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In considerations of societal change, the application of classic evolutionary schemes to prehistoric southwestern peoples has always been problematic for scholars. Because recent theoretical developments point toward more variation in the scale, hierarchy, and degree of centralization of complex societies, this book takes a fresh look at southwestern prehistory with these new ideas in mind.

This is the first book-length work to apply new theories of social organization and leadership strategies to the prehispanic Southwest. It examines leadership strategies in a number of archaeological contexts—from Chaco Canyon to Casas Grandes, from Hohokam to Zuni—to show striking differences in the way that leadership was constructed across the region.

These case studies provide ample evidence for alternative models of leadership in middle-range societies. By illustrating complementary approaches in the study of political organization, they offer new insight into power and inequality. They also provide important models of how today's archaeologists are linking data to theory, providing a basis for comparative analysis with other regions.

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