Social Stratification, Genealogical Distance, and State Formation in Early Hawaii and the Central Andes: Steps, Slopes, and Off-Ramps in Social Evolution

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ABSTRACT

Henri J. M. Claessen proposed that the early state came into being by a process of social stratification that led to the creation of genealogical distance between a ruler and the ruled. This article evaluates Claessen's proposition by comparing the development of early large-scale polities in Hawaii and the central Andes. The process of state formation in Hawaii largely followed Claessen's proposed 'slope' of political development – by the end of the sequence, kings were seen as gods in the protohistoric Hawaiian state. The central Andean Wari polity, in contrast, took an 'off-ramp' from Claessen's slope to a more heterarchical political structure of competing elite-led corporate groups. We explain some of the possible reasons for the differences between our case studies and emphasize that there are many branching pathways to greater political complexity in the ancient world.

Keywords: *States, social evolution, political economy, Wari, Hawaii.*

Henri J. M. Claessen was a giant among scholars trying to understand variation in human societies. One way to think of his long career is as an attempt to solve an enduring geometric problem. His early work helped define 'the early state' as an evolutionary stage in step-

wise societal development (*e.g.*, Claessen and Skalník 1978a). Yet soon, he became interested in how states came into being, attempting, in his words, to add a common 'slope' with internal dynamics that could both propel a society to the early state stage of development and keep it there (Claessen and van de Velde 1985: 9). Close attention to detail, he hoped, could find common pathways to a generalized political organization of early states predicated on the division between 'the rulers and the ruled' (Claessen and Skalník 1981: 490).

This article seeks to re-examine one of the primary facets of the state development slope that Claessen identified: increased social stratification and genealogical distance from the ruler. Key to this endeavor is to find well-documented examples of early state formation. This is not as easy as it sounds. The first states developed before historical records and are often obscured by the detritus of later states that may have been organized around other kinds of institutions. To better understand how the first large-scale political collectives formed, this article considers incipient state formation in Hawaii and the Central Andes that have been well-documented archaeologically.

In eighteenth-century AD Hawaii, Claessen's motor for political development works reasonably well, with a ruler emerging through social distancing from his peers. Kings were portrayed as Gods. The resulting polities, however, without urbanism or extraordinary monumentality failed to meet many classic expectations for what a state should look like (*e.g.*, Childe 1950). The Wari polity of the eighth century AD Central Andes, in contrast, meets more of our expectations for stereotypical early states, with its impressive urbanism and monumentality. Yet Wari was organized around competing elite-led kin groups, rather than by a centralized government as expected in Claessen's model. If a Wari ruler emerged, it was both centuries after the polity formed and in competition to an earlier, more heterarchical, political organization.

An inspection of data from our two historically independent cases problematizes both the steps and slopes of Claessen's model. As social stratification increased in both, pathways to greater levels of centralization *did* relate to genealogical distance; however, 'off-ramps' could lead to other political formations capable of sustaining large collectives. As these two cases illustrate, political evolution does not converge on a single type of society. Rather than looking for *the* early state, we need to explore various ways that people met the challenges of creating large-scale political collectives. Claessen's final scholarship did just this (Claessen 2005; Claessen and van Bakel 2006), and we seek to honor his legacy by continuing to unravel cross-cultural

patterns in world history that illustrate the variety of means used to form complex political formations of increasing scale and integration.

STEPS, SLOPES, AND COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Stepwise cultural developmental models were not of Claessen's making. Morgan (1877) and other nineteenth century anthropologists developed these models to make sense of the dizzying cultural variation revealed by European voyages of discovery and colonization. Although aware that they were simplifying observed variability, scholars attempted to glean from their readings the outlines of organizational plateaus that crosscut cultural contrasts. Morgan, for example, formulated seven evolutionary stages from savagery to civilization, each associated with a suite of common traits, such as his civilization stage that included traits familiar to the European world: monotheism, monogamy, social classes, the political state, and patriarchy.

More sustained ethnographic fieldwork in the twentieth century led to a backlash against grand theories of cultural evolution. The racist underpinnings of these theories were criticized, as was the quality of sources from which they were derived (Boas 1940). Far more work needed to be done to elucidate historical patterns of social evolution. With Boas's pointed critique, several sociocultural anthropologists developed new evolutionary syntheses, sometimes using archaeology, but relying primarily on the ethnographic record that was expanding rapidly at this time. Most famously, Julian Steward (1955) promulgated a theory of multilinear evolution that emphasized both the historical and environmental circumstances of particular pathways and commonalities found across these pathways.

In theory, the emphasis in Steward's work was to identify slopes *and* steps of cultural change. This research agenda was perhaps best articulated by two of Steward's students, Sahlins and Service, in *Evolution and Culture* (1960), wherein they argued for a distinction between specific evolution and general evolution. Service (1962) and Fried (1967; another student of Steward) continued his intellectual project, proposing similar steps in alternative general evolutionary models that respectively emphasized the roles played by cooperation and coercion to achieve increasing integrative scales. By the 1970s, their nomenclature entered the discipline's lexicon – Service gave us bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states; Fried offered egalitarian, ranked, and stratified societies. Both cautioned that their typologies were provisional and called for further research. Service (1975) began exploring variability in state formations.

With his Ph.D. only recently in hand, Claessen 'set out to refine the existing theoretical tools through confrontation with generalized data on actual early states' (Claessen and Skalník 1978b: 650). He elicited twenty-one historical case-studies, organized alphabetically from Angkor to Zande, aiming 'to formulate certain *structural characteristics*' that 'will have to be present in at least sixteen cases… and absent in no more than two cases' (Claessen 1978: 537, emphasis in the original). This inductive approach yielded a definition that began 'the early state is an independent socio-political organization with a bounded government and a center of government' before sprawling across ten paragraphs to include centralization, a monopoly on legitimate force, social stratification, regular surplus, and a common ideology (Claessen and Skalník 1978b: 637–638).

Much of Claessen's subsequent comparative work focused on finding a common political 'slope' to deduce the early state's core features. In so doing, he questioned the utility of a stepwise modeling of political formation that obscured how states came into being. His research led him to argue that one of the primary processes of state development was class formation premised on genealogical difference – a distinction between the ruler and the ruled (Claessen 1984). The early state thus emerged in his view by replacing kin bonds with class divides, 'shattering a cage of norms' that had long limited inequality and centralization (Acemoglu and Robinson 2019: 18).

Claessen sought to understand 'evolution and its many faces' (Claessen and van de Velde 1985: 7). His cross-cultural research, however, used archaeology only peripherally, assuming that historically known case studies could represent the early state. With archaeology in its infancy, this strategy was reasonable, but, by the 1980s, the second generation of processual archaeologists were beginning rigorous research into the earliest states. The primary synthesis of this scholarship is provided by Flannery and Marcus (2013) in *The Creation of Inequality: How our Prehistoric Ancestors Set the Stage for Monarchy, Slavery, and Empire*. Processual archaeologists continued to address Claessen's geometric problem of relating slopes and steps, a problem that we have also addressed in our own work. The first author has echoed some of Claessen's concerns about stepwise models (Jennings 2016), while the second author has attempted to resolve Claessen's concerns by offering an 'upward spiral' of culture change that can encapsulate the 'parallel but distinct lines' of societal development (Johnson and Earle 1987: 15, 247).

Recognized but never really elaborated by Claessen (1978: 536), we look at politics as a process considering both top-down and bot-

tom-up dynamics creating a shifting balance across deep history (De-Marrais and Earle 2017). Only by reconstructing multiple independent cases, as he did, can we hope to understand how common processes resulted in the observed extraordinary variability. Here deep sequences of changes are critical to comparative work. As increasingly provided by archaeology and ethnohistory, these sequences show the particular order of change and the changing balances that help evaluate the correlations that Claessen had recognized.

The engagement with these variable processes of change has become the work of second- and third-generation processual archaeologists. Top-down processes were integral to chiefdom and state development as leaders asserted power over people by controlling different and changing sources of power, such as economies, warrior might, religious ideology, and administrative structures (Gilman 1981; Mann 1986; Earle 1997). Correspondingly, 'governed' populations self-organized to solve most problems of every-day life giving them an ability to function independently, resist domination, and expect services from elites (Blanton and Fargher 2008; Carballo, Roscoe, and Feinman 2014; Stanish 2017). These changing balances created different political relationships and distinctive pathways to complexity (Fargher and Heredia Espinoza 2016).

We argue here that genealogical distance, which Claessen (1984) emphasized, was indeed important for building larger scale polities, but that it did not necessarily lead into a feedback loop of greater centralization and class formation as he thought. Breaking down kinship relationships can also allow other relationships to form, creating what we call off-ramps to class formation. The resulting societies can meet many of the early state's 'structural characteristics' as identified by Claessen (1978: 537), but often come to those characteristics along alternative pathways. By foregrounding a particular slope of development, Claessen obscured other branching formation processes that led to the large-scale political organizations that we now consider for the Hawaiian Islands and Central Andes.

THE HAWAIIAN ISLAND COMPLEX CHIEFDOMS AND EARLY STATES

Located just below the Tropic of Cancer, the Hawaiian Islands are the northeastern extent of the Polynesian Islands triangle. With a service-able boat technology and knowledge of maritime skills, Polynesians expanded from Island Melanesia to inhabit most islands in the central Pacific (Irwin 1992). Using ethnographic descriptions, Marshall

Sahlins (1958) compared how a single people with shared culture histories dispersed and developed different levels of complexity across islands from tiny atolls to major volcanic island groups. From a shared proto-Polynesian society, they diversified to form societies from almost egalitarian to highly stratified.

The Hawaiian Islands are unusual for their large sizes and isolation. At first contact (1778), Hawaiian polities were the largest scale and most stratified of any Polynesian societies. Detailed description by explorers including Captain Cook, a rich ethnohistory by Native Hawaiians, and increasingly detailed archaeology document how complex political formations developed here from regional chiefdoms to island-wide complex chiefdoms and then state-like societies (Hommon 2013; Earle 1978, 1997; Cordy 1981; Kirch 1984, 2010; Kolb 1994, 2006; Bayman and Dye 2013). From these sources, we can model increasing sociopolitical complexity that fits with Claessen's understanding of early primary state formation. We capture a 800–1000 year sequence in scalar expansion, subdividing rather arbitrarily an oscillating continuum of reformulations.

Island settlements started off the process (circa 800/1000–1200 CE). Sparse evidence suggests that groups were small and probably quite flexible and mobile. Sites are ephemeral and coastal, positioned ideally for fishing and probably some agriculture. Population growth was slow and repeated resettlement was probably necessary to establish a breeding population across expansive ecosystems.

Social reconstitutions were second (circa 1200–1400 CE). Population slowly expanded inland with more established but still small sites, shifting to an increasing agricultural subsistence economy (Hommon 1986). With some intergroup competition, we expect that a basal social unit of small sub-lineages asserted corporate ownership of land and participated in cooperative problem solving. Family-level subsistence farming was common, sometimes with small-scale irrigation. Although chiefly status probably distinguished dominant sub-lineages, as common across Polynesia, the roles would have been largely ceremonial. Some religious monuments (*heiau*) were likely founded at this time, engaging all within simple chiefdoms.

Regional political formations were third (circa 1400–1600 CE). Population expanded rapidly (Dye and Kamori 1992), requiring agricultural intensification. Inland dryland cultivation apparently resulted in soil erosion filling deeply entrenched valleys with rich alluvium that was developed by irrigation for taro pondfields. In these situations, population moved coastally, focusing on the irrigated pondfield taro (Spriggs 1985).

This phase included major heiau construction (Kolb 1994) that would have legitimized the political centralization and expansion that eventually created island-wide, complex chiefdoms. Control over intensified irrigated facilities generated substantial surpluses that were used politically. To institutionalize the regional Hawaiian chiefdoms and those elsewhere across Polynesia, social labor (mobilized by chiefs) built religious monuments as a hierarchy of temples that marked the landscape and determined responsibilities of individual communities to support annual ceremonies (Kolb 1994). Heiau, however, were open in structure, suggesting an ideology of group inclusiveness and identity.

Structural dynamics of Polynesian chiefly ranking created growth cycles in political economies. At this time the local communities (*ahupua'a*) apparently supported expanding control over surplus production largely from highly productive, irrigated taro farming. Engineered landscapes included irrigated pondfields for taro, fishponds, tree groves of bananas, breadfruit and coconut, and newly constructed religious monuments and division walls. Importantly, the productive landscape was concentrated in valleys, but broadly spread across the Islands wherever an ancient topography had developed valleys. A new system of land tenure with overarching chiefly ownership was created by conquest with rights to surplus held by island paramounts. This new overlapping ownership proved foundational for further changes.

State formations were fourth (circa 1600–1800 CE). During this phase, population growth appears to have leveled off (Dye and Komori 1992) probably reflecting production limits (Kirch 1988) and increasing demands for surplus production. Although commoners retained broad access to local resources (Dye 2010), the ancient lineage system by which commoners claimed rights to land was supplanted by feudal-like land-tenure, in which commoners gave obligated labor and material in return for land access. Especially on the eroded western islands of Oahu and Kaua'i where irrigation was possible, commoners were obliged under oversight by land managers to work plots and fishponds set aside for the chiefs. Intensified irrigation facilities were developed wherever feasible, although only in a small fraction of the islands' total land area (Earle 1980). Commoners were not without agency even within these situations; small irrigation systems were located in the upper reaches of large valleys and on small streams where commoners probably farmed relatively free from chiefly oversight (Earle 1978).

The potential for irrigation was limited on the younger (less erod-ed) eastern islands of Maui and Hawai'i, where valleys with streams were few (Ladefoged *et al.* 2009). Here staple-based political econo-mies emerged in core zones by building extensive, terraced dryland sys-tems. Although dryland zones were less productive and riskier, their productivity for pigs was high, because sweet potato grown here was ideal pig food. Large pig herds in dryland areas generated a moveable wealth as elite ceremonial sacrifices and gift payments (Dye 2014). Some dryland farmlands were more productive, lower risk, and sub-stantially more engineered (Ladefoged and Graves 2008), and these core zones would have served as control points that produced staples and staple-fed pigs for the political economy.

Kolb (1994) describes a fundamental change in ritual practice. Sacrificial offering that included pigs and humans greatly increased as construction of temples declined. At this time, temples and their ritu-als were dedicated to the warrior god Ku, and heiau forms used mas-sive wall enclosure, surely a demonstration of exclusive elite access as was later documented at contact with the West. Broadly held rules of *kapu* (what was permitted) came to distinguish chiefly hierarchy. When Captain Cook arrived on the Islands, he described how people must prostrate themselves as a chiefs passed.

The state-like polities on Hawai'i and Maui were formed by con-quest that depended on warrior and priestly specialists. To form large-scale polities, resources were poured into warrior, craftsmen, and ritu-al specialists expanding and legitimizing conquest warfare. Territorial conquest, using large armies, formed the newly formalized state (Kolb and Dixon 2002). With a larger area now under control, it was possi-ble to intensify dryland farming (especially on the Big Island of Ha-wai'i) and supplement the yield of less productive and higher risk zones (Kirch 2010). Importantly, because of the broadly dispersed nature of agriculture, nothing like a city ever developed prior to incor-poration into the world economy. People lived in low density settle-ments of several hundred spread among their fields.

The latter phase of the Hawaiian trajectory fits well with Claessen's proposition that social stratification increased and solidified with state formation. The high chiefs became kings recognized as gods on earth (Kirch 2010). Prestige goods were an essential part of political econo-mies reinforcing a class-based ideology. The kings lived in settlements with special ritual monuments, but without concentrated settlements. Ru-lers were thus spatially removed from most of the people, whose sur-pluses supported them. The apparel of ruling chiefs included famous

feather cloaks and helmets, all clothes of the gods (Earle 1987). By and large, these objects, although made of regionally available materials, were made by highly skilled and knowledgeable crafter people. In contrasted to many cases considered by Claessen, prestige items were *not* linked to trade at a distance.

Rather, control over distinguishing objects was through direct support of attached specialists and procurement of key materials and manufacturing technology. Basalt for adzes used for woodworking was available on all islands, for example, but high-quality material was restricted to certain sources and traded between islands (Lass 1998). These traded basalts were concentrated in elite residences and religious shrines (Kirch *et al*. 2012), suggesting that chiefly networks dominated their availability for sculpting god-images, other paraphernalia for temples, and building war canoes used for inter-island conquest. Near the end of the sequence, as war focused on conquest, chiefs create a class system based on ritual, distinctive dress, and kapu distinctions – increased social stratification had led to genealogical distance from the ruler, just as envisioned by Claessen.

WARI

In the early first millennium CE, people in the Ayacucho Valley of the Central Andes lived in small, dispersed, and unfortified villages (Leoni 2005; 2013; Lumbreras 1959; 1974; MacNeish 1981; Ochatoma Paravicinio and Cabrera Romero 2010; Pérez Calderón and Carrera Aquino 2015). They inhabited lone houses with an external patio, had limited status differences, and buried individuals around the home. Large groups periodically gathered in the region's scattered ceremonial centres (Cavero Palomino and Huamaní Díaz 2015; Leoni 2005; 2006; Peréz Calderón and Paredes 2015; Vivanco and Mendoza 2015). Without written sources, it is difficult for us to determine the kin relationships that structured life in early first millennium Ayacucho; however, little indicators exist of well-defined lineages or other mid-range social groupings. For example, there are very few extended family compounds, clearly defined neighbourhoods, collective tombs, or even anthropomorphic art that might depict leaders.

This pattern began to change in the fifth century as more people moved into Huari, Ñawinpukyo, and other ceremonial centres. Communal burials and multi-family households became common as larger kin groups formed in response to increasing population densities (Alvarez 2014; Anders 1986; Leoni 2006; Lumbreras 1974; MacNeish *et*

al. 1981; Pérez Calderón 2001; 2019a; Valdez 2017), perhaps to facilitate decision making and defend lands cooperatively. Urbanization also accelerated during the sixth century (Isbell 1977; Isbell and Schreiber 1978; Pérez Calderón 2001; Valdez and Valdez 2017, 2021). As villages emptied, people experimented with new ideologies, living arrangements, ceremonial structures, and funerary practices in cities that now housed thousands (*e.g.*, Cook 2012; Isbell 2004; Ochatoma Paravicino *et al.* 2015; Pérez Calderón 2019b; Valdez *et al.* 2002). By the end of the seventh century CE, a new living style had solidified in Ayacucho around shared ideas (Isbell 2008; 2010), including the *ayllu* that brought together dozens of people around a common ancestor (also see Jennings and Berquist 2022).

Ayllus were, and remain, Andean social collectives organized via kinship, economic reciprocity, shared ancestors, and commonly held land (Doyle 1988; Zuidema 1973). Ayllu configurations have changed over time, with the version in late seventh century Ayacucho perhaps inspired from Peru's northern highlands. Larger sites in the latter region featured rival compounds where feasting and ancestor veneration occurred (Berquist 2021; Lau 2010; Topic and Topic 2001; 2010). Select dead were buried in accessible collective tombs nearby (Ibarra Asencios 2021; Orsini 2014; Ponte 2015), with a few ancestors showcased in compound ceremonies (Ibarra Asencios 2021; Orsini 2014; Ponte 2015). The region's art depicts these activities, often foregrounding and enlarging the dead (Lau 2002, 2011, 2016).

Wari warfare following urbanization led to greater contact with the northern highland ayllus – 'Wari' is the name archaeologists have given to the polity that expanded out of Ayacucho in the early seventh century. Impressed with the ayllu's organizational possibilities, Wari warriors returned home with the concept and melded it with Ayacucho's own social experiments in sodality construction that were derived from both the region's ceremonial center traditions and the on-the-fly adaptations being made to urban living. The result was a uniquely Wari version of the ayllu.

Ayllu organization brought some order to Wari's rapidly urbanizing landscape. Huari was soon the largest city in the Pre-Columbian Andes, sprawling across 10 km^2 (Isbell 2009: 215). Economic specialization surged and status differences increased (González Carré and Gálvez Pérez 1981; Isbell and Vranich 2004; Spickard 1983; von Hagen and Morris 1998). Although widening social distance likely led to increased instability in Ayacucho as rival leaders competed for followers, there are no royal palaces, main temple complexes, great pla-

zas, or other core feature that suggest institutions to unite residents. Instead, Wari cities were organized via elite residential compounds located throughout the settlement that were surrounded by lower-status homes (Isbell 2001, 2006; Ochatoma Paravicino 2007). The compounds, sometimes called lineage houses because they appear to have been organized around elite matrilines (Blacker and Cook 2006; Tung 2012), sought to create broader affiliations by hosting feasts and other rituals that celebrated the ancestors buried on-site in accessible tombs (Cook and Glowacki 2003; Nash 2010; 2012). Associated households contributed their resources and labour to lineage house events (Jennings *et al.* 2023; Nash 2010; Rosenfeld 2012; Sayre and Whitehead 2017; compare Beck 2007).

Another intermediate level gathering space were D-shaped temples. The buildings had curved walls with niches, a single entrance in their straight wall and, typically, a small courtyard around the entrance (Bragayrac 1991; Cook 2001; Reid 2023). Dozens of D-shaped temples were scattered across Huari's neighborhoods, with few capable of hosting more than a hundred people. Their link to the lineage houses is unclear, but some scholars suggest that temple niches might have displayed ancestral mummy bundles (Cook 2001; McEwan 1998). Large, face-necked jars were featured in ceremonies in both contexts. Some vessels appear to depict important figures in Wari politics (Knobloch 2010, 2012, 2016; Nash 2018; Vasquez de Arthur 2020). A social network analysis of the individuals in Wari art suggests a more heterarchical political organization of shifting kin-based coalitions – a landscape of competing ayllus that fits well with what we know from the polity's settlement organization (Gibbon *et al.* 2022).

Without oral histories or written records, nuances of Wari politics remain unclear. Yet, available evidence suggests the binding of high-status lineages to lower-status followers through intensive, recurring, face-to-face interaction. Working, feasting, and worshipping together helped create identity through shared ancestry that became the primary mechanisms for collective action both within cities and beyond (Jennings and Berquist 2022; Jennings *et al.* 2023). The churn of construction, abandonment and reuse in Wari cities suggest a shifting landscape of ayllu affiliations as leaders jockeyed for prestige and power (Groleau 2009, 2011; Isbell and Groleau 2010). This seeming political instability underlay a polity that is often glossed as the first Andean empire (Isbell 2009; Schreiber 1992). Wealth flowed into the Wari heartland (Rosenfeld *et al.* 2021), and Wari influence was profound over politics, economy, and society in the central Andes (Isbell 2009).

Increased social stratification and genealogical distance *were* fundamental developments to the Wari polity from the fifth through eighth centuries CE. Wealth and status differences rapidly widened, and it is likely that elite families thought that they stood above others. Most political efforts were nonetheless about creating and sustaining horizontal distinctions between vertically organized ayllus. When employed in this matter, rising social stratification and genealogical distance acted to curb centralization, and the resulting heterarchy of competing ayllus inhibited cross-cutting state institutions (see discussion of Isbell 1997 in other Andean contexts). Although Wari looks like a state and has the social stratification, regular surplus, common ideology, and other features that Claessen would expect, its political structure took an off-ramp in political development that limited, rather than accelerated, centralization.

DISCUSSION

A comparison of Hawaiian and Wari state formation reveals considerable overlap in the beginning and middle of their development sequence. In both cases, population growth led to agricultural intensification, the extension of kin sodalities, increased social inequality, and elaboration of ceremonial structures. The similarities are such that 1400 CE Hawaii and 500 CE Wari both seem to follow Claessen's trajectory of class formation and genealogical distance as foundational to centralized state creation. Over the next centuries, Hawaii would complete this transition in many of the ways that Claessen envisioned, but Wari's political development went in a different direction. Why?

We suggest three reasons for the difference in our Hawaii and Wari case-studies. First, the Hawaiian chiefdoms and later states relied on dispersed agricultural production. Irrigation systems were well developed but small in scale as the landscape was subdivided into small valleys each supporting irrigation. Wari farmers, in contrast, lived in an environment more conducive to large-scale agricultural intensification. Terracing and irrigation canals in Ayacucho were used to convert surrounding area into farmland for maize, quinoa, potatoes, and other high-yield crops. The potential carrying capacity of the Wari heartland immediately surrounding Huari, therefore, was higher than that in any locale of Hawaii. The limited carrying capacity restricted population aggregation on the Islands. More people living next to each other in Huari may have made it more difficult to create the categorical separation between rulers and ruled that was later seen in Hawaii. The argument that rulers are gods is made easier when they live isolated from the rhythms of everyday life.

The second and linked difference was urbanization. The potential to bring more people together makes cities possible, with thousands soon crowding into places like Huari. The survival of Wari cities depended on surplus staple production of local laborers. Dependence on the yields from many farmers meant that leaders had to be seen as serving the public's interest – they worked for the people. Hawaiian leaders, however, lived in palaces set apart from villages and linked to special ritual spaces that they alone could access. Their subsistence could be guaranteed by harnessing the labor of just a few attached families, and they received support as a moveable feast, traveling from region to region and exhausting its surpluses. The power of Hawaiian rulers was based heavily on religion and the special paraphernalia and monuments restricted to them. The right to rule in Hawaii was predicated on an ideology of radical difference, while Wari leaders needed to build connections between themselves and those living around them to sustain metropoles. The result, as Blanton and Fargher (2008) have argued more generally, was that Wari government provided more public goods than in Hawaii, accelerating urbanization as more people moved into cities to take advantage of what the government was offering.

A final difference between our cases studies is in the pace of change. Hawaii went through a sequence of expanding chiefdoms that lasted four hundred years. Social stratification and genealogical distance ratcheted up each time, slowly separating out an elite class from commoners. Wari changes, in contrast, occurred in less than half that time. Spiraling wealth differences created elite families, but insufficient years existed to develop a class-based ideology that separated these families from the rest of the population who were seen as belonging to the same kin group. As important interlocuters with gods and ancestors, Wari leaders had a privileged place in society. Yet in our Hawaii case, leaders became gods who stood apart from the rest of society. The slower pace of change on the Islands allowed for the greater naturalization of these roles.

Claessen cogently recognized that leaders legitimize their positions of power by drawing distinctions between themselves and others. Over time, Hawaiian leaders took this distinction to the extreme, creating a new class of divine rulers. A higher carrying capacity, enhanced possibilities for urbanization, and a quicker pace of change opened new possibilities of political organization in our Wari case study while foreclosing others. Increasing social stratification and genealogical distance could have led to a class-based society with clear

distinctions between the rulers and the ruled. The glut of people trying to find their way at places like Huari, however, appears to have taken an off ramp in political development that set factions against each other. A 'heterarchical grid of authority' arose that limited centralization (following McIntosh 2005: 206). Certain families amassed great wealth and hundreds of followers, but they were counter-balanced by rival families who also sought to extend their power.

In archaeology, states have traditionally been defined as societies with centralized and internally specialized administrative organizations (*e.g.*, Wright 1977). Although Hawaii by 1600 CE fits this definition to some degree, Wari does not, even though the latter polity perhaps looks more like a state-level society that the Hawaiian case without massive cities, monumental buildings, and record keeping devices. One way to deal with this discrepancy is to enlarge the definition of the state – Kim (2015: 25) recently defines states as based on social stratification and institutionalized power, and Johnson and Earle's category of state-level societies took in considerable institutional variability within polities that have large populations and territorial extent (2000). The key question for us is about how different kinds of large-scale political entities came into being and were sustained. At the beginning of his career, Claessen thought that only one slope existed to one kind of ancient state. We now know that this is incorrect, with alternative pathways leading to a diversity of political formations that existed in the past.

CONCLUSIONS

For most of his career, Henri J. M. Claessen sought to identify the cross-cultural traits associated with the early state and the common mechanisms that brought these states into being. His effort to induce the early state from dozens of historic case studies was useful for identifying many features of large-scale polities, and his work identified key variables at play in state formation. Claessen insistence on a single slope of political development, however, assumed that these variables could only come together in certain ways, leading to a set of feedback loops that inevitably brought a centralized state into being (Claessen 1984). This is incorrect.

We emphasize that there are many pathways to greater complexity that can be demonstrated at any scale, be it of 1,000, 100,000, of 100 million, or even the present mega-states of over 1 billion people. The emerging forms of governance can be evaluated according to sta-

bility, sustainability, and quality of life (*e.g.*, Blanton *et al.* 2021). Archaeology may in fact point toward outcomes of future experiments between democratic and autocratic regimes. Archaeology's deep history of states and other kinds of large-scale political organizations therefore has great potential as we look to the future (for a similar argument, see Jennings 2023).

Social stratification and genealogical distance *are* common variables in state formation. Often, attempts to legitimize higher status position by making distinctions between groups *do* create feedback loops that lead to the emergence of centralized governments ruled by divine kings. As with the Hawaiian case study, Claessen is sometimes right. Yet, the common variables that he identified can also come together to initiate new pathways of political development, taking off ramps to the single slope that Classen laid out. If our goal is to unravel how states and other large-scale political organizations first came into being, then we need to identify the many branching routes that societies can traverse with increasing scale and integration. There are many slopes and off ramps in the archaeological record.

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