

# The Evolution of Leadership

## 1

### Introduction

#### *The Evolution of Leadership*

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Leaders make decisions that have significant effects on the lives of others. They have the ability to influence events and impact the evolutionary trajectories of societies. Indeed, the “Great Man” theory suggests that these individuals essentially “make” history (Carlyle 1888). Leaders exist in all societies, ranging from smaller-scale heads of households to larger-scale elected governing bodies to dictators with vast coercive powers at their disposal. As typically conceived, “leaders” are individuals who have decision-making authority that extends beyond the household to include non-kin. Today all of us are familiar with and see (and feel) the influence of leaders. However, ethnographic research in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries showed that many small-scale societies lack permanent institutionalized leaders with extensive decision-making power. Hunters and gatherers are especially well represented among such groups, but some small-scale pastoralists and horticulturalists also fall into this category.

Given that leaders and leadership are so influential on human social behavior yet are variably represented among different societies in the past and present, generations of scholars have examined these social phenomena from a variety of humanistic and scientific perspectives. This book, the product of an advanced seminar at the School for Advanced Research

(SAR), brings together the perspectives of cultural anthropologists and archaeologists to explore why and how leadership emerges and variously becomes institutionalized among disparate small-scale and middle-range human societies. This introductory chapter examines the background for leadership studies in anthropology, proposes the value of approaches that consider leadership from multiple sociopolitical and temporal scales, and introduces the chapters in this volume.

## **LEADERSHIP STUDIES IN ANTHROPOLOGY**

Leadership has long been of interest in cultural and biological anthropology. A complete review of the literature is beyond the scope of this chapter; it has been summarized in other recent research (for example, Butler and Welch 2006; Feinman 1995, 2005; Hayden 2001; Spikins 2008). Beginning with early social theorists such as Weber, who explored different kinds of leaders throughout history (1968[1921]), cultural anthropologists have evaluated the topic of leadership in a variety of ways. Later theorists, such as Fried (1967), Sahlins (1963), and Service (1962; see also Barth 1959; Sahlins and Service 1960), wrote much about the evolution of social complexity, a higher-level notion but one in which leaders were an essential component in the transformation of societies from bands to tribes, chiefdoms, and states. More recently, Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony, as well as practice theory (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1979; Ortner 1984), forms the foundation of much anthropological inquiry, but these theories tend to emphasize unequal power relationships that already exist. They are less clear on how these inequities become established in the first place. Biosocial anthropologists consider the role of warriorship and coalition building in the maintenance of leaders in their positions of authority, whereas biological anthropologists study the effects of leadership on somatic and reproductive success (for example, Betzig 1986; Borgerhoff Mulder 1995; Chagnon 1990; Maschner and Patton 1996). Again, however, considerations of diachronic processes by which positions of leadership are established in the first place receive less attention.

Leadership in human societies also has been a persistent theme in archaeological studies from the mid-1900s (for example, Childe 1936) continuing through today (for example, Byrd 2005; Fitzhugh 2003; Kuijt and Goring-Morris 2002; Spikins 2008). The focus, however, often has been on higher-level social organizations, such as the characteristics of social hierarchy and ranked societies (for example, Earle 1991, 1997; Haas 1982). Many archaeologists also tend to emphasize synchronic structural explanations. The political economy and practice approaches (for example, Cobb 1996;

Earle 1997; Pauketat and Emerson 1999; Stein 1998), for example, evaluate the ways in which unequal status is maintained within a discrete time frame but do not focus on the emergence of the leadership required to attain this unequal status in the first place.

Even though archaeologists have emphasized synchronic and societal scales when discussing leadership, the role of individual leaders in this process has been recognized by many (for example, Adams 1966; Blanton et al. 1996; Carneiro 1970; Rathje 1971; Wittfogel 1957). Part of the long-standing interest in leaders and leadership surely relates to a goal of many early archaeologists, sometimes explicit and other times implicit, to better understand the history and development of Western civilizations. Powerful leaders are nearly ubiquitous in the ancient writings from these societies, and archaeological efforts were often aimed at verifying such texts rather than understanding the activities of non-elites. A second reason for the focus on leaders likely relates to the high visibility of archaeological remains that result from the organizational skills of leaders, such as pyramids, irrigation canals, and monuments. Such impressive works have captured the interest of the public and archaeological community, often at the expense of the common people of the past.

Yet, perhaps the most pertinent reason for the continued anthropological interest in leadership is the consistency with which leaders appear in human societies. In spite of very different environments, technologies, and culture histories, leaders in the past and present are identifiable in some form on almost every continent. As a result, scholars have sought to construct general models based on anthropological theory to explain their seemingly universal presence (for example, Brumfiel and Earle 1987; Feinman 1995; Flannery 1976; Hayden and Gargett 1990; Wenke 1981). Because leaders have developed in human societies so often, in different places and times and under different circumstances, there are ample opportunities to test such models against detailed case studies. Indeed, we believe that this scientific approach—the building of models, the extraction of testable hypotheses, and the repeated testing of these against the archaeological and anthropological record—contributes significantly to the continued interest in and vibrancy of research on the evolution of leadership.

Although many previous studies have discussed leaders and leadership as part of larger models of differentiation, the mechanisms by which individual leaders emerge are surprisingly undertheorized across the fields of anthropology. The origin of sociopolitical hierarchies has been well studied in archaeology (for example, Earle 1991), but the emergence of leaders, the key feature in distinguishing hierarchical societies from egalitarian

ones, has not. The distinction here is critical and relates to the scale at which these issues are examined. Past studies have focused on the evolution of inequality or hierarchy at the level of the society and considered macroevolutionary processes over long time scales (for example, Ames 1981; Blanton et al. 1996; Haas 1982; Paynter 1989). Models that do focus on individual leaders usually assume, as a point of departure, that such leaders already exist. Rather than consider their genesis, these models focus on the maintenance and development of positions of power (for example, Earle 1997).

Special emphasis on the individual as an active agent of diachronic structural change brings such research in line with two major bodies of theory that have been actively developed in archaeological research over the past twenty years: practice theory and neo-Darwinian theory (for example, Ortner 1984; Shennan 2002; Wolf 2001). Both approaches focus on individuals and their role in change, though they also recognize that the collective behaviors of individuals add up to broader changes at the societal level. The time scales of such studies are generally shorter, or microevolutionary, in nature. Accordingly, the types of data required for these approaches are different, focusing on evidence for the actions of individual people as measured, for example, in discrete artifacts, burials, or households. In contrast, models examining macroevolutionary patterns often rely on, or are tested, using large-scale and aggregated data, such as those from regional site distributions. The collection of fine-scaled data useful for examining the behavior of individuals is standard in ethnographic studies. However, many archaeological excavations over the past thirty to forty years have also collected high-resolution data, making it possible to test sophisticated hypotheses regarding the evolution of leaders across different social and environmental contexts.

Newer approaches focusing on the evolution of leadership from the point of view of the individual do not contradict older ones, but they examine the question in new ways and at finer scales that can highlight aspects of leadership not previously visible. For example, where other studies tend to conflate notions of status and wealth with those of leadership, finer-scale and individual-based research has the potential to decouple these different variables and examine their interplay. Likewise, instead of examining the evolution of societies as a whole, in which all parts are assumed generally to change in concert, finer-scaled studies can distinguish change in certain segments of society—at least at the chronological resolution typically used—such as among leaders themselves or among their followers, or in the economic versus religious behavioral arenas.

**NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE EVOLUTION OF LEADERSHIP**

Small-scale and middle-range societies often have in place formal rules that effectively inhibit the development of leaders and emphasize cooperation over competition (Boehm 1993; Winterhalder 2001). Such social-leveling mechanisms include a broad range of behaviors that limit the influence individuals can gain over non-kin, such as self-deprecation, gossip, ridicule, physical punishment, and ostracism (see Fried 1967). These mechanisms are strongly enforced, and egalitarian notions often pervade many aspects of culture (for example, from food sharing to kinship structures to the spatial layout of communities), providing significant challenges to the development of inequitable decision-making power.

Recent cross-cultural behavioral experiments indicate that egalitarian convictions run deep (Henrich et al. 2006). Experimental games in which participants may observe the sharing and distribution of a resource show that some individuals will severely punish noncooperators and people who do not reciprocate, often at great cost to themselves. Such costs may greatly exceed the unreceived benefits to which the punishers feel they are entitled. Although the level of costly punishment varies (societies with higher rates of altruism punish more frequently), such behavior is observed in a range of societies across the world. Indeed, humans are keen at detecting individuals who violate sharing or cooperative norms. Cosmides (1989) has even proposed that the human brain has specialized modules devoted to detecting “cheaters” (see also Beaman 2002). All of this suggests a strong commitment to cooperation and sharing, as well as maintenance of these ideals across generations. If these ideals are hardwired (that is, maintained genetically), then overcoming them presents a strong challenge to aspiring leaders whose decision-making authority disenfranchises others not only of their autonomy but also often of their resources.

In contrast, many nonhuman primate societies, such as chimpanzees and gorillas, are characterized by influential leaders with broad decision-making powers (Boehm 1999). Whether human societies “lost” such leaders as they evolved during the Pleistocene and developed social institutions to repress the decision-making power of leaders, or whether leaders evolved among nonhuman primates only after their split from humans (perhaps several times independently), these issues are beyond the scope of the chapters in this volume. Most anthropologists agree (for example, Boehm 1999; Winterhalder 2001) that small-scale human societies of the late Pleistocene generally lacked formalized and permanent leaders with

authority to make decisions about a broad range of activities (such as economics, religion, and politics).

Only during the early Holocene do we see the expression (or re-expression) of such leaders among human societies. How did these positions of leadership emerge? Given the strength of social-leveling mechanisms and the commitment that egalitarian societies make to enforcing them, it is unlikely that leaders could have simply asserted or forcibly taken their positions. Likewise, given the human propensity for detecting unequal distributions in resources, it is also unlikely that aspiring individuals could have cheated or duped others into accepting subservient positions. If becoming a leader were so simple, then such permanent positions would surely have evolved long before the early Holocene.

One view on the evolution of leadership suggests that there was a mutually—if perhaps unevenly—beneficial relationship between leaders and their subjects in the evolution of such positions. Around the globe, societies with leaders consistently recognize the qualities and importance of certain individuals as decision makers. These individuals possess certain valuable skills and abilities that promote their status as effective decision makers (for example, Boehm 1999:70–72, 106–108). Leaders also tend to work harder and longer than the average person in maintaining their positions, although they often enjoy certain material or other benefits as a result of their positions (for example, Arnold 2000a; Betzig 1986; Hayden 2001). Thus, for nonleaders, the organizing skills of leaders and the benefits that come from group-level coordination (for example, communal hunting, trading, socializing opportunities at organized social events, or increased efficiency in craft production) may justify some loss in equal distribution of resources and decision-making power. At the same time, in most societies, nonleaders often maintain the means to sanction and/or remove leaders who overextend or abuse their powers, by voting them out of office, using magic or witchcraft to rein them in, or even banishing or executing those with despotic predilections.

A slightly different approach to the evolution of leadership, though not necessarily oppositional to the first, suggests that the costs to aspiring leaders were sufficiently high during the Pleistocene that the development and formalization of such positions were not tenable. Some event or set of events, according to this view, conspired during the Holocene to change these dynamics such that leadership became an attractive alternative, despite the costs. What these events were has been the subject of much theorizing, but changes in population levels, changing climate, or some combination of these are common components (for example, Carneiro

1967; Richerson, Boyd, and Bettinger 2001; Wittfogel 1957). For example, increases in population densities may have lowered the social-leveling penalties incurred by noncooperators, such as gossip and ostracism, making the maintenance of egalitarian formations more difficult. Similarly, storage and mass harvesting of certain resources not available in the Pleistocene may have changed the costs and benefits of cooperation.

The specific strategies employed by aspiring leaders to overcome social-leveling mechanisms, particularly with regard to property, are of great importance (Earle 2000). Common property and common-pool resources are widespread among hunting and gathering societies and were presumably ubiquitous in Pleistocene societies (for example, Beckerman and Valentine 1996; Eerkens 1999; Hawkes 1992). How leaders were able to gain private control over property, labor, and other goods is a theme that seems to be at the core of the development of such positions. In recent research, related strategies are theorized to have included using ritual or religion to circumvent traditional rules (for example, Brown 2006; Hollimon 2004; Roscoe 2000a); increasing organizational oversight over the production of goods (for example, Vaughn 2006); controlling the transmission of information, particularly regarding the production of complex technologies (for example, Barth 1990; Peregrine 1991; Sinopoli 2003); gaining access to the labor of non-kin (for example, Arnold 1996b, 2000a); shifting focus to the extraction and production of previously unused resources, for which rules regarding ownership had not yet been established; and producing goods out of view from others, which may have included physical isolation or separation from a community.

### **DIMENSIONS OF LEADERSHIP**

So far in this introduction, the concept of leadership has been presented simply as decision-making authority beyond the household level, including the capacity to make decisions on behalf of non-kin. As the chapters in this book explore in more detail, leadership can be measured along different scales and dimensions. These are briefly explored below both to standardize terminology used in this book and to introduce the more elaborate considerations of leadership presented in each chapter.

First, leadership occurs at different temporal scales. Terminology related to temporal scale that is most often employed in the scholarly literature includes the distinction between transitory, permanent, and inherited leadership (for example, Hayden 2001; Redmond 1998b; Wills 2000). Transitory or temporary leaders, such as “bosses” whose leadership is limited to seasonal ceremonies, animal drives, or small-scale conflict, enjoy very

situational decision-making authority. More permanent leaders include headmen, shamans, scribes, and kings who retain a level of authority for long periods, perhaps for life. Some forms of permanent leadership transcend a single human life span. These positions are inherited or passed along according to culturally defined rules (for example, father to son, mother to daughter, or uncle to maternal nephew). Although this leadership includes chiefly positions that are passed from one generation to the next, other kinds of leadership, such as shamanistic ability and authority over extrasocietal exchange relations, can also be inherited (for example, McAnany 2001; Wiessner and Tumu 1998). Of course, there are middle grounds between these conceptual categories. For example, the permanent position of king may normally be inherited from father to son, but occasionally an outsider can assume this position by force (for example, by homicide or military action).

Second, temporal scales of leadership can usefully be distinguished from structural forms of leadership. For example, religious authority may be permanently endowed in an individual, but the context in which decision making occurs may be situational, such as only during specific ceremonies. An especially important structural concept is institutionalization, which addresses the degree to which a leadership position is culturally encoded. Institutionalized leadership exists largely separately from the individuals who fill a particular position. The position of the classic hereditary chief, for example, is part of the sociopolitical structure, whereas a classic “Big Man” (Sahlins 1963) is not filling an institutionalized position but instead creates a position for him- or herself. This is of course not a simple dichotomy—the ability to achieve Big Man status depends to some degree on cultural institutions that allow the position to exist at all—but a consideration of the degree of leadership institutionalization is a useful way to examine the interaction between agentive political action and socio-cultural structure.

Third, considerations of structure also include the degree to which societywide forms of leadership are heterarchically or hierarchically related to one another. Again, this dimension is not invariably tied to the temporal scale of leadership, and it is also not inseparable from the degree of institutionalization. Heterarchical positions of leadership—those related to one another horizontally rather than hierarchically—can be transitory or permanent, and they can be institutionalized or purely achieved (for example, Crumley 1987; Ehrenreich, Crumley, and Levy 1995; Frangipane 2007). Although anthropologists generally equate heterarchy with limited authority and transitory leaders, and consider hierarchy



to be linked to permanent, institutionalized leaders it is useful to analytically separate each of these dimensions to understand more comprehensively the evolution of leadership (Kantner 2002; Paynter 1989).

Fourth, leadership also varies according to the arenas or domains in which it emerges or is most often exercised. Scholars tend to consider early leaders as maintaining authority over merged political, economic, and ritual domains, emphasizing the holistic and intertwined nature of small-scale societies (for example, Redmond 1998b:9; Spencer 1994). Many ethnographic examples, however, especially of egalitarian and transegalitarian societies, demonstrate that incipient forms of leadership are usually domain-specific, with the evolution of leadership often involving the cooperation of multiple emergent leaders who separately enjoy authority over secular, religious, diplomatic, or kinship arenas (for example, Hobart 1975). This process comprises more than just heterarchical formations reorganizing into hierarchical ones. Instead, a few heterarchically organized leaders can, through intrigue, manipulation, cooperation, and other mechanisms, combine their authority in ways that promote the emergence of hierarchical and centralized sociopolitical structures.

Fifth and finally, a related issue revolves around the types of goods that leaders control or make decisions about within these realms, whether it be information (or the distribution of information), labor, or actual material supplies (for example, McIntosh 1999a). The level of ownership of or decision-making power over these goods is also relevant—that is, whether they are privately controlled by individual leaders, controlled by a select group of individuals, or publicly controlled. In most cases, increasing decision-making power is directly correlated with increasing degrees of privatization of such goods. Equally important is the number of people over whom a leader holds decision-making power. Such power may vary by realm. For example, a leader may hold extensive decision-making power with respect to the production of material goods, by overseeing such activities on a regional level, but only slight influence with respect to religious activities—among only a few households, for example.

Clearly, some fields of anthropology are better suited to studying certain of these dimensions than others. Given the focus on material remains, archaeological studies are likely to focus on economic and technological decision-making power and on long-term, permanent, and institutionalized forms of leadership. Ethnographic studies are likely to focus on a broader range of realms, including those that are religious and narrative, but are less likely to inform on the degree of temporal permanence for such positions. A comprehensive assessment of leaders and leadership in

human societies accordingly requires the marshaling of different perspectives and sources of data.

### **THE SAR ADVANCED SEMINAR**

Ten scholars who work with ethnographic and archaeological cases of leadership formation in small-scale and middle-range societies gathered at the School for Advanced Research in December 2006 to discuss the evolution of leadership. In many ways inspired and informed by the highly influential SAR advanced seminar book *Chieftdoms: Power, Economy, and Ideology* (Earle 1991), our goal was to examine leadership at a level more incipient than is typically understood for chiefly societies. Thus, this book can be considered something of a prequel to the 1991 volume.

Participants in the 2006 seminar were selected to represent a wide range of geographic areas, as well as for their differing theoretical perspectives and use of a variety of data sets, including ethnographic, historical, and archaeological sources. Each participant was asked to prepare in advance a working paper examining the evolution of leaders and leadership in his or her particular part of the world, with an emphasis on leadership emergence and processes of institutionalization.

Over the course of five days, lengthy discussions about each working paper developed, resulting in the identification and exploration of general themes regarding the evolution of leadership. Seminar participants were then asked to revise their initial papers in light of these discussions; the chapters in this book represent the end product of that process. Although complementary in their basic philosophy and content, the chapters comprise original and fresh examinations of leadership from a range of perspectives and regions.

We have organized the chapters into three conceptual sections: (1) "Roots of Decision-Making Inequity"; (2) "Pathways to Institutionalized Leadership"; and (3) "History, Process, and the Evolution of Leadership." Although there is overlap between all chapters in the volume, this organization reflects the focus of each contribution and how it relates to overarching issues concerning the development of leadership in small-scale and middle-range societies. The organization of the volume is not intended to imply a linear or single path in the development of leaders. Indeed, if there is one thing that all seminar participants agree upon, it is that there was never a simple, unilineal pathway to leadership in human history. The chapters in this volume reflect the diversity of ways in which leaders came into their positions.

The first group of chapters, by Bird and Bliege Bird, Bowser and

Patton, and Eerkens, focuses on incipient levels of impermanent leadership at smaller social scales. The chapters include ethnographic examples from the Martu of Australia's Western Desert, from the Ecuadorian Amazon, and from the Paiute of the American Great Basin. The chapters consider hunting magnanimity, ritual gerontocracies, alliance formation, and the development of private property in small-scale societies, as well as their relation to leadership formation. Not surprisingly, a common theme in the three chapters, because they focus on societies of a smaller scale, is that incipient leaders go to great lengths both to reinforce (in the case of the Martu) and to break down (in the case of the Owens Valley Paiute) an egalitarian ethos. These seem to be contradictory strategies, but aspiring leaders often pursue both at the same time. In all cases, as the chapters by Bird and Bliege Bird and Bowser and Patton especially show, emerging leaders cannot be analyzed separately from the kin-based networks and coalitions of which they are a part.

In chapter 2, "Competing to Be Leaderless: Food Sharing and Magnanimity among Martu Aborigines," for example, Bird and Bliege Bird argue that prestige among Martu male and female hunters (referred to as *mirtilya*) is based primarily on magnanimity, equity, and generosity. This situation has less to do with social strategies for "buffering risk" in a precarious environment, as some anthropologists have argued (for example, Gould 1982), and more to do with agentive construction of an individual's political reputation. The authors juxtapose the egalitarian nature of much of Martu life (especially with regard to private property and material resources such as food) with the strongly hierarchical nature of ritual life, illustrating how the former is a critical building block for the latter—positions in the powerful ritual gerontocracy are attained through a lifetime of hunting success and magnanimity.

In chapter 3, "Women's Leadership: Political Alliance, Economic Resources, and Reproductive Success in the Ecuadorian Amazon," Bowser and Patton use ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological data to reconstruct how coalition building contributes to the process of emergent leadership, especially among women in Conambo, a village in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Their chapter identifies the complementary strategies that men and women employ to attain mutually reinforcing positions of authority within the community.

Eerkens, in contrast, argues in chapter 4, "Privatization of Resources and the Evolution of Prehistoric Leadership Strategies," that the key element in the evolution of leadership is the development of private property and surplus, without which inequities in wealth and authority

cannot develop. Using ethnographic examples from the Owens Valley Paiute as background, Eerkens demonstrates this argument with an archaeological example showing how households had become differentiated by AD 1400 and correlates this situation with the development of private property. The three chapters in this section provide rich ethnographic descriptions of incipient leadership and examples of what leadership might look like archaeologically.

Drawing from ethnographic, ethnohistoric, and archaeological data, the second group of chapters, by Stanish, Arnold, Vaughn, and Pauketat, focuses on specific elements for institutionalizing and legitimizing leadership. Although different theoretical perspectives provide each chapter with distinct points of departure, they all assume that the egalitarian ethos (critical in smaller-scale societies, such as those described in the first section of the book) has been broken down or disrupted in their case studies. Thus, the chapters do not focus on the *first* instances of leadership to have emerged in their respective regions and instead focus on the various pathways that can lead to increasingly institutionalized, and hence more permanent, forms of leadership. The chapters consider economies of scale, labor cooperation, ownership of property (both material and intellectual), costly technologies, materialized ideology, and the role of historical narratives in the construction of institutionalized leadership. Examples are derived from the Central Andes (Titicaca Basin and the South Coast of Peru), eastern North America, and the North American Pacific Coast, but the common theme running through the chapters is that to be institutionalized, leadership needs to be legitimated.

Stanish, for example, evaluates the role of cooperative labor in the development of leaders in chapter 5, “The Evolution of Managerial Elites in Intermediate Societies.” Specifically, he argues that the emergence of rank from previously egalitarian social formations requires the establishment of labor organizations that can take advantage of economies of scale and that become reinforced by culturally encoded group ritual. To illustrate the model in detail, Stanish turns to the evolution of managerial elites in the Titicaca Basin beginning approximately 1400 BC.

In chapter 6, “The Role of Politically Charged Property in the Appearance of Institutionalized Leadership: A View from the North American Pacific Coast,” Arnold focuses on the institutionalized, permanent leadership that develops in middle-range societies as a result of costly technologies (such as plank canoe production), ownership of resource collection areas (including raw material sources such as chert quarries), and the development of intellectual property (especially ritual knowledge).

Focusing on the South Coast of Peru, Vaughn similarly argues in chapter 7, “Emergent Leadership in Middle-Range Societies: An Example from Nasca, Peru,” that institutionalized leadership emerged among the Nasca because of multiple factors. Leadership was based on feasting, reinforced in group ceremonies, and materialized in ideologically charged polychrome ceramics.

Pauketat argues in chapter 8, “Of Leaders and Legacies in Native North America,” that critical to the discussion of the evolution of leadership is the fact that all leaders are legitimated by historical narratives. He argues that leadership “was a historical process of becoming” and suggests that leaders in native North American history were able to draw on historical narrative to attain and sustain their positions. With many examples derived primarily from historic sources, the chapter provides greater detail on how leaders in middle-range societies may legitimate their positions.

The final section, consisting of chapters by Wiessner, Kusimba and Kusimba, and Kantner, focuses on the historical and contingent nature of leadership development, with all three contributions drawing on processes outlined in the first two groups of chapters. The final section is diverse in terms of geographic region (Papua New Guinea, sub-Saharan and East Africa, and the American Southwest) and in scale of society (from a relatively small scale in the case of the Enga to a very large scale in the case of East African iron-producing societies).

Wiessner, using her own ethnographic and historic data from the Enga of Papua New Guinea, in chapter 9, “The Power of One? Big Men Revisited,” argues that when considering the evolution of leadership, archaeologists generally make two problematic assumptions: first, that egalitarianism is somehow the “natural” order from which hierarchy evolved and, second, that “aggrandizers” (for example, Hayden 1995) in small-scale societies are capable of developing and maintaining complex economic and ritual systems. Instead, Wiessner argues, hierarchy is the “norm,” and aggrandizers actually have to focus on cooperation and coalition building (“wealth in people”; see Guyer 1995) before leaders can influence the economic and ritual arenas of sociopolitical life. Her chapter provides a rich historical study of the emergence of leadership among the Enga.

In chapter 10, “Leadership in Middle-Range African Societies,” Kusimba and Kusimba illustrate the various ways in which leadership emerged and was sustained in three East African societies: the Bukusu, the Swahili, and the Oromo. In one society, hereditary forms of leadership are lacking (the Bukusu); another is a hierarchical society with hereditary elites (the Swahili); and one has an elected representative government (the Oromo). Again, noting the historically contingent nature of the evolution

of leadership, this contribution provides an ethnographically rich study of these East African societies.

Kantner concludes the book with chapter 11, "Identifying the Pathways to Permanent Leadership." His chapter ties together many themes brought up in the seminar and the resulting papers while also providing a case study from the Puebloan Southwest. The themes that Kantner addresses include the skills and abilities of leaders, socioeconomic qualities of leadership (and whether there is a conflation in the archaeological literature between leadership per se and status and wealth), scales of leadership, and pathways to leadership.

### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

A topic as broad as leadership in the past and present cannot be fully addressed in a single seminar or presented in just one edited volume. Recognizing this, we hope that this book adds to an interdisciplinary dialogue on the topic of how leaders emerge and how leadership becomes institutionalized. The week of conversations at the School for Advanced Research contributed to this topic in three ways. First, the seminar emphasized the variability in leadership strategies and how critical it is for anthropologists to accommodate this variability in both diachronic and synchronic models of leadership. The range of anthropological disciplines represented, including ethnography, ethnohistory, ethnoarchaeology, and archaeology, as well as the widespread geographic areas in which the participants work, including the Americas, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific Islands, demonstrated the importance of the culturally specific dimensions of leaders and leadership.

Second, the seminar revealed some of the general processes by which leaders take or obtain their positions and how such positions change and become institutionalized over time. The approaches to understanding this process were varied, drawing from a range of high-level theoretical frameworks, but the chapters in this book share several themes, including the ubiquity of decision-making inequity, the impact of reverse dominance hierarchies in small-scale settings, gendered differences in political action, the role of resource privatization, the beneficial labor organization that leadership provides, and the critical place of religion and historical narrative in the institutionalization of leadership positions. These themes are addressed in more detail throughout the volume and brought together in the concluding chapter by Kantner.

Third, although drawing from a diversity of anthropological fields,

almost all the chapters consider the material correlates of leadership, especially as manifested in the archaeological record. Unless they were written on a permanent medium, such as a clay tablet, we cannot dig up ancient decisions themselves. Instead, we are left with only the material results of such decisions. The chapters consider how the archaeological record can inform on whether those decisions were made by certain individuals on behalf of others, were reached by group consensus, or were simply individual decisions with little or no repercussions for others. Because the leader is an entity that archaeologists consider essential in all models of socio-political complexity, the results of this advanced seminar help archaeologists plan investigations that reveal evidence of such persons and their behavior, and they link this evidence to specific models for the emergence of leadership.