

NON-STATE AND STATE SOCIETIES

For more than 99 per cent of human history people have lived in groupings that social scientists call "non-state societies." The world population in 10,000 B.C.E. was about 10,000,000 persons, all living in non-state societies. By the time Columbus sailed to the New World, the population had grown to about 350 million and only about 1 per cent still lived in non-state societies. Today less than 0.001 per cent of the world's people live outside of the direct control of state societies. Many people living in non-state societies enjoy lifeways that a number of Americans seem intent on reinventing – such as close association with the land, small group size, and emphasis on oral traditions. Whether composed of dozens or thousands of persons, these societies are demographically simple and culturally homogeneous. Small-scale societies may be relatively isolated from their neighbors and relatively tight-knit. Cultural knowledge is widespread in non-state societies and the distribution of attitudes fairly homogeneous. Labor is divided mainly by age and sex, specialists are absent or few in number, and social status distinctions are diminished. People in such non-state societies lack an alphabet and writing system in their own language, although they may read and write in another language. History is passed from generation to generation through an oral tradition; myths, legends, and folktales are the main medium of social exchange. Historically, people in non-state societies are relatively autonomous and sovereign. They generate their own subsistence with little or no assistance from outside sources. They bow to no external political leaders. Nor are they routinely exploited by outsiders. In recent times, however, nearly all non-state

societies have fallen under the influence of outsiders – especially as a result of European invasions of the world since the 16th century.

Types of non-state societies

Bands, tribes, and chiefdoms To elucidate the similarities and differences among the world's peoples, anthropologists have developed several typologies of non-state societies. One of the most widely used of these typologies was developed by Elman Service (1975). He has described three types – bands, tribes, and chiefdoms – as components of a broader evolutionary sequence that precedes state societies.

Bands

Bands represent the most rudimentary form of human society with which we are familiar. The principal integrating mechanism of bands is kinship. Statuses, social and economic relations, residential patterns, and intergroup ties are all kin-based. Most frequently, these bands are patrilineal: male members select brides from other bands, then the newly married couple joins the male's residential group. Within a band the basic unit is the nuclear family – a man, his wife, and their children. These groups may be expanded to include old persons without spouses. Small families of this type may live dispersed from one another or join in a relatively permanent manner. As many as 100 persons may come together in times of plenty as well as during cooperative hunts or group ceremonies. The economic system is technologically very simple and subsistence is based on hunting, gathering,

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fishing, and foraging. Very few societies in the contemporary world can be classified as bands. Groups such as the Arunta of Australia or the !Kung bushmen of Southwestern Africa are located on the fringes of civilization. Although the rate of change may seem slow, bands are not static societies. Their populations increase and decline, with concomitant effects on the natural resources which they exploit. As their technology and subsistence system improve, their intimate relationship with nature may become more distant. And outside forces may transform their customary social, economic, and religious life.

Tribes

Tribes have larger populations than bands; they also have more social, economic, and political subdivisions, and forms of sociocultural integration are different from those of bands. Peoples in tribes also have more kinship and residential units. While tribes are egalitarian and family-oriented, they may be considered "supraband" societies. A major feature of tribal life is the "sodality," which may be defined as a nonresidential association that has some corporate functions or purposes. Kindred, clans, segmentary lineages, or associations based on age-grades, secret ceremonies, or similar interests serve as examples. These sodalities are named and have designated insignia or symbols. Tribal unity is achieved and maintained by overlapping membership in such groups. Tradition provides the key guide to behavioral norms for tribal peoples, just as for band members. Feuds among groups are the prime source of internal disruptions, and hostilities against other tribes, which are ever-present, are the greatest source of external conflict. With the population of a tribe more concentrated than that of bands, in-marrying groups are not scat-

tered so widely, and thus intermittent cooperation is possible among males even when they live in different residential units. Because of their greater size and complexity, tribes tend to be less isolated from outside influences than bands. They also possess more complex technological and social-political systems. In sum, tribes possess many traits associated with bands, but also have several that bands do not. Tribes, like bands, are not timeless unchanging social units. The Navajo (or "Dene") are an example of a tribe fully involved in the modern world. From approximately 15,000 in the 1860s, they have increased to more than 100,000 persons, most of whom live on reservation lands in northern Arizona and southern Utah.

Chiefdoms

In contrast to bands and tribes, chiefdoms are non-egalitarian. Political leadership is centralized and usually hereditary. Social and economic status in the society is determined by genealogical distance from the chief. Chiefdoms usually consist of sedentary populations whose subsistence comes mainly from agriculture. As the population increases, a centralized authority develops to provide means for the people to cope with famine, drought, floods, or enemy attacks. Formal social, economic, and political control is more pronounced in chiefdoms than in bands or tribes. Chiefdoms also serve as efficient instruments for military and political expansion into larger geographical territories. Just as a tribe is a supraband society, so the chiefdom is a supratribal society. The rise of chiefdoms is related to the total environmental situation within which these societies lived. Specialization arose in regions with diverse ecological zones in which the localized resources were exploited by particular residence groups. Whereas bands and even tribes might

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move from one region to another to exploit localized products, farming peoples tended to settle permanently, thus forcing a reciprocal exchange among people occupying different zones. As production increased, the distributional networks became more complex and fostered further specialization of labor. Eventually, chiefdoms contained specialists (religious as well as economic) who were subsidized by the whole society. Often, this subsidy was provided by means of a system of economic redistribution. A chief could support multiple wives, retainers, priests and shamans, and craftsmen at a residential/ceremonial center to which the people would bring their tribute. Often, the position of chief would become a permanent office, and this created social differences between the family of the chief and all others in the society. Once the office of chief became hereditary, a permanent social and political hierarchy emerged. The world's chiefdoms (e.g., the Maori of New Zealand) are less numerous than its bands and tribes, but their political control extended over more territory and more people. In Africa, the rulers of the continent's ancient chiefdoms (also called kingdoms by those who equated the European concept of king with that of chief) still have considerable power. The citizens of these emerging African nations share their loyalty between traditional hereditary chiefs and elected chiefs of state.

States

A true state is distinguished from non-state societies by the presence of political leaders who maintain a socially approved monopoly on the legal use of legitimate force. In contrast to the situation in bands, tribes, and chiefdoms, individuals in state societies are not permitted personal recourse to force to settle arguments or disputes. Only the government has the legal use of force at its disposal. In states we also see that political classes are formalized to a degree unknown in non-state societies. The social life of individuals living in states may be dominated by the nuclear family as well as extended kinship networks. People may be involved in a wide range of economic and technological systems: while a few focus on surviving at a subsistence level of existence, others participate in complex arrangements of production, distribution, and consumption. A major feature of world affairs during the period from 1450 to 1850 was the emergence of the modern nation state as a dominant political and economic formation throughout the world. As a corollary, bands, tribes, and chiefdoms declined both in their populations and their territories.

[adapted from Elman R. Service (1975), *Origins of the State and Civilization: The Process of Cultural Evolution*. New York: Norton.]