Regime change is a critical social process that has occurred throughout human history and yet much is still unknown about how political developments shape local communities. This dissertation examines the impacts of the Late Postclassic (1350-1530 CE) Purepecha Empire on residents at Angamuco, an ancient city within the Lake Patzcuaro Basin imperial heartland in Michoacan, Mexico. Imperial narratives in ethnohistoric texts emphasize that authorities controlled craft production, tribute, and social practices. Archaeologists have investigated these narratives within a social evolutionary framework that underscores an expanding and highly centralized Purepecha state and empire. Drawing upon material from five field seasons of excavation and survey of domestic and public ritual contexts, I evaluate whether the dominant top-down model of political economic consolidation has more explanatory power than alternative bottom-up models. Changes in the production and use of the ceramic artifacts, as well as differences in stone architecture, suggest that the Purepecha exploited existing resource systems, and that imperial changes are most visible in elite areas of Angamuco. In addition to investigating models of political development, this dissertation provides a foundation for understanding the chronologies of occupation at Angamuco derived from architectural patterning, artifact use and variation, and radiocarbon determinations. By critically analyzing the prevailing Purepecha social evolutionary model, this project adds to our knowledge of complexity and urban forms in western Mexico and contributes to studies that investigate how local communities are transformed or impacted by processes of political growth.