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Feasting in Early States and Empires

*When Inanna entered the Abzu,
He gave her butter cakes to eat.
He poured cold water for her to drink.
He offered her beer before the statue of the lion.
He treated her respectfully.
He greeted Inanna at the holy table, the table of heaven.
Enki and Inanna drank beer together.
They drank more beer together.
They drank more and more beer together.
With their bronze vessels filled to overflowing,
With the vessels of Urash, Mother of the Earth,
They toasted each other; they challenged each other.*

– From Wolkstein and Kramer 1983:13–14

With the emergence of early states, feasting takes on yet grander scales of consumption, sacrifices, pomp, and ceremony. Due to the emergence of writing in tandem with some early states, we also have the first written accounts of feasting from ancient times. In cases such as the Linear B inscriptions on Crete, these accounts are often simple records of the amount of beer, barley, sheep, goats, and other foods being requisitioned, or, in the case of the Shang oracle bones, the human sacrifices being made. However, they also include poetic descriptions of gods like Inanna and Enki having intimate feasts of beer and butter cakes that undoubtedly reflect similar feasts of the Sumerian elites. The early Shang verses also depict worshippers offering ancestors wine, soup, and the first fruits from the paddies:

*Abundant is the year, with much millet, much rice. . .
We make wine, make sweet liquor, We offer it to ancestor, to ancestress,
We use it to fulfill all the rites, To bring down blessings upon each and all.*

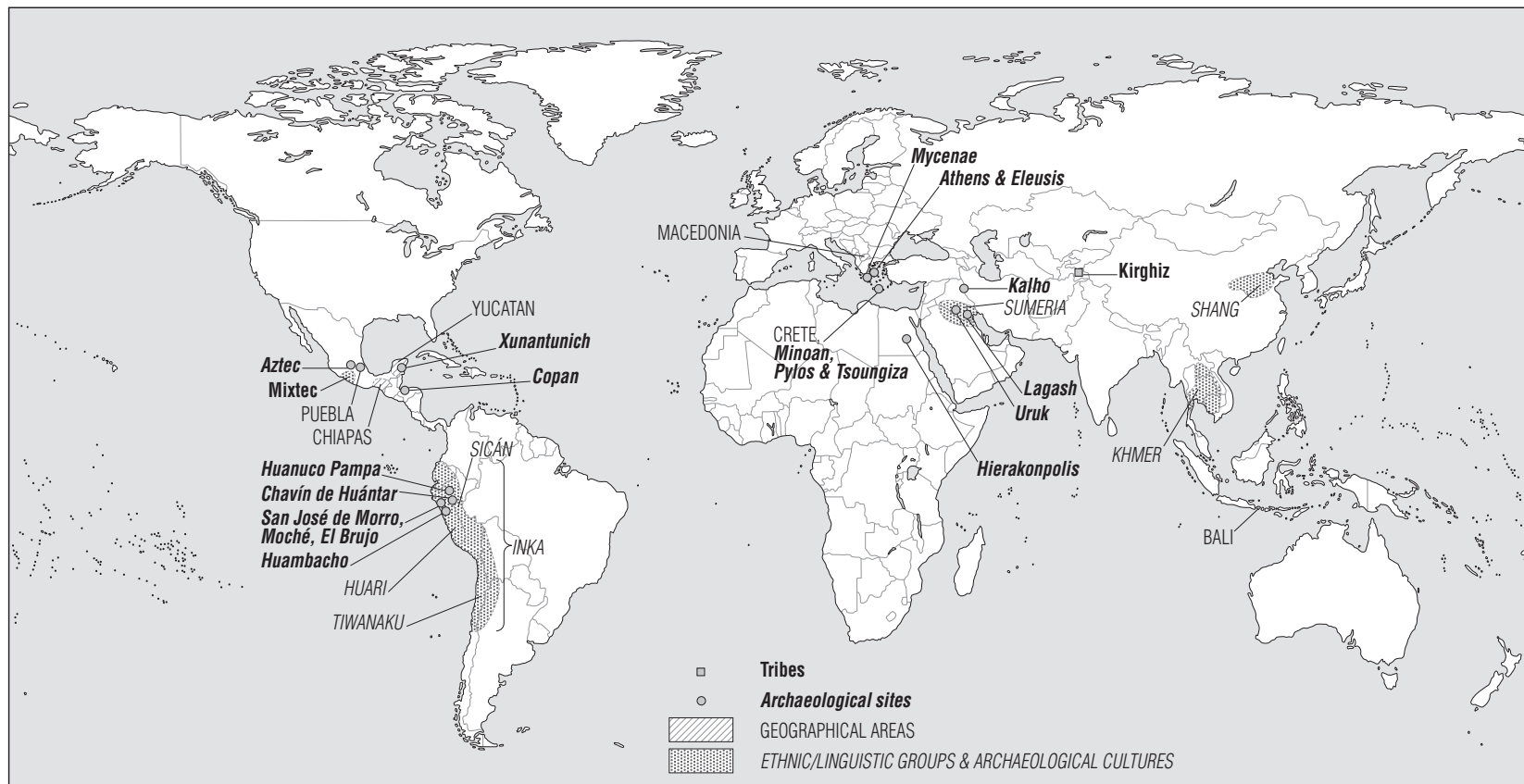
(Waley 1996:297)

In contrast to those who imagine that the early state apparatus effectively dismantled extended or corporate kinship groups in order to curtail opposition to ruling factions, here we see the apparent continuation of household, or, more likely, corporate group feasting in the context of ancestor worship, which is generally prominent in corporate kinship organizations. At least at the elite (literate) level, families appear to have functioned as corporate groups with appropriate feasts. It is more difficult to know what the situation was for most commoners, who left behind no written accounts. Sumptuous royal feasts, together with smaller scale kinship feasts, form a pattern that is reported for the New World as well as the Old (e.g., Goldstein 2003:165; Hendon 2003:205,207,226; M. Smith et al. 2003:245,259; Ur and Colantoni 2010; LaTrémolière and Quellier 2012; see Figure 8.1). The tantalizing but brief and fragmentary early written accounts, supplemented by archaeological evidence, provide valuable insights into early state-level feasting. However, before discussing some of this evidence, it will be useful to review a few basic distinctions between various levels of state organization because there are substantial differences between the early city states, later empires, and contemporary nation states. I must also beg for some indulgence in my foray into the Classical time periods since the historic and academic literature becomes exponentially vast with increasing sociopolitical complexity, and my background in this area is limited. Thus, the following overviews touch on some notable highlights and are somewhat more impressionistic or exploratory than the preceding topics.

DEFINITIONS

Many definitions have been advanced in the broad compass of states. Some authors treat states as synonymous with urban centers, and some make their existence contingent upon writing, institutionalized social strata, standing armies, craft specialization, interdependent craft productions, or similar criteria. However, from an archaeological perspective, and to be consistent with the previous definition of chiefdoms, I focus on the levels of hierarchical integration (three or more levels) as suggested by H. Wright (1977, 1984). It is possible to divide up the considerable array of past states into: *simple states*, or city states; *empires*; and *industrial nation states*. I limit my discussions here to these rudimentary types, although other distinctions can be and have been made (e.g., trade vs. subsistence-based states, theater states, theocratic states, meritocracies, feudal states, primate center states, contest states, segmentary vs. unitary states, derivative states [in world systems], and more).

In the scheme used here, simple states, or city states, characterize the earliest form of state development and typify the Sumerian polities, many Mycenaean and Minoan states, many Classic and Post-Classic Maya states, small Medieval kingdoms



8.1. Locations of key sites, culture areas, ethnic groups, and regions related to feasting in early states and empires.

in Europe, and the historic Balinese states. These states consisted of a single, dominant, typically urban center together with an agriculturally productive hinterland. District and local administrative or service centers, as well as smaller farming villages and hamlets, constituted the second, third, and additional levels of settlement/political hierarchies. By modern standards, the Mycenaean, Mayan, Medieval European, and Balinese examples of paramount political centers in simple states often seem surprisingly small. The urban centers generally held only a few thousand residents, although the total population in the polities was usually in the tens of thousands or more. It is reasonable to assume that within individual simple states the population was relatively homogeneous and shared the same language and cultural background. Therefore, there may have been little need to transform cultural identities or create multiethnic cultural solidarity other than focusing on affiliation with the state polity and emphasizing cooperation between members of different classes or occupations.

In contrast, ancient empires represented very different kinds of polities with different problems and different scales of activity. Empires were expanded to encompass a number of simple states to the point of controlling entire regions and adding additional levels of political settlement hierarchy. Although competition between simple states was often intense, including endemic warfare (e.g., Kramer 1975:18–19), there seems to have been a lack of military, technological, and administrative ability in simple states to be able to integrate large territories in a stable fashion. Remember that, as Rambo demonstrated, there was a cost to complexity. Every increase in political complexity entailed an exponential increase in the cost of maintaining the political structure. These costs involved the establishment of additional cooperative levels of administration, each of which required food surpluses to support personnel and the necessary feasts replete with gifts that made the wheels of government turn. Increasing costs of transportation, communication, and enforcement also had to be underwritten, as well as the increased ostentation of rulers. Empires frequently incorporated a number of different conquered ethnic groups, and this also added to the cost of integrating the polity, or at least its elite levels. Typically, it was the urban dwellers and especially the elites who spoke the language of the conquering rulers and adopted their customs while the rural producers continued to adhere to their own traditions and languages. Examples of past empires include unified Egypt, Ch'in China, Rome, Assyria, Huari, Tiwanaku, and the Mongol, Khmer, Incan, and Aztec states.

Simple states as well as empires continued to exist in favorable environments from about 5000 years ago until about 1700 CE. They generally cycled back and forth between simple states and empires according to variations in economic, climatic, military, and other conditions. The empire level of organization appears to have constituted an absolute ceiling on the level of political and cultural

complexity that it was possible to attain given preindustrial technology. This situation changed dramatically with the Industrial Revolution, as clearly chronicled by Hobsbawm (1962, 1968). Industrialization has changed virtually every aspect of traditional life, including family structure, transportation, urbanism, military capabilities, food production, competition, mass production, mass education, ritual, politics, economics, and, of course, feasting. I delve more deeply into this topic in the next chapter, but, for now, it is sufficient to recognize that the nation states that emerged during and after the Industrial Revolution were radically different from traditional simple states and empires.

ETHNOGRAPHIC AND HISTORIC ACCOUNTS OF FEASTING IN SIMPLE STATES

There were few areas in the world where simple states were observed before colonial impacts. However, these included various parts of Southeast Asia, Central Asia, India, Africa, and Mesoamerica. Early written texts from these simple states can help elucidate the role that feasting played in the dynamics of these kinds of polities. From these sources, is possible to distinguish at least five major arenas of state-level feasting: (1) royal feasts, (2) state-sponsored temple/religious feasts and revenue-generating feasts, (3) state-sponsored work feasts, (4) networking feasts, and (5) lineage or family-level feasts. It is apparent that many of the feast types that were common in chiefdom organizations continued to be important in simple states. In fact, the basic political dynamics and feasting types in chiefdoms and simple states may be indistinguishable except in terms of scale and ostentation. Royal funeral feasts provide a good example.

Royal Feasts

Although it may be difficult to imagine elite funerals becoming much more grandiose than the massive kurgan tombs with hundreds or thousands of sacrificed animals, sacrificed people, and food offerings documented in the preceding chapter, some simple states seem to have upped the maximal expressions even more. One of the enhanced manifestations of chiefly practices were the special squads of soldiers or gangs of enforcers that royalty used to carry out arbitrary campaigns of terror and murder to intimidate the governed and obtain acquiescence for their edicts and ideologies (Dickson 2006). In a number of early polities, every action of the king seemed to require the sacrifice of a victim to convey news of his deeds to his ancestors, as with the sacrifices made by Shang royalty in China whenever they consulted oracles. In a perverted form of communitarian ideology, elites justified such actions in terms of strengthening the state and therefore the public good, or

simply in terms of demonstrating the power of the elites to potential rivals and the populace at large. As one inquisitor in early Europe was reported to have said, "It doesn't matter whether those we execute are really guilty or not. What matters is that the people are terrified by our trials" (Bobrick 2001:134, cited in Dickson 2006:137). This is a strategy for maintaining power that Dickson (140) associates with complex chiefdoms, as well as with early states throughout the world. It is transparently self-serving for the elites, despite any justifications in terms of the public good.

On the other hand, early state elites, like their chiefly predecessors, also provided entertainment and gustatory delights to their constituents via feasts and ritual displays. They thus used both the stick and the carrot. State rulers frequently employed their own achievements or life passages as suitable pretexts for handing out (as well as receiving) figurative carrots to their populace. Battle victories, installations of rulers or other important figures, and completion of major building projects (especially temples ostensibly erected for the good of the community) all provided good opportunities to vaunt rulers' abilities, power, ideologies, and triumphs.

But of all the royal feasts, and true to preceding practices, funerals were often the most opulent occasions for displaying the destruction of the most property, the sacrifice of the most people, or the construction of the greatest monuments. Royal funerals in some West African kingdoms involved the live burials of servants, concubines, and family members with the deceased, and at annual commemorations of deceased kings large numbers of war captives and criminals were publicly sacrificed to the king's ancestors, along with a large number of female victims sacrificed in private (Dickson 2006:138). In nineteenth-century Bali, royal funerals were attended by 40,000–50,000 spectators who watched as eleven stories (60–70 feet) of wooden pagodas were engulfed by flames that consumed the body of the dead king, followed by the self-immolation of young women to accompany him (Geertz 1980:99–101). Little is said about the feasting at these events, however, it is difficult to conceive of them without large-scale and lavish feasts, certainly for the elites. From these descriptions and Geertz's (117) own analysis, it is evident that these royal funerals were highly competitive "aggressive assertions of status" as part of a "headlong attack in a war of prestige." Of course, "prestige" and "status" can be considered here as synonyms of "power" and "self-interest" on the part of the surviving family and their supporters. Although Geertz (120) thought that rivalry for prestige was the "driving force of Balinese life," it seems likely that what was ultimately at stake were the claims of descendants to close links with powerful predecessors, as well as the revalidation of supporting alliances involved in the succession of a new generation to power and wealth (Oestigaard and Goldhahn 2006). Elaborate funerals were fundamentally used to establish

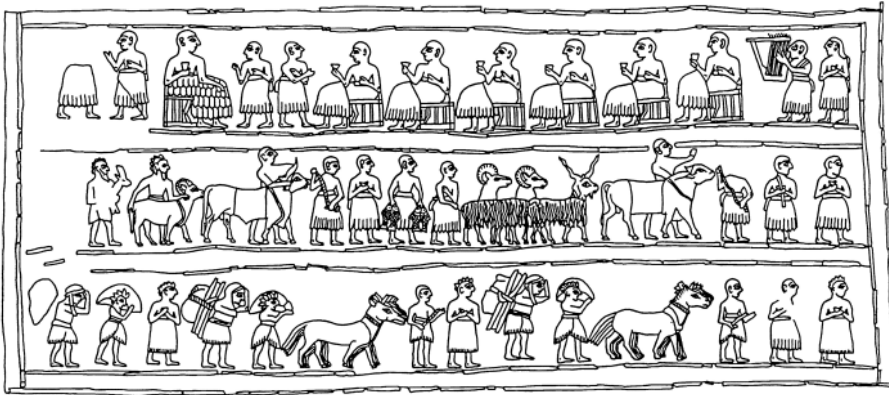


8.2. Although there no longer are royal funerals in Bali (Indonesia), important and wealthy individuals are still commemorated with large, colorful processions and feasts when they die. This funeral procession was for a wealthy and influential individual. (Photograph by B. Hayden)

continuity in rulership and to maintain the dynastic grip on power. The Balinese funerals were the most dramatic, splendid, large, and expensive of all the royal Balinese displays requiring three months of ceremonies including three days of major events (Figure 8.2). They promoted the ideology that worldly status has a cosmic base and that hierarchy is the governing principle of the universe. Similar events, ideologies, and strategies were probably quite common in early states everywhere.

Networking Feasts

Aside from royal funerals and similar but lesser scale celebrations surrounding life events of royalty (e.g., the investitures, marriages, military victories, and alliance pacts documented in Sumeria; Schmandt-Besserat 2001:397), it is difficult to imagine that there would not have also been networks and entanglements between elites hosting feasts in more private surroundings to secure allies and support. This is probably what the story of Inanna and Enki represents, as depicted in the opening of this chapter, as do a number of ancient Mesopotamian cylinder seals showing elite banqueting (Figures 8.3 and 8.4). The Homeric epics seem to reflect similar elite feasting contexts, as well as a general obsession with elite feasting. Susan Sherratt (2004) has observed that in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, feasting is the single most frequent activity described aside from fighting. These accounts reflect the



8.3. The “Standard of Ur” depicts Sumerian citizens bringing animals and produce in the lower registers, presumably for the important feast shown in the top register. This may depict an important state-sponsored temple feast held as a means of collecting tribute or perhaps a critical solidarity/alliance feast with regional administrators or elites from other cities. (From *Before Writing* by Denise Schmandt-Besserat, p. 173, figure 104; Austin: University of Texas Press. 1992)

8.4. Cylinder seals used by Sumerians sometimes also depict feasting scenes, presumably involving wealthy or elite individuals. These examples from Ur depict the transport of drink and fish to the relatively intimate feasts in the upper registers where the seated individuals are drinking beer from long straws as is still done in some traditional parts of Africa today. Beer would have only been drunk on special occasions, as indicated in the opening quote for this chapter. Small-scale, more intimate hospitality feasts were undoubtedly used by elites in all early states to secure support and cooperation from key people (Image courtesy of Pierre Amiet, *La Glyptique Mésopotamienne Archaique*, Pl.90:1190–1, CNRS Editions, 1980)



Mycenaean period, when simple city states dominated the Greek political landscape. In the Homeric descriptions, elite feasting is the context for epic poetry, songs, dance, philosophizing, and politics, all of which were used to unify participants in an epic worldview that constituted their collective elite ideology. Gifts such as gold and silver cups were also conferred at these feasts, and it seems evident that these gifts, like prestige objects in general, were being used to forge alliances

and maintain loyalties within the city states, as well as to launch cooperative ventures between polities, like the sacking of Troy. For larger venues, elites feasted with each other inside their megarons and courtyards, whereas nonelites feasted outside the palaces (Sherratt 2004). The attempt to build relationships in this way is illustrated in *The Iliad* (9:199–204):

With this he led them forward, and bade them sit on seats covered with purple rugs; then he said to Patroclus who was close by him,

“Son of Menoetius, set a larger bowl upon the table, mix less water with the wine, and give every man his cup, for these are very dear friends, who are now under my roof.”

Linear B inscriptions from that period deal almost exclusively with provisioning palace feasts (Sherratt 2004). The major culinary features of these feasts were meat (with animals bearing gilded horns sometimes transported by boat to the sites), olive oil, wine, and almost certainly bread. Later, *symposia* formed a more exclusive variant of these types of events in which close elite compatriots gathered at a host’s house and were entertained by musicians, poetry, dancers, good food and drink, and philosophizing.

A number of scholars have suggested that, like some chiefdom organizations discussed in the preceding chapter, the early states of Southeast Asia and even some of the early empires like the Khmer relied heavily on the personal relationships that rulers were able to forge between themselves and other elites in their realms (Higham 1989:342,352,355). Feasting and lavish displays, both among close affiliates as well as at more public events, therefore were viewed as playing especially critical roles in maintaining the political support networks that constituted the foundation of these states. Geertz (1980) refers to such polities as “theater states.” Indeed, royalty often appeared personifying deities in public temple dramas. Under these conditions, political stability was expectedly ephemeral. This may have been a fairly widespread characteristic of the earliest states in many regions, but such issues deserve considerably more research.

In the context of royal and elite network feasts, Bray (2003b:95), Issakidou (2007), Pollock (2003), M. Smith et al. (2003:245), and others have suggested that “haute cuisines” developed to create a visible (diacritical) distinction between social classes (see also Sherratt 2004 on Mycenaean cuisine). However, it is not clear from the written sources whether, as I suspect, the development of fine cuisines was simply a natural consequence of the desire and ability to impress important guests with ever more lavish foods, or whether, as with other sumptuary items, it was really expressly motivated out of a desire to create social distance between the classes. Alternatively, sumptuary items, like monopolies on prestige trade items, may simply have been used to limit competition. What seems to be clear from other discussions of royal feasting (see below) is that special foods were used to bind political supporters together and to run the empire. In all events, detailed accounts concerning the motivations behind the

development of fine cuisines seem difficult to come by. The symposia of the Greeks may be an exception, and there are undoubtedly other details of similar banquets in obscure archives of the simple states of Medieval Europe, but this is beyond the scope of this overview.

Temple and Revenue-Generating Feasts

From Mesopotamia to the Aegean, from India to China, and from Mesoamerica to the Andes, early state royalty appear to have frequently organized large-scale feasts requiring large-scale “contributions” for large portions of their populations under the guise of temple or religious events. Why temples should feature so prominently in the governance of early states has always been somewhat of an explanatory conundrum. Many archaeologists and ethnographers concluded that early elites must have gained their power from their control over supernatural knowledge and rituals. However, as illustrated in previous chapters, elites at all levels of sociopolitical organization used a range of more effective strategies to acquire and maintain power. Ideology was only of secondary importance, perhaps only convincing 10–20 percent of the population, but serving to justify elite actions and their demands to the majority (Hayden 2003a:15). Moreover, Flannery (1999:5,7–8,10,14–15) argues that ideological changes occurred *after* states were formed by aggrandizers who appropriated old symbols for their own use.

Early state elites were able to use coercion and intimidation to a far greater extent than in transegalitarian or chiefly societies; however, as Service (1975:270–2) and Earle (1997:110,131) have noted, the use of force by itself is inadequate to hold complex political organizations together for any extended period. Early state elites also used ownership of land and resources (Magness-Gardiner 1994; G. Schwartz 1994; Hayden 1994b:202), together with contractual agreements with tenants, the lure of prestige items, ideological claims, interpolity conflicts, marriages and marriage payments (discussed later), and debts generated by various means to hold state organizations together. Feasts at state (elite) temples can be considered as a new emphasis in the feasting repertory, although it clearly had functional antecedents in chiefly ancestor cults, secret societies, and chiefly temples such as the Polynesian feasts at *marae* and the feasts at Celtic sacred enclosures.

In the amalgam of strategies employed to hold early states together, elites certainly used temples to reinforce their own self-serving ideological constructs of how the cosmos should be constituted: that is, hierarchically, with high kings playing roles similar to high gods if not actually embodying them; mortals as having been created by the gods to serve the gods and give them the gifts they desired; agricultural productivity as controlled by the gods who had to be repaid with feasts, tribute, and ceremonies; worldly status/success being based on

supernatural qualities; the power of wealthy ancestors; rewards in the afterlife for warriors; differential values of elite versus agrarian goods; and many other similar “cultural values” or “beliefs.” However, beyond the use of temples for ideological propaganda, temples served a number of other good economic and practical political purposes, and feasts were central elements. Temples increased control over the populace and helped to extract goods and labor from citizens and/or control key resources like water, as argued by Hauser-Schäublin (2003).

It is important to recognize that temples were of great use for attracting people. Once gathered, they could be prevailed on or manipulated through feasting and euphoric ambiances to agree to render services, provide goods, agree to commitments, or adopt elite ideologies. But people first had to be attracted to these events. Temples could attract people with large ceremonial performances and feasts hosted in impressive architectural surroundings festooned by colorful textiles, elaborate masks, exotic foods, and entertaining music or dramas. Such periodic allures must have been strong indeed in otherwise fairly drab daily agricultural lives. Like the elite secret societies that may have been ancestral to some of the early state temples, the deity figureheads of the temple were rooted in familiar popular supernatural concepts and would have had an already established appeal for local people. Thus, one practical benefit of temples and temple feasts was their ability to attract people. In fact, it may be that temple feasts were so alluring for many people that those attending willingly provided material or labor contributions for the events. Organizers could then retain a portion of those contributions for their “operating costs.”

A second benefit of temple feasts was that the competitive displays and offerings created demands for surplus production, wealth production, and debts that, directly or indirectly, favored increased benefits to elites.

A third economic or practical reason for royalty to establish temples was that, in at least India and probably Indonesia, royal endowments and other “gifts” to the temples were used to intensify agricultural production through the creation of irrigation systems, paddies, raising and renting out plow animals, or similar intensification projects (B. Stein 1960; see also Hauser-Schäublin 2003). Families who benefited from temple agricultural intensification programs were then pressured to make contributions to the temple in compensation, or, as in Greece, temple lands were rented out to agriculturalists. The net recorded rents paid ranged from 140–1,200 tons of barley from estates 300–370 hectares in size. City rulers appear to have granted temples these lands, and city elites retained ultimate control (Ampolo 1992). In other Greek temples, metals and textiles were produced (Hägg 1992), presumably to pay for temple costs and to supply elites with prestige goods or returns on investments. In India, the amassed produce of temples was used (1) to support temple personnel and activities (including general feasts) and (2) to repay

the royal founders of the temples or other donors who, in India, received an average of about 10 percent per annum return on their investments (B. Stein 1960:167; see also Morrison 1996:587,596). A similar situation is implied in Bali, where hamlets and villages were tied to specific temples with the general populace making pilgrimages to the temples for their major feast days. The temples “requested” (or required) certain gifts from each village, with the offerings sometimes being considerable amounts of rice, pigs, fish, coconuts, salt, water buffaloes, and wealth (Hauser-Schäublin 2003:157,160,164,166ftn). In effect, this was a form of tribute, and the king threatened nonparticipants with punishments (163–4). Those who did not properly honor the deities (presumably with adequate offerings) were also conveniently scapegoated and blamed for crop failures (163–4). As Hauser-Schäublin (2003:177) succinctly states it, “Temples were tax collecting institutions.”

A fourth benefit of the establishment of state temples in various districts was their demonstrations of the influence of the ruling personnel (vs. their rivals) in those districts under the guise of religious worship. This kind of political posturing, together with the competition between local elite kin groups to display their prominence, has led B. Stein (1960:171) to observe for South Asia that “the Temple acted more as a place to record political loyalties than as a center of worship.” This was also true in Balinese temples, where at the height of the ritual, the king would appear in dazzling attire in the ritual area, standing above the officiating priest like a god incarnate (Hauser-Schäublin 2003:165). Contrary to Geertz and others who viewed the Balinese kingship as all performance and pomp with little power or substance, Hauser-Schäublin (2003:176) argued strongly that pomp served power, not vice versa. The performances were not simply pomp for the king, but material demonstrations of his dominance in the political, economic, and ritual networks that constituted the foundation of his kingdom. The kings sought to control the administration of temples and reserved intimate relationships with the deities for themselves (168). This also seems to have been the case for Sumerian potentates.

A fifth practical reason for royalty to establish temples was that temple administrators, with their higher levels of education and literacy, constituted important links between rural villages and higher political powers, as well as links to state defense forces and trade networks (Wälty 2003). People with concerns or complaints were normally dependent on temple personnel to submit requests to authorities for redress or appropriate action. Thus, elites who controlled temples could exert considerable control over local populations (Figure 8.5). These considerations also provided practical motivations for rural families to support temples with food gifts both at feasts and on a more routine basis so that they would be treated favorably by state officials or helped when in need (Figure 8.6). Temple administrators, in turn, often depicted their gods as being “gourmands” who regularly required a great deal of food (Appadurai 1981:505). In India, three-quarters of such



8.5. Temples became important centers for feasting and other state-related activities that benefited the local populace to some extent, but primarily benefited state elites whether in the major urban centers like Angkor Wat or in rural villages like this Buddhist temple in a Laotian village. (Photograph by B. Hayden)

8.6. Because temple priests were often literate and connected to state elites, the favor of priests was often sought by people who might need support of various kinds from state officials. In this example, a temple priest has been invited to a feast to bless a Balinese household. The host not only could establish a closer rapport with the temple priest and administration, but could also use this opportunity to display his relative wealth and kin support, thereby augmenting his image in the eyes of the priest. Such feasts were essentially promotional in nature, unless there was a specific favor being requested, in which case they would constitute solicitation feasts. (Photograph by B. Hayden)



food gifts were retained by temple personnel for their needs, whereas one-fourth was given to royal or other investors of the temple (B. Stein 1960:172). In all this, the annual temple celebration and feast was a major event at which large amounts of food were conveyed to the temple administration, as well as to participants and pilgrims who attended and contributed to the event. In their fundamentals, these feasting events appear similar in nature to the chiefly sponsored feasts tailored to extract food from the populace under the guise of providing entertainment and food for local constituents.

Another benefit of attracting many people was that events at these locations provided an important venue for local and elite families to show off their wealth and success (“prestige” or “status”), which played such important role in brokering marriage arrangements and economic or political alliances between rural families but was also critical in the political jockeying for power in early states. As Hauser-Schäublin (2003:164,167,169) characterized the situation in Bali, “The temple court was and is an arena for the establishment of political claims” where claims to power were negotiated between competing networks and social groups. The assortment of shrines to ancestors (including the king’s ancestors) and deities associated with the temple represented constellations of powerful social groups identified with ruling houses. Thus, rather remarkably, the giving and redistribution of food at temple feasts was a source of conflict and often litigation (Appadurai 1981:506–7).

There are a number of examples of these benefits from the Old World. The Eleusinian “Celebration of Bread” festival at the state-run temples of Eleusis was the “proudest feast of the ancient world” (Jacob 1945:66). Its origins can probably be understood as a form of annual tribute feast for the polity, but the attractions were so alluring that it gained interstate renown. Certainly, many Greeks made generous donations to the temple gods of Eleusis (Demeter and Persephone) with expectations of obtaining ecstatic spiritual experiences, and adorants were encouraged to make similar sacrifices to the temples of many other gods (at Eleusis) who might feel neglected or insulted. As a result, at its height, the temple of Eleusis boasted large granaries overseen by a ten-man financial collegium of shrewd grain merchants who sold grain at good prices for the benefit of the temple treasury, only part of which was used for the costs of the annual feast. A three-man directorate, ultimately taken over by Athenians, oversaw the administration of the temple and had the power to inflict punishments. They ran inns for visitors and undoubtedly profited in many other ways from events and donations (Jacob 1945:66). The yearly celebration of the “mysteries” was a major social and dramatic experience for many citizens of the region and a major economic boon for the priests and polity of Eleusis.

The same basic kinds of arrangements and dynamics observed in the South and Southeast Asian temples discussed earlier may well have characterized early

Sumerian and Mycenaean temples that featured so prominently in the political landscape of the earliest states. Sumerian temples owned, loaned, and managed herds of animals and agricultural lands, taking a generous share of production. According to the analysis by Schmandt-Besserat (2001), inscriptions and depictions show that the Sumerian elites sponsored periodic feasts about once a month at the temples of the main deities in the state pantheon. Like the Hindu temples described earlier, the Sumerian temples organized sensually attractive events replete with pageantry, music, dance, games, drama, and even sacred prostitution that must have drawn people from far and wide and enabled them to parade their own elegance, strength, dexterity, and beauty to attract the attention of others. Royalty would certainly have been lavishly attired. Even the gods descended to earth where they (or their masked impersonators) presided over the feasts and rituals and had special intimate relationships with royalty. "Offerings" from the populace for the feast included grain, animals for sacrifice, fish, oils, and other foods, which were paraded for all to see and probably involved competitive displays. However, standard contributions were strictly mandatory and highly regulated (400–1). A portion of these gifts were offered to the patron deity (temple staff), a portion was allocated to the royal family and administration, and a portion was given back to the populace to enjoy during the feast. Whether at the chiefly level or the early state level, rulers generally seem to have made a big show of their own contributions to these and all official feasts, portraying themselves as the major contributors to communal feasts (Sherratt 2004), but of course they seem to have profited much more from what they received than what they doled out as their contributions.

The quantities consumed could be prodigious: 30,800 kiloliters of barley alone consumed at the inauguration of the temple to Ningirsu in Lagash c. 2500 BCE (Schmandt-Besserat 2001:398). The installation of new priestesses as wives of the principal city deity were promoted as important feasting events as well, with the king and elders presiding over the affair, as described in an early document for a city state of the late second millennium BCE (Falconer 1994:133). When we discuss empires, we will see that feasts in the later Near Eastern empires were even more lavish. Similar arrangements seem to have been established in Mycenaean states if the nine bulls provided by each of nine villages (eighty-one bulls in total) for the Poseidon feast at Pylos is any indication (Sherratt 2004).

Medieval Christian churches with their Passion plays may have served similar functions as the Hindu temples, especially since plows and oxen or horses owned and rented out by the churches were needed by many families to undertake intensive plow agriculture. Although unclear as to whether secular or sacred in nature, Landa (Tozzer 1941:151–65) recorded similar patterns of monthly feasts requiring major contributions among the sixteenth-century Maya of Yucatan,

where various sectors of the community served, in turn, as feast sponsors including warriors, fishermen, beekeepers, hunters, curers, the elderly, and parents of children, as well as the community as a whole. In later centuries, the organization of the Maya *cofradia* and cargo system (largely in the areas where clerics were absent) may also have filled a similar role as the temples in early states (especially in providing loans to those in need, having *cofradia* lands cultivated, and, in some periods, receiving tribute and controlling community surpluses), as well as providing a local supernatural warrant for the exercise of political and economic power (Fariss 1984:324–6,329,333,336–9,340–3). Farther south, in the Inka empire, *ceque* shrines constituted locations at which kin groups were obligated to provide offerings and perform dances over several days on a rotational basis so that food was brought to the shrine on an almost daily basis. Massive amounts of food and *chicha* were consumed and undoubtedly offered to the temple in exchange for a nominal cake served on a silver or gold plate, ostensibly given to them by the Sun (Coben 2004).

Thus, the focus on religious institutions such as temples, far from being rooted in putative spiritual qualities of royalty or the religious fervor of the populace, appears to have largely been an expedient practical strategy for increasing production, obtaining revenues from investments, entangling local populations in debts and sociopolitical webs, and promoting the self-interests of the elites and those with ambitions, all under the guise of religious needs or mitigating the material consequences of failure to adequately honor the gods. The elaboration of temples with permanent staffs may be a characteristic that distinguishes states from chiefdoms, although this issue requires more careful scrutiny. Nor is it clear whether harvest or first fruits feasts continued to exist as state-run revenue generating events separate from temple feasts or whether temple feasts had completely absorbed these functions.

The “touring” feasts, or *gafol*, documented in Chapter 7 for chiefdoms, were sometimes less reliant on religious justifications or manipulations for the extraction of surpluses than were temple feasts. Kobishchanow (1987) observed that touring feasts were commonly used in many early states to obtain tribute and assurances of political loyalties, particularly in Medieval Europe, but elsewhere as well. Although temples could not exhibit royal personages at every event, they had the advantage of being permanently fixed on the landscape, in contrast to ambulatory royalty with their peripatetic appearances and *gafol* visits. Although there does not appear to be any record of touring feasts among the Yucatec Maya of the sixteenth century, they did have a functional equivalent of bringing elites from outlying centers to the main towns for warrior feasts (Tozzer 1941:165). It is reasonable to suggest that this was to maintain contact and the fidelity of the military and administrative organizations within the states’ jurisdictions.

Work Feasts and Alliance Feasts

There are few ethnographic or historic accounts of actual work feasts in early states, although Sumerian accounting documents make it clear that state laborers were given beer and bread for their work. Feasts given to raise armies might also be considered a type of work or alliance feast. As Odysseus relates, after he armed nine boats and gathered a crowd, he feasted his faithful companions for six days and covered all the expenses needed to offer sacrifices to the gods and provision the feasts (*The Odyssey* XIV, 248–51). All early states undoubtedly used work feasts to one extent or another to recruit manpower for their many construction or other projects; however, it is among the Inca of South America that this practice is best documented historically. Although this documentation is from a later empire rather than an early state, we have seen in the preceding chapter that this practice seems to extend back in time to early polities in the region, possibly even being used in some early chiefdoms. Whether the large-scale use of *chicha* to underwrite armies and state production or surpluses was a development only in later empires or occurred even earlier than the initial simple states is an open question that will be interesting to investigate in the future.

Kinship Feasts

Some researchers have argued that state-level administrators attempted to curtail the existence or power of extensive kinship groups such as clans either because they limited the power of the king or to prevent powerful rival factions from disrupting centralized rule (e.g., Earle 1997:6). As Sahlins (1968:93) phrased it, “Where kinship is king, the king is in the last analysis only kinsman, and something less than royal.” Hence, strong kinship groups were thought to be antithetical to the political centralization of large groups. However, it is apparent that, at least at the level of elites, kinship and kin-based corporate groups continued to play an important role in the inheritance or acquisition of wealth and power well into the development of empires (as exemplified by the exploits of the Juliani to which Julius Caesar belonged). Elite kin helped each other in economic and political maneuvers, and they often formed corporate lineages, as evidenced by the corporate precincts that lasted for many generations in Teotihuacan, Classic Mayan sites, Bronze Age Mesopotamian cities, and Roman villas (Millon 1967; L. Brown 2001; Ur and Colantoni 2010). Feasting certainly must have continued to play a key role in maintaining cooperation between members of such corporate kinship groups and in negotiating advantageous economic and political relationships with other corporate kin groups. Therefore, funerals, in particular, continued to be important events (Figure 8.2 & 8.7). Even in rural areas of Southeast Asia, lineage houses continued



8.7. The importance of funeral feasts and lineages in Minoan early state societies is clearly illustrated in this depiction from the Hagia Triada sarcophagus (Crete). Celebrants can be seen bringing to a tomb with an ancestral statue before it drink (probably wine), undetermined foods, and calves to be sacrificed. Note the exclusive and predominantly elite status of the participants. (Permission granted by the Scuola Archeologica Italiana di Atene)

to be constructed and used to hold lineage feasts that reified the power of lineage heads and the land resources that they controlled (Freedman 1965, 1970) (Figure 6.17).

Although corporate kinship groups may not have been eliminated in most early states, their relative strength may have waxed and waned in relation to the strength of centralization in the polity. For instance, in Imperial China, lineages came into being to protect resources, especially in contexts of uncertainty, competition, and change. The growth of lineage landholdings increased dramatically during periods of weakened state control (Rankin and Escherick 1990:317). It has also been argued that strong lineages could more effectively evade taxes and limit the state's ability to act in local affairs (Gates 1996:107). If this is a general pattern, the magnitude of corporate kinship feasting may provide an important barometer of centralized power in state-level organizations. However, much more research is required to establish this relationship as reliable and to monitor it archaeologically. One might also wonder if strong lineages were the result of weak centralized control or the cause of it.

Some of the most graphic descriptions of elite corporate kinship feasts come from India, where they have even been characterized as "Hindu potlatches." This alludes to the competitive nature of these feasts for "prestige," which is, in this case, explicitly linked to power, influence, success, supporters, social networks, social credit, and a group's rank in all these dimensions compared to others (Hanchett 1975:42,48). Both Hanchett and Appadurai (1981) focus on marriages as the most extreme expression of kinship-based feasting in India. Such feasts serve to define

networks of support and to bind supporters to factions. They also define caste boundaries, establish possible future marriage arrangements (entailing access to land, education, and wealth), open paths to careers, and display overall socio-economic and political power. As such, marriage feasts are intensely competitive events, with many of the characteristics that have been previously noted at the level of corporate kinship feasting: the contractual basis of reciprocity, the extreme generosity, ongoing affinal exchanges, the cultivation of important officials as guests, and the straining of family finances to the maximum in order to impress guests sometimes to the point of courting financial disaster (Hanchett 1975:35,39,41,47–8). Even ambitious individuals in the lowest ranked groups use this strategy in attempts to improve their conditions. In this system, the large debt loads assumed by lower ranked families generally benefit higher ranked families who have surpluses and wealth to loan out (typically at high rates of interest) thus pushing surplus production to its maximum and establishing important sources of power and sources of labor (39). Failure to perform adequately at whatever social level is considered a humiliation and defeat of one's endeavors (39,48–50), similar to becoming a "rubbish man" in transegalitarian societies.

Among the sixteenth-century Maya of the Yucatan, strictly reciprocal feasts and gifts were organized by elites and carried corporate responsibilities. The return of the invitations and gifts transcended particular individuals who, upon death, passed on their obligations and debts to their descendants (Tozzer 1941:92). In the Andean region, Hastorf (2003) has similarly emphasized the ongoing importance of corporate kinship feasts within state or empire organizations. In this case, the focus is more on ancestors than on marriage, although a number of occasions, such as marriages, funerals, ancestral ceremonies, and house embellishments, typically are used to varying degrees to promote family or lineage prospects through competitive displays. We can probably also expect that other, albeit less grandiose, kin-based feasts were common in early states, similar to the birth, coming-of-age, or tattooing feasts observed in chiefdoms and transegalitarian societies. Harvest feasts, hosted for group solidarity at the household, corporate kinship, or village level (rather than state-organized events), may also have been common in early states, as historical texts indicate for early Greek city states (Nilsson 1940:25–8).

Thus, overall, it is possible to view the feasting complex of early states, like the chiefdoms before them, as basically incorporating many feasting practices of previous sociopolitical organizational types and sometimes transforming them. Feasting at the family, corporate kinship, and village levels of transegalitarian or chiefdom societies seem to continue to be vibrant and important among elites in early states, and especially in segmentary states in which the lower order settlements had considerable autonomy. Even in the major urban centers and lower order settlements of unitary states, we can probably expect these types of

feasts to be important at least at the elite level and perhaps to some extent at the poorer ends of the spectrum. The socioeconomic safety networks that they create become ever more important with increasingly extralocal political entanglements in individual lives, as demonstrated in rural China by Yan (1996). These traditional feasting and gift-giving networks could be used to exert influence and obtain favorable decisions at higher political levels of governance.

In addition to these kinship and family-based feasts, continuities of feast types from chiefdoms to early states include the touring feasts used by chiefs, the secret society-*cum*-temple feasts, the ancestral feasts of leaders, the work feasts, the fidelity bonding of elite factions or supporters through feasting, and the city- or polity-wide feasts, including celebrations of the life stages in the ruler's family. The only new feasting features in early states appear to be the magnitude of the feasts, the institutionalization of temple tribute feasts, and the increasingly ostentatious polity-wide celebrations of royal achievements or life events.

The basic principles on which many early states were organized also exhibit strong continuities with chiefdoms, especially the use of ritual and ancestral institutions to construct the political framework of the state through displays of success, power, and wealth, together with economic investments. As Hauser-Schäublin (2003:168), Geertz (1980), and others have observed, the Balinese state was not so much a territorial unit as a network of temples and affiliated local elites with their supporters or dependents. Loyalties and affiliations with higher political levels were constantly shifting and being contested by rivals. Conversely, there were some distinctive changes from chiefdoms in the dynamics of early state organizations including the increased use of terror. States are partly defined by some researchers as having standing armies. Thus, it is worth contemplating the possible emergence of new types of feasting events for soldiers as well as other specialist, guild-like organizations since early states were also supposed to be characterized by increased specialization. However, I am not aware of any historical evidence for such profession-specific feasts, although there is likely to be some documentation for guild feasts in empires. It is also possible to view some of the transegalitarian or chiefly secret society feasts as having strong warrior components. This, too, would be an interesting avenue to investigate.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEASTS IN EARLY STATES

It seems that the greatest amount of archaeological interest in early state feasting has concentrated in the Mycenaean city states, the Middle Eastern centers, and the Andean areas. These areas will therefore serve as the focus for our discussion.

Minoan and Mycenaean Feasting

PALACE FEASTS

The archaeological literature on Mycenaean feasting is substantial. However, a relatively comprehensive recent overview volume on the topic has been edited by James Wright (2004a). As might be expected, the greatest attention has been spent on elite feasting in the palaces. On the basis of Linear B inscriptions, pottery, and fauna, Stocker and Davis (2004) and Palaima (2004) concluded that the larger palace feasts at Pylos involved small groups of about twenty-two elite participants in the palace feasting room (where bronze vessels were used) with a much larger group of lower ranking participants in the palace courtyards and vicinity (where coarse ceramic wares were used) and a third, or middle, group in the palace who used fine ceramic cups (Bendall 2004). Isaakidou et al. (2002; Halstead and Isaakidou 2004) concluded that at least nineteen cattle were sacrificed for these types of events, enough to feed hundreds or even thousands of people, and they, too, think that the limited number of special cups inside the palace probably represents a more exclusive group of feasters inside the palace, although Borgna (2004:137,149) indicates that a number of rooms in the palaces were used for banquets on different social/ritual occasions so that the situation is undoubtedly somewhat more complex.

Isaakidou et al. suggest that the Bronze Age use of small exclusive rooms may represent a change from *inclusive* types of feasts in the Late Neolithic (as represented at Makriyalos) to more *exclusive* feasting events in the Bronze Age. Girella (2007:152–3) and Borgna (2004:136,146) suggest a similar difference between the Minoan (more communal feasting) and the Mycenaean (more exclusive feasting) periods. However, due to the vicissitudes of archaeological recovery and changes in material use and visibility, this may be more of an apparent than real change. As noted in Chapter 6, most large feasts in ethnographic transegalitarian societies have separate, more exclusive eating areas (often in domestic structures) for lineage heads or other important participants in feasts, while the lower ranking lineage members and other guests eat outside (Figures 6.9 and 6.11). In addition to these large feasts, lineage heads (even in transegalitarian societies) are frequently involved in much more exclusive, small-scale feasts of a political, ritual, or planning nature attended only by themselves. This was also probably the way feasts were organized at Çatal Höyük. The same pattern may well characterize most Neolithic and Bronze Age feasts at the chiefdom and simple state levels, with the material expression of the highest ranking feasters simply becoming more distinctive and archaeologically identifiable as increasing architectural elaboration and political complexity developed in tandem with increasing levels of wealth.

According to Mycenaean inscriptions, at least one palatial feast was for the installation of a new king, perhaps involving similar dynamics as the installation feasts of chiefs discussed in Chapter 7. Key aspects probably involved the demonstration of economic and organizational ability, as well as the warranting of the new title and position by key power holders in the region. Other feasts were larger, and Halstead and Isaakidou suggest that very large feasts may not only have served to attract allies and supporters, or reinforce social solidarity in the polity, but also to promote the prestige of the palace administration and naturalize sharp socioeconomic inequalities within the society (see also Halstead 1998–9:187). This appears to follow the ideas enunciated by Hamilakis (1999a:40,45,49; 1999b:58–60) about feasts serving to transform wealth into power, especially under highly competitive sociopolitical and economic conditions. Similarly, Borgna (2004:127,134–5) and Girella (2007:157) view large Minoan palace-sponsored feasts as serving to create, affirm, or legitimize hierarchies of power and dependencies (Dietler's patron–role types of feasts), as well as to promote certain ideologies and political strategies, all the while enhancing the social bonding and political unity of dispersed groups. In this view, Minoan feasts are essentially political tools.

Halstead and Isaakidou point out that the invocation of the (elite) gods during the sacrifice of the animals for the feast conceptually ensured participation of those deities and legitimized the elite social ideology that they represented. Feasting contributions from dependents and supporters were justified by representing the goods as given to the gods in exchange for the use of their lands (Halstead 1998–9:168). By attending the feast and accepting highly valued foods from the sacrifices, participants tacitly acknowledged or acquiesced to the ritual and social scenarios being promulgated by the elite organizers. Isaakidou et al. (2002:90) point out that virtually all feasts involved sacrifices in the name of the gods, who received their portion (some of the blood, bones, the tail, and the gall bladder), while mortals feasted upon the meat and fat.

All the functions (alliance building, solidarity, political power, patron–client relationships, palace promotion, naturalizing inequalities, promulgating ideologies) that various authors propose for palace feasts may have been pursued simultaneously at large palace events, although perhaps not in the same locations or with the same emphasis in all instances. Still to be considered by Aegean archaeologists is the possibility that large palace feasts (and they were large if the 4,000 cups recorded on the Linear A tablets at Ayia Triada and the thousands of cups recovered from modest palaces like Petras are any indication; Girella 2007:147) may have functioned like the monthly large-scale Sumerian feasts held primarily for collecting resources to underwrite the elite administration, although these, too, undoubtedly served to promote many auxiliary goals such as those just listed. Interestingly, Athens, too, held ritual animal sacrifices and feasting every month, and the largest of their public sacrifices,

the Panathenaia, was explicitly to display Athenian power to official visitors from other polities, especially other members of the Delian League, as well as to reward the loyalty of officials working for Athenian interests outside of the homeland (Palaima 2004:101–2). Hundreds of oxen were sacrificed at Athena's temple at the largest of these events, and it can be wondered whether these events were not also essential means of collecting tribute or conscripting services and goods under the pretext of necessary celebrations for the gods.

Palaima argues that the same dynamic was in play during Mycenaean times when palatial elites struggled to maintain control over member communities and to outdo competitors in displays of power and the ability to provide feasts. Halstead (1998–1999:167,187; Halstead and Isaakidou 2011:91; see Bendall 2004 as well) also observes that individuals were obligated to contribute to the large palace feasts at Pylos, which seems to echo the Sumerian practice of imposing feast contributions on citizens in order to collect food and other items to sustain the political administration. There can be little doubt that for many people attending temple feasts, the receipt of some food, together with the pomp and ceremony and social interactions, all contributed to feelings of identity with the sponsoring polities – or, “social solidarity,” although this was likely to have been an advantageous side-benefit for the organizers that they were also fully aware of and did what they could to promote. All of these suggested functions seem to me to be more reasonable than the claims that palatial feasts were essentially diacritical in nature; that is, meant to differentiate the ruling elite from everyone else, as suggested by Isaakidou (2007), Halstead (2007:42), Bendall (2004), and others.

NONPALACE ELITE FEASTS

James Wright (2004) alludes to a wide range of other types of feasts that may have occurred inside palaces, as well as elsewhere. However, with some notable exceptions such as Eleusis, not as much archaeological or historical work has been directed to documenting or interpreting other feast types. Hamilakis (1999b:59) refers to drinking parties that essentially constituted work feasts, perhaps much as household work parties in contemporary urban societies often feature copious beer supplied by the host. Hamilakis notes that work parties were one means of using surpluses to achieve other ends, including increasing inequalities on the part of the rich.

Borgna (2004) and Girella (2007) have discussed other types of feasts in greater detail than most authors. Borgna (2004:143–9) remarks on the apparent complexity of feasting patterns in a variety of Minoan contexts, from cemeteries, to caves, to peak sanctuaries, and in palace rooms that varied from small dark chambers to huge banquet halls. Most nonpalace feasts appear to have been sponsored by corporate (“communal”) groups in which individual hosts are difficult to detect unless identified with individual house remains.

Borgna (2004:134,138) has investigated feasting in elite households where wine mixing kraters were used in contexts outside of the palaces. These events are viewed as quite competitive between rival elites with the aim of acquiring political authority largely via the creation or strengthening of ties with supporters. Halstead (2007:42) also interpreted faunal remains in terms of the use of meat gifts to create reciprocal debts and negotiate social relationships between households and probably lineages. The use of prestige items as gifts and the desire to maintain alliances for marriage purposes or to access resources makes good sense within this framework (Borgna 2004:135). These interpretations seem very reasonable to me. It is less clear that these events would be of a patron–client nature or that they were motivated by redistributive concerns, as postulated by Borgna. Reciprocal feasts of support or rivalry seem more likely. Some of these events apparently also entailed larger groups of participants outside the houses (as might be expected of promotional marriage or funeral feasts) because the number of cups recovered from some elite households greatly exceeded the number of people that could fit into the indoor spaces (135).

FUNERAL FEASTS

Exclusive participation certainly seems to have been important in certain contexts, such as some funerals and some palace events – a pattern established well before the Palatial period. Hitchcock (2011) views exclusive feasting events as having played a key role in the early creation of socioeconomic stratification involving the construction of monumental tombs as well as the lavish rituals associated with them (Figure 8.7). Hamilakis (1998:118) also views the controlled access to sacred space (as exemplified by funeral rituals and feasting) as a source of social power. Girella (2007:152–3) concurs but argues for some important changes over time from larger corporate-sponsored funerary feasts to more exclusive banqueting within rock-cut tombs, although one must wonder again if lower ranking participants were not also banqueting outside.

Although Early Palatial period cemetery feasts may have been characterized by limited access to tombs, there were huge numbers of cups and serving or consuming vessels in the cemetery areas (Hamilakis 1998:137) indicating yet again, a select number of high-ranking participants in privileged areas, as well as large numbers of lower ranking participants in open areas – the same organizational pattern that occurs in most ethnographic studies of chiefdoms and transegalitarian societies.

SANCTUARY FEASTS

Peak sanctuaries (Figure 8.8) exhibit similar large numbers of feasters drawn from regional communities, leading to the suggestion that feasting in these locations was primarily a communal event of aggregated rural people from the entire region who



8.8. The remains of a temple or shrine structure in the foreground at the important Minoan peak sanctuary of Youchtas. The largest religious feast of the year still takes place at this site, although the rituals are now held in the church in the background. (Photograph courtesy of Andonis Vasilakis)

gathered to enhance social solidarity and stability (Borgna 2004:137). Although solidarity within the group hosting these feasts may have been enhanced, the underlying motive of the organizers was more likely to have been the promotion of individual or possibly corporate benefits and political control, as discussed previously.

Given the writing and the prestige items found at peak sanctuaries, together with the limited access to building interiors at peak sanctuaries in the Palatial Period (Kyriakidis 2005:86–9,116,118), it would appear that elites were participants, and likely organizers or hosts, in feasts and rituals at peak sanctuary sites. Haggis (1999:78–81) argues that chiefly elites also organized peak sanctuary feasts and rituals in *Prepalatial* times as a means to spread their ideologies throughout the entire region, as a means of extracting surpluses and labor from people in the region, and as a means of affirming sociopolitical structures. Kyriakidis (2005:113–4) concurs, viewing peak sanctuaries from their beginnings as:

ideal semi-neutral places for higher-ranking persons of chiefdoms (such as chiefs, wealthier individuals, local spiritual leaders, and so on) to meet and create what Stanish calls 'pan regional elite alliances' with their equals from other villages . . . a second link between peers from different communities appears over the existing link between those belonging to the same community. . . . The potential political value of these sites, therefore, would have dated back to the very beginning of their ritual use. . . . They are bound to have been the arena for local political competition . . . nodes of tension, competition and mediation between agents, factions or towns.

This description bears a strong resemblance to characteristics of secret societies. Haggis goes further and suggests that Minoan peak sanctuaries were similar to pre-Sumerian (Ubaid) temples. Both were possibly similar to the roles of Buddhist/Hindu temples of South and Southeast Asia described previously. In light of these observations, in-depth analyses of feasting remains at both peak and cave sanctuaries seem critical, including determining the costs of offerings, costs of construction and ritual paraphernalia, size of gatherings, and other important characteristics discussed in Chapter 1. Kyriakidis (2005:86–9,131–2) has already taken the first step in this direction by examining the number of cups and figurines (in the tens of thousands at some sites), which indicate large numbers of participants who gathered periodically, perhaps similar to the large feasts and ceremonies that secret societies periodically host to demonstrate their spirit power for the general populace and to indebt, or at least impress, them through patron–client types of feasts.

In addition to the occurrence of common cups and feasting or food preparation wares, Kyriakidis (2005) has also compiled the evidence for elite presences at peak sanctuary rituals, including fine wares, weapons, metal containers or other items (double axes, gold jewelry, and gold overlays), stone vessels, scripts, and other items. The investment in sophisticated architecture, leveling bedrock, and ritual paraphernalia of later Cretan peak sanctuaries, as well as the practice of human sacrifices (per Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1981) seem consistent with elite-sponsored events such as those that secret society members typically hold for a populace, as well as the more exclusive clandestine rituals and feasts held out of view of the populace. Despite the large number of common vessels and the large gathering grounds at peak sanctuaries, there is clearly more that transpired, especially from the Protopalatial period onward, than the often proposed communal rural events that were thought to be popularly organized (Marinatos 1993:116). In fact, Girella (2007:149–51,157) interprets peak, as well as cave, sanctuary feasts as being linked to the palaces and as serving to legitimize elite power in the context of divine displays and feasting gifts to the general populace – essentially, the patron–role model of feasting. On the other hand, Kyriakidis (2005:117,126) portrays peak sanctuaries as institutions independent of the palaces, cross-cutting political boundaries and adding another tier of complexity to the political organization of Crete,

perhaps, I would again suggest, similar to the kind of political role that secret societies generally play together with their public feasts and displays of supernatural powers or connections. In this respect, they may have been a key component in the consolidation of political power in emerging chiefdoms, only to come into conflict with the aspirations of later palace elites trying to forge state types of political networks, after which peak sanctuaries were abandoned. In this fashion, peak and cave sanctuary feasts may have been created by elites to attract support for the political centers of the region. Some cave deposits have yielded hundreds of cooking vessels. In any case, it seems very probable that peak sanctuaries with large feasts, as well as cave sanctuaries, played critical roles in the evolution of political centralization in Minoan times and should provide very fertile ground for future research. In a similar vein, Steel (2004:177) has argued that the Bronze Age ceramic and faunal assemblages in sanctuaries on Cyprus represent ritual feasting by a religious hierarchy.

DISTRICT FEASTS

Elsewhere, in other contexts, excavations at the relatively small settlement of Tsoungiza indicate that it was a regional center for feasting (associated with a temple to Zeus) involving the sacrifice of cattle, with an estimated 1,400–2,100 pottery vessels in a single refuse dump, probably tying together the regional political structure and involving all individuals of importance from the surrounding area (Dabney et al. 2004). Such large-scale feasts at surprisingly small settlements may have rotated among settlements in the same tier of the political hierarchy (with Mycenae dominating the hierarchy), perhaps on a decadal or similar basis, much as the proto-chiefdom district feasts did in the Torajan areas discussed in the preceding chapter. Similar alliance feasts between rural communities in Classical Greek times have been reported by Gernet (1981; cited by Hamilakis 1999b:60).

In fact, with the collapse of the palaces on Crete in Late Minoan times, Borgna (2004:136,150–1) considers political organization to have reverted to the chiefdom level, with the locus of large feasts shifting from palaces to elite households involving more exclusive inner circles and more emphasis on individuals than on corporate socioeconomic groups, as tended to be the case on the Mycenaean mainland in Greece as well. Determining whether these political organizations constituted chiefdoms or states is beyond the limits of this analysis, but I have opted to include them in this discussion given their historical origins from palace-centered state organizations in the Minoan period.

From the perspective of identifying feasting behavior archaeologically, it is noteworthy that the Aegean area has provided multiple lines of evidence for feasts that enable archaeologists to arrive at reliable conclusions about feasting by employing “triangulation” based on several different kinds of evidence. These

include the faunal analyses of Halstead and others; the ceramic analyses of numbers and types of vessels (e.g., *kraters* and drinking cups or bowls), including the identification of prestige wares, such as Kamares ware, used exclusively for feasting (Day and Wilson 1998:356); prestige or costly plant products such as olive oil, wine, and pomegranates (Hamilakis 1999a); architecture; feasting-associated prestige items; inscriptions; and graphic depictions. The largest feasts were organized by the palace and elites, including feasts for funerals, accessions, victories, and peak and cave worship. However, more exclusive feasts among elites also occurred within palaces and outside palaces (and undoubtedly among nonelite agriculturists in villages, although these have not been recognized archaeologically). Temple feasts appear to have been new venues that were probably used to obtain food, services, and resources.

Mesopotamia and Egypt

A similar range of material indicators of feasting exists for early Mesopotamian states, which is probably not unexpected given the exchanges and interactions between these early centers and the states in the Aegean. However, with a few notable exceptions, feasting seems to have featured to a far less extent in Near Eastern archaeological interpretations than in the Aegean area, which seems surprising since historic accounts depict festivals occurring every day in Uruk with dancing in the streets and priestesses providing sex as a connection with divinity and as a lure to support temple feasts (Mitchell 2004:14,81). Bottéro (1994) has examined feasting in the Near East from more different angles than perhaps anyone else. Utilizing the historic accounts, he documents the use of feasts to seal contracts in a ritual fashion, to ratify alliances between states, to solidify support of those individuals critical to the rule of the king, to celebrate completion of large works, and as monthly honoring of family ancestors (at the new moon) with the entire society celebrating the king's ancestors. He also alludes to a fictional historical novel on Sumerian life in order to discuss feasts for marriages as well as to defend family or factional interests; to celebrate successes from which all concerned would benefit (e.g., battle victories such as depicted on the Standard of Ur; Pollock 2003:24); to take on political, administrative, or ritual roles; to involve people in new relationships; to obtain things or services from others; to publicly recognize undertakings or roles; and to have a good meal and discuss matters with friends. Most of these purposes are familiar from our discussions of transegalitarian and chiefdom feasting. It is interesting to note again the strong continuing emphasis on kinship organizations and ancestor worship, which also characterized Far Eastern and South American early states as well as later empires. Ur and Colantoni (2010):57,68) even portray household feasting rooms and storage facilities as the

major feasting venues for the Bronze Age cities of northern Mesopotamian, although the largest of these households seem to have been attached to temples or other institutions, whereas there was no large-scale storage in the temples or palaces themselves. It is worth iterating that why strong kinship organizations should continue to be important, how their strength varied under changing political conditions, and how the tensions that must have arisen between such groups and central authorities were mitigated should provide good fodder for future analysis.

Surprisingly absent from Bottéro's overview is any mention of funeral feasts. Yet, these are documented in considerable detail for the very lavish Sumerian royal funerals represented in the archaeological record (Baadsgaard et al. 2011:9). Scaled-down versions of these funeral feasts probably also characterized lesser elite and even commoner funerals, especially given the existence of strong kinship groups featuring ancestor worship and elaborate marriage feasts. The tens or hundreds of crude bowls and food remains recovered from funeral contexts indicate a range of sizes of funeral feasts, as do the use of metal or stone vessels (vs. crude bowls) for funerals of the more important or wealthy people (Pollock 2003:26). Nor are work feasts or tribute feasts explicitly mentioned by Bottéro (but see Crawford 1981:110–1; Eyre 1987:25; Joffe 1998:304–5; Mitchell 2004:183–4; Neumann 2004). Joffe also provides an overview of the use of alcohol (in feasts) as an important element in the emergence of early states in Western Asia and elsewhere. He focuses primarily on its use in underwriting craft production; providing compensation for labor; establishing political power; fueling competition among temples, palaces, and corporations for dependents (clients, workers, and administrators); creating acceptance or acquiescence of elite ideologies and symbols; and altering gender roles. Geller (1992:24) also suggests that beer making in predynastic Egypt was “a dominant elite-building and maintaining industry” on the basis of a large brewery discovered at Hierakonpolis. Collon (1987) observed that early second-millennium Syrian seals appear to depict feasting beverages consumed in the context of intercity rivalry and were probably being used to establish alliances and attract supporters.

More than anyone else, Denise Schmandt-Besserat (2001) has drawn attention to the role of the monthly Sumerian feasts organized by the temples nominally held to honor various patron deities (and probably royal ancestors, real or fictitious). However, the underlying motive for organizing these temple feasts appears to have been the garnering of tribute from the populace. Feasting was the “leitmotif” of ancient Near Eastern art, and, at the state level, it provided a relatively painless, or at least more acceptable, fashion of contributing to the “common good” in the form of the state administration – perhaps not too dissimilar to the strategies used by big men in transegalitarian societies to get others to produce surpluses and hand control over to feast organizers for “good causes” such as defense, allies, or other forms of the common good.

In Sumeria, the king reviewed the major gifts brought in processions (Figure 8.3), and records were certainly kept, but the texts are silent concerning the consequences of failures to contribute to temple feasts or to contribute enough. These feasts were also ideal venues for promulgating the elite versions of myths and self-serving ideological concepts, especially among a slightly intoxicated citizenry. The elites did not fail to insist that mortals had been created by the gods in order to maintain the deities who required food, jewelry, and ritual paraphernalia – all, of course, managed by the royal entourage and temples. Mortals had to produce surpluses in order to give the gods what the gods purportedly needed (Schmandt-Besserat 2001:398). As noted earlier, for the inauguration of the temple of Ningirsu in Lagash, the king boasted of providing 30,800 kiloliters of barley, alone! Falconer (1994) showed that prestige animals were consumed almost exclusively at temples in smaller Mesopotamian temples located in relatively autonomous rural hamlets within the orbit of Bronze Age city states. This indicates that many of the same strategies were employed in rural areas as in the urban centers, albeit at a much reduced scale and with appropriate modifications. These temples may well have functioned like the rural village temples described at the beginning of this chapter.

At the major centers, the elaborate pageantry, music, drama, dance, games, sacred prostitution, ceremonialism, and impressive appearance of the king and the gods (descended to earth for the event) cannot have failed to attract many people (as the performances were meant to) or to impress them. Anyone who had pretensions for improving their sociopolitical standing could have used such opportunities to vaunt their abilities and success in public. Temple feasts were undoubtedly major social arenas for participants and spectators alike, just as they are today in India, Indonesia, and many other parts of the traditional world. And for such events, large courtyards or plazas were required to host the multitude of participants, although elites undoubtedly continued to feast inside. Thus, temple precincts generally encompassed large open areas, whether in Sumer, Egypt, South America, Mesoamerica, or other areas with early states.

Despite Bottéro's relatively pragmatic list of reasons for feasting, he concludes that feasts were essentially organized primarily to experience a collective life and establish a common identity (Bottéro 1994:13), thus placing the motivating force for feasting in the symbolic and ideological or phenomenological realm which I think is unrealistic. Pollock (2003:26,33) also views the driving force behind Sumerian feasting as symbolic and ideological, although her specific interpretation of it is diametrically opposed to Bottéro's. In place of creating a common identity, she proposes that feasts organized by the early states were "principally a means to distinguish exclusive contexts and styles of consumption" or to promote exclusivity. Bray (2003a:9) similarly emphasizes the use of feasts to promote class distinctions (or to differentiate members of social groups), although she also recognizes that

other motivations may have played a role, such as the creation of debts and the acquisition of political power. Pollock's views of Sumerian feasts would seem to fit the description of diacritical feasts proposed by Dietler. However, as Schmandt-Besserat has shown, these were not really redistributive events (although redistribution did occur during them), but taxation events, with some "tax rebate" in the form of the alcohol and food consumed. It is again difficult to imagine such huge expenditures and efforts made simply for the purpose of distinguishing exclusive styles of consumption or to promote exclusivity. The fundamental logic of feasts is not to break social bonds but to create them, although by the nature of any social gathering, some people at some level will be excluded. Nevertheless, the creation of ingroup versus outgroup distinctions may certainly have been a secondary, even desired, effect.

South America

The archaeology of early South American states rivals the Aegean for its discussion of feasting in state-level societies. Although most attention has been devoted to occurrences in later empires, some discussion has also taken place about the role of feasting in emergent state societies. As noted in Chapter 1, there is a wide range of opinions concerning the level of sociopolitical integration of earlier prehistoric societies in the area. For heuristic purposes, I consider some centers from the Early Horizon (800–200 BCE) and the Early Intermediate Period (200 BCE–700 CE) as early state-level societies.

At the earlier end of the spectrum, the work of David Chicoine (2010, 2011) at the Early Horizon site of Huambacho in the Nepeña Valley of coastal Peru is probably the most detailed. This was a regional center that appears to have been subordinate to a larger contemporaneous site in the valley (Caylán), thus indicating a degree of complexity approaching statehood. Chicoine also views the feasting structures as reflecting institutionalized hierarchies of control, both in terms of their size, their spatial layouts, and the restricted occurrence of prestige items probably made by craft specialists. As Chicoine (2011:450) summarizes the situation, these societies "were complex and . . . socially stratified systems, marked by political hierarchies, centralized religious structures, labor specialization, and large-scale public projects." One of the more interesting aspects of his analysis is the identification of two large enclosed plazas (up to 6,000 square meters; see Figure 8.9) with decorated raised colonnaded benches (apparently for the seating of elites while lower ranking people gathered and ate below in the open), as well as a range of smaller sized colonnaded patios for smaller more exclusive feasts (Figure 8.10; Chicoine 2011:439–40). Similar large courtyards (for patron–client or tribute types of feasts with commoners) and smaller feasting rooms (for exclusive elite feasts) probably



8.9. At the Early Horizon district center of Huambacho, on the coastal plain of Peru, the large open courtyards, one of which is shown here, were used for periodic feasting by the general populace, while the colonnaded periphery was probably reserved for elite participants who benefited from the shade. (Photograph courtesy of David Chicoine)

8.10. Much smaller patio and room complexes at Huambacho also appear to have been used for feasting, but for smaller groups of participants probably consisting exclusively of elites. (Photograph courtesy of David Chicoine)



also characterized Late Intermediate centers such as the ramped palaces at Pachacamac. These examples are strikingly reminiscent of Minoan and Mycenaean large banquet halls, together with smaller rooms used for a variety of other feast sizes and compositions. Large temple courtyards for feasting and ceremonies also typify Sumerian, Egyptian, and Polynesian states and chiefdoms and perhaps many others. They certainly seem to be common at this level of political organization.

As in the Minoan case, archaeological attention has primarily focused on the large-scale feasts rather than on the smaller, more exclusive events, although Chicoine acknowledges that the smaller venues were probably for elite participants and served a variety of purposes, with smaller patio complexes ranging from a mere 44 square meters to 1,200 square meters. He views the large feasts in the plazas as serving a range of functions: diacritical, patron–role, community solidarity, work (construction), and tribute collection. Elites are portrayed as organizing these feasts to justify demands for producing the surpluses that were surrendered to them – reminiscent of Sumerian “taxation” feasts. To attract as many willing producers as possible, South American elites, like their Near Eastern counterparts, developed techniques to make feasts as emotionally, aesthetically, and gustatorily appealing as they could by providing food, drink, ritual, and entertainment, notably with music and undoubtedly drama and dance in a multisensorial spectacle, all experienced in impressive architectural settings that may well have been constructed to enhance acoustic, lighting, and even psychotropic effects (Chicoine 2011:447). John Rick (2008:32–4), in particular, has emphasized the use of such effects by elites to make their claims of access to alternate worlds believable via the manipulation and deception of participants in ritual events at Chavín de Huantar. It is telling that some ritual spaces could only have been occupied by very small numbers of individuals (Figure 7.12). To make credible the power of emerging authorities, fearsome half human/half animals were among the entities that confronted celebrants (Figure 7.13). Rick argues that these were highly competitive rituals that did not serve the common interest but rather the interests of the organizers. In a similar vein, Chicoine (2011:450) inferred that “Elites benefited from these events and manipulated the emotional aspects of feasts to intensify local production and muster greater material surpluses . . . these transformations were part of the political strategies of community leaders competing for local support and authority. The success of these new elites was materialized in the capacity to sponsor various building projects.”

Although it cannot be doubted that community solidarity was enhanced as a by-product of these feasts (Delibes and Barragán 2008:114) or that status differences were reaffirmed, it seems unlikely that these objectives by themselves would have provided sufficient reason for building such elaborate feasting structures or undertaking the complex organizational activities required to host feasts with thousands

of people probably attending. Of particular interest in this time period is the adoption of maize and its predominant use in feasts, especially by political competitors who appear to have used maize beer to attract as many people to the events as possible and make them want to partake in, and contribute to, large feasts. Chicoine and others (Murra 1960; Burger and van der Merwe 1990; Gummerman 1994; see also Clark and Blake 1994:25 for similar observations in Mesoamerica) emphasize that the use of maize was primarily as a prestige food, and its primary use was for brewing *chicha*, presumably undertaken on a relatively large scale to improve the allure of feasts. The use of maize beer (either provided at a limited scale to elites or on a larger scale to all adult feast participants) may have played a large role in motivating the sociopolitical and material transformations that characterize the changes from the Initial Period to the Early Horizon on the coast.

In the Early Intermediate Period, a number of local states established or extended their hegemony. One of the most notable of these states was centered on the coast at Moche, and George Gummerman IV has perhaps done the most detailed analysis of feasting practices associated with this polity. In a series of conference papers, publications, and presentations, Gummerman (1994, 2004, 2010) has focused on the importance of funerary feasts and, within these, the importance of maize. At the site of El Brujo, he recovered a large kitchen with several massive hearths (two more than 4 meters long) and many large storage jars on a funerary platform adjacent to two cemeteries with rich burials indicating funerary feasting. How much of the food that was prepared was destined to accompany the defunct person and how much was destined for consumption by participants in the funerary feast is difficult to determine. However, Gummerman emphasizes that, except for rulers, funerary rituals were surprisingly limited in scale, probably on the scale of corporate kin-based participants. Even at the capital, Moche, he notes that there is no clear evidence of much large-scale feasting or storage.

Gummerman similarly concluded that evidence of work party feasts at Moche sites indicates small-scale events such as might be hosted by a household or lineage, a far cry from the massive work feasts organized by the Incan empire. Even evidence for feasts in elite compounds (postulated to have been held to reward agricultural laborers) are inferred to have been small on the basis of the associated room sizes. However, as repeatedly pointed out, ethnographically, interior rooms are generally only for the high-ranking participants of feasts, with lower ranking members feasting outside and often eating off of perishable dishes such as large leaves or woven fronds. On the basis of archaeological feasting evidence, Gummerman infers a relatively decentralized political structure with extended households and lineages as the most significant socioeconomic and political factions in Moche society. Given the widespread importance of funerary feasting

among other early states and chiefdoms, or even transegalitarian societies and the occurrence of large feasts in most of these societies, the small scale claimed for Moche feasting seems somewhat aberrant. One wonders if this is not perhaps due to sampling and recovery biases (a caveat expressed by Gummerman) or even obliviousness to the significance of feasting remains on the part of earlier excavators. In contrast to Gummerman's interpretations, Delibes and Barragán (2008:106,112,114–5) describe "intense activity related to the celebration of fiestas and rituals" for elite funerals in the Mochica site of San José de Moro. Without estimating the sizes of groups, they write of large-scale competitive preparations and consumption of *chicha* at the site by many elite people from different settlements of the region. Gummerman's conclusions also contrast markedly with Gero's study of feasting at other Early Intermediate Period sites such as Queyash Alto in the highlands, where she sees high degrees of political competition leading to a more ranked society and the consolidation of power in the hands of fewer individuals (cited in Renfrew & Bahn 1996:208). On the other hand, if Gummerman's interpretation does prove to be robust (as perhaps indicated by the work of Ur and Colantoni [2010] in Mesopotamia), this would add a new dimension to our models of the structural variability of early states.

Mesoamerica

Despite some lavish depictions of banquets and elaborate ritual spectacles among the Maya and other Mesoamerican groups, comparatively little archaeological analysis has focused on feasting among early, or simple, states in Mesoamerica. This is all the more surprising since Peten polychromes appear to have been the equivalent of the fine china dinner sets of modern Industrial households, which no self-respecting household would be without (LeCount 2001:947). We can probably assume that periodic feasts were held to honor the kings and queens buried within Temples I–V in Tikal, as well as in the temples at Palenque and other sites, but no study of feasting behavior has been undertaken in these contexts that I know of. Lisa LeCount (2001) has probably undertaken the most comprehensive discussion of feasting in Maya states to date. Based in part on early Spanish accounts, she distinguishes between elite and commoner feasts as well as private versus public, small-scale versus large-scale, and inclusive versus exclusive feasts (the latter being viewed as diacritical in nature; LeCount 2001). Following Brumfiel's and Randsborg (1982:135) lead, she also suggests that in competitive political situations (such as Blanton's network-based political economies), consumption of prestige goods and foods should flourish, whereas in more placid political milieux (such as Blanton's corporate political organizations), ostentatious displays and feasts should be more subdued. The widespread distribution of feasting wares both spatially and

economically in households at Xunantunich and elsewhere (LeCount 2001, Gonlin 1994) would seem to imply a more network-oriented feasting and political organization perhaps similar to that proposed for Southeast Asia and other areas.

In addition, LeCount (2001:937) thinks that festival feasting to celebrate harvests, solstices, or other events with special foods were a type of diacritical feast, presumably because it helped to establish local or polity identities and inclusiveness while at the same time displaying and celebrating elite prerogatives. As in previous examples, one must wonder exactly how the large public festivals were funded and whether there were not ulterior motives for organizing large feasts, such as the collection of tribute or goods to run the administrative components of early states, as may have been the case especially at harvest festivals, year-end ceremonies celebrating the departure of Kukulcan, and at annual rain ceremonies dedicated to Chac and Itzamna (943–4). But little is known about these aspects of feasting in Maya states, and we must wonder whether there were any dominant diacritical motives behind either public or private feasts. Certainly, the widespread distribution of the Peten polychromes used in feasting seems inconsistent with diacritical motives for hosting feasts but make good sense in terms of establishing reciprocal political alliances.

It is clear from Landa's sixteenth-century accounts that elites held feasts in which return payments for food and gifts by guests was mandatory. M. Smith et al. (2003:246), following work by Pohl (1998, 1999, 2003), view the elaborate polychrome vessels in the Mixteca-Puebla Postclassic city states as having been used in feasts to create or maintain alliances between simple state polities, probably similar to Landa's descriptions. There is no reason to believe the situation was much different during Classic times. There were also more open, large-scale, inclusive feasts that did not involve the obligatory return of gifts by guests (except probably for some specially invited individuals). LeCount interprets these, respectively, as competitive and diacritical in nature. Drinking cacao and/or *chicha*, and eating meat (a rare item in daily foods) were key components of ethnohistoric feasts. Hendon (2003:225–7) seems to have evidence of such feasting in the remains at Classic period Copan as well as small-scale feasting in rural households, although, here again, she imputes the motive behind such feasts as attempts by elites to define themselves by excluding commoners (207).

One of the most unusual occurrences of feasting remains among these early states were the food remains associated with Maya ball courts (Figure 8.11), which illustrates the remarkably versatile nature of feasts in the use of pretexts. As reported by J. Fox (1996:484,493), the use of ball game competitions between factions or villages was a widespread context for competitive displays including feasting, competitive gift exchanges, and displays involving slaves, jewelry, elaborate ritual clothing, and expensive exotic paraphernalia. Although the nominal



8.11. Ball courts such as this example at Mixco Viejo (Guatemala) were important feasting sites in Mesoamerica. They combined sports, betting, ostentatious displays of wealth, and sometimes human sacrifices in a unique constellation of co-occurring feasting activities. It would seem that the eating was as competitive as the sports. (Photograph by B. Hayden)

justification for holding these events may have been to celebrate harvests and ensure good future crops, the activities involved clearly indicate that political gamesmanship was the underlying motive: to wit, displays of power, success, and triumphs that were meant to impress potential or current allies, dissuade rivals, and create indebted relationships in volatile political contexts. Warren Hill (1999; Hill and Clark 2001) has dealt with this topic in even greater detail and from the broader overall perspective of competitive sports, including the Maya ball game and the modern Olympics. In his view, competitive sports bear many similarities to feasting as an aggrandizer strategy. He points out that elites, by their very nature, are high-roller high-risk takers who create large debts, gamble, host feasts, and risk everything in waging wars. Competitive sports can combine all of these features, even to the extent of being a means to acquire territory or losing lives. Although this is a fascinating field to explore, it would take us far away from our primary focus on feasting. However, in cases like the Maya ball game, feasting and competitive sports intersect and occur as part of the same event. Hill (1999) has documented the use of competitive sports and feasting beginning in the Early Formative of the Chiapas coastal region, thus extending this strategy or tactic back to early chiefdom levels of organization. Other chiefdoms, like the Kirghiz of Afghanistan, sometimes have highly competitive but loosely organized sports (Nairn 1981). However, in general, it may be that organized competitive intercommunity sports became particularly

prominent with the development of early states. Other competitive sports events, such as the original Classic Olympic games, may have featured prominent feasting as well. Aside from these accounts, there is also evidence for state-level feasting in some Mayan caves (Moyes, 2013), possibly indicating feasts held by secret societies.

SUMMARY OF SIMPLE STATES

Early, simple states developed from chiefly political organizations and shared a great deal in common with chiefdoms, both in terms of politics and feasting dynamics. Both chiefdoms and early states were probably ethnically uniform and did not face the challenges of integrating linguistically and culturally diverse factions into a single political organization. If ostentation is any barometer of political organizations based on personal relationships involving feasting (vs. political power based on control of resources), then relationship-based states may have been surprisingly common in both chiefdoms and early states. Changes in emphasis and new developments included the greater use of coercion; the expanded importance of polity-wide celebrations held in honor of rulers' accomplishments, ancestors, or life stages (sometimes including competitive sports events); and an expanded and institutionalized use of temple festivals for tribute collection. These developments are all amenable to archaeological detection, especially with epigraphic commemorations. There appear to have been five fundamental types of feasts in early states: (1) royal events, (2) regular temple tribute and other revenue-generating feasts, (3) state corvée work, (4) political network support, and (5) corporate kinship and possibly guild events (Scullard 1981:122).

Kinship-based feasts may have varied in strength under changing degrees of political centralization, and, like royal celebrations, they should be amenable to agent-based analyses if feasting remains can be identified with specific households. The more exclusive elite gatherings for intimate political support may also be susceptible to detection and agency analysis at the household level. Multiple lines of evidence can be brought to bear on these issues using "triangulation" techniques. These include epigraphy and iconography; ceramic, stone, and metallic serving wares; special architectural, storage, and cooking features; faunal and floral remains; human remains and burial materials; prestige items; and special locations (especially caves, mountain peaks, cemeteries, temples, palaces, and sports facilities). Of particular interest are widespread occurrences of large gathering areas (courtyards, plazas, or halls) often associated with temples or palaces. Alcoholic beverages like beer also frequently feature as a major element in attracting people to feasts for work, alliances, or tribute collection.

There is a tendency among archaeologists to interpret the appearance of exclusive feasting facilities (special rooms and wares) as evidence of a fundamental shift

from communal to more individual or exclusive commensal behavior. This theme appears when dealing with the transition from Megalithic to Bronze Age burials and feasting, as well as in early versus later states in the Andean area and in the Aegean. However, on the basis of ethnoarchaeological research (Chapters 6 and 7), it would appear that there have always been small (c. 10–20 people) exclusive feasts involving the highest ranking individuals of communities, whether transegalitarian or more complex. And, at larger feasts, privileged guests and hosts have probably always segregated themselves (usually eating inside hosts' houses) from the lower ranking participants (usually eating outside houses). Thus, the appearance of what seem to be exclusive elite feasting facilities and wares probably simply reflects the increasing wealth of elites in more complex societies that enabled them to build special rooms for their feasting cronies and buy specialty wares to serve them while the majority of participants ate and drank in open venues with more common, often perishable, wares. Thus, the material visibility of these feasts has probably varied greatly as a consequence of the wealth available for such purposes. I doubt that there was any major change in feasting dynamics from inclusive to exclusive participation as frequently postulated.

Similarly, the common notion that early state feasts were often organized for the primary purpose of distinguishing elite classes from the *hoi polloi* is, I think, a misrepresentation of the fundamental driving forces behind the exorbitant expenditures for many feasts. Certainly, hosting the major state feasts was prompted by a number of mutually reinforcing factors or motives, but diacritical concerns seem to pale in comparison to the other more practical motives and benefits, such as tribute collection.

One of the more intriguing problems of early states is the nature of the dialectic between centralized political power and decentralized corporate kinship power as reflected in the relative magnitude of feasts sponsored by kinship versus royal groups. Another interesting issue involves the near universal central importance of temples in political organizations. Temples, of course, are highly visible archaeologically, and understanding the reasons for investing huge amounts of resources in their construction and establishing the practical benefits that elites derived from promulgating these institutions is central to understanding the nature of early states. There are clearly precedents among chiefdoms and even transegalitarian societies, but early state temples seem to develop new levels of entanglements involving attempts to attract the populace to events, extracting surpluses as tribute, developing arable resources as investments, charging interest on loans, displaying sociopolitical rank and control, and as a liaison or monitor of the elites for local affairs. Further exponential escalation of the state use of temples and administrative costs continued with the emergence of empires with new problems of social integration to solve, issues to which we now turn.

EMPIRES

Although written and graphic accounts from early simple states often provide tantalizing tidbits of information about feasting, the art of writing was usually in a fairly rudimentary state of development, and one is left with snippets of allusions even to the most important events, although written accounts from later written epics like *The Iliad* or from medieval kingdoms sometimes do provide fairly detailed feasting descriptions. With the emergence of empires and their need for keeping accounts, documents, and records of important events, writing and visual depictions of events tended to become much more elaborate (with some exceptions, such as the Inca and Teotihuacan empires, which left no written records although they did use other accounting and recording techniques). In fact, the textual material from some of these empires, such as the Roman, Shang, and later empires is often overwhelming, and I only briefly touch on some of the more salient aspects here. With the emergence of empires, the field of feasting simply becomes too vast to deal with in any thorough fashion for an analysis such as this one. Roman food and dining alone form the focus of numerous books and articles. However, there are some remarkable historical accounts from empires that should at least be mentioned in passing, as well as a few archaeological analyses that I would like to draw attention to. Thus, this discussion will be short but hopefully illustrative of some of the changes in feasting behavior that occur with the emergence of empires. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, empires operate at new scales of political and administrative organization. They have new problems of integrating multiethnic groups and dealing with urban anomie and unruly behavior/social unrest. Thus, we might well expect new developments in feasting as well.

The Mediterranean Empires

One of the most obvious developments is in the sheer opulence of the elite feasts and the sheer magnitude of the major events open to the public, such as the Roman "triumphs." An account of a more intimate elite marriage feast from third-century BCE Macedonia hosted by Caranus (a relation of a companion of Alexander the Great) provides a taste of the new levels of wealth and power that could be attained in empires and subsequently used in feasting:

Caranus celebrated his marriage with a banquet at which the number of men invited to gather was twenty; no sooner had they taken their places on the couches, than they were presented with silver cups, one for each, to keep as their own. Each guest had been crowned before he entered with a gold tiara. And after they had emptied their cups, they were each given a bronze platter containing a loaf as wide as the platter; also chickens and ducks, and

ring doves too, and a goose and an abundance of such viands piled high; and each guest took his portion, platter and all, and distributed among the slaves who stood behind him. Following which came a second platter of silver, on which again lay a huge loaf, and geese, hares, young goats and curiously moulded cakes besides, pigeons, turtledoves, partridges and other fowl in plenty. This also they presented to the slaves, and when they had had enough food they washed their hands. Then numerous chaplets were brought in, made of all kinds of flowers, and in addition gold tiaras, equal in weight to the first chaplet. Then they proceeded to drinking toasts and when they had at last pleasantly taken leave of all sobriety, there entered flute girls and singers and some Rhodian Sambuca players. The girls looked quite naked, but some said they had on tunics. Then came in other girls carrying each two jars fastened together with a gold band and containing perfume; one jar was silver, the other gold, and held half a pint. These also they gave to each guest. After that there was brought in a fortune rather than a dinner, namely a silver platter gilded all over to no little thickness, and large enough to hold a whole roast pig – a big one too – which lay on its back upon it. Roasted inside it were thrushes, ducks and warblers in unlimited number, peas puree poured over eggs, oysters and scallops; all of which towering high, was presented to each guest, platters and all. After this they drank, and then received a kid, piping hot, again upon a platter as large as the last, with spoons of gold. Caranus then ordered baskets and bread racks made of plaited ivory strips to be given the guests to contain their gifts. Then more crowns again, and a double jar of gold and silver containing perfume, equal in weight to the first. Then trooped in men, Ithyphallic dancers, clowns and some naked female jugglers who performed tumbling acts among swords and blew fire from their mouths. After they had finished their attention was given to a warm and almost neat drink of three wines and very large gold cups were given each guest. After this draught they were all presented with crystal platters about two cubits in diameter, lying in a silver receptacle and full of a collection of all kinds of baked fish. Then they washed their hands again and put on crowns, again receiving gold tiaras twice the size of the former ones, and another double jar of perfume.

They then each drank a six-pint bowl of Thasian wine and after this a chorus of one hundred entered singing tunefully a wedding hymn (for this was a marriage feast); then came in dancing girls, some attired as Nereids, others as Nymphs. They then threw open the room, which had been curtained all about with white linen, and when this curtain was drawn back it disclosed Cupids, Dianas, Pans and Hermae holding lights in silver brackets. While admiring this artistic device, boars were served to each guest, on silver platters rimmed with gold; they were skewered with silver spears. The slaves then stuffed their happy baskets full until the customary signal for concluding the banquet was sounded on the trumpet. After more drinking in small cups there came in the concluding courses; that is dessert in ivory baskets, and flat cakes of every variety. Then they arose and took leave, quite sober – the gods be their witness! – because they were apprehensive for the safety of the wealth they took with them. They had carried away a fortune from Caranus's banquet and were now looking for houses, or lands, or slaves to buy. (Hippolochus: Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* IV.128; in Bullitt 1969:56–8)

Other descriptions of feasts include Trimalchio's feast, in which live birds flew out of the stomach of a roasted boar and an astrological globe provided foods

related to each sign of the zodiac (J. Renfrew 2004:47–52). The banquet described by the poet Martial featured a pool that served as the table on which dishes floated (Capasso 2005:36). These accounts pale, however, in comparison to Caranus's wedding feast and the feast given by Cleopatra, said to be the most expensive event of all time (Renfrew 2004:47). As described by Lucan, her banqueting hall was a jewel in itself with gold plating and precious stones on the ceiling, pillars of agate, walls of marble, an onyx floor, doors of tinted tortoise shell and emeralds framed by ebony posts. The couches were jewel-studded with coverlets of purple embroidered in gold and red cochineal. The tables were supported by gleaming elephant tusks. The wine goblets were of jasper, and the servers represented a variety of races. The guests poured cinnamon and cardamom oils on their hair and washed their hands from ewers of rock crystal. Cleopatra was weighed down by necklaces of pearls, although not so much that her white breasts could not be observed through her diaphanous silk clothes. Caesar had never seen anything as impressive. She offered him every kind of flesh, fowl, and fish available, and every delicacy, including the finest aged wines, almost certainly to impress him with her wealth, her power, and her desirability as a political and amorous ally (Graves 1957: Book X). The fate of her empire hung on her ability to establish a close relationship with Caesar. Any diacritical effects must have been an afterthought, if they even entered her thoughts at all. As can be seen from these accounts, high cuisine certainly constituted a major feature of elite feasting in empires and most likely in early states as well, if not in chiefdom societies.

The development of elite cuisines has been a preoccupation of a number of authors (Bray 2003b; M. Smith et al. 2003:245; Isaakidou 2007; Hastorf 2008), especially as diacritical elements of feasts. The Romans (like the medieval French potentates) even published cookbooks and etiquette books on how to prepare foods and host important feasts (e.g., Edwards 1984; and Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*; see also Scully 1986). However, as indicated earlier, I think it is more parsimonious simply to view distinctive elite cuisines as natural outgrowths of competitive feasting and attempts to indebt individuals by constantly raising the culinary bar as well as the lavishness of gifts. From Hippolochus's description, it is difficult to imagine that Caranus went to such great effort and expense simply to diacritically distinguish himself and his friends from the *hoi polloi*. It seems much more likely to me that the goal of the lavishness of this feast was to forge strong political alliances with his twenty guests, putting them in his debt and obtaining their support for future undertakings or enterprises. Can there be any doubt that the fate of participating in the rule over entire empires could justify the expense of such feasts? Julius Caesar, like other Roman leaders, held his triumph celebrations and feasts to win the support of the key decision makers (the Senate), the troops, and the general populace (Scullard 1981:213–8), all part of a strategy to consolidate his hold on

political power. Fine cuisine was simply one of the useful features of this strategy. It was also a feature of the Roman *convivia* and *symposia* – essentially private dinners or drinking parties among close associates, sometimes including those from lower social levels, presumably to assess their suitability for promotion to higher level roles. Like the more ostentatious events, and like contemporary Western dinner parties, these Roman events were probably hosted to solidify social, political, and economic support networks.

In terms of more routine feasts, the Romans celebrated Saturnalia and the Kalends with gifts and feasting among family and friends, at least for the elites and their imitators and perhaps for all classes. There were Saturnalia feasts in all communities and in the countryside, with local feasts for senators and knights that were open to the local citizens (Scullard 1981:205–7). Neighbors and friends continued to be fêted following the Saturnalia at the Compitalia feasts with pig sacrifices, street dancing, games, and general jollity (59). Class distinctions were supposed to be minimized or even dissolved at the Saturnalia, with mock kings creating social chaos (Scullard 1981; Miles 1990:165–9), apparently in attempts to reduce tensions and unrest due to the complex ethnic composition and inequalities of most empires. A wide range of temples were devoted to different deities to accommodate different ethnic groups, a characteristic of many empires. Other institutions were established that often cross-cut ethnic differences. These included the sports organizations, circuses or coliseum spectacles, and many of the mystery cults of the Roman era with their celebratory feasts, including the early Christian “love feast.” The mystery cults, in particular, provided many benefits to their members and helped to consolidate the imperial social fabric which, by many accounts, was often frayed, if not torn. Other divisions in Roman society and politics were represented by major feasts such as the thirty *curia* with their assembly halls for feasting on holy days (Scullard 1981:73). Guilds, too, probably hosted feasts (122) to maintain a united front for prospective apprentices and clients. Other professions, such as the military, also hosted feasts for legion deities (Henig 1982:218).

At the family level, ancestral or household deity (*Lares*) feasts were often held at gravesides or around the house (MacMullen 1981:39; Henig 1982:220; Scullard 1981:74–5). However, for larger festive gatherings (from groups of nine to large crowds), many houses did not have adequate facilities. Thus, in order to host parties and cement relationships with friends or others, temples were frequently used. Family and kin who wanted to celebrate various events could do so in the presence of the gods and in cultured, agreeable settings. In *lectisternia* celebrations, the icon of the god was brought out from the temple and laid on a dining couch beside the celebrants while suitable sacrifices, music, surroundings, and rituals were provided. The god was considered as an honored guest or even the host of the feast being held in his or her house (MacMullen 1981). Invitations were sent out

by priests in the name of the deity, e.g., “Dionysius asks you to dine . . .” The temple itself was a repository of culture, not only in art and architecture, but also housing antiquities, aviaries, zoological parks, and presenting public lectures, features not found elsewhere in most communities. There were kitchens, animal pens for the sacrifices, and dining rooms (up to twenty-five separate rooms) or tents around the sacral areas, including inns for those who remained overnight. There were butchers, bakers, chefs, sommeliers, cupbearers, dancers, and musicians available to serve the feasting parties. Meat and a surfeit of wine with excessive indulgence characterized such sacred feasts – features not typical of normal meals. Temple priests obtained a share of all the animals sacrificed at the temple altars and were able to sell any excess. Indeed, the great bulk of meat eaten in the Roman Empire was probably consumed at temple feasts. It should therefore not come as a surprise to learn that considerable deposits of animal bones have been reported from a number of Roman temple excavations (MacMullen 1981:39–41). These temple feasts must have been costly affairs and were likely hosted by those who were relatively well off in Roman society to establish or cement important social and political relationships, as with other networking feasts.

The devotees of particular temples also hosted feasts at the temples, and the priests hosted annual citywide celebrations with banquets open to all, undoubtedly to promote the miracles that occurred at the temples and to promote the advantages of feasting at their temples (MacMullen 1981:47), just as a modern-day hotel promoter might advertise the benefits of staying at his establishment rather than a competitor’s. Such displays also recall the yearly feasts and displays hosted by many secret societies even in transegalitarian and chiefdom societies. The temples in Roman times thus seem to have been more economic institutions (which had to obtain licenses from the government) than religious ones.

The Near East

In some instances, Roman poets and historians have left graphic accounts of the most outstanding examples of elite and public feasts; however, there appears to have been minimal attention devoted to other levels and kinds of feasting that undoubtedly took place. In addition, classical archaeologists dealing with empires seem to have focused heavily on monumental constructions, temples, documents, and prestige items rather than documenting feasting remains in much detail. This situation is not much different when dealing with Near Eastern empires. However, Bottéro (1994:11) does refer to a “Pantaguelesque” feast given by the Assyrian emperor Assurnasirpal II in 870 BCE for all his support personnel, including everyone who helped restore his capital, Kalhu (Nimrud) and all the inhabitants of that city: 69,574 people in all, as commemorated on a stela itemizing the dizzying array

of food served, including 300 oxen, 1,000 calves, 15,000 sheep, 1,000 lambs, 500 deer, 500 gazelles, 10,000 eggs, 10,000 loaves of bread, 10,000 jars of beer, 10,000 skins of wine, 10,000 measures of chick peas, and much more (Schmandt-Besserat 2001:398) – perhaps the largest feast of the ancient world, and undoubtedly meant, like Egyptian pyramids and modern Olympic games, to advertise the host's political power and successes in order to attract workers, allies, supporters, and trade partners. Intercity feasting rivalries, presumably to establish trade and military alliances and to attract support from other polities, also seem to have been depicted on Syrian seals of the early second millennium BCE, especially featuring beverages (presumably beer; Teissier 1984:63–4, nos. 352–9; Collon 1987:27).

Pinnock (2004:19) reports a New Year's Festival in Neo Babylonian times that was in preparation for the sacred marriage between the king and a goddess or her representative. This may have been similarly used to promote the desirability of partnerships with the empire as well as another opportunity to demand resources from the populace. And, as in earlier states, there were also special feasts to inaugurate new buildings, presumably either work-based feasts to compensate laborers, but probably also promotional feasts hosted to vaunt the power of the polity elites and to have the undertaking officially recognized or sanctioned, much as feasts to install new house features functioned in transegalitarian societies (Chapter 6).

The use of beer and bread to attract and compensate workers on imperial construction or other projects seems fairly widespread in the Near East, from Mesopotamia to Dynastic Egypt, where large complexes with two-story ovens used in the production of large quantities of beer and bread have been unearthed (H. Crawford 1981:110–1; Eyre 1987:25; Joffe 1998:304–5). This appears to extend back into predynastic (early state) times, when fermented beer and wine are viewed as predominantly an “elite-building and maintaining industry” (Geller 1992:24). As in other empires, evidence of more intimate elite feasts continues to exist, probably involving the core members of political factions or kinship groups (Joffe 1998:304).

South America

Together with the eastern Mediterranean, the empires of the Andes have attracted especially intense archaeological investigations into feasting (see Kaulicke, 2005, Kaulicke and Dillehay, 2005, and Rosenfeld, 2012 for overviews), and much of the attention has focused on the role of *chicha* beer in imperial dynamics. Following Murra (1960), Craig Morris (1979, 1988) was perhaps the strongest early archaeological advocate to draw attention to the critical role that maize and *chicha* played in running pre-Hispanic empires like the Incan state. Morris documented this aspect archaeologically at Huánuco Pampa, an Incan district administrative center. Morris

(1979, 1988) emphasized the high prestige of maize *chicha* and also the inflated value of gifts from the Inca or his representatives versus the low value attributed to the obligatory “gifts” in return from subjects. Morris (1979) cites the 1556 testimony from Cristóbal Payco, a coastal chief, to the effect that “the main reason that the people obey their leaders here, is through the custom that they [the leaders] have to give the people drink . . . and if they do not oblige by giving the people drink neither will the people plant their crops for them.” This seems to follow the tradition of using beer to obtain labor, feasting tribute, and goods for administrative or elite purposes in the early South American states discussed previously, as well as similar uses of beer in early Near Eastern states and empires.

Jennings (2005) and others have continued the study of maize beer production and consumption in the running of the Incan state. As Jennings (2005:243) summarizes the situation, “the Inca was able not only to fulfill his reciprocal duties for the labor service rendered to the state but also to reaffirm his position of power by putting laborers in his debt by the sheer quantity of food and *chichi* that he provided.” In addition, the Inca provided huge quantities of food and *chicha* to guests at various feasts throughout the year – on average about 12 liters of *chicha* per person. One can only surmise that the guests were other elites or people of power whom the Inca wanted to put in his debt or with whom he wanted to establish alliances, thereby consolidating his power base. As Morris (1979:32) expressed it, the Inca had to entertain and provide *chicha* to state officials or workers. “It was central to keeping his armies on the move, preventing revolt, and maintaining the storehouse filled. Feasting and *chicha* were critical elements in keeping the Incan state functioning.”

The same political strategy has been detected in other, pre-Incan, Andean empires. Maize was the economic foundation of the Huari empire (beginning c. 800 CE), and archaeologists have noted an overall good correlation between intensive maize agriculture and sociopolitical complexity (Finucane 2009:535). Large Huari breweries, with capacities of up to 1,800 liters, have been documented archaeologically (Joffe 1998:308; Moseley et al. 2005). In addition to the positive inducements to acquiesce to imperial rule that feasting and *chicha* consumption provided, there were also imperial strategies of dividing and relocating ethnic groups in order to curtail political opposition. However, as appears to have been the case in early states, no concerted effort seems to have been made to dismantle the strong kinship-based corporate groups that could form important factions within the empire and challenge the rule of emperors. Among others, Hastorf (2003) and George Lau (2002) have documented the persistent importance of ancestor worship into the Huari empire, at least among elites, and even up until the present among peasant land-holding groups (see also Rosenfeld 2012:151,157). Corporate kinship ancestral cults involved enormous expenditures of wealth for

burials, funeral feasts, and recurring memorial feasts focused on key kinship figures. However, Lau does note a change in scale of ancestor feasts over time, perhaps corresponding to the broadly based use of clan ancestors by chiefs in early periods versus the more restricted use of ancestors by later elites. Rankin and Escherick (1990:317) document relative increases in lineage landholdings, and presumably power, during times of devolving state power in Imperial China, and this provides at least one possible explanatory model for changes over time in the scale of Andean corporate kinship feasting displays.

Farther north, on the coast, Shimada et al. (2004) envision very large-scale public feasting and consumption of *chicha* in plazas associated with the burials of the highest ranking elites during the Middle Sicán expansion (c. 900 CE), which overtook earlier more localized states like Moche. Perhaps these large-scale memorial events represent deified imperial ancestral worship, not unlike the pyramid complexes of the Egyptian pharaohs and Maya temples. As before, elites appear to have continued the tradition of using small-scale, more intimate feasts to secure local support for labor and military requirements (Joffe 1998:308) and to establish reciprocal support with other elites in the ambiance of more secluded patios, as interpreted by Cook and Glowacki for Huari rulers (2003:195). Rosenfeld (2012:151,157) documents funerary feasts within lineage compounds at Conchopata, a second- or third-tier Huari settlement about 10 kilometers from Huari. She interprets these as diacritical feasts; however, given the strong pattern of using funerary feasts to consolidate alliances, this seems unlikely. On the other hand, she also documents the use of large patios (c. 40 × 60 meters) for larger scale feasting, viewed as patron-role in function. This seems more likely, although simple work feasts or tribute feasts should also be considered. A more provocative conclusion is that, in contrast to the Inca practice, the Huari imperial elite probably did not directly finance these larger feasts, but they continued to be organized and underwritten by local elites. In contrast, Cook and Glowacki emphasize the use of beer to obtain corvée labor (as reflected in the abundance of mass-produced bowls) and they propose this as a fundamental element in the imperial Huari expansion, one that was effectively copied by the Inca who replaced the Huari political apparatus. Huari elites may have emphasized the use of feasting to establish patron–client relationships in the form of work feasts, with the elites providing beer in exchange for labor and goods. As an aside, Cook and Glowacki lament the limited information on feasting from historic documents and most Incan archaeology.

Goldstein (2003) is one of the few to deal with feasting in the Tiwanaku empire, which was a major rival of the Huari empire. He extends earlier interpretations on the importance of maize to claim that the Tiwanaku expansion was associated with a new and greater emphasis on the drinking of *chicha*. In fact, he suggests that the Tiwanaku expansion was driven by a “mania for maize beer” (144). Goldstein uses

isotopes to show that before Tiwanaku influence on the coast, maize only made up 3–18 percent of the diet, whereas with Tiwanaku control, 46–76 percent of the diet consisted of maize or maize products like beer (163). Apparently, the widespread distribution of *chicha*, together with newly introduced feasting practices, placed people in such a blissful state that they readily accepted Tiwanaku rule without putting up much resistance! Thus, the empire spread in the wake of bliss without the need to conquer other polities. If this seems somewhat difficult to swallow, the claim that chiefly feasts (in earlier and imperial periods) were driven by the desire to empower elites with symbolic capital (146) is equally difficult. That the state-level feasts that Goldstein discusses were used primarily to establish patron–client relationships and debts seems more credible. The pattern of feasting that he argues spread with the Tiwanaku polity (little large-scale imperial-based feasting, but considerable feasting at the corporate and household levels) is certainly interesting and seems to be quite different from the large-scale imperial works and celebratory feasts of the Huari and Inca but reminiscent of Gummerman’s interpretation of Moche political organization. One might even conceive of Tiwanaku as a confederation of independent polities or kin groups allied for the main purpose of stopping Huari expansion. In fact, D’Altroy (2001) and Hastorf (2001) have concluded that in Wanka II times, prior to the Incan expansion, the polities on the central coast of Peru were composed of small-scale competing political units where feasting occurred mainly in elite households. With the Incan incursions into the area, there was an abrupt and staggering “leap of scale,” with the new imperial Incan center hosting feasts for “great throngs of people” in “vast open plazas” approaching 17 hectares in size (Figure 8.12).

Tamara Bray (2003b) also emphasizes the critical role of maize in consolidating political power, with maize and meat constituting highly esteemed “food of the gods” that was consumed on special occasions rather than for quotidian meals. She focuses on the development of a fine cuisine among the Incan elite, viewing its development as due to the desire to establish “visible differences between social classes” (95). Once again, I am sure that it did have this effect, but I am more skeptical that this was the real motivating force behind the development of high-brow cuisine.

Other Areas

In other areas, it is worth noting that the Aztec emperors invited subject and enemy kings to major Aztec events such as coronations, imperial funerals, and temple dedications, all accompanied by large-scale human sacrifices (M. Smith et al. 2003:245). There can be little doubt that these were high-level promotional feasts meant to suitably impress and intimidate rivals or potential rival factions within the



8.12. The Inca established huge spaces for periodic large gatherings of their subjects, which undoubtedly included large-scale feasting. This example of an Incan plaza is at Pachacamac, the most important ritual site on the Peruvian coast at the time of conquest. The plaza extends between the low mounds on the sides (c. 100 meters) and almost to the tree line on the far horizon (c. 300 meters) (Photograph by B. Hayden)

empire. There were certainly some large-scale events involving many people, as attested to by the deposit of 1,000 ceramic vessels near the Templo Mayor in the Aztec capital (254). These may have been for some of the large feasts, described by Sahagun, that rulers gave for the general populace to pacify any discontent (Anderson and Dibble 1981:96–8). As in Sumeria, “pleasure girls” (courtesans) were used to attract people to the events, although they reportedly only took the hands of nobles and warriors. The ball courts, too, continued to be used as venues for feasting, predominantly by elites and as an element in political strategies. In addition, there were many temple feasts at which commoners made food offerings especially upon the “arrival of the god.” Contributors sometimes received some food back as part of a feast (Anderson and Dibble 1981:7,16,21–3,29,36,97,128,149,153,159–62), again indicating that Aztec temple feasts may have been used for gathering tribute as an effective revenue-producing strategy similar to strategies used elsewhere. If that did not suffice, there were also occasions when priests performed dances at houses and expected to be given food, or they went from house to house to request food, with maize going to the temple granary (62–4,84). Sahagun reports a surprising number of household-based feasts

celebrated by “everyone,” especially events at which neighbors, kin, and close friends exchanged tamales and invited each other to share food, including at the new year festivities (84,153,167). There were also more lavish household-based feasts such as to celebrate the piercing of children’s ears, with feasts both in the household and at the local temple at which everyone drank pulque, even children (165) – events that appear remarkably similar to Polynesian coming of age feasts described in Chapter 7. However, the most extravagant household feasts, with blood relatives as hosts, were undoubtedly those to celebrate the capture of an enemy at which the captive constituted the main course (49). There were also marriage feasts and feasts for various professions. Smith et al. (2003) emphasize that feasting was important at all social levels, as indeed it appears to have been, from commoner feasts for funerals or the sacrifice of captured enemies, to the high “lords’ feasts” which Smith et al., like others, view as hosted to serve diacritical functions (i.e., to reinforce class differences) – a view to which I demur.

In the Far East, I have already mentioned the funerary and ancestor feasts described in the Shang Hymns: the “soup well seasoned, well prepared, well mixed,” the “clear wine” brought for the ancestors (and participants) so that victory, blessings, and prosperity would be conferred upon descendants (Waley 1996:319). From the same or even earlier period, the Yi Ching counsels rulers to use “great sacrificial feasts and sacred rites” as the means to unite men (i.e., to gain allies) (Trigram 59, in Wilhelm 1967:227). There are also numerous archaeological examples of bronze and ceramic wine containers (*lei*) and spouted serving vessels dating back to the Zhou empire (1122–756 BCE). At a considerably later period, Charles Higham (1989:342) has interpreted competitive feasting as a major component of political organization in the Khmer empire. He interprets the political structure as having been based largely on relationship networks not unlike the political dynamics characteristic of chiefdoms in the Philippines documented by Laura Junker in the previous chapter or the “theater states” discussed earlier in this chapter.

SUMMARY

With the emergence of empires, there do not appear to be any major changes in feasting strategies or dynamics, although there are clearly differences in scale, uses of prestige resources, and attempts made to integrate diverse ethnic groups into a coherent sociopolitical framework. I am struck by the enormous potential of archaeological feasting remains to inform us about the nature of the political organizations and dynamics of both early states and empires, particularly in terms of tribute collection and the relative importance of centralized rule versus decentralized power centers such as corporate kinship groups. The apparent

recurrence of groups of twenty for intimate feasts (in Mycenae and Macedonia) is an interesting possible pattern in early states and empires, and perhaps earlier political organizations, that may be of some interest in developing future models. I am also struck by our ability to trace a continuous tradition of feasting strategies, dynamics, and purposes from the initial appearance of feasts in transegalitarian societies to their use in empires with, of course, suitable adjustments along the way (reviewed in the next chapter). It is a story of changes in emphasis, staging, foods, scale, rituals, and strategies. In contrast, a fundamental shift in the world order was ushered in by the advent of the Industrial Revolution. This entailed a radical restructuring of the basic premises on which traditional feasting systems were built, so that feasts in contemporary nation states bear only a superficial resemblance or relevance to what existed previously. This constituted the most dramatic development since the advent of competitive or promotional types of feasts in the Upper Paleolithic. It is to this remarkable transformation that we now turn in approaching the end of our inquiry.