ORIGINAL PAPER

CrossMark

The evolution of simple society

Severin Fowles[1]

Abstract
Anglophone archaeology arose to explain what we now refer to as the emergence of complex society. This article reviews complexity theory from its nineteenth-century origins in Darwinian thought to contemporary studies of social evolution. Rather than making a case for the continued theorization of complexity, however, this review advances the proposition that a new inquiry into the historical development of social *simplicity* should be inaugurated, one in which simplicity is understood as a derived trait that has evolved in creative opposition to complexity. Examples of what such an inquiry might look like are drawn from recent research into the archaeology of indigenous North America.

Keywords Complexity · Simplicity · Evolutionary archaeology · Egalitarianism · Counterculture

In ancient history we learnt about the "Rise and Fall" of Athens and Sparta and Rome. I confess I was not quite sure what was a "rise" and what a "fall."

— V. Gordon Childe (1983:4)

Archaeology is a historical discipline, and since its nineteenth-century emergence as a professional undertaking in Europe and North America, one history has preoccupied the discipline above all others: the rise of complex society. "Complexity" is a contemporary way of describing history's content. Fifty years ago, one would have written instead about an archaeological preoccupation with the rise of the "state" out of "pre-state" societies. This latter language is still with us, though it has fallen out of favor in many circles due to its rhetorical links to the teleological notion that modern nation-states have always stood as a kind of finish line. Turn back the clock another fifty years, and this same disciplinary preoccupation was more often discussed by Western archaeologists as the rise of "civilization" out of an original condition of "savagery." For many decades now, everyone has known to steer well clear of such terminology, even as we continue to debate whether our contemporary portrayals of small-

scale, hunter-gatherer societies smuggle in racial prejudices inherited from the colonial discourse of savagery, particularly when modern African groups like the Hadza or !Kung are used as models for understanding Paleolithic societies. Be that as it may, archaeological inquiry—whether framed in terms of the rise of complexity, civilization, or the state—has rarely strayed from its focus on long-term directional movements toward ever-larger systems of social inequality and political domination. Understanding such movements might be regarded as archaeology's first and most persistent mandate.

Consider how Robert Chapman begins his study, *Archaeologies of Complexity*. "We live in a complex and un-equal world," he writes:

> … a world without historical precedent. During the last two million years, successive human species have colonized the planet, and during the last five decades our species has begun the physical exploration of space. In the course of human history, the decisions which affect us have been taken at increasing distances from our daily lives: autonomy has been surrendered to, and power appropriated by, regional and national governments. Out of the first states five and a half thousand years ago grew the first empires, mobilizing and exploiting human labour and material goods across regions many times the size of the original states. From the fifteenth century AD, European colonists annexed land and peoples on other continents… Capitalism accentuated inequalities, both within nation states and between those states and

✉ Severin Fowles
   sfowles@barnard.edu

[1]   Barnard College, Columbia University, New York, NY, USA

⌂ Springer

their colonies… [C]hanges in technology, politics, culture and the economy mean that our lives are governed increasingly at the global scale (Chapman 2003:1).

How has this come to pass? Confronted with the apparent inevitability of ever-greater complexity, how might we understand this trajectory as a contingent process? Such questions have resounded in Western intellectual circles since the Enlightenment, and archaeologists are surely their modern standard bearers. This is nowhere more evident than in a recent book by Flannery and Marcus (2012) in which the authors explicitly fashion themselves as neo-Rousseauians setting forth to add the missing anthropological data, as well as the missing evolutionary theory, to belatedly complete Rousseau's mid-eighteenth century answer to the Academy of Dijon.

For those in the thick of such conversations, "complexity" marks a notable improvement upon the earlier discourses of "civilization" and "the state," both of which tended to be discussed in binary terms. Once linked to the emergence of cities and writing systems, civilizations are now more commonly equated with the presence of social stratification and a dominant class legitimized by an elite ideology and culture (e.g., Trigger 2007:44–45). However, this has not altered the perception of civilizations as having evolved out of a prior human history that lacked civilizations. The state is similarly binary: it, too, was absent as a political formation for most of human history, only arriving on the scene in different parts of the world during the past five and a half millennia. Indeed, our most sophisticated evolutionary models portray the shift from non-state to state as a punctuated rather than a gradual development. As Spencer (1990, 2010) has emphasized, the state is born in that abrupt moment when a leader realizes he can exponentially increase his power by abandoning the jealous desire to make all decisions himself and by distributing governance across a wide bureaucratic network. This bureaucratic expansion *must* have happened rapidly, posits Spencer. Limited delegation of decision-making authority to just a few secondary leaders would have been dangerously unstable, setting the stage for insubordination and coups. Quick and extensive delegation to many subordinates was therefore the only successful strategy for the emerging head of state. The histories of both civilization and the state, then, depend upon a rupture narrative and a transition from absence to presence.

In contrast, a central virtue of "complexity" in the eyes of its adherents is that it reckons societies along a graduated scale. All human societies can be portrayed as more or less complex, particularly when placed in a wider primatological context and compared with, say, chimpanzee or gorilla societies (which, for their part, are still more complex than the societies of most other species). Moreover, some archaeologists have sought to develop granular analyses of particular human societies by asking "not only 'How complex were they?' but also 'How were they complex?'" (Nelson

1995:599), suggesting that the variables used to assess complexity are plural and not necessarily conjoined.

But complexity theory has drawbacks as well, the most significant of which is that it still encourages us to read human history as a process of acquisition in which more and more structure is amassed over time (e.g., Adams 2001). This leaves the past looking impoverished, empty, and unstructured, rather than as a world of difference governed by alternative social organizations and logics. As such, the modern study of complexity quietly perpetuates a basic accumulative logic that has circulated in anthropology's evolutionary imaginary since the nineteenth century. Lewis Henry Morgan serves as a convenient point of origin. His widely influential account presented world history as a progressive building-up of things and organizations, which the anthropologist was charged with studying in reverse via what Morgan (1974:26) referred to as "the work of elimination." For Morgan, historical analysis was like working through a set of Russian dolls. Take away the trappings of civilization, remove all the evolved traits, and one eventually arrives at the "zero of human society": history's infantile beginning point, which allegedly could still be glimpsed in certain nomadic hunter-gatherer bands roaming the colonial frontier. Those who study complexity today have worked hard to wipe their models clean of the teleology that stained nineteenth-century scholarship of this sort. Nevertheless, the specter of, if not a "zero," then at least a markedly diminutive or "less complex" point of origin continues to characterize accounts of the evolution of complex society.

At the heart of the matter is the fact that we still have difficulty envisioning alternative approaches to political organization beyond the logics of "complexity" and the seemingly natural drive for ever-larger and more centralized polities. Simplicity is the obvious inverse, but there have been few anthropological efforts to build a coherent theory of "simple society" alongside our theories of complex society. In fact, one rarely finds reference to simplicity in the modern anthropological literature at all, no doubt due to the worry that this would be demeaning to the communities being described. "Simple" societies composed of mere "simpletons"—this is very much the way the term was invoked during the early colonial era as European scholars first began to describe the indigenous peoples of the Americas:

"Ces nations me semblent donq ainsi barbares, pour avoir recue fort peu de façon de l'esprit humain, et ester encore fort voisines de leur naifveté originelle… une nayfveté si pure et simple…"

[These nations seem to me, therefore, so barbarous, for having received but very little of the form and fashion of human invention, and are still very close to their original naiveté… a naiveté so pure and simple…] (de Montaigne 2018 [1580]:206).

In Early Modern Europe, to live in a "simple" society was to live, for better or worse, in a naively primitive state, bound by the laws of nature rather than the laws of culture. Little surprise that the language of simplicity grew unfashionable in twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholarship.

Some archaeologists have further suggested that the study of "simple societies" is embarrassing to analysts as well. Everyone would rather be seen by their colleagues as having taken on a "complex" topic, observe Reid and Whittlesey (1990), if only because historical reconstructions "of simple folk doing simple things are tacitly viewed as simple-minded" (Reid and Whittlesey 1990: 184). This led Reid and Whittlesey to distinguish between "the complicated and the complex": all archaeological data are complicated, they insist, but not all archaeological data need be evidence of complex societies. Suffice it to say, this very reasonable observation made nary a dent in the popularity of complexity as a discursive frame for the study of everything from hunting camps to monumental temples.

Against this longstanding tradition of valorizing complexity—and, by extension, civilization and the state—I advocate on behalf of an alternative perspective that has begun to offer an important rejoinder to dominant theories of social evolution within North American archaeology. This alternative draws inspiration from the global histories of social activism directed against systems of class-based inequality, political domination, and the technologies that support them. We frequently regard such movements as distinctly modern struggles, initially designed to overthrow the monarchies of the recent past and more recently to reform any state government characterized by institutionally entrenched hierarchies based on race, class, or gender. Increasingly, the international recognition of the need to collectively reform our environmentally unsustainable modes of industrialized production has also marched hand-in-hand with this principled struggle against inequality. Indeed, as Bruno Latour (1993) has observed, the false promise of the modern age—proclaimed by the leaders of both socialist states and liberal democracies—has been that human mastery over other humans can be replaced by our collective mastery over nature, technology, and the world of non-human things. And yet, this has only led to still greater human inequalities. Moreover, the specter of global warming now threatens to undo *all* human political systems, as nature reclaims its mastery over us. This, then, might be understood as the most recent chapter in the evolution of "complexity"—and also in the search for less complex (and more sustainable) alternatives.

With respect to the archaeological study of the past, I defend two propositions. First proposition: that the struggle against complexity is not a uniquely modern undertaking; on the contrary, humans have been engaged in this struggle since the Paleolithic, more or less continuously, which means that archaeologists should always be on the look-out for the material correlates of reactionary movements. Second proposition:

that as archaeologists, we must therefore conjoin our established inquiries into complexity with a concerted theorization of the evolution of simplicity. Doing so demands that we fully reject the antiquated notion that sociopolitical simplicity is either a natural or a naïve state of affairs for human communities; that it is, in other words, a default beginning point for evolutionary studies. Simplicity has always been a social achievement, and the arc of history is transformed when we begin from this position.

These propositions will become clearer, I hope, when we look to how new notions of political simplicity are surfacing in the archaeology of indigenous North America. But before turning to consider this recent work, let us take a step back and briefly consider how the archaeological commitment to complexity, as such, became so entrenched in the first place.

1 The rise of complexity

Our modern understanding of social complexity has its roots in nineteenth-century theories of biological evolution, particularly in England where Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, and their contemporaries began to craft a new cosmogony in which all things progressively moved from small to large and from simple to complex. Human societies were but one part of this natural progression, it was claimed. And so was born a seductive analogy: dispersed hunter-gatherer bands are to single-celled organisms as state societies are to advanced mammals with specialized parts coordinated by a ruling brain. This organic metaphor not only linked social evolution to biological evolution; it also laid the foundation for anthropology's first reigning theory of society—functionalism—which was refined in the early twentieth-century writings of Emile Durkheim but flowered in mid-twentieth century ethnography (particularly in Britain) and archaeology (particularly in the United States).

In a way, it was ironic that an organic metaphor borrowed from evolutionary biology, which had just gone to great lengths to demonstrate the historical mutability of natural entities—came to be redeployed as the basis for functionalist analyses in the study of human organization. The classics of functionalist anthropology were conducted among relatively small-scale societies in Africa, Australia, and Polynesia, and they resulted in notoriously ahistorical snapshots of bounded systems in which all parts somehow contributed to the homeostatic perpetuation of the status quo. When the continued functioning of a society is taken as the overriding goal, when human actors become the equivalent of cells within a body, and when the wider colonial context of anthropological research is elided in order to maintain the illusion that one is indeed studying "traditional" lifeways, then the very idea of historical or evolutionary transformation becomes anomalous and difficult to explain. Indeed, within much early

functionalist writing, history itself sometimes seemed like society's adversary.

Archaeology in North America is conceptualized as a subdiscipline of anthropology, so the dominance of functionalism among early and mid-twentieth century ethnographers had a significant impact on the development of American archaeological theory. For instance, while there was nothing new about a vision of the past as a succession of evolutionary stages, American archaeology's special penchant for stage-based models (notoriously, band-tribe-chiefdom-state), particularly during the second half of the twentieth century, might be understood, in part, as a consequence of the attempt to align the synchronic snapshots of functionalist ethnography with the inevitably diachronic nature of archaeological evidence. History came to be regarded as society's adversary within archaeological writing as well, insofar as evolutionary change from one synchronic stage to the next was explained, as often as not, as a forced response to some sort of unanticipated problem or "socioenvironmental stress" (Flannery 1972:409) within a system that would have preferred to remain the same. (As often as not, that problem was regarded as having a Malthusian source, ultimately stemming from increased population growth in the context of limited resources.)

Functionalism's organic metaphor also left its mark on the way twentieth-century American archaeology understood evolution's directionality. Here too, there was nothing new about the idea that societies around the world have progressed—willingly or not—along a common path; this was a core Victorian notion and was part of the early anthropological repudiation of the thesis of social degeneration (see Tylor 1920). But the frequent comparison between human societies and biological organisms had the effect of much more deeply sedimenting the image of history as a unidirectional process of growth. An organism never grows smaller over the course of its lifetime; so too, it was assumed, a society never grows smaller or less complex over the course of its history. Needless to say, there are plenty of cases in which past societies did drastically reduce their scale and complexity, but such "collapses" were equated with the death of an organism, rather than with a life that was simply evolving in a different direction. In this sense, it is significant that archaeologists more or less ignored collapse as an object of study right up until the 1980s (see Cowgill and Yoffee 1988; Tainter 1988). This might be taken as diagnostic of the fact that evolutionary theory had very few tools with which to understand historical processes that did not lead toward greater complexity.

Even the devastating effects of war and economic depression were not enough to disrupt the engrained sense of complexity's inexorable growth within twentieth-century archaeology. V. Gordon Childe's introduction to *Man Makes Himself* addressed this explicitly. "Have we progressed?" he asked in 1936, shortly after horrific new

means of killing had been unleashed on the world and in the midst of a severe period of global economic decline. Raw technological capability had increased through it all, he noted, but you could not possibly see this as a "progressive" accomplishment "… if your lungs have been filled with mustard gas, or your son has just been blown to pieces with a shell" (Childe 1983:2)—or, for that matter, if you have experienced "the misery, disease, and ugliness imposed upon the proletariat by the [modern] factory system" (Childe 1983: 11). If society is an organism, then this was a sickly beast indeed. Childe's analytical solution, however, was to avoid moral evaluations of history altogether and to anchor his study with cold, hard, numerical indices.[1] Societies of greater and greater population scale, supported by more and more differentiated modes of production, became the archaeologist's yardstick. In this way, argued Childe, the science of history might "vindicate the idea of progress against sentimentalists and mystics" (Childe 1983: 11).

With Childe's help, *scale* and *differentiation* became two key variables in the formal assessment of complexity for twentieth-century archaeologists across the Anglophone world. When populations grow or when society's parts become more specialized, we now say that the system in question has become more complex, all else being equal. By mid-century, however, a third variable—*integration*—was being vigorously asserted in the United States by Julian Steward, who stood in the somewhat unusual position of both ethnographer and archaeologist. Steward's ideas built on what was, by then, an aging tradition of functionalist anthropology, which he redeployed and made relevant again by bringing it to bear upon new evolutionary questions. Whereas Childe focused on the quantitative nature of historical change, Steward sought to redirect attention toward the *qualitative* question of how a society's parts are drawn together into interdependent wholes.

> The differences which appear in successive periods during the development of culture in any locality entail not only increasing complexity, or quantitatively new patterns, but also qualitatively new patterns… Cultural development therefore must be conceptualized not only as a matter of increasing complexity but also as one of the emergence of successive *levels of sociocultural integration* (Steward 1955:5).

---

[1] A similarly numerical approach to social evolution was simultaneously put forward in American anthropology by Leslie White (1943), who also sought to eliminate moral debate that either celebrated the present or romanticized the past. In White's model, complexity was effectively evaluated as a measure of the amount of energy capture per capita within a social system vis-à-vis its surrounding habitat. The influence of Marx on both Childe and White was, however, very deep, and so it is easy to still read a critical discourse just below the surface in their respective work.

Steward's levels of sociocultural integration are often lumped together with the evolutionary stages of Morgan and Edward Tylor, an unfair comparison given both the sophistication of Steward's evolutionary approach—which attended closely to matters of ecological and historical contingency—and his far more nuanced understanding of the diversity of archaeological and ethnographic cultures. Be that as it may, Steward inspired a generation of American scholars to seek out patterns of social organization and emergent structure in the archaeological record. Complexity, therefore, had become a question not just of demographic increase or the acquisition of new technologies but also of the shift from, say, lineage systems to clan systems or from theocratic classes to the military organizations of expanding empires.

The final quarter of the twentieth century saw complexity theory crystallize as the dominant discourse within American archaeology. By 1972, Flannery had already penned an influential framing:

> complexity can be measured in terms of its *segregation* (the amount of internal differentiation and specialization of subsystems) and *centralization* (the degree of linkage between the various subsystems and the highest-order controls in society…). An explanation of the rise of the state then centers on the ways in which the processes of increasing segregation and centralization take place (Flannery 1972:409).

Echoes of both Childe and Steward are evident, but equally so is a new enthusiasm for formal systems theory, analyses of information processing, and the so-called second cybernetics (Maruyama 1963), which offered American archaeologists an overtly scientific language for talking about how "homeostatic systems" (the functionalists' traditional interest) were transformed through "deviation-amplifying" feedback loops to result in new systems (the evolutionists' traditional interest). Research into such processes has continued unabated in American archaeology; and with new computational technologies at their disposal, some scholars remain hard at work modeling the evolution of what are now typically referred to as "complex adaptive systems."

And yet, Childe's vision of an archaeology that refrains from moral evaluations of the shape of history never really took hold. In fact, when most modern archaeologists talk about "complex societies" they have in mind not bloodless systems but rather societies marked by pronounced inequalities and engrained relationships of domination and submission—societies with sacrificed retainers, slave labor, military conquest, bound captives, and the rest. The more oppressed the masses and the more privileged the elites, the more complex the society. Inequality may not rise to the level of a structural criterion in the archaeology of complexity, comparable to differentiation or integration. After all, dominance

hierarchies are just one way that "difference" can be "integrated." But there is no denying that the history of complexity has, in practice, proven to be coterminous with the history of oppression.

2 The struggle for simplicity

And the history of simplicity? In the old Whiggish view of human progress, this question was effectively rendered nonsensical precisely because simple societies were regarded as unevolved, as having not yet entered into history. Or they were regarded as the rubble of collapsed societies, broken down into a savage state. Either way, simplicity was not considered a historical project. No society, it was assumed, ever worked to reduce the scale of its settlements, to increase local autonomy, or to limit inequalities. One still hears variants of this position. "If evolution is *defined* as change in the direction of increasing complexity," writes Robert Carneiro,

> then the opposite change—change in the direction of simplification—cannot be evolution. It must be something else… Clearly there is something distinctly different between the process of growth and development that produced the Roman Empire at its height, and the one that marked its decline and fall. This difference strikes me as being so fundamental and distinct—since, after all, it reflects *opposite movements*—that it deserves terminological recognition. And, following [Herbert] Spencer, I would reserve the word 'evolution' for the former, 'anabolic,' process, and for the latter, 'catabolic,' process I would employ some other word, such as 'dissolution,' 'devolution,' or 'retrogression' (Carneiro 2003:163, italics in original).

The issue at hand, then, remains one of first principles. We must insist that, at a definitional level, there is no reason why simplification cannot be studied as an evolutionary process as well. Moreover, we must insist that there is no a priori reason to view simplification as a retrogression into previous social states rather than as a movement into entirely novel historical configurations.

This is where an increasing number of North American archaeologists are pursuing a new way forward. In doing so, they are taking their cue from one of the key shifts in anthropological theory during the latter half of the twentieth century: namely, the recasting of simple societies as *egalitarian societies*, a phrase that has its etymological roots in the assertive *égalité* of the French Revolution (Woodburn 1982) but that gained special relevance for American anthropologists in the wake of the protests and civil rights movements that transformed the academy during the late 1960s and 1970s.

The shift from simplicity to egalitarianism was, in a way, a natural outgrowth of the earlier tradition of functionalist analysis. As it became more and more commonplace to regard all societies as homeostatic organisms, anthropologists faced the special challenge of explaining how societies on the non-hierarchical and decentralized end of the spectrum protected their own status quo, particularly insofar as there seemed to be no formal institutions and no real authorities around to do the protecting. How did "cold societies" (sensu Lévi-Strauss 1966:233–4) regulate their temperature? How was "complexity" kept at arm's length? What defended society against would-be despots when they attempted to seize control? With such questions, a great range of societies that had been regarded as simple by default came to be slowly reconceived as simple by design.

A new image of a non-state—even an anti-state—world of politics gradually came into focus. Whereas earlier ethnographic studies of small-scale foragers and agriculturalists looked to either kinship (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940; Lévi-Strauss 1969) or religion (Rappaport 1971) as functional *alternatives* to politics, an increasing number of anthropologists underscored the importance of "levelling mechanisms," systematically enacted so as to prevent the development of systems of dominance and submission (Barclay 1980; Cashdan 1980; Fried 1967; Woodburn 1982)."Egalitarianism," wrote Lee (1979:457) in an influential study of the Ju/'hoansi foragers of the Kalahari Desert, "is not simply the *absence* of a headman and other authority figures, but a positive insistence on the essential equality of all people and a refusal to bow to the authority of others." This "positive insistence" in egalitarianism had been documented in small-scale societies in many parts of the colonized world, but it was now being linked to specific sanctioning techniques (leveling mechanisms) directed against hubristic leaders when they began to throw their weight around. These sanctions ranged from gossiping and ridicule to disobedience, desertion, ostracism, expulsion from the group, and, in extreme cases, the outright execution of the would-be despot (for a review, see Boehm 1999:73–84). Collectively, they amounted to an antiauthoritarian politics that stood in opposition to the hierarchies that had for so long been viewed as the primary accomplishment of human history. This shift in our anthropological understanding of "simple" societies, then, was a fundamental one: from alternatives to politics arose the vision of an alternative politics.

The most resolute voice announcing this alternative politics was the French anthropologist, Pierre Clastres, who mounted an impassioned challenge to the long European reduction of *non-state* societies to *pre-state* societies. Clastres considered this to be a basic act of misrecognition, which he linked to the West's efforts to legitimize its conquest of indigenous communities throughout Africa, Australia, and the Americas, insofar as the placement of colonized peoples in a position *prior* to the state simultaneously presented the colonial project—regrettable though its violence may be—as an inevitability whose lasting effect has been simply to hasten along history's natural progress. For Clastres, contesting this claim demanded that the alterity of non-Western societies be acknowledged. How is one to understand, he asked, that "vast constellation of societies in which the holders of what elsewhere would be called power are actually without power; where the political is determined as a domain beyond coercion and violence, beyond hierarchical subordination; where, in a word, no relationship of command-obedience is in force" (1989:11–12)?

Clastres' lasting contribution to anthropology was to outline a veritable political mode that systematically prevents, rather than aspires toward, the institutionalization of centralized, top-down control. As such, his work was in dialogue with the growing analysis of egalitarianism in American and British anthropology. Like Morton Fried and Richard Lee, Clastres attended to leveling sanctions, fission-fusion dynamics, purposeful economic underproduction, generalized exchange, consensus-based decision-making, and the like; he even wrote the preface to the French edition of Marshall Sahlins' *Stone Age Economics.* In contrast to his contemporaries, however, Clastres portrayed so-called "primitive societies" as far more deliberate, more aggressive—and, indeed, more violent—in their structural opposition to coercive power. Other anthropologists wrote about societies who peacefully opted out of hierarchy, voted with their feet, or who simply had no interest in building relations of subordination. Clastres conceived of the primitive world as an outright war against the State. "The war machine is the motor of the social machine," he wrote. "The primitive social being relies entirely on war, primitive society cannot survive without war. The more war there is, the less unification there is, and the best enemy of the State is war. Primitive society is a society against the State in that it is a society-for-war" (Clastres 1994:166).

He was being provocative. Taking a page from the young Amazonian warriors of his ethnographies, Clastres was setting out to lock horns with his mentor. Lévi-Strauss had proposed that exchange—and, hence, the cessation of violence that exchange demands—was the foundation of primitive society. Clastres concluded that Lévi-Strauss had it wrong, that, on the contrary, cycles of war and alliance between individuals and groups were the very thing that made exchange possible in non-state settings. War was infrastructural, he insisted.

His intervention amounted to a radicalization of the functionalist observation that egalitarian societies achieve their egalitarianism through the sharp limits they place on coercive power and authority. Consider how Mary Douglas—a close follower of Lévi-Strauss—understood the role of sorcery in non-state societies. Sorcery is "a form of spiritual power *biased towards failure*" (2002 [1966]:135, emphasis added), she wrote, observing that a fickle populace will quickly blame any unwanted outcome on an authority's misuse of his powers, providing grounds for his immediate—and often violent—removal. "Such beliefs correspond to a social system in which

authority is weakly defined and has little real sway" (134). To which Clastres effectively asked: but what is the real nature of power here? The "chief" may hold little authority; he may have no real coercive power at his command. But the cage in which he is kept is itself the product of a *political* and not merely a "spiritual" authority that is vested in the collective. Indeed, the power of sorcery is only biased toward failure from the perspective of the State; for those engaged in the Clastrian war against the State, it is a very successful power indeed.

A small group of North American archaeologists have attempted to refine and extend Clastres' understanding of what Graeber (2004:24–35) refers to as "counter power" (e.g., Angelbeck and Grier 2012; Borck and Sanger 2017; Fowles 2010, 2014), but Clastres' impact on wider evolutionary studies remains muted. And this is a pity, because the most interesting question is not how an ethnographically-encountered community might construct itself in opposition to the State (after all, colonialism ensured that most indigenous communities had quite clear states to oppose), but rather how elaborate systems of counter power developed over time within particular historical sequences. In the case of the fiercely independent villages of Amazonia that so fascinated Clastres, for instance, one is led to wonder how their political systems were impacted by the rise of Inka imperialism during the late precolonial period, or how they grew and transformed in response to any number of local and regional interactions across the millennia. These are the sorts of questions that only archaeology can answer.

Herein lies the crux of the issue, then. When we encounter the remains of a "complex society"—dynastic Egypt, the Han Dynasty, the Inka—we immediately perceive an evolutionary history to contend with. We are prompted to inquire into the sequence of machinations, compromises, and power struggles through which an original congeries of autonomous, egalitarian social groups was transformed into a large, centralized polity. Complexity is always regarded as the product of human historical agency. But simplicity implies no such past. Confronted with a social world composed of small, dispersed bands of hunters-and-gatherers, many do not see a product of history at all. Rather, they see a point of departure, the preface to a book whose pages have yet to be written. Insofar as simple societies are understood to exist prior to evolutionary processes, they demand neither explanation nor analysis.

3 The new political histories of indigenous North America

The winds of evolutionary theory are changing, however, and nowhere more so than in the study of precolonial North America. I turn to this region, then, for a few brief examples of recent research into simplicity's history in hopes that they might serve as models for parallel studies elsewhere.

Even more than Australia and Africa, indigenous North America has been a staple of anthropological discussions of statelessness. The Haudenosaunee of the Northeast and the Hopi of the Southwest were key case studies in Morgan's (1974) early theorization of primitive communism; the Great Basin served as the quintessential locus of a "band level" of social integration for Steward (1955); Clastres repeatedly invoked the centrifugal logics of native groups on the Great Plains (1989:177–188); and more recent conversations under the broad flag of anarchism have drawn our attention to the decentralized societies of the West Coast (Angelbeck and Grier 2012; Bettinger 2015). Some archaeologists push back against such portrayals of the continent's statelessness, and for good reason. With its massive earthworks, urban scale, and elite mortuary complexes incorporating retainer sacrifice, it is only through the creative use of language—notably, the discourse of "chiefdoms" (see Pauketat 2007)—and a large dose of denial that one could exclude the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century center of Cahokia from our wider anthropological understanding of the state (see Fig. 1). More controversially, Lekson (2009) has forcibly argued that we must even pose the question of the state (or more precisely, the "secondary state") in our analyses of the Great Houses constructed in Chaco Canyon during the twelfth century (of which, more in a moment).

Paradoxically, the simplification of indigenous North American societies by anthropologists in the present has had the effect of further obscuring the political project of simplicity taken up by many indigenous groups in the past. Indeed, shutting one's eyes to the periodic eruptions of hierarchy and oppression—to the instances of forcibly pooled labor and monopolized resources, the class hierarchies and elite displays, the cases of entrenched slavery and human sacrifice—perverts not only our understanding of the complexity of the Native American past but also our understanding of the worlds of assertive simplicity that were built in response.

The Ancestral Pueblo societies of New Mexico and Arizona are a case in point. From an ethnographic perspective, the Pueblos are among the most intensively studied traditions in the world, having dominated Americanist research right up until the 1970s. There were a number of reasons why the Pueblos made for very good anthropology, beyond the happy mix of colorful exoticism and geographic accessibility. Significantly, they resided on the same lands occupied by their precolonial ancestors; in fact, many even dwelt in architecture that predated the European invasions. (Most other Native American communities, in contrast, had been forcibly displaced from their traditional lands.) But the Pueblos also appealed to anthropologists because they so easily fueled enduring American fantasies of a simpler time, prior to the corruptions of political life, when societies of equals grew their own food, fulfilled their own spiritual needs, and lived in peaceful autonomy with no need of kings. This is one of the reasons why the ethnographic study of Pueblo societies greatly intensified during and immediately after the world wars.
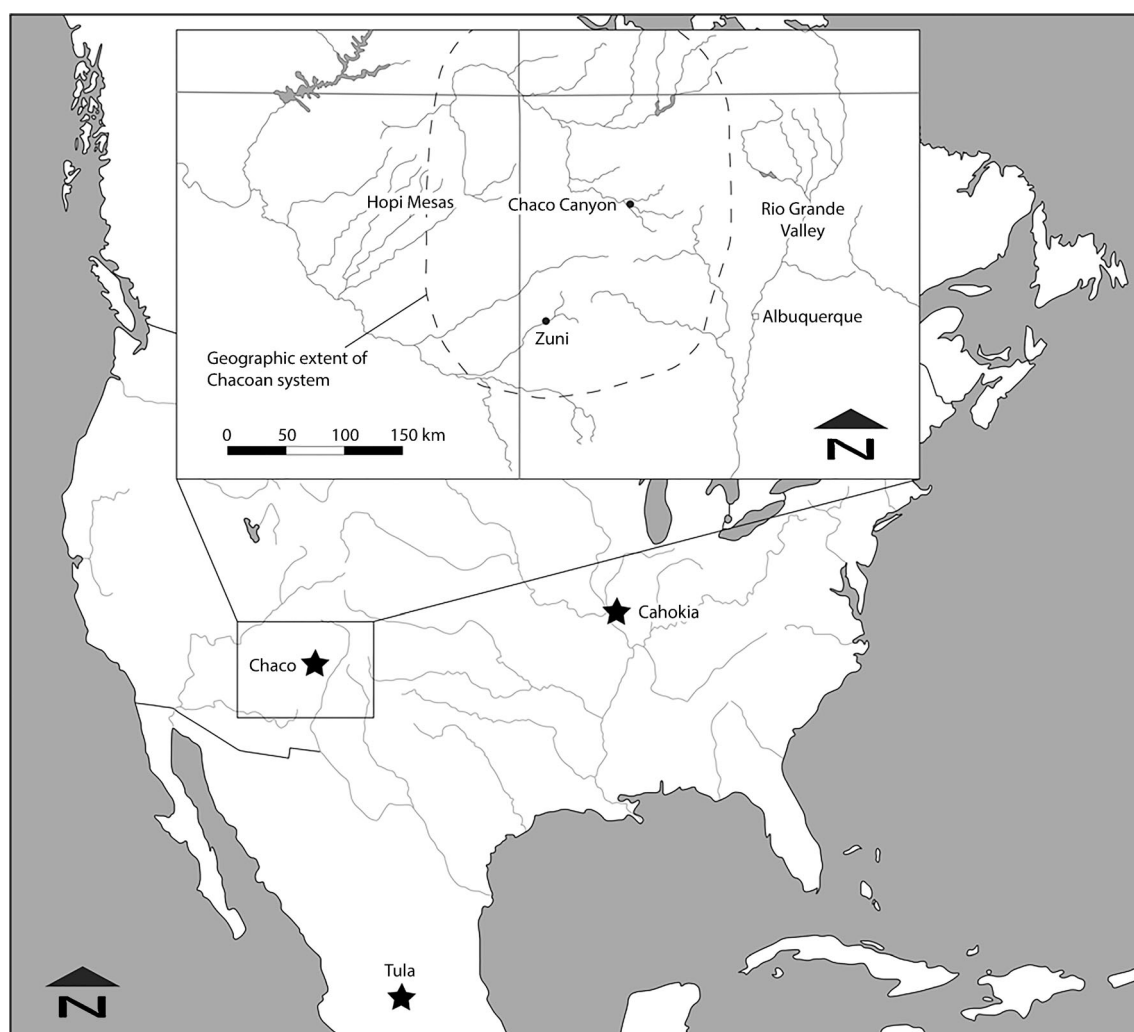
Fig. 1 Map of the Chacoan system in North American context

"Pueblo egalitarianism" cannot be dismissed as just another anthropological illusion, of course. When the Spanish arrived in the sixteenth century, they encountered dozens of largely autonomous villages, each occupied by up to a few thousand people, in which families resided in apartment-style complexes that were studiously identical to that of every other family in size and mode of construction. "They have neither king nor law, and we did not notice that any evil-doers were ever punished. They live in complete equality, neither exercising authority nor demanding obedience," pronounced one colonial report (Villagrá in Espinosa 1933 [1610]:144). In fact, chiefs did exist, but their authority was sharply curtailed. As Cushing (1883) would later discover during his nineteenth century fieldwork at Zuni Pueblo, a leader who asserted himself too aggressively ran the risk of being branded a witch and suffering an unpleasant death. Little surprise that individuals sometimes had to be physically coerced—against their will—into assuming positions of leadership. Violent practices such as the torturing and executing of deviants had been formally outlawed for a

generation or more by the time serious ethnography commenced in the twentieth century. However, the characteristic Pueblo ambivalence toward power remained, as did the careful humility of their leaders. Twentieth-century ethnographers drew upon these persistent characteristics to bill the Pueblos as icons of primitive egalitarianism. For Benedict (1989 [1934]), the Pueblos were exemplars of the "Apollonian" culture type in which individuality and individual ambition were fully subordinated to the group and to the strictures of group ritual.

As I have emphasized, traditional evolutionary theory typically only grants complex societies a history; simple societies are assumed to have descended with little fanfare from ancestral groups that were, if anything, yet simpler. This myopic assumption structured early archaeological efforts to understand the evolution of Pueblo society, no less than in other parts of the world. The classic framework for Ancestral Pueblo history was established in 1927 in what has come to be known as the Pecos Classification, which divided the past into a "I, II, III, etc." scheme of gradual social, economic, and technological

growth out of a Paleoindian base. The classification is still in use today, and it is still, as Lekson (2009) has vigorously argued, constraining how we interpret Ancestral Pueblo societies.

> The Pecos Classification posited a steady, unilinear, specific evolution of the modern Pueblos… from simple hunter-gatheres, to simple agriculturalists, to pueblo-dwelling ancestors of the modern Pueblos… the Pecos Classification confirms a steady development from simple to simple (Lekson 2005:163).

This does not sound much at all like the drama of real human history, observes Lekson.

Moreover, the archaeology of the precolonial Pueblo world immediately signals that the situation is more complicated. Eight centuries before the Spanish established their colony in New Mexico, a desolate landscape in the middle of the Pueblo region—Chaco Canyon—became the stage for an unprecedented social experiment that organized labor and indulged in displays of elitism well beyond anything encountered by ethnographers. The first act in this experiment was in some respects the most remarkable: namely, the creation of a mortuary crypt to house two adult men who were accompanied in death by more marks of distinction than any other Pueblo individuals before or after—including many thousands of crafted turquoise, shell, jet, and wooden objects (Plog and Heitman 2010). A single cylindrical basket amongst the offerings was inlaid with 1214 shaped turquoise fragments and then filled with nearly 6000 additional beads and pendants. This mortuary crypt resided at the heart of an architectural complex that would grow in scale and formality to become the multistory monument now known as Pueblo Bonito (Fig. 2). And throughout its occupation, from the early 800s until roughly 1130 CE, the maternal descendants of the original two elites were buried in the fill of the mortuary crypt

above them (Kennett et al. 2017), along with additional caches of extraordinary objects.

Those interred in Pueblo Bonito were very different than the leaders who lived amongst their descendants by the time Europe invaded. Scholars remain sharply divided on the scale and complexity of the political world built by this elite matriline as well as by the leading families in the dozen other so-called "Great Houses" in Chaco Canyon (see Lekson 2015; Plog et al. 2017), but certain facts are clear: (1) they had unprecedented access to long-distance imports from Mesoamerica, including live scarlet macaws, copper bells, shell ornaments, as well as cacao, the latter of which seems to have been consumed in special vessels as an elite beverage; (2) they wielded painted wooden staffs and adorned their bodies with bracelets, necklaces, and feathered robes, which surely had spiritual significance but would have also served to distinguish leaders as a special class; (3) they were able to mobilize extremely large amounts of mundane resources—timber, corn, pottery, and stone—from throughout a 150 mile radius; and (4) the Chacoan model, either through emulation or imposition, was exported across the northern Southwest via the construction of between 200 and 300 "outlier" Great Houses, many of which remained connected to Chaco Canyon by an elaborate system of formal roads and road segments.

Great Houses, in particular, were expensive undertakings (Fig. 3). They were the first multistory complexes in the region; they employed specialized core-and-veneer masonry techniques; and excessive amounts of wood were used in roof construction. There are no forests in the canyon, and trace element studies have demonstrated that most of the estimated 240,000 logs needed to build the great houses were imported from over 75 miles away (Guiterman et al. 2016). Presumably most of the wood needed to fuel Chacoan hearths would have been imported as well. This would have involved the collective labor of many backs—as well as, presumably,

Fig. 2 Pueblo Bonito (photo by the author)

Fig. 3 Chetro Ketl, a Great House in Chaco Canyon (photo by the author)

forms of leadership with more coercive power than the defanged Pueblo chiefs of the colonial era ever possessed. Moreover, most Great Houses—both in Chaco Canyon and in outlier communities—were accompanied by dozens of contemporaneous but far more modest settlements, whose buildings were simple single-story affairs with little attention to detail. There is a clear site size hierarchy, then, and this has led many to envision an equally clear set of status differences between an elite class residing in the Great Houses and a commoner class residing in the surrounding small hamlets.

Suffice it to say, an extensive literature explores the rise of complexity within the Chacoan system, in which many emphasize the importance of historical linkages with the political centers far to the south in Mesoamerica. Another literature, nearly as large, has come to examine Chaco's "collapse" in the twelfth century and the reorganization of the Pueblo world in its wake. While the growth of the Chacoan system has always been regarded as the product of human agency, the most exciting new research is now unveiling all that was involved in the so-called collapse or, more precisely, in the movement *away* from Chaco. Indeed, by the end of the thirteenth century the Great Houses were in ruin, trade networks were shrinking, the evidence of regional political organization had disappeared, and elites were nowhere to be found. In fact, Chaco Canyon itself was entirely vacated during this period along with many other parts of the Colorado Plateau that had formerly stood at the demographic and political heart of the Ancestral Pueblo world. How, we now ask, was *this* accomplished?

"Pueblo societies developed, historically, in reaction to and rejection of Chaco, after 1300," argues Lekson (2015:36). Scholars in a number of parts of the Southwest have been taking this proposition to heart, but so too are they extending the notion of creative opposition into earlier time periods to examine regional responses to Chaco during its heyday. A wide refuge of assertive "Chacolessness" has now been identified to the east, in the Rio Grande region, beginning in the tenth century (Borck 2018; Fowles 2010, 2013). Once known only for being Chaco's "backward" neighbors—that is, for being decentralized with local systems of production, village-level autonomy, and a lack of hierarchies—this region is now being reimagined as a landscape of political alternatives crafted by those who opted out of Chaco's experiment in complexity. In fact, it was this established history of reactionary Chacolessness that appears to have helped make the Rio Grande a destination for the participants in what Ortman (2012:350–353) has characterized as a late thirteenth century "religion of revolution" organized around both (1) the rejection of the final occupation of the old Chacoan world as well as (2) the creation of new and aggressively egalitarian ideologies. Thus arose the new tradition of Pueblo "Apollonianism" encountered by colonizing Spaniards and, later, by ethnographers.

History is filled with examples of what Graeber (2013) has referred to as "acts of creative refusal," and precolonial North America is no exception. We can track these oppositional movements across the continent: from the Chacolessness of the Southwest, to the "traditions of resistance" among Archaic hunter-gatherers in the Southeast (Sassaman 2001), to the modes of Iroquoian communalism in the Northeast that evolved in opposition to the deeply engrained hierarchies of the Mississippian world (Trigger 1990), to the rejection of slavery in the late precolonial societies of northwestern California (Wengrow and Graeber 2018). Indeed, it is worth dwelling on the fact that the two epicenters of debate about political complexity in precolonial North America—the core Chacoan region of the northern Southwest and the core Cahokian region of the American Bottom—had both been reduced to vast and largely empty landscapes of ruins by the start of the colonial period. Only the occasional passing Navajo took note of the beautiful masonry walls that were slowly caving in upon the elites

Fig. 4 Countercultural evolution
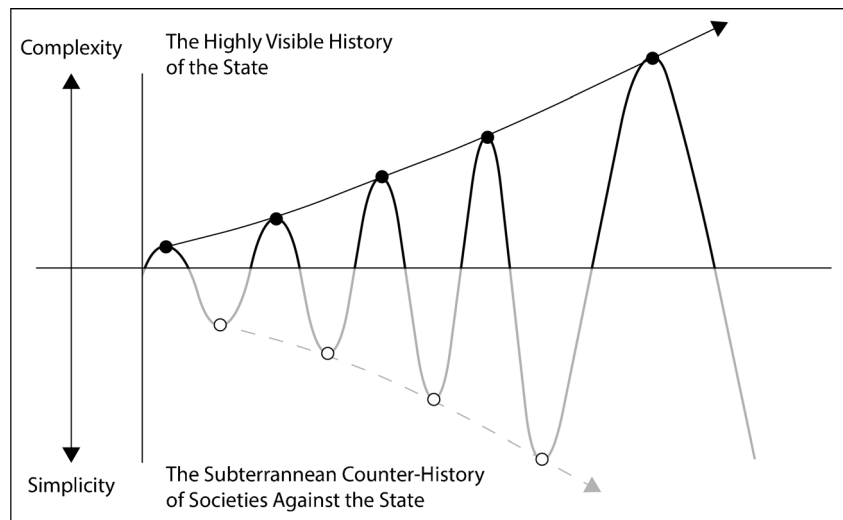
buried within Pueblo Bonito; and the monumental city of Cahokia, where thousands of laborers had once supported elites residing on temple-topped pyramids, lay in the middle of what some archaeologists refer to as "the Vacant Quarter" (Cobb and Butler 2002).

Such imposing ruins once fueled racist speculation that the contemporary indigenous communities of North America were really just recent arrivals—barbarians who swept in shortly before the Europeans and destroyed a great (White) civilization that had previously thrived on the continent. Today, the view is very different indeed. Seneca scholar Barbara Mann conveys this with special force. "I suspect," she writes, "that a much more encompassing political movement was afoot… than western scholars realize, … it seems to have been continent-wide. Socially, politically, economically, and religiously, Native America advanced significantly… turning away from war, organizing gift-based economies, and developing the rule of democratic law." The "magnificence" of a polity like Cahokia or Chaco may have disappeared, she adds, "but its old order was little missed" (Mann 2003:167–168).

4 The evolution of simple society

What would evolutionary theory look like if historic struggles for simplicity were fully acknowledged? Surely, it would demand that we build from the observation that all humans are political animals and that all human communities reckon their political aspirations in response not only to the models that arise in their own midst, but also to remembered social worlds of the past, to the foreign worlds they encounter while traveling far from home, and even to those they visit in dreams and nightmares. It would require, in other words, that our analysis of the evolution of culture walk hand-in-hand with what I have

elsewhere referred to as the evolution of counterculture (Fowles 2010).[2] After all, complexity and simplicity refer not just to a cold measure of scale and integration or even to a gradient from individual autonomy to the systemic inequalities of the state. They are political directionalities that run *counter* to one another, that drive each other along, and that exist as each other's outside. Held in tension, they are each other's wellspring.

The imbrication of complexity and simplicity extends further. Based on his reading of Scott (1998), Yoffee (2005) has concluded that the state, as the consummation of complexity's evolution, is ironically driven by efforts to *simplify* social experience: to standardize weights and measures, to distribute the same mass-produced ceramics over vast areas, to make a plurality of juridical systems subject to a single law and a single sovereign, to transform the ecological complexities of one's surroundings into productive units with a limited range of economically valuable plants and animals, and so on (see also Wengrow 2001). One might argue that the reverse is true as well, however. If one builds a state by simplifying complexity, then one fashions societies against the state by "complexifying" simplicity: by weaving elaborate symbolic worlds that valorize the suicidal pursuits of warriors, or that restrict those of highest status to a life spent in solitary prayer. Or as in the famous case of the Ju/hoansi of the Kalahari (Lee 1979), by proliferating arrow types, trading them widely, and granting ownership of any animal killed to the maker of the arrow rather than the hunter. Here, I am also reminded of a Pueblo colleague who once mentioned to me just how long and exhausting consensus-based decision-making—a staple of simple society—can be. We sit in the kiva, he explained; a proposed course of action is articulated; everyone in the room individually re-states and agrees with the proposal in turn; or, if a speaker makes a slight alteration to the plan, then the modified

---

[2] See also Wengrow and Graeber's (2018) discussion of what, following Gregory Bateson, they refer to as "schizmogenesis."

proposal must again be individually re-stated and agreed to in turn by everyone present. Consensus, in short, can be extremely complex, far more so than the simple decree of the dictator.

Figure 4, then, provides a schematic representation of how we might think anew about countercultural evolutionary processes and the amplifying nature of reactionary politics. Our traditional accounts of the past have prioritized the story of the upper half of the figure, leaping from complex site to complex site and from monument to monument, stitching together macrohistories in the process. A fuller analysis would also explore the subterranean counter-histories of the far less visible sites and archaeological traditions in the lower half of the figure that aggressively moved in the opposite direction.

In the end, the history of such countercultural oscillations has a history of its own. As anthropologists, we traditionally divide the past into two broad domains. On one hand, archaeological anthropologists examine how societies have changed over time due to shifts in social organization, material culture, and worldview. This is the domain of social evolution; it dominates inquiry into the past 40,000 years; and it is underwritten by the assumption that human biology has effectively remained constant, or at least that changes in human biology over this period are not of much historical significance. On the other hand, biological anthropologists have examined the much deeper time scales during which humans and their phenotypic and social characteristics arose in the first place. This is the domain of biological evolution; and it dominates anthropological inquiry from about 8 million years ago through to the Upper Paleolithic.

What is especially interesting about this disciplinary division is the way it designates egalitarianism—that is, social simplicity—as either a historical starting point or a historical end point. For the archaeologist, looking at the past 40,000 years, egalitarian social formations seem to comprise our original condition, and the major historical question is therefore how despotic systems, or systems of marked inequality, arose and became entrenched. For the biological anthropologist, the historical question is reversed. When placed alongside the other apes, human sociality is most extraordinary for its ability to build egalitarian communities in which despotism is sharply curtailed. Indeed, primatologists are inclined to view human egalitarianism as strongly *derived*, while despotism—as evidenced in chimpanzee dominance hierarchies or gorilla alpha male behavior—seems comparatively *archaic*. From the perspective of the past eight million years, then, the core evolutionary question is how dominance hierarchies were so consistently replaced by egalitarian social behavior among our hominin ancestors.

This, at least, is the argument of Christopher Boehm (1999) who has effectively integrated these two questions—the long-term biological evolution of human egalitarianism and the comparatively short-term social evolution of human despotism—to

construct what he refers to as an "ambivalence model" of human nature. Like other great apes, he suggests, dominance and submission are natural aspects of human sociality. But unlike other primates, so too are shared experiences of resentment. And this has led to an unusual form of coalition behavior in which moral communities have come to assert collective dominance over those few who would otherwise assume an alpha position. Egalitarianism, from this perspective, unveils itself as a special form of primate dominance hierarchy: namely, a *reverse* dominance hierarchy in which the 99% assert their dominance over the 1% of would-be depots, rather than the other way around. History, in turn, becomes an unsteady struggle between orthodox and reverse dominance hierarchies, neither of which ever become fully stabilized, even as the scale of social formations greatly expands.

Boehm's notion of a "reverse dominance hierarchy" amounts to a biological reframing of counter power. It helps us envision a deep and persistent human history in which complexity and simplicity have evolved in generative tension, each the inversion of the other. For the Pueblo people of the American Southwest, the historical experience of institutionalized hierarchy at Chaco may go a long way towards explaining the aggressive egalitarianism encountered by ethnographers some seven hundred years later, just as the historical experience of monarchy in Europe was foundational to the emergence of French Enlightenment notions of *egalité*. Such political reversals from simple complexity to complex simplicity may ultimately be an inheritance passed down from much more ancient forms of reactionary sociality that began as an evolutionary response to dominance hierarchies among early hominins. Millions of years ago, this plausibly led to new selective contexts in which the bodily tools of alpha males were partly disassembled: canine teeth were reduced, bristling hair for dominance displays effectively disappeared, and sexual dimorphism was greatly muted. In more recent times, it has made possible a great plurality of historical political trajectories that led to the evolution of simple societies.

Or at least, these are propositions that a new era of research is poised to consider.

References

Adams, Robert McC. 2001. Complexity in archaic states. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 20: 345–360.

Angelbeck, Bill, and Colin Grier. 2012. Anarchism and the archaeology of anarchic societies: Resistance to centralization in the coast Salish region of the Pacific Northwest coast. *Current Anthropology* 53 (5): 547–587.

Barclay, Harold. 1980. *People without Government: An Anthropology of Anarchy*. London: Kahn and Averill.

Benedict, Ruth (1989 [1934]). *Patterns of Culture*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Bettinger, Robert L. 2015. *Orderly Anarchy: Sociopolitical Evolution in Aboriginal California*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Boehm, Christopher. 1999. *Hierarchy in the Forest*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Borck, Lewis. 2018. Sophisticated rebels: Meaning maps and settlement structure as evidence for a social movement in the Gallina region of the North American Southwest. In *Life Beyond the Boundaries: Constructing Identity in Edge Regions of the North American Southwest*, ed. Karen G. Harry and Sarah A. Herr, 88–121. Boulder: University Press of Colorado.

Borck, Lewis, and Matthew C. Sanger. 2017. An introduction to anarchism in archaeology. *The SAA Archaeological Record* 17 (1): 9–16.

Carneiro, Robert L. 2003. *Evolutionism in Cultural Anthropology*. Cambridge: Westview.

Cashdan, Elizabeth A. 1980. Egalitarianism among hunters and gatherers. *American Anthropologist* 82 (1): 116–120.

Chapman, Robert. 2003. *Archaeologies of Complexity*. London and New York: Routledge.

Childe, V. Gordon (1983 [orig. 1936]). *Man Makes Himself*. New York: New American Library.

Clastres, Pierre. 1989. *Society Against the State*. New York: Zone Books.

Clastres, Pierre. 1994. *Archaeology of Violence*. New York: Semiotext(e).

Cobb, Charles R., and Brian M. Butler. 2002. The vacant quarter revisited: Late Mississippian abandonment of the lower Ohio Valley. *American Antiquity* 67 (4): 625–641.

Cowgill, George, and Norman Yoffee, eds. 1988. *The Collapse of Ancient States and Civilizations*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Cushing, Frank Hamilton. 1883. My adventures in Zuñi. *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* 6: 28–47.

Montaigne, Michel de (2018 [1580]). "Des Cannibales." In P. Villey and V.-L. Saulnier (eds.), *Les Essais*, pp. 202–214. Online edition edited by P. Desan. Chicago: University of Chicago. https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philologic4/montessaisvilley/ (accessed Jan. 3, 2018).

Douglas, Mary (2002 [orig. 1966]). *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London and New York: Routledge.

Espinosa, Gilberto, ed. 1933. *History of New Mexico, by Gaspar Perez de Villagra, Alcala, 1610*. Los Angeles: Quivera Society.

Flannery, Kent V. 1972. The cultural evolution of civilizations. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 3: 399–426.

Flannery, Kent V., and Joyce Marcus. 2012. *The Creation of Inequality: How our Prehistoric Ancestors Set the Stage for Monarchy, Slavery, and Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Fortes, Meyer, and E.E. Evans-Pritchard. 1940. *African Political Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fowles, Severin. 2010. A people's history of the American Southwest. In *Ancient Complexities: New Perspectives in Pre-Columbian North America*, ed. Susan Alt, 183–204. Provo: University of Utah Press.

Fowles, Severin. 2013. *An Archaeology of Doings: Secularism and the Study of Pueblo Religion*. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press.

Fowles, Severin. 2014. On torture in societies against the state. In *Violence and Civilization*, ed. Roderick Campbell, 152–178. Providence: Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology Press.

Fried, Morton. 1967. *The Evolution of Political Society*. New York: Random House.

Graeber, David. 2004. *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.

Graeber, David. 2013. Culture as creative refusal. *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 31 (2): 1–19.

Guiterman, Christopher H., Thomas W. Swetnam, and Jeffrey S. Dean. 2016. Eleventh-century shift in timber procurement areas for the great houses of Chaco canyon. *PNAS* 113 (5): 1186–1190.

Kennett, Douglas J., Stephen Plog, Richard J. George, Brendan J. Culleton, Adam S. Watson, Pontus Skoglund, Swapan Mallick NadinRohland, Kristin Stewardson, Logan Kistler, Steven A. LeBlanc, Peter M. Whiteley, David Reich, and George H. Perry. 2017. Archaeogenomic evidence reveals prehistoric matrilineal dynasty. *Nature Communications* 8: 14115. https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomms14115.

Latour, Bruno. 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Lee, Richard B. 1979. *The !Kung San*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lekson, Stephen H. 2005. Complexity. In *Southwest Archaeology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Linda S. Cordell and Don D. Fowler, 157–173. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

Lekson, Stephen H. 2009. *A History of the Ancient Southwest*. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press.

Lekson, Stephen H. 2015. *The Chaco Meridian: One Thousand Years of Political and Religious Power in the Ancient Southwest*. Second ed. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1966. *The Savage Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1969 [1949]). *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Mann, Barbara. 2003. *Native Americans, Archaeologists, and the Mounds*. New York: P. Lang.

Maruyama, Magoroh. 1963. The second cybernetics: Deviation-amplifying mutual causal processes. *American Scientist* 5 (2): 164–179.

Morgan, Lewis Henry (1974 [1877]). *Ancient Society, or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization*. Gloucester: Peter Smith.

Nelson, Ben A. 1995. Complexity, hierarchy, and scale in Chaco canyon, New Mexico, and La Quemada, Zacatecas. *American Antiquity* 60: 597–618.

Ortman, Scott G. 2012. *Winds from the North: Tewa Origins and Historical Anthropology*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

Pauketat, Timothy R. 2007. *Chiefdoms and Other Archaeological Delusions*. Lanham: AltaMira Press.

Plog, Stephen, and Carrie Heitman. 2010. Hierarchy and social inequality in the American Southwest, A.D. 800-1200. *PNAS* 107 (46): 19619–19626.

Plog, Stephen, Carrie C. Heitman, and Adam S. Watson. 2017. Key dimensions of the cultural trajectories of Chaco canyon. In *The Oxford Handbook of Southwest Archaeology*, ed. Barbara Mills and Severin Fowles, 285–306. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rappaport, Roy. 1971. Ritual, sanctity, and cybernetics. *American Anthropologist* 73: 59–76.

Reid, J. Jefferson, and Stephanie M. Whittlesey. 1990. The complicated and the complex: Observations on the archaeological record of large pueblos. In *Perspectives on Southwestern Prehistory*, ed. Paul E. Minnis and Charles L. Redman, 184–195. Boulder: Westview Press.

Sassaman, Kenneth E. 2001. Hunter-gatherers and traditions of resistance. In *The Archaeology of Traditions: Agency and History Before and After Columbus*, ed. Timothy Pauketat, 218–236. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

Scott, James C. 1998. *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Spencer, Charles S. 1990. On the tempo and mode of state formation: Neoevolutionism reconsidered. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 9: 1–30.

Spencer, Charles S. 2010. Territorial expansion and primary state formation. *PNAS* 107 (16): 7119–7126.

Steward, Julian. 1955. *Theory of Culture Change: The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Tainter, Joseph A. 1988. *The Collapse of Complex Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Trigger, Bruce G. 1990. Maintaining economic equality in opposition to complexity: An Iroquoian case study. In *The Evolution of Political Systems: Sociopolitics in Small-scale Sedentary Societies*, ed. Steadman Upham, 119–145. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Trigger, Bruce G. 2007. *Understanding Early Civilizations: A Comparative Study.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tylor, Edward B. (1920 [1871]). *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom.* London: John Murray.

Wengrow, David. 2001. The evolution of simplicity: Aesthetic labour and social change in the Neolithic near east. *World Archaeology* 33 (2): 168–188.

Wengrow, David, and David Graeber. 2018. 'Many seasons ago': Slavery and its rejection among foragers on the Pacific coast of North America. *American Anthropologist* 120 (2): 237–249.

White, Leslie A. 1943. Energy and the evolution of culture. *American Anthropologist* 45: 335–356.

Woodburn, James. 1982. Egalitarian societies. *Man* 17 (3): 431–451.

Yoffee, Norman. 2005. *Myths of the Archaic State: Evolution of the Earliest Cities, States, and Empires.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.