth, material culture, social rules, group endogamy, etc. The corporate strategy stresses inclusiveness and ideologies that promote community well-being through reference to cosmic values, though not necessarily by
eschewing social hierarchy. The authors of the original study stress the incompatibility of the two strategies and their concomitant temporal or spatial separation (Blanton et al. 1996:7).

Maurice Bloch (1975) examined a similar contradiction; he questioned how traditional political oratory that drew upon the formalized rules of speech could propose novel plans that required divergence from those same rules. Bloch found that the contradictions between them required some kind of separation between the two speech events. The separation could be temporal,

Figure 4.2. Examples of each of the forms of built space proposed to be associated with specific social institutions and strategies: (a) shaft tomb; (b) guachimontón; (c) ballcourt; (d) elite residential group (images taken from Beekman 2005a:figures 4.2, 4.4, courtesy of the Tequila Valley Regional Archaeological Project).
with both formal and informal parts to a speech. The two roles could be separated into two individuals, as between priests and rulers or between presidents and prime ministers. The first option is inaccessible to archaeologists and the second might potentially be addressed through studies of burials or imagery. But a third option is the separation of traditional and novel political oratory into entirely separate speech events (Bloch 1975:26–28). Bloch’s focus is on language and oratory, of course, and not necessarily on the material and spatial component that draws the attention of archaeologists. But, we can consider the possibility that traditional and more innovative speech events took place in different dedicated spaces. This possibility is available to us archaeologically, and my analysis of built space in terms of distinct strategies can be summarized briefly.

Those forms of architectural space that I (Beekman in press) associated with an exclusionary strategy were places in which lineages were celebrated in dramatic fashion. Mortuary ritual was a public event depicted in ceramic models from the region (figure 4.3). The family tombs were often reused and could include offerings quantitatively and qualitatively superior to anything known from other excavated contexts (Galván Villegas 1991; Ramos de la Vega and López Mestas 1996). Burial furniture included fine vessels such as the Oconahua Red on Cream type, objects made of imported jade or marine shell, and the hollow ceramic figures that were used for decades to define the archaeology of western highland Mexico (e.g., Kan et al. 1989). Descent group ritual thus incorporated rare materialized cultural capital that exhibited the wealth and social connections of the family associated with the tomb (Beekman 2000).

Habitation areas are known from the rural hinterland and within the immediate environs of the ceremonial centers and provide another possible line of evidence for the aggrandizement of particular families. Drawing upon those published in the site maps for Llano Grande and Navajas (Beekman 2003a:figure 7, 2005b:figure 8), residential groups can be defined by the presence of those structures arranged around rectilinear patios and their immediate ancillary buildings (cf. Smith 2009, who focuses solely on those with four structures around a patio). These groups can have from two to eight structures and display a wide size range. Although one would hesitate to call them palaces, a handful of very large and more symmetrical residential groups exist within major ceremonial centers and, while unexcavated, suggest the efforts of particular lineages to express their power and access to labor.

In contrast, the ballcourts and guachimontones (which are typically attached to one another) are separate architectural spaces better associated
with community rituals and interests. Ballcourts across Mesoamerica were arenas of controlled competition, in which conflicts could be resolved or compartmentalized in a socially acceptable manner (Blanco 2009; Gillespie 1991; Weigand 1991). Secular games could easily be played in open fields, but constructed ballcourts within the ceremonial centers imply a more public function—indeed, the ballgame across Mesoamerica had cosmic overtones in which the myths of the gods or the cycles of the cosmos were enacted through play (Scarborough and Wilcox 1991; Whittington 2001). Far from being associated with ancestors and the aggrandizement of a family, the ballgame was a material manifestation of community ritual oriented toward the higher goal of social and cosmic balance. Even impressive athletic prowess in the game would have been reinterpreted in cosmic terms, and excavations within the ballcourts have found modestly decorated ceramics focused on unelaborated food consumption and human remains associated with sacrifice (Blanco 2009:119–57). As discussed above, the guachimontón architecture was also the seat of community ritual. Ceramic models depict known agricultural ceremonies, and our excavations within the circles have recovered a considerably less elaborate assemblage than found in the shaft tombs (Beekman 2000, 2008). The contrast in associated artifacts is all the more striking when one considers that some of the lineage tombs are found beneath the guachimontón

**Figure 4.3.** Ceramic model depicting a burial procession, with pallbearers carrying the dead (drawing by Kathy Beekman, after von Winning and Hammer 1972:figure 89).
architecture (Beekman 1996:159–64, figure 4.4; Long 1966:248–78, figures 8–10; Ramos de la Vega and López Mestas 1996:126–29, figures 3, 4, 12; Weigand and Beekman 1998:40, figures 8, 9), underlining how particular forms of built space were used very differently, even when one was literally on top of the other. Each formal architectural space was a field in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu (1990), in which competition over power was bounded by social rules.

The circular guachimontón architecture presents an especially illustrative case. As noted, the architecture was used for agricultural ritual and replicated the Mesoamerican cosmos. But the elites who could claim a connection to the architecture and its symbolism were composed of multiple (usually eight) lineages who each constructed and maintained one of those structures that formed the outermost concentric circle of the guachimontón (Beekman 2008). In other words, the individual lineages that aggrandized themselves in ancestral ritual tied to the shaft tombs also participated in broader community ritual with distinct and even contradictory goals. Furthermore, since lineages shared privileged access to this sacred space, no one of them was in a position to monopolize the tie to the supernatural (for specific potential exceptions, see Beekman in press). Whether this was truly unique to this region or whether non-reigning elites in other areas of Mesoamerica may have held more clout than we usually assume is obscured by elite monopolization of writing, sculpture, and other forms of social mass media in those areas.

The social institutions present in the Late Formative to Early Classic Tequila valleys included both those oriented toward the aggrandizement of individual lineages and others that stressed the needs of the entire community, and they show intriguing patterns when one examines their distribution across the landscape (Beekman in press). While these contrasts were partly smoothed over through the separation of the opposing strategies into different forms of built space (cf. Fogelin 2011), this was not completely successful in the case of the shaft tombs and the guachimontones. Indeed, the presence of family tombs beneath the satellite structures of the guachimontones makes it very likely that the same families participated in both ritual series and thus had to represent lineage and community interests at different times. One may have even been dependent upon the other. For example, lineage elites may have been forced to link themselves to the community in some way to fully legitimize themselves as descent groups. The contradictions are evident, and the resulting cognitive dissonance (Festinger et al. 1955) would have impacted not only elites but also followers attempting to navigate these conflicting messages. While the archaeological record documents these opposing descent group and community strategies, ethnohistoric and ethnographic data from
the region help explain how the tensions between them could produce their own internal dynamic over time, and how some of those contradictions might have been mitigated.

SOCIAL CONTRADICTIONS AMONG THE NÁYARI OF WESTERN MEXICO

Ethnographic research in western highland Mexico has diversified in recent years to consider more broadly the Náyari (Cora), Wixarika (Huichol), Tepecano, and others from northern Jalisco and Nayarit and to place them more effectively within a historic context (Coyle 2001; Fikes 1985; Jáuregui and Neurath 2003; Magriña 2002; Neurath 2005, 2008). Older sources have been rediscovered, republished, and incorporated into a more dynamic understanding of the social and ceremonial systems of these groups (Diguet 1992; Lumboltz 1902; Preuss 1998; Seler 1993; Zingg 1988).

The indigenous peoples of this mountainous region are the most plausible known descendants and heirs of the Teuchitlán culture to the south. A number of studies have compared archaeological and ethnographic evidence for specific rituals, religious symbolism, temple architecture, and sociopolitical organization (Beekman 2003a, 2003b, 2005b; Neurath 2000; Weigand 1985b, 1996). Among the better substantiated parallels is the practice of communal rituals in sacred spaces, subdivided into areas built by and/or associated with different lineages. Past comparisons focused heavily on the Wixarika to the exclusion of other groups (e.g., Furst 1966, 1972, 1974, 1977), but here I draw upon ethnographic work among the Náyari. This is not the place to delve into the specifics of past-present analogies, and my aim is merely to use a similar case of internal social conflict to illustrate the contradictions likely to have been present in the archaeological case described above. Anthropologists warn against using traditional societies in uncritical comparisons with the past. I strive to respect those issues here while simultaneously recognizing the value of understanding the descendants of those cultures being studied.

The Náyari occupy an isolated and dissected upland landscape in Nayarit known as the Gran Nayar. They live in scattered farmsteads and in the few communities of Mesa del Nayar, Santa Teresa, and Jesús María. Similar to their Maya counterparts at the opposite end of Mesoamerica (though receiving, sadly, much less scholarly attention), the Náyari were not conquered by the Spanish until 1722. Their temple to the Sun (Tonati) was destroyed and the mummified remains of past rulers were taken from a nearby cave and burned (Malvido Miranda 2000). The temple to the sun may suggest
a community-oriented role, while the physical separation of the remains of the ruling dynasty into a cave points to special treatment of a family and ancestral rituals, perhaps symbolically related to the burials in the much earlier artificial caves of the shaft tombs. In the following centuries, the Náyari continued to practice an annual ritual cycle very similar to that followed by descent groups today (Coyle 2001:76–86). By the end of the nineteenth century, however, descent group rituals existed in dynamic opposition with community-oriented ceremonies that closely interwove both traditional and Catholic elements. Philip E. Coyle suggests that similar community ceremonialism existed in the past but had been centered on the capital at Mesa del Tonati, whereas today each town has its own complement of community ritual.

Coyle describes the tension between descent group and community-level authorities among the late twentieth-century Náyari of Santa Teresa and how external interference further fanned the flame. His (Coyle 2001:26–73) description of descent group ceremonialism invites comparison to the Late Formative to Early Classic ceremonies associated with lineages and their shaft tombs. Individual Náyari participate in the ceremonial cycle of one or more descent groups to which they can claim kinship. Members receive bundles of maize specific to their descent group(s) and participate in a series of three major annual ceremonies, or *mitotes*, that celebrate the planting and harvest of maize. Descent group rites of passage are nested within these maize ceremonies, and children, male and female adults, and group ancestors all play a role at different points of the year. Ancestors become equated with the rains that support maize farming, but specifically for the lands held by that descent group. Indeed, individuals obtain access to land through their attachment to one or more groups. Membership in a group and the concomitant participation in its descent group ceremonialism are therefore critical to the social identity and physical survival of people relying on subsistence agriculture.

Community rituals, on the other hand, are the primary route by which lineage elders can extend their authority to wider segments of the community. Community rituals incorporated two authority structures: one that “scales up” the metaphors of descent group ritual to the community level and another based on the well-known cargo system of Mesoamerica (Coyle 2001:96–176). The senior community elder is in charge of the first of these ritual series, which draws upon many of the same metaphors found in descent group ritual to bind individuals to their community rather than to their descent groups. For example, while the ritual actions of ceremonial elders of each of the lineages are responsible for bringing rain to their descent group territory, the ceremonial elders active in the community mitotes are considered responsible
for ensuring the entire dry season-rainy season cycle. They are thus of another order with greater authority and responsibilities that are a closer match to the Late Formative and Early Classic temple rituals of central Jalisco. The cargo system rituals fuse Christian myths about Jesus with Náyari culture hero twins Xuráve and Sáutari (Coyle 2001:115–24). Descent group elders together form a council that runs the cargo system, and therefore hold leading roles in the ceremonies for their own descent groups and simultaneously for the larger community.

Both lineage and community rituals are associated with a complement of material objects, symbols, and sacred spaces with notable similarities to the archaeological record. Descent group rituals are performed in prepared plazas close to the home of the group’s ceremonial elder. Decorated gourd bowls are used as containers for maize or sacred waters collected from throughout the group’s territory and used in ritual. Much like the pre-Columbian vessels found in tombs or ritual centers, the gourd bowls are decorated with quadripartite motifs that are explicitly described by Náyari informants as nested representations simultaneously of the cosmos and of the circular mitote plazas (figure 4.4). The bowl becomes a means of communication with the ancestors during ritual by moving it up a series of steps over the course of a mitote, and one can easily see how something similar might have been done on the stepped guachimontón pyramids. Prayer arrows, maguey liquor, tobacco, quartz crystals, and beads all play a role in the ceremonies, and potential correlates exist for all of them either in the excavation record from Llano Grande or Navajas or in contemporary ceramic figures that depict individuals smoking or drinking (Beekman 2005b; Butterwick 2004; Cabrero García and López Cruz 1997).

The community-level mitotes are scaled up from the descent group rituals, in an attempt to stress their more universal claims. Mitotes are practiced in a sacred locale close to the town of Santa Teresa and separate from the homes of descent group elders (perhaps the plaza depicted in Lumholtz 1902, 2: 519). The water collected for the rites comes from different parts of the community territory rather than descent group lands. Descent group maize bundles are substituted with bundles of maize grown in the town’s communal garden and greater use is made of the more cosmic symbol of the cross representing the four directions. Chánaka poles are raised in the center of sacred grounds as an explicit representation of the cosmos, in a clear parallel to the poles erected in the pre-Columbian guachimontones. Few of these materialized symbols are exclusive to either descent group or community ritual, and the expanded meanings attributed to them are most important to Coyle’s analysis.
This summary only covers the essentials of Coyle's analysis but serves to demonstrate two major points: the notable parallels between the modern Náyari and the Teuchitlán culture of Jalisco and the origins in deep time of the conflict between descent group and community interests being acted out.
among the modern Náyari. Prior to the 1722 conquest of the Cora, descent group interests appear to have been paramount and focused on the central figure of the ruler at Mesa del Tonatí. Spanish authorities dismantled this layer of political organization and that of individual communities without replacing them with effective religious or political authority, allowing local descent group ceremonialism to dominate until a resurgence of community organization and ritual took place over the course of the nineteenth century. Coyle’s (2001:177–240) research addresses how sharp but intermittent interference by federal agencies with U.S. backing during the twentieth century has increased the presence of the distant Mexican state and eroded the legitimacy of community authority structures, all while feeding local violence. The oscillations between different political interests have occurred on a historic or archaeological timescale and resemble the temporal cycling between strategies recognized earlier by Richard E. Blanton and his colleagues (Blanton et al. 1996). The twentieth century was marked by the addition of an entirely new scale of political activity, as the centuries-old field of conflict has been disrupted by the external demands of distant political authorities.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The ethnographic example explored here provides a more dynamic view of the archaeological case study but without insisting that the modern Náyari are necessarily the direct descendants of the Teuchitlán culture. Rather, the community of Santa Teresa presents a similar field of power (Bourdieu 1990) to that from pre-Columbian central Jalisco, with sacred spaces dedicated to different forms of performative ritual that competed for followers’ attention and support of different political authorities. Descent group elders carried out ceremonies that highlighted membership in the group, while community elders (who were, in turn, lineage elders as well) performed rituals that stressed broader unifying interests. Community support of one or the other could enable or deny ritual specialists’ efforts to extend their authority over groups other than their own lineages. It is the clash between different political strategies that is held in common between the present and the past, and Coyle documents how the dominance of community or lineage interests may tip one way or the other over time due to both internal dynamics and external impacts.

In considering the relevance of this material to the goals of this volume, I will focus on three intertwined themes present in the archaeological and ethnographic cases presented here: access to property through group membership, appeals to symbolic meanings as the basis for legitimacy, and the
affective qualities of performance. Outside of private ownership, individuals commonly obtain access to capital such as land, titles, sacred knowledge, hunting grounds, etc. through their membership in corporate groups (Beekman 2005a). Their primary mechanisms of recruitment (such as descent or alliance) have traditionally been used in anthropology to distinguish them as lineages (Evans-Pritchard 1940), houses (Lévi-Strauss 1982), etc., but the group’s role in enabling access to corporate property (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; Watanabe 2004) deserves more attention. Individuals could probably claim membership in the lineages described in my prehistoric case in much the same way that they could to the descent groups among the Náyari—by tracing ties of genealogy or fictive kinship to one or more groups. Some families held access to land while others held title to sacred knowledge; or perhaps it was a subset of a descent group that held myths and rituals in secret. But descent group rituals such as rite of passage ceremonies or mortuary ritual would have constantly reaffirmed the boundaries of that group and identified those who could continue to access corporate property by their active participation in group events and perhaps physical proximity to other members. The motivation for “followers” (or members) of the descent group was comparatively clear, as their continuing presence at events was necessary to ensure their access to capital, thereby reproducing the authority of group leaders. It is noteworthy that in the Náyari case, individuals traced descent via multiple pathways, allowing them some flexibility as to which groups they would continue to support. Therefore, the decision of these followers is not so much to follow as it is whether to maintain social ties to one group or another.

The inducements to identify with broader community interests and support community authorities are distinct. Coyle (personal communication 2014) notes that the Jesuits established a communal garden and cattle herd in the center of Santa Teresa, and these supplied maize and meat for the communal authorities. But this only establishes the source for financing the community ritual series rather than a form of capital that becomes accessible to participants. More important to my mind is Coyle’s subsequent observation that participation in ritual at this scale is tied to one’s very existence as a Náyari of Santa Teresa. Failure to participate marginalizes one as a member, though the ability of the authorities to enforce this in some concrete manner would seem to be a critical variable. For these reasons, I would argue that more durable community authority would require leaders to offer something more concrete for those who support community ritual (such as burial within the community gave access to formal citizenship in classical Athens [Morris 1991:157–58]). The useful part of this discussion is that it prompts us to ask what community
leaders in the Late Formative/Early Classic provided that drew in followers who already had access to land through their lineage membership. Did community leaders obtain independent rights to conquered lands, convincingly establish exclusive links to higher ranks of the supernatural, as described by Joanne Baron (this volume), or provide other inducements to community members? We do not know, but these are worthy topics of research. The value of community affiliation, and hence the importance of civic leaders, can also be destabilized from above if a higher level of political organization were to abrogate community powers or resources to itself. In the case of the Náyari, distant governments with pretensions to authority in the area have frequently played a role in delegitimizing community leaders, actions that should result in a decline in participation in community ritual.

The second issue is the cross-legitimization of community and descent group interests. Coyle’s Náyari example assumes that descent groups and their rituals are the more primal form of social organization and predate community authorities. Hence, community leaders draw upon prior descent group symbolism to legitimize their more expansive yet historically ephemeral positions. But archaeologists typically assume the opposite in their treatment of the rise of Mesoamerican elites. If a community already existed as a meaningful social entity, emerging descent group elites may have sought to legitimize their own positions through reference to the established suite of meanings associated with the community. We may or may not be able to identify the arrow of causality in this chicken-and-egg problem, but the close proximity of opposed forms of built space associated with distinct strategies suggests that some form of cross-legitimization was at work. Lineage-based shaft tombs have been found beneath some guachimontones, despite the very different interests represented—elites associated with one may have sought to draw upon the legitimacy of the other in order to achieve social acceptance as lineage elites sought to bootstrap their authority upward over the community as a whole. The same might be said for the very largest elite residential groups, which are prominently located within the central areas of ceremonial centers. Were these built only after one or more descent groups succeeded in making inroads toward acceptance, or did community leaders purporting to control wider aspects of the supernatural through ritual borrow from the authority previously associated with the elders of each descent group?

The final issue is the cultivation of affective ties between elites and followers through performance (Inomata, this volume; Inomata and Coben 2006; Smith 2000). Access to land or other capital is an important consideration in determining whether someone will associate with a group, but the fact that
the Náyari of Santa Teresa are free to choose between different descent groups suggests that other factors play a role in their decision to select one or another. The aesthetic aspects of public performance may be one of these factors, and exclusionary or communal rituals could generate ties of affect through an appeal to small and familiar or large and inclusive audiences, respectively. Thus, the very limited space associated with shaft tombs in comparison to guachimontones or ballcourts implies that only a small subset of the community could ever have participated fully in ancestral rituals (Beekman 2000), and they, in fact, derived their power from that greater intimacy. Georg Simmel (1971[1908]) once suggested that the desires for imitation and differentiation are present in all individuals, and people could have been attracted equally to exclusive and inclusive rituals.

Whatever the size of the audience, ritual must be carried out in reference to tradition in order to be recognized by the supernatural powers to which it is addressed (Coyle 2001:14). But in order to meet with the approval of its human audience, ritual must be performed in ways that are novel, aesthetically interesting, and engaging. In the case of the Náyari, much the same symbolism exists in both descent group and community ritual, with the difference being primarily one of scale. Both sets of rituals propitiated rain, but the first does so through requests to the ancestors of the descent group while the second claims responsibility for the dry-rainy season cycle. This raises the question “When is ritual sufficiently different in its claims of efficacy to attract the participation of members?” Compliance can lead to further participation in ritual, reproducing the authority of the lineage or community leaders. But a failure to engage can lead to a decline in follower participation and legitimacy, just as is currently taking place in Santa Teresa. The most extreme result may be a catastrophic loss of support and physical relocation (Houston et al. 2003), and it is the perpetuation or cessation of performance that is our best archaeological evidence for the success or failure to engage the emotions of the audience.

The three themes considered here thus isolate potential areas of conflict between descent group and communal authorities and interests: socially defined access to resources, the concepts and meanings that legitimize the holders of these resources, and the theatrical attempts to create emotional bonds between leaders and supporters. Lineage and community leaders each likely sought to associate their groups with material or spiritual resources that were either different in scale or in kind. Newer groups likely borrowed from existing concepts of legitimacy in their attempts to establish themselves and achieve acceptance, whether by attempting to co-opt meanings or through associating themselves with acknowledged sacred spaces. Their use
of performance and theater to create emotional bonds with audiences was a further area of potential conflict in the contrasting appeals that might be made toward exclusiveness or inclusiveness. Supporters were in the position of selecting among the options presented to them and thereby reproducing one form of authority or another, but they may have found it far more difficult to opt out of the system altogether if they wished to maintain access to land and social relationships. Theoretical arguments that emphasize the power held by commoners in social negotiation may be assuming independent access to lands and hence a degree of autonomy from the distant wranglings among political elites, but individuals may actually have been very dependent upon membership in communal groups for their social and physical survival.

Strategies that appear to contradict one another can be massaged through the efforts of both elites and members/followers so that those contradictions become less apparent even as they remain unresolved. They may be spatially separated into different forms of built space. Innovations in ritual can gradually fuse Christianity and native religion or appropriate and alter the claims of lineage elders to control aspects of the environment. Those elites seeking to establish competing claims to community leadership may need to offer something different from lineage elders in order to stabilize their authority. Conflicts do not need to be resolved, but neither are they left unaddressed.

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