Political organization & social control

What is politics?
- Ideas & behavior involving:
  - Decision making
  - Resource control & allocation
  - Maintaining social control & resolving conflict
- Anthropologists do not restrict study of politics to nation-states.
- Study politics in both cross-cultural and evolutionary frameworks.
- This global & comparative approach includes non-states as well as states.

Levels of political organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Chiefdom</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population Size</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10,000-50,000</td>
<td>Over thousands and beyond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Type</td>
<td>Hereditary</td>
<td>Hereditary</td>
<td>Hereditary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Form</td>
<td>Foraging</td>
<td>Horticulture</td>
<td>Pastoralism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement Type</td>
<td>Nomadic</td>
<td>Villages</td>
<td>Villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>Hadza, Yoruba, Bantu</td>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>Indian, Japanese, Chinese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Political organization & adaptive strategies
- Many have noted the correlation of sociopolitical types with adaptive strategies:
  - Bands - foragers
  - Tribes - horticulture & pastoralism.
  - Chiefdoms - horticulture or intensive agriculture.
  - States - intensive agriculture.

Foraging bands
- “Leadership” in form of headmen.
  - Not true leaders but rather first among equals.
  - Possess some culturally valued skill (good hunter, eloquent speaker, spirit medium)
  - Lead by example.
  - Lack of private property means theft is not common.
  - Conflicts often based on adultery or accusations of some other type of anti-social behavior.
- Social control is maintained by informal sanctions based largely on public opinion
  - E.g., Mbuti molimo, Inuit song duels.

Tribal cultivators/pastoralists
- Larger groups, based on either horticulture or pastoralism.
- Villages and/or descent groups – lineages, clans.
  - Segmentary lineages
  - Principle of corporate jural responsibility.
- Lineages/clans exercise administrative functions by controlling the internal behavior of group members and external relations with other lineages/clans.
Segmentary Lineage Organization
- A number of lineages are organized into clans.
- A number of clans are organized into tribal sections/segments, etc.
- Tribal segments ally with or oppose one another based upon genealogical proximity.
- Political centralization unnecessary.
- Segments come together based upon principle of complementary opposition.

Headmen/Big men
- Must be generous.
- Achieved status.
- Achieved status through wealth, generosity, eloquence, bravery, physical fitness, and/or supernatural powers.
- Limited degree of influence.
- Must lead by example.
- May mediate disputes.
- Represents village in dealings with outsiders.
- Big men sometimes act as regulator of regional events as they temporarily mobilize people from several villages.
- Ongka’s Big Moka.

Pantribal Sodalities & Age Grades
- Sodalities are non-kin groupings that are based on age or gender.
  - Link together different groups in tribal societies.
  - Often found where different tribes come into regular contact.
  - Especially likely when contact involves warfare.
- Age sets
  - sodalities that include all men born during a certain time span.
  - Members of age set progress together through series of age grades.
- Common among:
  - Native American tribes of Great Plains
  - Pastoral tribes of eastern & southern Africa.

Chiefdoms
- Beginnings of centralized authority.
- Transitional form between tribe & state.
- Kin-based with status based upon descent seniority; differential access to resources, permanent political structure.
- Chiefs’ primary obligation to his subjects is redistribution.
- Expectations of chiefly generosity mitigate stratification.

State
- Based upon territory rather than kinship.
- Stratification is present & accepted:
  - Superordinate stratum has greater access to wealth, power, & prestige.
- New statuses replace kinship
  - Occupation
  - Birthplace/Residence
  - Religion
  - Ethnicity
- Bureaucracy – cadre of full-time administrative specialists.
- The state claims monopoly on legitimate use of force.

Dimensions of variation
- Variation in political organization:
  1) Extent to which politics is distinct (differentiated) from social structure – e.g., kinship, economics, religion, etc.
  2) Concentration of power & authority in specific roles – centralization.
  3) Level of political integration – size/scale of population & territory.
Power vs. Authority

- **Power** refers to ability to effectively influence or control people and things.
  - Can get people to do things you want them to do but they may not want to do.
- **Authority** refers to socially acknowledged right to make a particular decision and to command obedience;
  - Power that is perceived by the members of society to be legitimate/valid.
- Power & authority need not be synonymous.

Blood vs. Soil

- *States and Stateless Societies*
- *African Political Systems. Meyer Fortes & E. E. Evans-Pritchard. 1940*

Political organization

- Bands, tribes, chiefdoms, states
- Uncentralized (Acephalous) vs. Centralized
- These are all ideal types
  - real behavior should be looked at on a continuum.
- Fact: state is dominant system in world today

Social control

- Mechanisms that encourage adherence to social norms (expected forms of behavior) most of the time.
- Another human cultural universal, BUT does not require presence of courts & codified laws.
- Mechanisms of social control can be both formal and informal.

Informal means of social control can include:
  - socialization
  - public opinion
  - corporate lineage
  - supernatural beliefs/ancestor worship
  - age organizations
  - witchcraft beliefs/accusations

Formal means of social control can include:
  - song duels (Inuit)
  - intermediaries (Nuer Leopard Skin Chief)
  - elders councils
  - oaths and ordeals (Cows of Dolo Kan Paye)
  - courts and codified laws