Origins
of the State
and
Civilization

The Process of Cultural Evolution

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to each other. Eventually some of them became hierarchical, controlled and directed by a central authoritative power—a power instituted as a government. Clearly, these societies were tremendously changed by the advent of this new stage in cultural evolution. Interpretations of this achievement have been the keynotes of some of the most significant historical, philosophical, and scientific writings in Western civilization from the time of classical Greek thinkers like Plato and Aristotle to today.

The evolution of civilized society has been contemplated by the important thinkers of all civilizations, but particularly in recent centuries by Western Europeans. Evolutionary ideas pervaded the philosophy of the Enlightenment and, later, nineteenth-century sociology and anthropology, and it is from these schools of thought that we have inherited much of our interest in the origin of government. But the philosophers were too remote from the real world of primitive peoples. Even the nineteenth-century authors knew little of primitive peoples at first hand, and the sources of data were still poor. New data available to us today demand a reassessment of their theories and some of their concepts—but not at the cost of losing their valuable evolutionary perspective.

Frequently these theorists unfairly and misleadingly called the primitive peoples savages and barbarians—implying wildness and animality. On the other hand, the words "urban" and "civil," applied to the nonprimitive side of the divide, came also to suggest "urbane" and "civilized" in the sense of high personal refinement, again to the disparagement of the primitives. Let us define a few necessary terms less pejoratively and apply them consistently.

Urban and *civil* can be accurately used to mean that the society was characterized by the presence of cities or large towns and that the inhabitants were citizens of some kind of legal commonwealth. It is these meanings of urban and civil that were prior and that evoked the other meanings only metaphorically—at least at first. Conversely, the earlier, simpler stage of society was characterized by the absence of urban agglomerations and formal legal structures and their associated institutionalized governments. This is what we shall take *primitive* to mean: simple, early, original, primary; lacking developed governmental institutions. However informal may seem this way of defining the subject of this book, it has the virtue of holding to the central core of mean-

ing in most modern statements of the problem of the differences between primitive and civilized society. These will be discussed in the next chapter.

Modern anthropologists know something that neither Plato nor Aristotle, Hobbes nor Rousseau understood. All of these and countless other commentators on human nature and the civilizational problem (but not Marx and Engels) equated government or civilization with society itself, and precivilization was not understood as anything but anarchy, with people constrained only by nature rather than by cultural institutions. But we know now that over 99 percent of past human history (and, for a part of the world's population, even history today) was spent in societies that did not govern themselves by legalistic, institutionalized systems of control. But primitive society was nevertheless not anarchical, for social behavior was strikingly constrained. How this was done will be discussed in chapters 3 and 4.

The archaic civilizations ancestral to modern civil societies evolved in different times and places: about 3500–3000 B.C. in Mesopotamia and Egypt, and about 2500 B.C. in the Indus River Valley, 1500 B.C. at the Great Bend of the Yellow River in China, and B.C./A.D. in the Valley of Mexico and in coastal Peru (see table 1). It is of course possible that some of these were related episodes, especially those in Mesopotamia and Egypt, and in the New World, in Mexico and Peru.[1] But some of these civilizations must have developed independently; most obviously, those of the New World were unrelated to those of the Old World. This is a most significant fact, for it affects our perspective. Were it one single development that spread to the other areas by conquest, diffusion, emulation, or whatever, then the problem would be "historical"—that is, our concern would be simply, what happened? When? But since it happened several times independently we immediately wonder, even if it only happened twice (in the New World and in the Old World), what *causes* or repetitive

1. V. Gordon Childe's very influential books, *Man Makes Himself* (1936) and *What Happened in History* (1942), concentrated on Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus River civilizations. His last, most definitive, formulation of the "urban revolution" (1950) added to these a brief discussion of the Maya. Since then, however, most anthropologists have cited the above six. Glyn Daniel (1968) makes seven by subdividing Mesoamerica. Table 1 above omits the Indus River Valley.

TABLE 1 / Absolute Chronology of Major Areas*

	Mesopotamia	Egypt	N. China	N. Peru	Meso-America
2000 A.D.	Cyclical Conquests	Cyclical Conquests	Cyclical Conquests	Cyclical Conquests	Cyclical Conquests
1000					
A.D. / B.C.			Dark Ages	Regional Florescent	Regional Florescent
1000	Dark Ages	Dark Ages	Initial Empire	Formative	Formative
2000	Initial Empire	Initial Empire	Regional Florescent	Incipient Agriculture	Incipient Agriculture?
3000	Regional Florescent	Regional Florescent	Formative		
4000	Formative	Formative	Incipient Agriculture	Hunting and Gathering	Hunting and Gathering
5000	Incipient Agriculture	Incipient Agriculture	Hunting and Gathering		
6000	Hunting and Gathering	Hunting and Gathering			
7000					
8000					
9000					

* These dates have been revised on the basis of Braidwood's estimates for the Near East (*The Near East and the Foundations for Civilization*, Eugene, Oregon, 1952) and of radiocarbon dates for the Near East and America. These new dates place the origin of agriculture about 2,000 years more recent than was formerly believed in the Near East and about 2,000 years earlier in the Andes. Period dates for India and China are revised to fit the Near East dates, but still presumably show a time lag. (New World dates are taken from *Radiocarbon Dating* (Assembled by Frederick Johnson), Memoir of the Society for American Archaeology, *American Antiquity*, Vol. XVII. No. 1, 1951). From Steward 1955, p. 190.

processes were at work. We want to know, by careful comparison, what were the shared factors: the antecedent conditions; the geographical, technological, economic, social, and ideological settings; the role of warfare and the nature of the surrounding political environment. If civilization had originated only once, it would not even pay to speculate as to whether or not it was an historical accident, with this causal network unanalyzable. But not only did some of the archaic civilizations probably develop independently; they also developed surprisingly similar kinds of new cultural features, some of which have been seen as indicative of civilization as an evolutionary stage.

Lewis H. Morgan and others in the last century felt that writing was the hallmark achievement of the archaic civilizations. (Peru seems like an exception, but the Peruvians did have the *quipu*, a mnemonic device of strings with knots for decimal places and colors for categories of things. If a main function of all early writing systems was record-keeping, then the Peruvians were only barely off the track.) In recent times, archaeological interest in socioeconomic factors has been greater, resulting in widespread acceptance of V. Gordon Childe's conception of the origin of the first civilizations as an "urban revolution." This rubric stands for the following set of functionally linked features (here only briefly summarized, following Childe 1950): urban centers (Childe provisionally suggested they were between 7,000 and 20,000 in population); a class of full-time specialists (craftsmen, merchants, officials, priests) residing in the cities; a "social surplus" in the food production of the peasants, which could be extracted by the government; monumental public buildings, symbolizing the concentration of the surplus; a "ruling class" of upper-level priests, civil and military leaders, and officials; numerical notation and writing; the beginnings of arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy; sophisticated art styles; long-distance trade; and, finally, an institutionalized form of political organization based on force—termed the state. The foundation of the state, as Childe expressed it, was the "glaring conflict in economic interests between the tiny ruling class, who annexed the bulk of the social surplus, and the vast majority who were left with a bare subsistence and effectively excluded from the spiritual benefits of civilization" (p. 4).

We should note at this point that the researches to be reported in this book do not support the core of this concept of an "urban revolution." We shall see that although a number of urban centers were found among some of the archaic civilizations, they seem to have been not only inessential to the development of the archaic civilizations, but also clearly dependent, most usually, on the prior development of the civilizations. In fact, Childe's ten criteria are only very generally and imperfectly coincident. There has been, consequently, a tendency to pick out one, or a very few, of the elements in Childe's scheme as the basic diagnostic feature(s) of the origin of civilization—or in some salient instances, as the causative prime mover. The most provocative feature thus selected has been the last on Childe's list, the Marxian notion of the *state,* based on repressive force, working to protect the economic interests of the ruling class.

The notion of the state as based on repressive physical force can be usefully applied, as we will see, to some *modern* primitive states. But our findings do not support the economic-class element in the definition of "state" set forth by Childe et al. And furthermore, our researches do not bear out the notion that the rise of civilization was founded on the origin of the state.

The alternative thesis to be presented here locates the origins of government in the institutionalization of centralized leadership. That leadership, in developing its administrative functions for the maintenance of the society, grew into a hereditary aristocracy. The nascent bureaucracy's economic and religious functions developed as the extent of its services, its autonomy, and its size increased. Thus the earliest government worked to protect, not another class or stratum of the society, but itself. It legitimized itself in its role of maintaining the whole society.

Political power organized the economy, not vice versa. The system was redistributive, allocative, not acquisitive: Personal wealth was not required to gain personal political power. And these first governments seem clearly to have reinforced their structure by doing their economic and religious jobs well—by providing benefits—rather than by using physical force.

In the course of this book, we will see how these hierarchical, institutionalized political structures developed out of the matrix of egalitarian primitive society.

Modern governmental creations such as legislatures, formal law codes and courts, police and militias, and so on, are all alike in that they are formal *institutions,* purposely established and specialized for carrying out major political functions, especially the maintenance of social order. But we should be reminded at this point that many behavioral restraints occur at an informal level also, within face-to-face communities like the household, especially, and in schools, neighborhoods, clubs, and so on. The most powerful socializing forces at this level are personal-social punishments and rewards that have strong psychological consequences—of which the more obvious are sanctions such as praise and blame. These are not usually visibly institutionalized and thus are not confused with our modern conceptions of *the* law and *the* state.

But if over 99 percent of human history has passed before the origin of institutionalized political systems, how did societies govern themselves? Obviously they must have done so in essentially the same way that our domestic families and modern primitive societies do, entirely by means of personal-social sanctions and by familistic allocations of authoritative status (as to elders) to praise, blame, and settle disputes.

Most anthropologists are inclined to use very broad (or loose) definitions of law and state in order to talk about primitive society in the same terms as modern nations. But those of us interested as much in contrast as in similarity—as in the present endeavor— have to use narrower definitions. An argument by Walter Goldschmidt seems helpful with respect to this kind of problem concerning the comparative method. He says (1966, p. 31), "What is consistent from culture to culture is not the institution; what is consistent are the social problems. What is recurrent from society to society is solutions to these problems." Looking at it this way, we can choose easily between comparison and contrast. An organized conscript *army* at war is an institution not found among primitives, although all societies get involved in fighting from time to time. Similarly, if a formal adjudicative *court* with a professional *judge* appears in the history of a society, we want to note it and consider its significance as a new institution even though in all cultural stages disputes have been settled by some means. Thus we may sometimes want to contrast civic problems

with domestic problems, and civil or governmental juridical insti-
tutional officials with familistic statuses. This attempted solution
to the problem of comparing institutions is necessary above all
because we want to know what was *new* at the point of the
appearance of the state and civilization, and most of the new is
obviously institutional. We do want to know, as anthropologists
conventionally do, what are the continuities and recurrent prob-
lems and processes that link one kind of society to another; but
in the present instance we are also determined to sort out the
discontinuities, which are usually the institutional forms.

Gabriel Almond squarely faced the problem of comparative
politics in his interesting introduction to *The Politics of Develop-
ing Areas* (Almond and Coleman 1960). He felt that it was of
"operational importance" not to dichotomize societies into state
and nonstate types. He says (p. 12), ". . . We are arguing that
the classic distinction between primitive societies which are states
and those which are not should be reformulated as a distinction
between those in which the political structure is quite differen-
tiated and clearly visible and those in which it is less visible and
intermittent. We are dealing with a continuum and not a dicho-
tomous distinction."

In our phrasing of Goldschmidt's idea, it would seem that
Almond's problem is resolved: the "continuum" is one of similar
political *problems* and of political *contexts of behavior*, but there
really is a "dichotomous distinction" in the *institutionality* of forms
in states and nonstates. However, as we noted, the term "state"
in the view of many modern anthropologists normally is under-
stood to mean that the basis of political organization is repressive
physical force. Let us retain this meaning, and when we wish to
speak of an instituted polity, without committing ourselves regard-
ing the factor of repressive force, let us use the somewhat more
vague word *government:* a bureaucracy instituted to rule a popu-
lace by right of authority.

Maintenance of Society

At this point we should carefully define a few labels for some
functional contexts to which political problems and related pat-
terns of behavior can be referred for analysis. Certainly the uni-

versal problem is simply *maintenance*—maintenance of social
order within the community and of the community itself in
defense against outsiders. Internal and external aspects of mainte-
nance are always so distinct (though frequently related) that we
will usually treat them separately.

The most ubiquitous form of internal maintenance of order
in daily social life, a form universal among societies, must be
simply *etiquette.* Next comes the teaching of *morality* and its
internalization as conscience. Finally, *social sanctions* are infor-
mal, personal-social ways of punishing and rewarding, usually
simply by the subtraction or addition of prestige, or by social
repulsion and attraction, as related to the obeying or ignoring of
certain social rules. These three categories are all in the realm of
custom, or more explicitly, of normative ideology. It is in the last
category, the maintenance of society by *power* and *authority*, that
we begin to consider rather different contexts of behavior.

Hannah Arendt (1961, pp. 92–93) has made the distinction
neatly:

Since authority always demands obedience, it is commonly mistaken
for some form of power or violence. Yet authority precludes the use
of external means of coercion; where force is used, authority itself
has failed. Authority, on the other hand, is incompatible with persua-
sion, which presupposes equality and works through a process of argu-
mentation. . . . The authoritarian relation between the one who com-
mands and the one who obeys rests neither on common reason nor on
the power of the one who commands; what they have in common is
the hierarchy itself, whose rightness and legitimacy both recognize and
where both have their predetermined stable place.

"Power" is a commonly used word and therefore has many
meanings. Let us use it in its broadest sense, as simply the relative
ability of a person or group to cause another person or group to
obey, or conversely, the ability to "not have to give in." Such a
conception obviously includes radically different kinds of things.
A person may do another's bidding because the latter is *in* author-
ity—as a priest obeys the bishop—or because he is *an* authority,
respected for his knowledge. The power of authority ideally rests
solely on an hierarchical relationship between the persons or
groups, so that the obedience is not compelled by some kind of
forceful bullying dominance but rather by custom, habit, ideas
of propriety, benefits, or other considerations that effectively rein-

force and legitimize the power and make it acceptable. The physical power to coerce we may label simply *force*. Although many political organizations exercise power both by virtue of hierarchical "rightness" and by force or threat of it, it is useful to distinguish them because in many societies there exists only one or the other form of power, ruling alone—especially in primitive society, where we often find the traditional hierarchy ruling adequately without using any force whatever.[2] The recourse to force signifies the failure of authority at the time of its use, as Arendt states. Even at this early point in our investigation it is certain that the analyses of societies to be made in subsequent chapters must feature careful use of the distinction between authority and force (Arendt's "power").

The Uses of Political Power

Political power, whether based on authority or force, or both together, seems to have three usual behavioral contexts in which it is employed. These are sometimes called the engineering of consent, decision-making, and judging. At this moment, because of the cross-cultural, comparative purposes of this book, we must be alert to choose concepts that label the usual processes and related problems, not the culture-bound institutions that operate so variably in relation to the problems.

Engineering consent, the creation of legitimacy, persuasion, reinforcement, benefits, negative sanctions, *lèse majesté* laws, and so on, all refer to means by which a political structure strives to safeguard its rule and increase its power. Frequently, of course, especially in modern times, it is a consciously wrought means by which one group maintains its ascendency over others in the society—serving itself. Sometimes, of course, its best service to itself is to serve the society—"doing well by doing good." Often the consequence of useful actions by the political structure is a sense of benefit felt by the citizenry. Sometimes the opposite is

2. Easton (in Siegel 1959, p. 217) tellingly criticizes Fortes and Evans-Pritchard's *African Political Systems* (1940) for having defined political organization in terms of the "control and regulation of physical force." He thinks *authority* is central in political organizations, some of which might not use force at all. Certainly Easton is correct, especially with respect to many African societies.

the case and the people are kept in line by fierce laws against loosely defined treason or *lèse majesté*. And, as we hear from modern behavioral psychology, positive rewarding sanctions as well as repressive ones will cause the citizens' behavior to take desirable routes even when they are not consciously aware of the reasons for their choices. Any of these conceptions may be usefully noted when we are sure we are actually encountering them in our investigation, but most are not general enough to serve the present overall purpose. Let us retain the word *reinforcement* as a general term for the effort that, under whatever institutional guise, the political or authority structure expends to integrate and preserve the society—and of course itself at the same time. In this broad sense, reinforcement carries no restriction in meaning as to whether the citizenry is aware or unaware of the forms of behavioral guidance, or whether the government consciously plans its constraining actions (as in "engineering" consent) or is strengthened by unsought accidental means (such as a favorable climatic cycle). To reinforce a structure is to strengthen it by various means—but the means are at this point unspecified.

The second context for the use of political power often has been called decision-making, and sometimes administration. The first of these is too general—everybody makes decisions, nearly all the time—and the second is too formal-sounding, too suggestive of institutions rather than problems, functions, or processes. *Leadership* is really what we need to talk about in the context of the evolution of political power. A concerted action may be agreed on by consensus, unanimity, argumentation, or whatever, or compelled by authority or force; and it may be organized in various ways and be successfully accomplished—that is, administrated. But it is when concerted action is a response to some form of leadership and is guided and accomplished *by that leadership* (not merely by "administration") that we have a kind of action, or process, which goes through the various permutations and finally institutional forms that are of major interest in any concern with the origin of political power.

The third context of the uses of power has been called judging, adjudication, arbitration, mediation, and other such terms. All refer to the more or less special powers of a third party to do something in stopping or composing disputes or feuds.

Judging and the near-synonym adjudication are too formal and restrictive to serve as labels for the general process we want to consider. They occur in societies with formal officials who can pronounce binding decrees. And arbitration is a special kind of third party settlement involving a voluntary agreement of the parties of the dispute to abide by the decision—thus far too restricted to special societies and to special situations in them. It is the actions of third-party mediation that constitute the general process which, like the leadership discussed above, can take the various institutional forms that we may be able to arrange in an evolutionary series. By *mediation*, then, we shall mean simply intervention by some unspecified form of political power into the disputes of contending persons or groups. The term can refer not only to the actions of a formal court of law but also to the use of a supernatural ordeal controlled by a priest or the intervention of "public opinion" after the harangue of a village elder.

The above are all means by which the power of either authority or force may be used to solve problems for the maintenance of the society as a whole, and as such they conform to a definition of the actions that we usually consider *political*. But we should remember that egalitarian primitive society, when it is a small, close-knit, face-to-face group primarily made up of relatives does not have the same proportion of political actions as does a modern nation, nor are they on the same scale. Problems of social order are more often met in terms of etiquette, normative ideology, and customary personal-social sanctions, and if these do not suffice in certain circumstances, then some conventional familistic authority may be called upon. But there is very little occasion for the political use of force in any primitive society—within the society. This "permissiveness" has been commented on by countless ethnologists, missionaries, and early travelers.

The State

Civil law and formal government, elements that characterize states, are distinguishable from the usual forms of political power in primitive society by the fact that they are institutionalized, enacted, official, and they employ, threaten, or imply the actual use of force. However legitimized by custom, however conven-

tionalized, and however acceptable the hierarchical relations embodied in them, law and government are usually considered unique among all the social devices in that all their requirements can be backed by force rather than by public opinion alone or some form of independent personal action. To be sure, force may be applied in a primitive society, as when a father spanks a child at the time he says "stop that!" Is this in some sense law and government? Certainly—in some sense. But is it a useful sense? Some American anthropologists think so and find law and the state variously in primitive kinship society, differing only in degree of complexity (Robert Lowie's *The Origin of the State* [1927] is the most extreme example).

At this point it would be unwise to attempt a formally adequate definition of law, and particularly to state that *all* laws (that is, every individual law) must be backed by threat or use of force. This problem will be discussed in chapter 4, "The Institutionalization of Power." But the *state* is backed by the force pertaining to its complete legal edifice, even if every law does not say so. This is true of most definitions of the state. We must declare that the power of force in addition to the power of authority is the essential ingredient of "stateness" simply because that is the only way to identify the subject of the investigation, which may be stated informally as: How did the institutionalization of the power to govern, by force as well as by the power of authority, come about?

Chiefdoms

Many important theories and debates connected with the origin of the repressive state have been handicapped because it is so difficult to account convincingly for its appearance out of the matrix of egalitarian primitive society. Its origin would have to be quite sudden and cataclysmic, therefore, which may be one reason that conflict/conquest theories of one kind or another are so common. But modern ethnohistorical records argue powerfully for the presence around the world of varyingly developed *chiefdoms*,[3] intermediate forms that seem clearly to have gradually

3. The concept of *chiefdom* first came to my attention when Kalervo Oberg (1955) used it to designate a type of lowland South American society

grown out of egalitarian societies and to have preceded the founding of all of the best-known primitive states. At this point it seems highly probable that similar stages preceded the flowering of the archaic civilizations.

Chiefdoms have centralized direction, hereditary hierarchical status arrangements with an aristocratic ethos, but no formal, legal apparatus of forceful repression. The organization seems universally to be theocratic, and the form of submission to authority that of a religious congregation to a priest-chief. If such non-violent organizations are granted the status of an evolutionary stage, then the origin of the state (as we defined it above) is much simplified, turning on the question of the use of force as an institutionalized sanction. Of course, one then is led to wonder about the rise of chiefdoms and their hierarchical form of governance.

Enough of this for now. Only the minimum of definitions have been made and in only their simplest form in order to get started. Complications, it is hoped, will be avoided by the procedure of bringing up new problems gradually in their ethnographic and historical context, chapter by chapter. Also, the casting up of various contrasting authoritative definitions against each other has been avoided at this point. Important modern anthropological interpretations and related definitions will appear when we need them, whenever possible in the area and context chosen by the authority.

On Perspective and Method

Because the usual models for social scientists are derived from the natural sciences, a frequent practice is to stress determinism, or the role of impersonal cause-and-effect in human

that lay between segmented tribes and true states. I borrowed it as the name for a full evolutionary stage in *Primitive Social Organization* (1962). I have found the conception of this intermediate stage enormously useful in several problems, and use it throughout this work.

Societies of the chiefdom stage, combining as they do some of the minimal features of states, are nevertheless usually considered "primitive." There has been, possibly due to this fact, a great deal of argument which seems at first to be merely definitional: Do primitive societies have *law? Politics? Government?* (Lucy Mair's introduction to her *Primitive Government* [1962, pp. 7–32] is a convenient summary of these arguments.)

affairs, as opposed to free-willism and human intention, especially as manifested by important political leaders, warriors, and inventors. Do humans create culture or does culture create humans? In the perspective taken in this book, the answer is yes to both statements. Culture *is* created by the human species as a whole, and through all generations. But culture also is creative in the sense that every human animal became distinct from all other animals by being cradled and constrained in a near-infinity of ways that were created by the culture it was born into.

· But this effect of culture does not mean that human beings do not have intention behind their actions, for purposeful acts are the very motor of society. And there are some remarkable leaders, too. For example, Shaka Zulu, whom we will discuss in chapter 5, was undoubtedly a very innovative war leader and the creator of the first native kingdom in South Africa. Had Shaka not been born would the Zulu state have been different? This is a pointless question because there is no way to answer it: Presumably if *anything* were different the results would have been different. What we do want is to find out all we can about the antecedent events, the interrelated conditions, the interplay of forces—the historical environment of causes, effects, and adaptations within which Shaka was entangled. These things we can discover in some part at least, and they will help us to know why Shaka was able to do one thing but not another. More importantly, we may find as we go along from chapter to chapter that conditions similar to those in Shaka's Africa seem to elicit responses similar to his. But remember: This is not a "determinism versus great man" argument, for that question is not being addressed. We are simply taking an arbitrary perspective on events that eliminates speculation about the unknown personal and psychological abilities of long-dead or anonymous leaders in order to concentrate on the knowables. Science, like politics, might well be defined as "the art of the possible"—and that is the aim of the method used herein.

As for the comparative method, it should be understood now that the procedures of this investigation will seem quite informal. That is, we are not following some logical scheme of statistical or mathematical tests of concordance, procedures for selecting a representative sample, and so on. The method to be used here does not require any of those formalities, but only the scholarly

care, caution, and attempt at reasonableness needed in any historical reconstruction.

There is no problem here that requires any statistical or sampling procedures simply because the instances of state formation that are documented well enough to be useful are so few— i.e., our sample is the known universe. Chapters 3 and 4, to be sure, contain some grand generalizations about primitive society as a whole, but they are not discoveries or arguments that should require proof. They are offered simply as well-established conclusions useful as background for the investigations of the origins of states. The actual cases described in these early chapters simply illustrate the general background statements.

Our Contemporary Ancestors

It should be emphasized at this point that this work departs from usual modern historical and anthropological procedure. Historically and ethnologically known cases will be used to help in the interpretation of societies that are known only archaeologically. Whether this is a good thing to do should depend on the care with which it is done—admittedly it is a tricky procedure—and on the results. Certainly it merits further description.

What is the justification of the comparative method when it moves from extant stages to extinct ages? Is it justifiable to look to the historically known formation of primitive states, as in the first part of this book, in order to better interpret or reinterpret the formation of the archaic civilizations that are known only through archaeology and distant ancient history? Most early twentieth-century anthropologists, following Boas's injunction, foreswore this procedure, though in many cases they could well have used it while making clear the possible dangers, as described below.

This method originated when philosophers began to use contemporary accounts of primitive peoples in thinking about their own past. This was the first empirical way to interpret the less-known history of simpler times. There is a long and classic history of the usefulness of the approach: Aristotle used it in his *Politics*, as did Thucydides in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*. It

was the primary tool of such great philosophers of civilization during the Enlightenment period as Hobbes, Ferguson, Lafitau, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Turgot, and finally in later times most notably by Spencer, Frazer, and Marc Bloch.

The most evident danger in the method in those early days was with respect to the validity of data. Untrained travelers' accounts, and the later reports of missionaries and traders, were often gross exaggerations or mistakes—though not always. But this is no more insurmountable in the present case than is the use of naive documents in historiography in general. In many ways they are more interesting and useful than someone's *re*interpretation. One should apply tests of reasonableness that are based on as much comparative ethnology as possible. In dealing with modern times, paradoxically, the greater dangers lie in using the "scientific" ethnographies of trained anthropologists because, even though the descriptive data may be more accurate and analytical than a traveler's account, the reports are descriptive of only highly acculturated remnants of societies that were among the few survivors of the Euro-American colonial and imperial expansions. It is particularly dangerous to use some mechanical statistical method that eschews critical judgment of the reliability of the sources (in the manner of the Human Relations Area Files, or the Ethnographic Atlas), when the sample is taken to represent aboriginal cultures—which of course it does not.

The problems in the present volume are not so great. The comparisons will not be mechanical and the data have been evaluated critically by several expert historians and ethnohistorical anthropologists. The greatest problem in going from the best known to the least known in the present instance is how to evaluate the structural and functional adaptive differences between secondary or derivative states—those that arose in response to relatively modern outside pressures and circumstances—and those primary ("pristine" or "naive") civilizations that were the original independent responses in their own areas (see Fried 1967, 1968).

The intellectual utility of comparing the primitive states of historical times and the primary civilizations will to a considerable extent turn on our ability to maintain Goldschmidt's distinction between political *problems* and processes as they apply to both, on the one hand, and the more variable kinds of *institutions* that

may be only historically evanescent—and thus evolutionary discontinuities.

The "pristine" versus "secondary" dichotomy, as proposed by Fried, is very important to the thesis of this book, particularly in contrasting the states of part II with the civilizations of part III. But frequently "pristine" does not seem quite right. "Precocious" is preferable in some contexts because it is a relative term: A society might be *more* evolved, because of having *earlier* achieved an advanced evolutionary feature, than its neighbors. The term "pristine" (vs. "secondary"), being absolute, poses problems that are not always entirely to the point (a related argument is found in Sanders and Marino [1970, pp. 104–105]). In other words, I don't want to say whether Olmec or Chavin culture was the *first* government (in Mexico and Peru), with Teotihuacán or Mochica second or third on the list. All that is necessary to argue is that the first manifestation of a new development *among adjacent societies* (the potential rivals), even though it may have been, like Kaminaljuyu in Guatemala, clearly a secondary off-shoot, would be in its local precocity tremendously advantaged and thus widely influential. The Petén Maya, the Indus River culture, the Chou in North China, Tiahuanaco in the Peruvian highlands, and others as well, may have actually been secondary in Fried's sense (or even tertiary), but they were precocious in a very wide environment and dominated it easily. For our present purposes in understanding evolutionary movements of rise and fall, local relative precocity, rather than absolute "pristineness," is what is significant.

2

Theories of the Origin and Nature of Government

EVOLUTIONARY THEORIES about the nature of the state seem inevitably to involve an interest in its origin. A mature state has acquired in its later history so many special features and manifest functions that its *main* function, its "true nature," is often obscured. The feeling seems to be that the nature of the state is best revealed—and best discussed—in the context of a consideration of its origin and early, rudimentary functioning.

Allied to this interest in the evolution of government (the bureaucratic state in a broad sense) is the notion found in modern times that a perspective of determinism, of cause-and-effect, could be used in comprehending it. And if that notion is accepted, then the nature of science entails that if such materials are reducible to comprehension then perhaps even control is possible. It is axiomatic that it is in the arena of differences of opinion about government ("politics") that citizens have their best opportunities to do something for the good of themselves, their class or profession, and their society. The most free-willist of any, however, must admit that what persons take to be their choices are also

in terms of what they believe to be the nature of their environment—which includes not only habitat but also other persons and other cultural institutions. It follows that free-willists as much as the most rigid of determinists ought to believe that the better they comprehend the nature of man, society, and cultural institutions, the more rational and effective will be their choices.

But it was not always thought that government or the social structure of a society emerged from something else, to develop and change in response to comprehensible chains of events. Nor was it always thought that reasonable people could do anything about government even after understanding something scientific of human ways and of the nature of the government.

"Since the social world, government especially, is the work of men, men should be able to change it." Such a creed is in total contrast to the view that prevailed in Europe and America—with a few individual exceptions—until the period of Enlightenment. It could easily be argued, in fact, that the distinguishing feature of Enlightenment thought was precisely that governments and forms of society were not immutable and God-given, and that intelligence and knowledge could be efficacious in changing the government of a society. It is for this reason that our brief excursion into the history of theories of government begins with the Enlightenment period.

The classical Greek and Roman philosophers, so various as Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics and the Epicureans, thought of the state as coterminous with society itself; all before was anarchy. During the Revival of Learning in Europe from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, Aristotle's idea of *natural law* to be fulfilled in terms of an ideal universal state, or *cosmopolis*, was united with Stoic philosophical thought to become finally theistic, particularly as the basis for the "natural" (i.e., God-given) desirability of the state. Thus the theory was finally antievolutionary, antideterministic, and antiscientific.

Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406), of Tunis, is the best known of those few who finally escaped the religious stultification of the studies of history and social science. His *Introduction to History* (1377) is a repository of important ideas about historiography, about social-structural factors as differentiated in nomadic and sedentary cultures, and especially the dynamic relations between

these two kinds of societies. It is this latter perspective on the conflict of societies that provided his idea of the motive force in the historical process, a view that has since been adopted by modern sociologists of the "conflict school." He should receive credit also, however, for his insistence on the influence of climate and geography on the kinds of society that are adapted to them.

About a century later Niccolo Machiavelli was notable for the same basic reason that Ibn Khaldun commands attention: They both regarded the state from an almost completely secular point of view. "Machiavellian" has come to suggest political cunning, or bad faith in political maneuvering, but this derives from the fact that Machiavelli, like Ibn Khaldun, had divested himself of moralistic theological and metaphysical attitudes in order to see the state in realistic perspective. Machiavelli's analysis of the state springs from the Epicurean-like premise that human self-interest amid the innumerable desires for happiness was the motivation of human activity.

Machiavelli was overwhelmed with the idea of Italian unity, and he concentrated on realistically depicting the practical means for concentrating power in the hands of a single overlord. His classic statement in *The Prince* reveals a sophisticated, objective ability to analyze the nature of kinds of states, and his treatment of government as having its own end, the strength to govern, is certainly a classic description of the ideals of the nation-states that were later to arise in Europe. As Lord Acton said, "The authentic interpreter of Machiavelli is the whole of later history."

Later in the sixteenth century, the realistic, naturalistic study of political forms was continued brilliantly by Jean Bodin. The national, dynastic states had continued their struggling evolution and Bodin, like Ibn Khaldun and Machiavelli, witnessed the turmoil that resulted from the absence of strong government, this time in France before the founding of the Bourbon dynasty by Henry IV.

Bodin's theory of the origins of government was essentially like that of Ibn Khaldun, that the state rises out of conflict. Also like Ibn Khaldun and Machiavelli, Bodin differed from the ecclesiastical dogmas of God-given stasis by recognizing that stability is practically unattainable and that good government must be able to cope with change. And finally, Bodin dwelled on the differences

in temperament between city-dwellers and nomads and the effects of fertile and barren geographical regions.

The similarity of the theories of Bodin to those of Ibn Khaldun should not be allowed to diminish the former. In the first place it seems highly unlikely that Bodin was acquainted with the earlier Islamic literature. And since Bodin was the first to describe and analyze politics comparatively and inductively from the historical materials of Western Europe, he was also the most important direct influence on the great and influential thinkers of the Enlightenment. His conflict theory was at least in harmony with, if not a direct influence on, the Scottish philosophers Hume and Ferguson and others who opposed the social contract school. And obviously Bodin's influence on the French was great, especially on Montesquieu with respect to his anthropogeographical comparative studies.

The Enlightenment in Great Britain and Europe[1]

The Enlightenment in Britain produced many marvelous philosophical writings. Of these we shall briefly consider the works of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and David Hume (1711–1776), and toward the end of this chapter, Adam Ferguson (1723–1790). The middle sections of the chapter belong chronologically and developmentally to continental Europe.

Hobbes claimed to be the founder of the science of politics. By using the word "science," he meant to ally himself with the newly burgeoning interest in the mechanical, cause-and-effect view of the universe as inaugurated by Bacon, Copernicus, Galileo, and Harvey. Hobbes lived amid the turmoil of civil and foreign war, and he was particularly conscious of the precarious balance of governance caused by the church-state conflict. He once said that he and fear, like twins, were born together. No wonder, then, that Hobbes's primary motivation was a desire for peace, which meant, in his unsettled experience in exile, a stable government of complete authority.

Hobbes's aim was to describe human behavior in terms of a kind of social physics. Thus the tendency of physical objects to

1. This section is especially dependent on the interpretations of Peter Gay (1969).

pursue their own trajectory—when left to themselves—could be translated into an egoistic principle for human beings, that they pursue their own interests in the line of least resistance. This, of course, is the source of social conflict, of "war, as is of every man, against every man."[2]

The life of early man, Hobbes suggests, was one of continual fear, as well as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." But men were able, finally, to agree to a *social contract,* accepting a common power, the state, which limited some of their egoistic liberties in favor of peace. Only after this could the civilized arts and industries develop. This argument is something like that of the Stoics in that it urges the desirability of individual submission to society and the state.

The writings of David Hume marked the beginning of the eighteenth-century attack on this kind of rationalism. Hume argued essentially from an empirical position rather than reasoning deductively from self-evident principles. He argued against Newton's mechanical universe with a relativistic, anthropological theory that "principles" of cause-and-effect, for example, are mental habits that are different in different times and places and not self-evident at all. "Custom is the great guide of human life" was his classic phrase (following John Locke's important argument).

In political theory he continued his emphasis on varying institutions and habits, including the belief that community life is based on conventions, not natural law. And as for "right" and "wrong" in society and in ethical systems, Hume felt that conventions could vary and thus could be more or less beneficial in their contributions to a stable and just society.

2. It may be well to emphasize that Hobbes, who has often been misunderstood, was talking about threatened or potential war as much as actual fighting. "Out of civil states, there is always war of every one against every one. Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man. For WAR, consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of *time,* is to be considered in the nature of war; as it is in the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather, lieth not in a shower or two of rain; but in an inclination thereto of many days together; so the nature of war, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE" (Hobbes 1651, p. 82).

Giovanni Battista Vico (1668–1744), Italian jurist and philosopher, laid out a more modern-sounding set of assumptions and prescriptions for a social science. In *The New Science* (1725) he skillfully criticized the logicomathematical form of deduction that Descartes and his numerous followers had given as a model for all knowledge and all of the sciences. Philosophically, he is like Locke and Hume in arguing that rationality was not a constant, but a variable historical and social acquisition. *The New Science* offered a new inductive approach to the study of history, conceived in nearly modern terms of cultural evolution. A comparative study of the history of cultures at different times and places, he felt, would show that nations passed through the same cycle from primitivism to civilization. Of special significance in this scheme is the consistently held anti-Cartesianism, that "the order of ideas must follow the order of institutions." All other writers of the time were concerned with the "mind" of an age or of a nation, as though it were the entity that had created the institutions.

Vico was not influential in the eighteenth century, nor was he known outside Italy until the French historian Jules Michelet came upon a reference to *The New Science* that so interested him that he set out to translate the book. Edmund Wilson considers Michelet's popularization of Vico in the early nineteenth century such an important intellectual event that he begins his study of modern revolutionary theory (*To the Finland Station* [1940]) with a description of Michelet's discovery of *The New Science*. Two related elements in Vico's book were responsible for the excitement: one was the organismic analogy of functional deterministic connections between institutions in a society; the other was that scientific knowledge of nations' histories could enable mankind to erect rational governments and cultures. As we know, these are the basic assumptions of most modern reforming movements, especially of Marxism. But Vico was ahead of his time and out of place.

In France the writings of Charles Louis Secondat de la Brede, Baron de Montesquieu, were the most influential in creating the wave of political critiques that characterized so much of the work of the *philosophes*. Although he was an aristocrat, and essentially conservative in many respects, he was, like much of the French aristocracy of the time, critical of the absolutism of the Bourbons.

In his major work, *The Spirit of Laws* (1748), he pays the more or less automatic obeisance to Cartesian systemization and rationalism typical of his time, but his full emphasis is more like Hume's relativistic empiricism. The "spirit" of law and government was therefore no universal natural law, but variable in time and place as the laws adapt to the geographic conditions of a region and the related temperament of the people. Montesquieu's argument was born out of his desire to replace monarchical absolutism with a constitution like that of the English that would reflect, with a built-in system of checks and balances, the varying desires and motives of different groups in the society.

In contrast, most of the French *philosophes* did not argue for a different *structure* of government, but rather tried to uncover and promulgate the true laws of nature so that the enlightened monarch might rule more rationally. It was not until the publication of *The Social Contract* in 1762 by Jean-Jacques Rousseau that a new kind of argument appeared that was to have great significance in the history of modern political philosophy. His use of the popular phrase "social contract" has made for confusion, for his view of governments and how to evaluate them (in his terms, how to evaluate their "legitimacy") and his notions of "liberty" were at great variance with those of Hobbes and other social contract theorists.

Liberty for Rousseau is not "natural freedom" but "civic freedom," for which it is exchanged. The civil entity is a moral entity that men are required to obey. But ideally the requirement is not made by force, but instead by the social contract, by which one surrenders one's egoistic demands to the *general will*. In a sense, Rousseau is saying that man surrenders his natural ego to society rather than to a state, as Hobbes would have it. That is, a *legitimate* government is an agent of society, not its master, and it rises out of a society that is governed by the general will. Whereas most liberal people of the Enlightenment thought of the political problem as consisting of the antagonism between personal freedom and civil authority, Rousseau tried to unite the two. If the state were truly legitimate, Rousseau believed, it would serve the general will, and as a consequence the individual, who would have also agreed to serve the general will, feels free—unrepressed by any outside force.

Such a conception obviously depends heavily on certain social conditions, the most important of which is political and economic equality. In conditions of near equality, according to Rousseau, a properly educated public is likely to manifest a civic spirit that will result in a tendency toward unanimity of opinion on important policy questions rather than simply "majority rule." But of course all this depends, in the end, not only on education in the formal sense, but on a sound *moral* training. Rousseau was above all a moralist trying to establish a theory of obligation—not submission to governmental force, but an intelligent adjustment to society. It should be noted that despite his use of the often-quoted term "the noble savage" he did not advocate a return to the primitive or a destruction of the arts and sciences. He felt simply that it was time to ascend to a better, more moral, adjustment of individuals to a better society than was present in his time. Rousseau belongs, really, in the company of the utopians.

It might be relevant to an understanding of all of the various social contract theorists that they must have been heavily influenced by Europe's feudal past. The disorder in Europe during the so-called Dark Ages was succeeded by local systems featuring hierarchies of personal relationships that apparently were somewhat voluntaristic, with the bonds symbolized by pledges of fealty by the inferior and by obligations to render military aid and various prestations (rents, taxes, or dues) in return for protection (Bloch 1961). This system was in fact a "social contract" of a sort (and also reminiscent of a primitive charismatic "followership" called the big-man system [see below, chapter 4]).

A few evolutionary schemes of the late Enlightenment were simply teleological and hence not very instructive to us in these days. As described by the two most prominent examples, Condorcet and Turgot, evolutionary progress, stage by stage, consists of inevitable improvements in rationality. Civilized man had simply reasoned his way out of primitivity. Turgot's famous Sorbonne discourse on this subject in 1750 was significantly titled, "On the Successive Advances of the Human Mind." Cultural progress, in this view, is thus immanent in the human mind—through variable in outcome due to differences in geography, historical fortunes, and so on.

Outside France, especially where different forms of government, including colonial governments, were to be found, these latter *philosophes* did not have an impact equal to some of the earlier ones. And it is evident that within France some of the important groundwork of a truly comparative inductive science was ignored.

Montesquieu, however, was exceptionally influential abroad. His influence on the Scottish "moral philosophers" was especially great and the basis of his perspective and method was enthusiastically promulgated and elaborated by Adam Ferguson in particular. In 1767 Ferguson published *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, which he based on Montesquieu while extending the latter's method by drawing more upon the observations of primitive peoples made by contemporaneous missionaries and travelers such as Charlevoix, Lafitau, Dampier, and others, as well as the classical sources. His attempt to describe human nature, or "men in a state of nature," was in terms of a careful evaluation of the evidences from primitive life. He had at once more data to work with than Montesquieu and also a more severely questioning attitude toward its validity—although it should be remarked that evaluation of data had a much more central place in Montesquieu's work than in that of the other *philosophes* such as Rousseau.

Ferguson more than agreed with Montesquieu about the falseness of the common idea that "man in a state of nature" was free to be his natural self. Man is governed by society, and never was outside it—he has always wandered or settled "in troops and companies." Man's nature as seen in a study of man in society is highly composite, in the primitive world as well as in civilization—which is but a continuation and accumulation of devices from earlier times.

Ferguson saw human nature as being composed of many opposite propensities—sociability and egoism, love and hostility, cooperation and conflict—an amalgam that is necessary to allow for the different kinds of characteristics demanded by society in different times and places. Ferguson felt—contrary to Rousseau's belief—that conflict had a positive function in cultural evolution, and for that matter even in individual psychology: the stronger the hostility to outsiders, the closer the internal bonds of the

collectivity; the very meaning of friendship is acquired from a knowledge of enmity.

Ferguson was notable for another extension of one of Montesquieu's interests. He went far beyond the *philosophes'* usual formal analysis of legal rights and constitutional forms to deal more directly with social and economic realities. His concern over the specialization of labor was particularly striking for his day. He saw that while increased division of labor brings greater skill and thus greater prosperity to a community, the community becomes fragmented and mechanized, with wealth increasingly unequally distributed—specialization can be a curse as well as a blessing.

It should be of interest that Adam Smith published his path-finding *Wealth of Nations* in 1776, nine years after Ferguson's *History of Civil Society*. The two men were close friends, radical for their times, and they undoubtedly influenced each other importantly. (That Ferguson's work was published first is balanced by the fact that Smith had been lecturing on his antimercantilist economics in the 1750s). Both men were critical of the contemporaneous civilization—like *philosophes* elsewhere they tended to move from analysis to prescription—but for the first time important emphasis was laid on socioeconomic factors, rather than on "mind" and ideologies and their presumed related legal and governmental consequences. This may be one of the most important as well as the first of the truly modern reformist confrontations of "materialist" versus "idealist" perspectives.

It is interesting that a kind of test of the different political theories of the European Enlightenment occurred in North America in the 1770s and early 1780s, when some of the *philosophes* were still alive. (Most of them had died before the French Revolution: Hume died in 1776, Rousseau and Voltaire in 1778, Turgot and Lessing in 1781, d'Alembert in 1783, and Diderot in 1784.) According to the historian Peter Gay, American thinkers like Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and George Washington were all enthusiastic followers of the Enlightenment thought of Britain and France, and eventually there was an important feedback. As Gay puts it (1969, p. 555): 'The splendid conduct of the colonists, their brilliant victory, and

their triumphant founding of a republic were convincing evidence, to the *philosophes* at least, that men had some capacity for self-improvement and self-government, that progress might be a reality instead of a fantasy, and that reason and humanity might become governing rather than merely critical principles." There is no doubt that the American Revolution was a tremendous catalyst for the subsequent French Revolution. Gay says, ". . . When tough-minded men looked to the young republic in America, saw there with delight the program of the *philosophes* in practice, [they] found themselves convinced that the Enlightenment had been a success."

It seems evident that of all the varying arguments of the *philosophes*, those of Montesquieu, directly and indirectly, had the most influence in America (Gay 1969, p. 325) and are those most validated by what actually happened in America.

Revolutionists Look at the State: 1789–1848

In discussing the European epoch of 1789–1848, E. J. Hobsbawm takes political and economic change, exemplified respectively by France and Great Britain, to constitute what he calls the Dual Revolution. This concept is useful in that it enables us to discuss the two aspects separately. Further, the concept does not prematurely limit our understanding of the age in the way that more restricted labels—the Triumph of the Bourgeoisie, the Age of Empire, of Capitalism, of Liberalism, of Industrialization, of World Conquest, and so on—may do. In revolutionary ideology, theories of politics and government were still dominant at the beginning of the Age of Revolution, but economic theory, with particular attention to the new technology of industrialism, was rapidly gaining ground, until finally in the theory of Karl Marx, it became the prime mover. The minds of thoughtful men must have been tremendously influenced by the Dual Revolution. The economic "take-off," especially in the 1780s in Britain (Hobsbawm 1964, p. 46) and somewhat later elsewhere, was an astonishing evidence of progressive evolution, and of the capacity of men to acquire wealth and to enhance their social station and political power. On the other hand, the more purely political events in France marked the beginnings of a growing social revolutionary

tradition that forever after has dominated social and political science, the writing of history, and the rise of ideologies attached to powerful political parties.

There had been foreshadowings in the Enlightenment period of the intellectual trends toward secularism, materialism, and determinism that were much later to be combined in the philosophy of Marx and Engels. For example, Denis Diderot (1713–1784), the powerful editor of the *Encyclopedia,* and his friends Holbach and Helvetius made the most ardent philosophical arguments in favor of a materialistic determinism.[3] But these examples were only portents; they did not significantly influence the following generation.

Out of the disorder of the French Revolution and the successive reactions of the civil and Napoleonic wars and, in England, the horrors of industrialization, were born the various attempts at utopian communities, such as those established by Robert Owen. These need not detain us, since no new theory of the state or society or human nature was proposed; they simply based their proposals on the pervasive Rousseauian ideas of the time that mankind is naturally good and that that goodness can be fulfilled by isolating social communities from the perverting institutions of the surrounding society. The revolutionary significance of the utopians is the spur they put to the work of Karl Marx (1818–1883) and his friend and collaborator, Friedrich Engels (1820–1895).

Marx and Engels combated the utopians directly with works such as *The Communist Manifesto* and *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific,* and also indirectly—though more effectively from a long-term point of view—by gradually achieving a complete and integrated body of theory about the nature of society and the state that would enable revolutionaries to expend their efforts rationally in terms of a "correct" appraisal of reality.

The conflict of social classes in the political arena was familiar to all onlookers and participants of the Age of Revolution. The power differential between such visible classes as aristocracy,

3. Interestingly enough, the theory that population pressure is the basic cause of inequality of wealth, which in turn leads to "servitude," was proposed by some Enlightenment figures, most prominently Voltaire in his essay, "Equality" (see the discussion by Cocks [1974]).

peasantry, and burghers was understood by all. Marx and Engels were the first scholars, however, to root the class struggle so firmly in economic inequalities, and to describe what we may call the class subculture of societies, especially their varying ideologies, as being fundamentally a consequence of their different relations to the means of production. All "history" is the history of class struggle, said Marx and Engels. But the different kinds of class struggles and their outcome were due to laws of economic development, not to social-class struggle in and of itself. (Marx said, in the author's preface to *Capital* [1906, p. 13], "Intrinsically, it is not a question of the higher or lower degree of development of the social antagonisms that result from the natural laws of capitalist production. It is a question of these laws themselves, of these tendencies working with iron necessity toward inevitable results.")

The above is a good example of the "materialism" of Marxism. In the famous *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (in Mendel 1961, p. 64), Engels puts it more specifically:

The materialist conception of history starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure; that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged. From this point of view the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in man's better insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange.

In later years, the publication of anthropologist Lewis H. Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877) stimulated Marx and Engels's thoughts about the actual origin of the state and its true nature as an oppressive structure. Morgan's book was an attempt to clear up the mystery of the varying contemporary forms of primitive social organization by positing the probable stages of social evolution. Primitive society, Morgan had discovered, was basically communistic, lacking important commerce, private property, economic classes, or despotic rulers. Toward the end of his book Morgan ventured that increased productivity in some primitive societies had led to increased trade, and consequently to private property and classes of rich and poor.

After Marx's death Engels published the products of their joint appreciation of Morgan's materials in his *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1891). Some of their earlier pronouncements about *all* history, *all* social structures, *every* society, being formed of classes based on relations to the means of production now were modified to refer only to civil societies and only to "written history." But this modification must have been gladly made, for Morgan's finding that the widespread and ancient forms of primitive society were communistic strongly supported the argument that capitalism is transitory, that it is *not* based on human nature or some universal natural law.

The materialist conception of history now was to Engels's mind also greatly justified inasmuch as it could be applied to an explanation of the transition from primitive society to civil (state) society. Essentially, the book was a more focused and expanded version of the basic ideas germinated by Morgan: Certain primitive societies had improved the technological means of production, the surplus product of which was traded; as this process was expanded, society perforce changed from a production-for-use economy to a production of commodities, and with commodity production unearned increments arose due to differences in efficiency, in supply and demand, and in the activities of middlemen; thus, with the rise of private differences in wealth, economic classes appear. Here is the economic genesis of the state: From their *material* (economic) beginnings, classes become gradually social, and finally political as well when the rich erect a structure of permanent force to protect their class interests. The political state is thus a special means of repression by the propertied class. As for the propertied basis of the nation-state, the *Communist Manifesto* put it succinctly: "The proletariate has no fatherland."

This posited origin of the state is also the exposing of its true nature. Lenin's *State and Revolution* (in Mendel 1961) was written precisely to emphasize this judgment on the "historical role and meaning of the state," in order to argue against socialist idealists and reformers who felt that the state stands above society and could be reformed in order to "reconcile" class antagonisms. According to Lenin, true Marxism reveals the necessity of the destruction of both the class system *and* the state, for the state represents and protects only the propertied class.

There was a complication in Marx's thought that we have not yet discussed. This has to do with intermediate stages in the transition from classless, production-for-use society to a class, commodity-production state. As indicated in chapter 1, some of my previous researches have suggested strongly that the communal, segmental society was succeeded by a hierarchical, chiefdom stage before the true states were formed. There is the suggestion in some of Marx's works that he too did not think there was an abrupt movement from communal to capitalistic stages of evolution. He also conceived of some intermediate routes to the capitalist state.

In the classic *Critique of Political Economy*, Marx designated the stages ("epochs") of economic progress as the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal, and the bourgeois. E. J. Hobsbawm considers these stages, discussed further in Marx's *Grundrisse*,[4] to be "analytical, though not chronological. . . ." (Marx 1965, p. 37). The first stage is that of direct communal property and it underlies all the others, everywhere. It is best seen in historical times in the Orient and in Slavonic communes. The second stage consists in the continuation of communal property as a substratum in societies that have acquired a class system, as in "ancient" (classical Greco-Roman) and Germanic forms. The next stage is feudalism, during which *crafts* manufacture arose with greater individual control over both production and consumption. Bourgeois society is the fourth stage, in which capital and labor (in the form of a proletariat rather than as slaves or serfs) create a new kind of class system. These are obviously not four stages of unilineal evolution; rather, the Oriental and Slavic are modified, arrested, residues of the first, or communal, stage, and lie outside the historical continuum that resulted in European capitalism.

But these are stages of *economic* development, with political forms only implied, at best. Feudalism, for example, is not defined

4. Marx had the habit of making voluminous notes of data and outlines and drafts of his thoughts before attempting final versions. One huge collection of his outlines or sketches (usually referred to as the *Grundrisse*), made during his last years in London, was published in its entirety in Berlin in 1953. Hobsbawm has edited an English translation and added his own long interpretative introduction of the sections of the *Grundrisse* pertaining to *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* (as the book is now titled [Marx 1965]). The discussion of Marx's stages in this chapter largely follows Hobsbawm's analysis. For a modern Soviet view, see Vasilev and Stucheoskii (1967).

as a political organization but in terms of its forms of production-for-use. Its "contradictions" arose with the growth of trade and of trading-handicraft towns, with both reciprocity and conflict existing between the towns and the countryside. This agrees with most prevailing interpretations of the economics of the breakup of feudalism. But what of the political systems of feudalism? Did not petty states and kingdoms arise from time to time out of the wreckage of the Roman Empire?

Part of the trouble in interpreting the Marxian scheme arises from the theoretical confusion of trying to make universal stages out of particular historical sequences. Marx and Engels eventually set the "Oriental epoch" aside as being historically isolated from European developments, but in their view of Western civilization the succession of stages remained ancient, feudal, bourgeois. A particular historical sequence in Europe—the Roman Empire and the political decentralization, power vacuum, and local economic self-sufficiency that prevailed after its fall—was elevated to a sequence of universal stages.[5] This had caused insuperable difficulties in attempts to adapt Marxist thought to the cultural evolution of the world. And in terms of European history in particular, the evolutionary significance of the primary archaic civilizations is needlessly downgraded and feudalism elevated to a stage that it never was.

The Modern Social Sciences

Auguste Comte (1798–1857) is frequently regarded as the father of academic scientific sociology. He is also known for his insistence on the organismic analogy for human society. Social order is closely related to the distribution of functions (division of labor) and the combination of efforts (government), Comte thought. But he also thought of government, of the state, as coterminous with organized society—simply as synonymous with it.

It remained for the great French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) to finally develop Comte's notions on the "division

5. Note that the Enlightenment thinkers also made feudalism into a universal stage when they took the voluntarism that existed in the political relations of the feudal aristocracy as a basis for their theory of the social contract.

of functions" into a coherent and logical theory of the organismic and solidary nature of society. Durkheim, it seems evident, wanted to get behind, or underneath, the legal and contractual institutional structures that Comte (and, as we will see, Spencer) had described. Not denying the presence and significance of these institutions, Durkheim felt that a more important system of less visible but more omnipresent factors had created organic solidarity. These were the systems of beliefs and sentiments held in common by the members of the society. These he called the *conscience collective*. (The French word *conscience* means in English both "conscience" and "consciousness," but it seems apparent from Durkheim's normative emphasis that he intended the first meaning. In fact, many of the "sentiments" he described are vague and probably unconsciously held, which again suggests that the English meaning of *conscience* was intended.)

Durkheim's greatest contribution to the history of evolutionary thought was his characterization of primitive society as a system of uniform, undifferentiated, *segmental* entities, held together by what he labeled mechanical solidarity, as opposed to later, structurally differentiated societies having organic solidarity. As more complicated societies came about in later evolutionary stages, the *conscience collective* itself may become more differentiated (less "collective") and be implemented by the more institutionalized aspects of law and government (see especially his *Division of Labor in Society* [1933]).

Durkheim's efforts strongly trended toward modern anthropological theory. He lacked the useful concept of *culture*, but now it seems clear that his cumbersome verbal constructions were attempts to arrive at the modern conception of it. He also argued for the scientific reality of "social facts" (culture traits), and that society (culture) exists *sui generis*. But it is in Durkheim's emphasis on arguing the significance of the *conscience collective* that he seems to diminish the role of the state or government: certainly he paid little attention to the historical or evolutionary rise of the state as such.

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) has often been equated with Lewis H. Morgan and E. B. Tylor as a cultural evolutionist and scientist, but a reconsideration of the main influence of each one makes such close parallelism seem untenable. True, all were

evolutionistic—but in varying ways, and with very different interests and effects. Morgan had almost no effect on the development of the academic social sciences (except in a negative sense, particularly stimulating the critiques of Robert Lowie). Tylor was an important influence in early British academic anthropology, but his interest was mainly in what today is often called culture-history, a concern with the origin, distribution, development, and diffusion of discrete culture traits. *Sociology*, on the contrary, was in Spencer's terms a scientific study of whole sociocultural systems, and this consuming interest is what sets him apart from the others of his time and what justifies giving him the sociological, rather than anthropological, label.

Aside from evolutionism, two aspects of Spencer's thought serve best to characterize him. One is his view of particular societies as *systems*, analogous to the structure, functioning, and specializations of parts of a living organism. He was, then, the most important, though not literally the first, proponent of the *organismic* perspective that was to characterize so much of academic sociology in the United States and France, and social anthropology in Britain. The other important aspect of Spencer was his "social Darwinism."

Social Darwinism took three forms that were not necessarily related. Those dealing with competition among businessmen and corporations need not detain us here. But Spencer's third theory about competition, however, rested on a firm scientific foundation and is well worth considering with care. This dealt with the role of conflict among whole societies. Spencer attributed the rise of the state itself to warfare, and also with important developments in legal, economic, and religious organization.

Warfare may select the stronger, more efficient societies, of course, and eliminate the weaker or cause it to be subsumed by the stronger. But it is the *prevalence* of successful warfare in a state that leads to the prevalence of military institutions, which carry their influence over to peacetime. At the same time, war unites otherwise disparate parts against a common enemy. If the warfare is prevalent, or if the threat is continuing, the subordination of the social divisions to the military governing center becomes relatively more stabilized. This is the important factor that leads a loosely compounded social aggregate toward a more con-

solidated society with a general governing center, with the originally independent local centers of regulation becoming dependent deputies of the general center.

The "regulating organization" has two aspects: the organization for offense and defense and the sustaining organization (Spencer sometimes calls them the "militant" and the "industrial"). These aspects vary in the ratios they bear to one another as we pass from society to society. But the militant organization creates centralized coordination, for that is in the nature of successful warfare. The sustaining organization does not necessarily create centralized government, and tends to acquire it only from the extension of militant government to the other aspects of life (including even the hierarchy of the gods and the ecclesiastical organization).

Spencer does not make a clear-cut distinction between state and nonstate, and hence his comparative data do not give the best support for his assertions. He classifies societies as simple, compound, and doubly compound, but with each category containing examples of varying degrees of "headship." Headship and the related centralization do not, in his scheme, ascend in the evolutionary order as prescribed by the stages of complexity (or "compoundings"). These latter are "social types," but each may or may not have "stable headship." A militant organization, however, with its strong centralization and subordination of parts, might characterize any of the above stages, as could the societies in which the sustaining organization is the more prominent. The Spartan and Athenian confederacies, for example, are alike in being in the doubly compound stage, but very unlike in that Sparta's militant organization was dominant while in Athens the uncoercive sustaining organization prevailed.

As far as the question of the origin of the state is concerned, Spencer seems to feel that there are two kinds of states: One is basically militant, in which the individual is subordinated to the collectivity, whereas in the other the industrial organization is a cooperative venture "which directly seeks and subserves the welfare of individuals" (1967, p. 65). Spencer thus combines, as it were, a conflict theory and a social contract theory in accounting for the origins of his broadly conceived "regulative" and "political" organizations. But Spencer's repeated emphases give the

overall impression that he sees successful warfare as the major
variable in political evolution. Indeed, sometimes he states this
outright (in partial contradiction to other statements). We may
take the following passage, in which Spencer summarizes a chap-
ter on political heads (1967, p. 126), as his considered conclusion:

> Headship of the conquering chief has been a normal accompani-
> ment of that political integration without which any high degree of
> social evolution would probably have been impossible. Only by impera-
> tive need for combination in war were primitive men led into coopera-
> tion. Only by subjection to imperative command was such cooperation
> made efficient. And only by the cooperation thus initiated were made
> possible those other forms of cooperation characterizing civilized life.

The problem of depersonalizing headship and continuing it
as a developing structure was considered most brilliantly by Max
Weber (1864–1920), like Durkheim one of the truly seminal for-
mulators of modern sociology. Weber believed that there were
three types of authoritarian leadership: charismatic, traditional,
and legal. Charismatic leadership is founded on the faith of the
people in the ruler's extraordinary spiritual qualities or greatness.
Traditional leadership is founded on the sanction of immemorial
custom. Legal domination means that authority's decisions are
subject to, justified and rationalized by general rules (Weber
1947, pp. 310–406).

Weber presents these types of legitimate authority as "ideal
types," not usually found in such pure form in historical cases.
They are useful for sharp conceptualization in systematic analysis,
and a given empirical case may actually contain all three types,
or be in transition from one to another. But it is important to
note that he does not present these as evolutionary stages—Weber
is a (somewhat unique) kind of historian-functionalist, not an
evolutionist. We may be therefore doing some violence to Weber's
thought, but it does seem, at least provisionally at this point,
that the three kinds of authority serve to epitomize very well the
leadership in turn of egalitarian-segmental societies, chiefdoms,
and the government of archaic civilizations.

A few lines should be devoted to Walter Bagehot (1826–
1877), an influential contemporary of Spencer's and the first
avowed social Darwinist. He did not say a great deal about the
origin of government, but a few paragraphs in his brief *Physics*

and Politics (1872) are interesting. He felt that warlike competi-
tion among societies in early times would select for those with
the best leadership and most obedient populace ("the tamest are
the strongest"). A major problem in the evolution of a politically
directed society is that of perpetuating the headship, making an
"official" out of a hero, which in early times involved inheritance
of the position.

Bagehot, like Spencer, was of great significance in developing
the so-called "conflict theory" of the origin of government. As
we have seen in the discussion of Spencer, this means *external*
conflict, the conflict between whole societies, rather than the
personal, anarchic conflict that played a part in the ideas of
Hobbes. As we also have seen, Ibn Khaldun argued powerfully
for the conflict origin, but he restricted the argument to the con-
flict between nomadic herdsmen and sedentary horticulturalists,
of whom the former were the more favored. The nomads, it
should be remembered, had neither class stratification nor private
property, but the settled communities typically were stratified,
and this factor must be regarded as a prerequisite for an impor-
tant aspect of successful conquest: the preservation by force of a
privileged social position as it becomes occupied by the incoming
conquerors.

The conflict theorists in more modern academic times were
led by sociologists Ludwig Gumplowicz, Franz Oppenheimer,
Albion Small, and Lester Ward. All were heavily impressed by
"Darwinian" conflict and survival theory, which they combined
with an emphasis on the permanent subjugation of losers by
winners—that is, they considered the state a product of *conquest*
as well as of conflict-inspired selection-and-survival.[6]

An alternative to extrasocietal conflict as a reason for the
rise of the state has been proposed in the present century. That
the classical origins of the pristine states in Mesopotamia, the
Indus River region, the Yellow River region in China, the New

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6. Oppenheimer states the importance of conquest succinctly as fol-
lows (1914, p. 68): "The moment when first the conqueror spared his
victim in order permanently to exploit him in productive work, was of
incomparable historical importance. It gave birth to nation and state; to
right and the higher economics, with all the developments and ramifications
which have grown and which will hereafter grow out of them."

World Valley of Mexico, and coastal Peru all seem to have involved irrigation systems has suggested that the factors of great bureaucratic power, high population density, intensive and high agricultural production, sedentary urbanism, or various combinations of these are responsible for the rise of the state, or at least the "Oriental" version of it.

The roots of the theory lay in Marx's suggestion that the course of the evolution of civilization in the Orient was different from and independent of that of the West. A latter-day Marxist scholar, Karl Wittfogel, used this idea to buttress his own full-scale interpretation of the rise of the ancient states in the Near East and Asia. Since the extension and maintenance of an extensive "hydraulic" system (of irrigation and flood control) presupposes a central authority, Wittfogel (1957) proposed this factor as the cause of the rise of the Oriental state, and of its "despotic" character as well. Wittfogel theorized that the ancient Oriental state was centralized because its mode of production required it, but importantly also, this control over production *enabled* the centralized state to exercise total power in other spheres as well. A presumption here is that if despotism is possible, the state will exercise it. (A stray thought: a state is seen as "despotic" when it represses its citizens; but if it *needs* to forcefully repress, is not this a sign of its weakness? Wittfogel's argument ought to mean that a large intricate hydraulic system would help a state to be *centralized* and *strong*—which is not the same thing as "repressive despotism.")

As we noted in chapter 1, several modern archaeologists working with data from the areas of the archaic civilizations have made some (necessarily limited) comparisons with the aim of discovering the essential features that regularly define civilization. Their findings imply that these features attend the origin, or "birth," of civilization. The most famous of these scholars, V. Gordon Childe, summarized his thoughts in a comparison of Egypt, the Indus River valley, and Mesopotamia (1950). He felt that the "urban revolution" is the hallmark of civilization, and that it develops other salient characteristics in its wake; the main "mover" toward urbanism, he believed, was the development of intensive food production that could support not only a dense population but also provide a sufficient "concentrated social sur-

plus" to support an elite hierarchy and a repressive state to maintain its dominance.

Others have agreed with Childe's emphasis on intensive food production, but all the cases reviewed,[7] whether agreeing with Childe or not on specifics (such as the question of the significance of "urbanism"), share one common fault. This fault lies in supposing that the presence of a certain necessary condition for the development of urbanization is a sufficient explanation of it (cf. Webb, 1968). Sufficient food for a dense population and to feed nonproducers is of course necessary, as an enabler, but as Carneiro (1961) has shown so cogently, such an enabler is not a cause: many, many societies can produce enough food to support a denser population, but do not actually "grow" or "develop" as a consequence; they just do not work hard—a perfectly natural state of rest, wholly to be expected.

Many of the aforementioned modern anthropologists, including Childe, often mention warfare, or conquest, as a contributing factor to the rise of a ruling group. This is of course an inadequate statement of causality since warfare is so general, especially among tribal societies. Perhaps warfare under some *special* ecological conditions might be specific enough to be cited as causal, or partially so. Robert Carneiro (1961, 1970) noted in numerous well-documented examples that when areas of unusually good land were surrounded by areas of very poor productivity, population pressure caused increased warfare. In tribal areas the defeated or weaker groups, being rather nomadic, simply moved away. But in areas where retreat was impossible it is likely that strong and weak groups existed in proximity, finally arriving at consistent rather than sporadic dominant-submissive and/or warlike relations. Carneiro goes on to speculate that if the situation were exaggerated, as presumably it was in the areas of the archaic civilizations (where *very* rich land was *very* circumscribed), so that defeated groups were absolutely tied down by the combination of environment and constant application of, or threat of, military dominance, this structure would easily turn into the primitive state. Malcolm Webb (1968), an archaeologist, has defended the ethnologist Carneiro's thesis with suggestive data

7. Steward (1959), White (1959), Braidwood and Willey (1962), Adams (1966), Armillas (1968).

from both the classical archaeological areas and from ethnolog-
ically known secondary states. In subsequent chapters we shall
note some exceptions, however, and suggest a broader hypothesis
that will not depend so heavily on geography.

In the same sense that Carneiro's circumscription theory can
be amended to include more of our cases, so can Ester Boserup's
(1965) closely related argument that land will not be used inten-
sively as long as cultivators can expand to virgin areas. Geographic
circumscription can thus cause a rise of population density that
would stimulate a more intensive agriculture. This theory makes
perfectly good sense, but, as in the case of Carneiro's, I think the
circumscription is more often nongeographical, usually military
(though often, of course, combined with important geographic
considerations). In any and all cases, however, it is important to
note that circumscription by whatever factors—geographic, social-
demographic, military, or combinations of these—does not do
anything by itself. It is a great circumstantial help, however, to a
governing bureaucracy, which is the active agent in planning or
carrying out defensive and urban arrangements, ways to intensify
agriculture, and means of governing the population better. And
all these factors make higher densities possible. (Boserup's theory
has mostly to do with the decisions of individuals; forced by popu-
lation pressure on scarce land, farmers intensify their own efforts.
But here we are referring to the decisions of governments.)

Morton Fried (1967) has rather more elaborately divided the
problem of the rise of states into component parts to be dealt
with separately, somewhat as suggested in chapter 1 above, pp. 15–
16. Fried delineates the stages of the evolution of political struc-
tures into *egalitarian* societies ("band and tribal" society in the
terms I have used [Service 1962]), *ranked* societies ("chiefdoms"
[Service 1962]), *stratified* societies, and *states*. These are stages in
the progressive emergence of the basic elements of governmental
structure, those elements being permanent centralized leadership
and legalized monopoly of power to back it up.

"A rank society is one in which positions of valued status are
somehow limited so that not all those of sufficient talent to occupy
such statuses actually achieve them" (Fried 1967, p. 109). Rank
societies may also be stratified at the same time, although Fried
sees stratification as a later development. Stratification is, in Fried's

view, almost synonymous with the state: "Once stratification exists,
the cause of stateship is implicit and the actual formation of the
state is begun" (p. 185). Fried is careful to point out that states
can arise under many circumstances, "but each pristine state cer-
tainly had to traverse this stage or level [stratified society]" (p.
185n).

Fried defines a stratified society as "one in which members
of the same sex and equivalent age status do not have equal access
to the basic resources that sustain life" (p. 186). A stratified
society is thus a *class* society in a Marxist sense, but with the
refinement that the classes are defined in terms of access to capital
goods (not possession of consumer goods), and not in terms of
relationship to the "means of production." But this is similar to
Marxism in that a basic difference in economic power is what
defines the difference in the classes, and these are different kinds
of *property;* or put another way, distributive systems determine
political systems.

How did these different kinds of property rights originate?
First, and most important in Fried's scheme, is the factor of popu-
lation pressure on resources (normally land, or irrigation water
for the land, which amounts to the same thing). The pressure
may be from internal growth or by accretion. Whatever the means,
a ranked society has powerful kinship sanctions regarding equal
distribution (or redistribution) of resources, but unequal kinship
statuses. In dire times of overpopulation and stress on resources,
the central kin groups of higher status will exert a stronger claim
to the resources than the more "distant" relatives of the chief's
lineage. As the situation becomes more exacerbated so will the
magnitude of the internal disputes, pressures, and conflicts (p.
225). "Nonkinship mechanisms" of political and economic power
then come into play. And "in the final analysis" these manifesta-
tions of power (army, militia, police) defend the general social
order, the heart of which is the central order of stratification (p.
230). As in Marxism, again, the state thus originates as a repres-
sive structure to maintain class ("strata") inequality.

In well-reasoned and well-documented arguments, Fried ex-
plicitly denies that either warfare or slavery had a role in the
origins of the pristine states (pp. 213–23). Once in existence,
however, the state had the power both to make war more effectively

than before, and to control captives as slaves. It should be noted also that despite his theory's basic resemblance to Marxism, Fried is not talking about the origin of the class system in Morgan and Engels's terms—commerce, the production of commodities, and "capitalistic" private property. Fried's description of strata with "differential access to basic resources" has to do with property, in the sense of differential economic control and power; but the differential may have been, and likely was, among hereditary *kin* groups rather than groups of capitalist owners and nonowners. This modification, alone should make his theory much more palatable to modern ethnology than the original Morgan-Engels theory because it conforms better to some of the facts of primitive life as we know them today.[8] But, as we shall see subsequently, mounting evidence discounts the differential access and the internal conflict theories, as it does the Marxian "class struggle" theory.

There are other modern anthropological theories of the origin of the state, but the above are the most important of the general, more philosophical sort. The most interesting of the others were developed in the course of their authors' work in their particular areas of specialization. It will be more convenient, therefore, to discuss them in the chapters dealing with those areas. For example, the theories of Oberg, Rattray, and Nadel will be described in terms of their own ethnological work in Africa; those of Childe, Braidwood, and Adams in the context of their archaeological work in the Near East; and those of Coe and Sanders and Price in the chapter on Mesoamerica, Steward in the chapter on Peru,[9] and Lattimore in the treatment of China. Others will be touched on more briefly as they come up in context. Most of these are variants of the conflict school, in the vein of either the Marxian class-conflict scheme or the conquest theory. Lattimore's is by far the most complex, however, another reason for describing it quite fully in terms of the specific data that spawned it.

8. Robert McC. Adams (1966) has reasoned similarly. His work will be discussed in the chapter on Mesopotamia.

9. Julian Steward, to be sure, had published a general theoretical article on the causes of state development (1949), but he later modified it so much (1955) that it is better to take a still later (1959) conception as developed in his discussions of Peru.

3

Man in a State of Nature:

The Egalitarian Society

THE VARIOUS KINDS OF societies in the world have been classified in many ways: technologically, as in the hunting, herding, farming trichotomy; geographically, by continents or smaller "culture-areas"; racially, as red Indians, white Europeans, black Africans, yellow Asians; linguistically, as Aryans, Malayo-Polynesians, Souians; and perhaps earliest and most pervasively of all, as to their sociopolitical institutions. This latter classification distinguished mainly between peoples with some sort of formal government and those without it.

This dichotomy was, as noted earlier, of central importance in the political theories of the eighteenth century, when arguments as to the purposes of government, the evolution of civilized institutions, the future of civilization, and so on, hung importantly on conceptions of the nature of human nature and, of course, its significance in social life. The important philosophers of that period all felt that the life of primitive peoples in precivil society was life in a "state of nature," untrammeled by our form of artificial (i.e., governmental) constraint.

But as we have noted, the philosophers lacked accurate information about primitive peoples. For that reason, their versions of human nature could range from Hobbes's idea that primitive life was a "war of every one against every one" to Rousseau's conception of idyllic and peaceful freedom. Common to all, however, was the idea that primitive society was anarchical, and hence that the nature of that social life would reveal the essentials of man's inherent social qualities.

It is interesting that the actual nature of primitive prestate society as we now know it ethnologically can support both Hobbes and Rousseau, each in part. *War,* as Hobbes meant it—as threat or imminence as much as action—certainly is an omnipresent feature of primitive life, as is, in part, an appearance of the Rousseauian peace and generosity. As we shall see, these two aspects of social life coexist; the threats of violence caused by the ego-demands of individuals are countered by social demands of generosity, kindness, and courtesy. What the philosophers did not consider was that a society without governmental forms was still not truly in a state of freedom. There are numerous informal social ways of constraining people besides the explicitly governmental, and in the absence of statelike institutions these may even be correspondingly stronger than those domestic-cultural constraints that we are ourselves accustomed to.

Any society, no matter how small and primitive, is organized, with social behavior structured in important ways—otherwise it would not be a society. Even an informal part-time group like a neighborhood gang has a structure, as modern sociological research has (perhaps unnecessarily) taught us. All societies control the social relations of their members by means of rules of etiquette and normative sanctions defining right and wrong behavior. So fundamental are these that they begin in infancy—as "socialization" (in sociology-talk) and as "enculturation" (in anthropology-talk). Also universal, and very similar to the above rules and sanctions, is the subdivision of society into statuses and related behavioral roles.

In a small primitive society, much of social life is smoothly regulated by these codes, rules, expectations, habits, and customs that are related to etiquette, ethic, and role. And because these are normally not explicit, nor revealed by frequent breaches, the

society might give the impression of freedom and lack of conflict, as Rousseau would have it.

But people are not all alike and an individual person varies in his lifetime so that not all persons fit their statuses and the normal role expectations smoothly. More important, probably no society is able to perfectly socialize all of its members or present unambiguous rules that fit all occasions. And of course sometimes a person is "crazy." (A perfectly good definition of a crazy person is that he behaves unpredictably, failing to do what the society expects of him.) Any society is therefore certain to have faced the problem of individual deviancy at some time or other and will have some means of dealing with it.

A greater problem is the synchronization of the relations of groups to one another. And when the groups are wholly autonomous societies the problem is of course acute. All societies must face the facts of diversity, deviancy, and group conflict at times, even if rarely. At this point we can see Hobbes's view as correct, particularly in his emphasis on the threat, the potentiality as well as the actuality, of conflict. But as in the case of Rousseau, Hobbes did not conceive of nongovernmental social devices that could so successfully function to control the conflict. Each relied on his own version of human nature to explain what went on in primitive society.

Equality and Influence

Most of the enculturation of rules of etiquette is, in small societies particularly, accomplished within the domestic family. Similarly, the most usual hierarchical statuses are also to be found in the domestic establishment. These are the various sets of parent-child, older-younger, male-female statuses—and they are, of course, profoundly inegalitarian because they are basically systems of authority.

But they are not *political* systems of authority and hierarchy; they are *domestic.* All societies have such hierarchical age-sex statuses, although of course they vary somewhat from society to society. But political problems are not domestic problems. Loosely defined, political problems concern deviant behavior that injures someone *outside* the deviant's own family, and difficulties of

various kinds in the relations *among* different groups such as families and larger kin groups, rather than within them. Political problems often may be like domestic problems in certain respects —two men fighting are two men fighting—but two brothers fighting may be pulled apart and their quarrel settled by their father, whereas two men fighting who are from unrelated families present an entirely different kind of problem of mediation, one that can have very serious consequences for the whole society.

This latter case, like all cases of difficulty among families rather than within one family, are very difficult to compose in the earliest forms of primitive society simply because there is no true hierarchy of authority outside that of the kinship statuses. The greatly distinguishing attribute of these societies is that outside of the familistic age-sex hierarchy the society is so profoundly egalitarian. So striking is this, and so equally striking and profound is the *in*egalitarianism of later chiefdoms and states, that it will prove convenient as well as appropriately indicative of this great difference to label the two kinds of societies respectively as *egalitarian* and *hierarchical*. The absence of nonfamilistic authority positions in the former and their presence in the latter, of course, render their respective solutions to political problems entirely distinct.

Charles Darwin saw this problem with the first primitive people he ever encountered. He observed that the "equality" characteristic of the Indians of Tierra del Fuego "must for a long time retard their civilization." Equality, it may be remarked, retards many things of practical, day-to-day importance also. Consider, in hunting societies particularly, how frequently some sort of ascendent person, a leader, must be necessary for the success of a coordinated action, yet how difficult for him to lead when the ideal personality is self-effacing.

A leader necessarily has peculiar characteristics in egalitarian society. Since he is an authority without formal status, the position must be based entirely on personal qualities. This in turn, would mean that different activities or different contexts would probably bring different persons to the fore. A person directing a ceremony is usually an old man, well-versed in tribal mythology and ceremonial customs because of his age; the leader of a war party, on

the other hand, might be distinguished by his youthful vigor and courage.

Adam Ferguson long ago recognized this characteristic of egalitarian societies (1767, pp. 83–84):

. . . They have in fact no degree of subordination different from the distribution of function, which follows the differences of age, talents, and dispositions. Personal qualities give an ascendant in the midst of occasions which require their exertion; but in times of relaxation, leave no vestige of power or prerogative.

A superior person seems to be essentially an advisor, not an executive. For example, Father Le Jeune, in 1634, spoke of the Canadian Cree Indians thus (in Thwaites 1896–1901, vol. 6, p. 243):[1]

All the authority of their chief is in his tongue's end; for he is powerful insofar as he is eloquent and he will not be obeyed unless he pleased the Savages.

Father Le Jeune said of another Indian group, the Montagnais-Naskapi of Labrador, that the individual Indian will not "endure in the least those who seem desirous of assuming superiority over others" (ibid., p. 165).

M. J. Meggitt has said, with reference to the Australian elders (1962, p. 250): "Whatever *de facto* control they had over the actions of others simply derived from their ability to make suggestions based on first-hand knowledge of commonly-occurring situations. . . ." This is reminiscent of the Eskimo, who call a person of importance by a title, *Isumatag*, which means, "he who thinks."

R. L. Sharp points out with respect to the Yir Yoront of Australia that whereas kinship statuses are unequal by their nature, this confers no absolute high or low status (1958, p. 5):

1. The illustrations that follow are quite unbalanced, for they represent a larger sample from hunting-gathering bands than from the more numerous tribal societies. This imbalance was caused by the fact that such very primitive peoples as the Eskimos, African Bushmen, and Australians, for example, particularly have, because of their relative isolation in marginal habitats, preserved a more purely aboriginal culture into modern times than have most horticultural tribes. For a wider sampling, consult the studies listed in appendix 1.

The nature of the [kinship] roles which are played by every Yir Yoront means that every individual relationship between males involves a definite and accepted inferiority or superiority. A man has no dealing with another man (or with women, either) on exactly equal terms. And where each is at the same time in relatively weak positions and in an equal number of relatively strong positions, no one can be either absolutely strong or absolutely weak. A hierarchy of a pyramidal or inverted-Y type to include all the men in the system is an impossibility. Without a radical change in the entire kinship structure, the Yir Yoront cannot even tolerate mild chiefs or headmen, while a leader with absolute authority over the whole group would be unthinkable.

Sometimes a person combines high degrees of skill, courage, good judgment, and experience so that his very versatility in a variety of contexts might give the appearance of authority of full chiefship. But even in such a case, this is not an *office,* a permanent position in the society. Rather, it depends entirely on his personal qualities, real and ascribed—power of the sort usually called *charismatic.* But just because this position is personal rather than a post, he cannot truly command. He can only hold the position so long as people respect him and listen to him; it is a kind of moral influence that he wields. Radcliffe-Brown (1948, p. 45), writing of the Negritos of the Andaman Islands, mentioned how certain personal qualities such as skill in hunting and in warfare may be combined with generosity, kindness, and freedom from bad temper, such that the person becomes highly respected and his opinions carry more weight than other still older men. But Radcliffe-Brown is careful to point out that this is entirely personal *influence* and not a position of authority.

The self-effacement of men of influence is well illustrated by the South African Bushmen. Elizabeth Thomas, in describing the case of a man who had won high status over two other men who had expected to hold it, says (1959, p. 183):

But neither ever contested Toma's position as leader for it was not a position which Toma held with force or pressure but simply by his wisdom and ability, and people prospered under him. No Bushman wants prominence, but Toma went further than most in avoiding prominence, he had almost no possessions and gave away everything that came into his hands. He was diplomatic, for in exchange for his self-imposed poverty, he won the respect and following of all the people there. He enjoyed his position, and, being strangely free from the normal strains and jealousies of Bushmen, he saw justice clearly and hence he led his people well.

An important characteristic of an influential person is (among others) the ability to sense public opinion. This is described as particularly important among the Athabascan Indians of Canada (MacNeish 1956, p. 151):

In sum, the leader characteristically has a very tenuous position in Northeastern Athabascan society. He might serve as advisor, co-ordinator, director and perhaps initiator of specific military actions and/or occasional and particular economic activities beyond the day-to-day hunting and snaring routine. Also, by virtue of his prestige, gained from his superior abilities and his awe-inspiring powers, he might act as the prime opinion-giver in social matters within the band. His "authority" lay in putting his stamp of approval upon decisions or viewpoints arrived at by the group as a whole or, more specifically, his male peers. The wise chief or leader had his finger upon the pulse of individual and group opinions. He had to woo others to his way of thinking or, that failing, to alter his course accordingly. His position might be buttressed by the attribution of powerful medicine and by the Europeans' evalution and use as "trading chief" of his already dominant role. But the power of a strong or "great" leader lay in his influence rather than his "legal" authority. Ordinarily he had neither the moral nor physical resources to impose his will. Birket-Smith's characterization of the Chipewyan chief as *primus inter pares* keynotes the position of the Northern Dené leader.

Authority and equality must be incompatible, since true authority rests on hierarchy. Yet some of the purposes of authority found in civil society are somehow accomplished in these egalitarian societies; and certainly the same kinds of political problems exist that persons of authority normally cope with in other societies, however different in degree. As outlined in chapter 1, the activities or roles that authority normally assumes with respect to political problems are three: reinforcement, leadership, and mediation. It may be useful to discuss the peculiarities of egalitarian society in these terms.

Reinforcement

Much if not most of the reinforcing of a social order is psychological, habitual, and customary, a constraint of social behavior accomplished through systems of rewards and punishments within the domestic family. But individuals differ, families differ, and cultural systems of social behavior are not always plain to every-

one, so that some of the time some person or other is likely to violate the generally accepted familistic norms of behavior. This means that all societies must have some form of sanctioned deterrence of delinquency that is political—that is, superimposed upon the domestic family's role. The term *reinforcement* will hereafter be used to include both domestic enculturation and unconscious internalization, as well as explicit, consciously applied positive and negative sanctions.

All systems of authority, in the end, seem to rest on some accepted definitions of delinquency accompanied by appropriate punishments. To civilized man, these are normally explicit as formal law. But egalitarian primitive society lacks formal authoritative offices and formal law. We find there only persons of influence and only general public customary sanctions rather than laws. Thus the negative sanctions in such a society are often not administered by any particular person at all. This is simply because most of the rules of proper social behavior in primitive society are in the realm of etiquette. Egalitarian society is normally small and the social relations are therefore mostly face-to-face. And the usual punishment in any society for a breach of etiquette is some amount of general disapproval or withdrawal from the culprit, depriving him of reciprocal courtesy and attentiveness. The extreme of such punishment is of course ostracism, in primitive society a fate practically equivalent to death. Any breach of etiquette is observable, so that no one can ever escape some consequences of it (whereas crimes can be concealed). But the sanctions against a breach of etiquette are not invoked by any designated person, but by the community itself.

It is only the rare true delinquent, the "crazy one," who can repeatedly withstand the normal sanctions of the community code. These sanctions—gossip, ridicule, withdrawal, and so on—may not stop him, and sometimes the longer they are applied the more he is committed to withstand them. But a person who so consistently misbehaves is likely to harm families and groups other than his own, and this endangers his own family because of the likelihood of retaliation—which often results in feud. It is very common in primitive society that a delinquent's own group will plot to do away with him if all other means fail to control him.

In the few contexts in which reinforcement is a function of

particular persons, it is very informal and largely a matter of social status rather than true authority. The most usual case of this is simply that of an elder admonishing a younger person. This of course is standard behavior within families—the older sibling guides and rules the younger, the parent punishes the children— and it is therefore domestic rather than political action. But in small primitive societies, the status "elder" accords some considerable measure of influence outside the elder's immediate family also, and therefore may function in the context of the reinforcement of any younger persons toward conformity. Similarly, the male status normally confers more influence than female status, and we do find in primitive societies that normally it is men who are occupied in nondomestic, political-like situations, rather than women. So, in summary, we may say that the sex and age status differentiations of domestic families may function in vague, but wider, contexts of reinforcement so that they approach true political actions. But it should be remembered that this is so only in relatively small, face-to-face societies that are themselves familistic, however attenuated the actual kinship ties.

Leadership

The role of authority on occasions of concerted group action is normally the most visible of the activities summed up by the term leadership. But as already indicated, there is no permanent position of leader in egalitarian society, no true "chief." Further, egalitarian society does not even tolerate a suggestion of it. "Bossiness" would not do, and humility is of the highest value.

It was this self-effacement of leadership and this apparent orderliness of society without visible authority positions that led such well-known writers as Walter Bagehot and Sidney Hartland to speak of the "cake of custom," the power of cultural norms over the individuality of persons. Herbert Spencer, on the other hand, was led to assume that this very egalitarianism allowed greater scope for individuals than did the later authoritarian state. Emile Durkheim, however, disagreed with Spencer in an interesting passage (1933, p. 94):

Rather than dating the effacement of the individual from the institution of a despotic authority, we must, on the contrary, see in this

institution the first step towards individualism. Chiefs are, in fact, the first personalities who emerge from the social mass. Their exceptional situation, putting them beyond the level of others, gives them a distinct physiognomy and accordingly confers individuality upon them. In dominating society, they are no longer forced to follow all of its movements. Of course, it is from the group that they derive their power, but once power is organized it becomes autonomous and makes them capable of personal activity. A source of initiative is thus opened which had not existed before then. There is, hereafter, someone who can produce new things and even, in certain measure, deny collective usages. Equilibrium has been broken.

What a confusion! Opposite conclusions are drawn from the salient characteristics of small primitive societies: their egalitarianism and their social docility despite the lack of authoritarian leaders. This may mean that such societies have no formal authority positions because they do not need them, as Rousseau would have it. But why do they not need them? Because the cake of custom is so thick upon them that they can think and act only in terms of collective norms, say some.

At any rate, egalitarian society does seem to have leadership when it is needed. What it lacks is permanent and pervasive leadership positions, with the ego-satisfying embellishments that go with and mark hierarchical authority positions. This should not be interpreted as necessarily meaning that persons are leveled out in all respects, that conformity is necessarily greater than in any other kind of society. It simply means that superiority of some sort or another is intermittent and personal rather than permanent and ascribed to an office. Durkheim was as far wrong in denying individuality to the persons of egalitarian society as he was in ascribing it to a chief in other, more politically advanced societies. But more of this latter point in the next chapter.

↘ Mediation

In the egalitarian society the right to use physical force is not monopolized by a public power or any other authority that suppresses internal conflict by legal means. Is this again a case of not needing force because the cake of custom is a sufficient deterrent? Or is it that there are enough informal means of preserving order in a small society that formal government is unnecessary? Perhaps it is some of both.

Usually, because the societies are so small, conflicts are between kinsmen. In such cases, it is often possible for an aged and respected relative whom the contenders have in common to intervene and arrange a satisfactory conclusion. Ideally, the arbitration should be by a relative who is equidistant from both so that there would be no expectation of favoritism.

In many disputes one person may be clearly in the right and the other in the wrong, so much so that public opinion is nearly unanimous. In such cases it may be said that, in a sense, the public is itself the mediator. When the issue is not clear, however, difficulties arise, since one of the salient characteristics of egalitarian society is that unanimity of opinion seems to be sought in political decisions, unlike our familiar majority-rule. One of the most usual recourses is for the disputants to engage in a public duel or contest of some sort.

Among the Eskimo, for example, wrestling and head-butting contests are typical forms of public dueling. More common, and certainly more interesting, are the famous Eskimo song duels (Hoebel 1954, p. 93):

Song duels are used to work off grudges and disputes of all orders, save murder. An East Greenlander, however, may seek his satisfaction for the murder of a relative through a song contest if he is physically too weak to gain his end, or if he is so skilled in singing as to feel certain of victory. Inasmuch as East Greenlanders get so engrossed in the mere artistry of singing as to forget the cause of the grudge, this is understandable. Singing skill among these Eskimos equals or out-ranks gross physical prowess.

The singing style is highly conventionalized. The successful singer uses the traditional patterns of composition which he attempts to deliver with such finesse as to delight the audience to enthusiastic applause. He who is most heartily applauded is "winner." To win a song contest brings no restitution in its train. The sole advantage is in prestige.

The song duel is usually carried on at some length, giving the public time to form a consensus. Most people probably have an initial idea of which side they are on, but they want to reserve expression of this opinion until they find whether it accords with that of the majority. Gradually more people are more overtly laughing at one duelist's song than at the other's, hinting at their own preference but not overtly committing them to it. But this can then turn very quickly into unanimity.

Among the Australian aborigines disputes are typically settled by means of a spear-throwing duel. From a prescribed distance the accuser is allowed to hurl a number of spears, while the defendant is allowed only to dodge them. The public can applaud the throwing ability of the accuser and the adroitness and agility of the defendant. As in the case of the Eskimo song duel, the public gradually realizes a majority opinion, which then quickly turns to unanimity. When this is in favor of the defendant, the accuser simply stops throwing. But if the defendant loses, he is supposed to allow one of the spears to wound him.

These are some of the ways disputes are settled between members of the same community. But these means will not suffice when the dispute is between members of different communities. The more distant the two groups, or the less known they are to each other, the more difficult it is to mediate a quarrel. A primitive kinship group such as a lineage or clan reacts as a whole to an injury to one of its members. Conversely, it assumes that a counter-injury to any members of the culprit band will serve the law of retribution.

Obviously there is great danger that the above injury/retribution cycle could develop into a full-scale feud. Retribution or retaliation in the "eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" vein does not ordinarily result in a return to the original state of equilibrium, simply because the contenders are not likely to view the original injury in the same light, which makes it unlikely that they would agree on what constituted an equivalent retaliation. People in these primitive societies seem to realize this as a danger and sometimes even to anticipate ways to prevent it. The most common attempt to prevent feuds between communities are what have been called "expiatory encounters." For example, sometimes in cases of homicide in aboriginal Australia the guilty person is required by his own kinsmen to submit to a shower of spears thrown at him by close relatives of the slain person. Once he is wounded an end to the conflict is possible, even though payment has not been made in full. Sometimes, too, the kinsmen of the culprit may punish him before the other side has a chance to retaliate—again in recognition of the danger of feud.

But sometimes, of course, feuds do occur, and they can fester and erupt into larger-scale true warfare between tribes. Warfare

among egalitarian societies, however, is seldom a pitched and bloody affair. This kind of society cannot sustain very many men in the field, and hence the battles are neither large nor protracted. But more important in limiting the scale of war is the egalitarian nature of the society. Leadership is ephemeral, for one thing, and the leader has no strong organization or authority to conscript or otherwise force people to serve his bidding. And he cannot force people to be brave by threats of legal punishment for dereliction of duty. Warriors left on their own usually will not run grave risks to their lives, and hence pitched battles are rare—ambush and surprise raids are the normal form of warfare. When a real battle does take place it is more noisy than bloody, as in the following example from northern Australia (Hart and Pilling 1960, pp. 86–87):

Thus Tiwi battles had to be the confused, disorderly, inconclusive things they always were. They usually lasted all day, during which about two-thirds of the elapsed time was consumed in violent talk and mutual abuse between constantly changing central characters and satellites. The remaining third of the time was divided between duels involving a pair of men who threw spears at each other until one was wounded, and brief flurries of more general weapon throwing involving perhaps a dozen men at a time, which ended whenever somebody, even a spectator, was hit. As a result of this full day of violence, perhaps a few of the cases would be settled that night—by a father handing over his delayed daughter, or a man with a disputed wife relinquishing her to her rightful husband—but when the war party left the next day to return home, the number of cases settled was likely to be less than the number of new feuds, grievances and injuries that had originated during the day of battle. For not only did the participants carry away from the battle field a vivid memory of all the physical wounds, intended or accidental, inflicted by whom on whom, but they also brooded long and suspiciously upon who had supported whom and why, either verbally or with spear in hand.

Finally, through all these disputes and hostile actions between senior men ran their united suspicion of bachelors. The only "battle" in two years between large groups drawn from distinct bands that had a clear-cut and definite final act was one fought at Rongu in late 1928. On that occasion, after disputing and fighting among themselves from early morning until late afternoon, all the old men present from both war parties gradually channeled all their anger toward one unfortunate young Mandiimbula bachelor whom they finally accused of going around from band to band creating misunderstandings between various elders. Several elders on both sides testified publicly that their mistrust

of each other had started shortly after the bachelor in question had begun hanging around their households; whereupon the senior warriors of the two opposing armies had no difficulty in deciding that most of their suspicions of each other "were all his fault," and with great unanimity ganged up on the bachelor and quickly clubbed him into unconsciousness for being a troublemaker and a suspicion spreader. In the midst of battle the gerontocracy had reasserted its solidarity by finding a bachelor scapegoat upon whom to unload all their mutual suspicions and aggressions.

External Relations

In the examples so far we have dealt largely with intrasocietal political problems. But when we turned above to questions of feuds and battles we touched on the essence of foreign political governmental problems, the ability to make war or peace. If government is mainly an organization formed to wield legal force, then it has not only the internal contexts for its use of or threat of force, but also the foreign. The two contexts should be separated, of course, for they are very different: Domestic constraints and sanctions (and law as well in civil society) are an omnipresent aspect of the problems of keeping the internal social order, but external affairs are essentially lawless, and unordered by mutual customs or public sanctions. Egalitarian society cannot wage war or make peace effectively via alliances and treaties because a responsible body, a governmental authority, is lacking. The external political problems are there, however, although the means of dealing with them are, as in the case of intrasocietal political problems, simply an extension of certain personal and domestic capabilities into the wider field.

It seems apparent, as in the previously mentioned case of feud, that primitive people recognize the danger of warfare and take measures to reduce its likelihood. These measures are various, of course, but they are all reducible to one generic mode of alliance-making, the reciprocal exchange.

Reciprocal exchanges are the ways in which all kinship organizations extend or intensify the normal interpersonal bonds of kinship statuses. Any two relationships of kinship imply standardized obligations and rights that are symbolized by exchanges of

goods and favors (as well as by prescribed forms of etiquette). Such exchanges are normally both utilitarian and symbolic. This means that a valuable present given freely to a person obligates that person to respond appropriately—*as though* personal ties actually existed as symbolized by the exchange. Something like this is actually pan-human and can be observed even in the obligations of alliance that young children lay on each other in the playgrounds of the modern world. But in primitive society reciprocal exchanges are taken with great seriousness simply because the society is egalitarian and anarchical. The rules and expectations that govern reciprocal exchanges are the very essence of domestic life, of course, but they are also the sole means available to primitive people in their struggles to cope with the political problems of war and peace. Failure and success in alliance-making is failure and success at peace-making. This sounds Hobbesian—to suggest that strife tends to occur, more or less normally so to speak, unless positive actions are taken to avoid it, that the deterioration of peace-making actions tends to result in warfare. I believe this is true: It is usually idle to talk of the "causes of war"; it is the evolution of various *causes of peace* that can be studied in the human record; and a large and essential part of the evolution of political organization is simply an extension and intensification of peace-making means. More: It can be claimed that not only the evolution of government, but the very evolution of society and culture itself, depends on the evolution of the means of "waging" peace in ever-widening social spheres—by continually adding new political ingredients to the social organization.

Reciprocal exchanges in primitive society are of many kinds and have multifarious implications. Here we want to discuss only the important ones used in alliance-making among sovereign groups. These are mainly of two kinds (although each can have many variations and permutations): marriages and exchanges of goods. The latter is not exactly "trade" as we know it in modern times, for although modern trade for profit may in some senses help keep international peace, alliance-making exchanges of goods in primitive society are giftlike personal exchanges showing generosity and friendliness, rather than impersonal extractions of what the traffic will bear, "buying cheap and selling dear." The other

political organization is not particularly plain, nor its boundaries consistently visible. Most primitive societies have overlapping and interlocking sets of social (hence potentially political) relations with other apparently autonomous societies.

This rather indeterminant character of primitive political bodies is largely created by the ephemeral nature of leadership and by the fact that different political problems are solved directly and expediently, if they are solved at all, after which the system relapses into anarchy. And added to this is the fact that different kinds of problems and activities will muster different numbers of people. Assemblages called together for feasts or dances will normally attract more people than, say, a funeral. But any such assembly, because it forms a social group, however temporary, can undertake some political functions. Radcliffe-Brown put it this way, speaking of Australian aborigines (1940, p. xix):

The point to be noted is that such assemblies for religious or ceremonial purposes consist on different occasions of different collections of hordes [local kin groups]. Each assembly constitutes for the time being a political society. If there is a feud between two of the constituent hordes, it must either be settled and peace made or it must be kept in abeyance during the meeting, to break out again later on. Thus on different occasions a horde belongs temporarily to different larger temporary political groups. But there is no definite permanent group of this kind of which a horde can be said to be a part. Conditions similar to this are found in some parts of Africa—for example among the Tallensi.

The Tallensi mentioned above are sedentary agriculturalists, a much larger society than the simple, nomadic, hunting-gathering hordes of the Australian desert. Yet they and many others, as distinct in various ways as Iroquois and North American Plains Indians, are all stateless egalitarian societies, making it difficult for an outsider to discern the limits of the society. Political events emerge from social events, the size of any gathering depends on its function, and attenuated kinship ties radiate in all directions so that the kindred—the true and constant society of relatives from the point of view of an individual—is not the same group of persons from family to family. And of course no kindred corresponds to any territorial demarkation, nor to any other distinc-

tion such as linguistic or cultural traits. The larger tribal societies, still within the category of egalitarian societies, have kinship groupings that are named and sometimes territorially demarked so that they are objectified and made corporate, so to speak, transcending the personal kindred and outlasting changes in membership from generation to generation. These are normally local lineages of patrilineally or matrilineally related persons, and clans (associations of related lineages). But even here, one cannot demark *the* society. Several clans may unite for some common purpose—ritual, festival, or war—and fall the next day into their constituent separate parts. This quality of structural subdivision and reconstitution depending on events is so formally equilibrated in some societies that they have been labeled a structural-functional type: *segmentary* societies.[4]

Evans-Pritchard epitomized this in concluding his essay on the Nuer (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940, p. 296):

. . . The consistency we perceive in Nuer political structure is one of process rather than of morphology. The process consists of complementary tendencies towards fission and fusion which, operating alike in all political groups by a series of inclusions and exclusions that are controlled by the changing social situation, enable us to speak of a system and to say that this system is characteristically defined by the relativity and opposition of its segments.

Emphasizing that egalitarian society is essentially without fixed political boundaries implies that the societies with formal political organization *are* bounded, and that this is an important function of, and aspect of, true political organization. Sir Henry Maine knew this and made it part of his famous distinction between primitive, stateless society and civilization. Political states become based on the principle of local contiguity as they grow beyond the feasibility of uniting new members by means of exten-

4. The classic examples may be found in M. Fortes, "The Political System of the Tallensi of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast," and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, "The Nuer of the Southern Sudan," both in their *African Political Systems* (1940).

A more recent volume is devoted entirely to segmentary societies in Africa. This is John Middleton and David Tait's *Tribes without Rulers: Studies in African Segmentary Systems* (1958).

sions of kinship (Maine, 1861, p. 109). Many anthropologists have disagreed with Maine on the grounds that many primitive societies are made up of families, bands, and lineages that *are* firmly based on bounded territories. But this is beside the point: Maine clearly did not mean that primitive peoples had no conceptions of territorial boundaries at all, but that these constituent units, territorial or not, were not consistently united to each other within a boundary that enclosed the permanent political entity, whereas one of the important aspects of a state or government is the strong sense of the area within which its laws are enforced and which it defends. The pliability of egalitarian society, the great variations in its scope depending on the nature of the political problem, is dramatically illustrated in the variety of the responses of these societies to the shocking arrival of European colonists in the Americas, Africa, and Oceania.

Primitive states and chiefdoms are bounded, governed, and permanently established to a much greater degree than the egalitarian societies, and thus they offer possibilities for invaders to preserve such populations for exploitation. They may do this by replacing the governing body with their own, or more usually and more successfully, leaving the ruling group in power, as little modified as possible. This form of "indirect rule" was practiced by the Spaniards in Mexico and Peru,[5] by the English most notably in West Africa, Kenya, and Rhodesia, and by missionaries in Hawaii, Tonga, and Tahiti.

But egalitarian societies offered no such possibilities and their adaptations to the invaders are striking illustrations of their alternative capacities for "fission and fusion." Two polar responses actually happened repeatedly: In some situations, large confederations were made of a size that were never achieved under purely

5. Inasmuch as the Spaniards were able to exploit the native Mexicans and Peruvians, whereas the English were not able to exploit the native North Americans, the English promulgated the famous "black legend," that the Spaniards were cruel and exploitative and the English correspondingly benevolent. I have argued elsewhere that this exploitation in Latin America and its relative absence in Anglo America were due to the nature of the native societies: The Mexican and Peruvian Indians had well-developed states, but the North American Indians had egalitarian societies except for some weakly developed chiefdoms in the southeastern United States and the northwest coast (Service 1971, ch. 6).

aboriginal conditions; in other situations, when confederations could not withstand the kind of pressure being applied, the tribes separated instead into small units, the better to escape defeat. One thinks immediately of the Abnaki, Mohigan, Creek, and especially the Iroquoian confederacies in eastern North America and of the more ephemeral confederations of the Great Plains (such as the great multitribal army that massacred General Custer's army) as examples of the former response. The Ojibwa of the Upper Great Lakes, however, unable to cope with either the whites or the confederated Indians, fell apart so early in the colonial epoch that they have since become well-known ethnological cases of an "individualized" and "fragmented" culture.[6]

There are excellent examples of the two processes in the American West, especially in the Great Basin of Nevada and adjacent parts of Utah and Idaho. The historical disturbance came later than in the lands further to the east and therefore descriptions have come down to us describing a more purely aboriginal situation. (It was detailed by Lewis and Clark in 1805 in the northern part of the basin, by Alexander Ross in 1824–25, and later by others.) The Indians of the basin spoke the same Shoshonean language, and their aboriginal culture and social organization was generically similar. But we have known them ethnologically as very different kinds of societies, because of the very different responses to the coming of the white man to the area.

Some of the Basin Shoshone acquired horses from New Mexico (and later firearms by trade from the north) and expanded their hunting ranges so greatly and their subsistence base so markedly that they came to resemble the mobile, warlike buffalo hunters of the Great Plains. These were the tribes known to us later as Utes. With their new way of subsistence, as well as the larger societies thus made possible, they were able to defend themselves and their ranges effectively for a long time against the whites and other Indians as well. So strong did they become, finally, that they became near-professional predators, raiding whites for guns, horses, knives, and so on, but also raiding other Indians. One of the most striking of their enterprises was to go into the central

6. See Harold Hickerson's (1960, 1962) documentary accounts of this early process.

basin of Nevada, a near-desert where refugee, unmounted Sho-
shone had retreated, and to round up these Indians to transport
them to Santa Fe for sale as slaves.[7]

These latter, the unmounted Indians, are known today as
Paiutes and Western Shoshone. Because of an advantageous loca-
tion, the Shoshone now known as Utes acquired horses and fire-
arms earlier than the others. This put the horseless Indians to
flight. They could not get enough men and horses together into
a viable organization that could compete with the Utes because
the Utes were able to prevent it. (When the Shoshone did find a
horse, they ate it.) The organization that resulted was the frag-
mented, isolated-family form described in the famous monograph
by Julian H. Steward.[8]

An interesting instance of the fission-fusion responses occurred
in the northern part of the Basin-Plateau area, interesting because
an Indian volunteered the same functional explanation of the
changes that we here are proposing. A "Ban-at-tee" (Northern
Paiute), quoted by Alexander Ross in 1824, said: "We can never
venture into the open plains for fear of the Blackfoot and Piegans,
and for that reason never keep horses." In 1825, a Ban-at-tee ex-
plained to Ross that his people lived in hiding because "were we
to live in large bands, we should easily be discovered" (Ross 1956,
pp. 176, 277–78).

In South America, egalitarian tribes of horticulturalists in-
habited the lowland jungles, and nomadic hunting-gathering bands
the savannahs and southern pampas. As in North America, re-
sponses tended to become polarized at the extremes of a fusion-
fission continuum. Araucanians in Chile and western Argentina
and the Puelche and Tehuelche of central Argentina are well-
known examples of durable large-scale federations that made
strong, hence aggressive (and therefore later epitomized in eth-
nology as "warlike"), predatory tribes.

On the other hand, some of the more remote areas became
refuges for fragmented tribes. These are most notably the upper
Xingu region, the Matto Grosso, the Montaña, and the Gran

7. Farnum as quoted by Steward (1938, p. 9).
8. *Basin-Plateau Socio-Political Groups* (1938). The above explana-
tion differs from Steward's; he believed the social fragmentation was caused
by the scarcity of food.

Chaco. More clearly even than in the Great Basin instances, the
fragmentation of these peoples was not a consequence of the nature
of the food supply, as Steward would have it, but defensive fis-
sioning.[9]

In Africa the situation was quite different because of the
greater numbers of kingdoms and chiefdoms (which often con-
federated to become kingdoms, most notably in coastal West Africa
and in Southeast Africa). Refuge areas for the weaker societies
were in Southwest Africa, the Congo jungles, and mountainous
parts of East Africa. Again it seems clear that fragmentation was a
form of adaptation to a political-military dominance of others, not
due to the nature of the food supply.[10]

In order that the fission-fusion principle not be taken too
simply as the only characteristic response of primitive peoples to
invading Europeans, we should insist, rather parenthetically, that
one of the most ordinary causes of fragmentation was simple
decimation due to European diseases. But when this happened we
still find, frequently, that the alternative adaptive responses of
confederation versus fragmentation were still possible. Confedera-
tions of unrelated people, the remnants of former kinship societies,
sometimes took place, although more usually the toll of diseases
resulted in a society so demographically weakened that the offense-
defense polity was weighted toward defensive retreat, and hence
toward continued or further fragmentation. But in any case, our
emphasis here is on the more purely political practices, particularly
so as to widen the ethnological relevance of the very useful fusion-
fission political principle whose application heretofore has been
confined to the societies termed "segmentary."

But beware of this difference: Evans-Pritchard and Fortes
were talking about societies that characteristically altered their
composition frequently as part of an ongoing equilibrium system
with respect to different political events—their label "segmentary"
thus characterizes a *type of society*. But in this chapter we are
talking about the political *process as such*, and it matters not that
in many of the societies mentioned fusion or fission happened im-
portantly only once in their histories, so that they cannot in the

9. Carneiro (1961).
10. Evidences are spelled out in greater detail in Service (1971,
ch. 10).

previous sense be regarded as segmentary *types* of societies. We will therefore reserve the term *segmental*, in the Durkheimian (1933) sense, for the kinds of societies composed of equal and similar component groups (normally kin groups like clans or lineages). Because they are segmental in *type* they may exhibit the segmentary *process* more frequently than other kinds of societies.

Note that I have not tried to be exhaustive about the varieties of political processes in egalitarian segmental society. The present chapter is intended only to describe very generally the salient characteristics of these societies as they are relevant to the major point to be pursued in subsequent chapters—the origin of, and nature of, formal political inventions as related to the origin of, and nature of, civilization. This chapter therefore has endeavored to present some features of *not*-civilization, hoping they will be useful in thinking about *pre*-civilization, which in turn would be useful in thinking about what political habits the early states had to work with.

4

The Institutionalization of Power

RELATIONSHIPS based on differential power exist actually or potentially in all human groups. All families, of course, have internal dominant-subordinate relationships, based primarily on age and sex differences. In interfamily relationships on the band and tribal (segmental) level, the prevailing ideology and etiquette presses toward equality in social interactions, so there is no formal hierarchy of authority or other power above the level of individual families. Leaders, as discussed in the previous chapter, are ephemeral, in action only sporadically and then usually in the context only of their special spheres of competence. The power inherent in their persons renders Max Weber's original concept of charisma an appropriate designation. The society's assumption that their leaders' abilities are in fact superior accords them power. But this kind of power is so limited and so personal in most primitive societies that it is best termed *influence*.

How does an influential person come to occupy an *office*, so that as his charisma wanes the office can be filled by someone else? In other words, how does personal power become depersonalized

power, corporate and institutionalized? How does a high achieved status become an ascribed status? In more societal terms, the question is: How does an egalitarian, segmental society become an hierarchical society with permanently ascribed differential ranks of high and low statuses? Still in social terms: How can we account for the "origin of the inequality of the social classes," as Gunnar Landtman entitles his work on this problem (1938). All of these questions refer to aspects of the same bureaucratic characteristic: As a form of personal power is finally established and institutionalized there will appear, in time, various subsidiary offices, forming an hierarchy. This hierarchy of offices, in all chiefdoms, was hereditary in terms of succession, and thus permanent social strata came into being.

This is a conception of bureaucracy that is rather more loose than Weber had it; especially in not citing such modern criteria as full regularization, salary, appointments, and so on (Weber 1946, pp. 196–204). The emphasis here is on a graded hierarchy and the related jurisdictions that are "offices"; that is, posts *instituted* to insure their continuity beyond the period of the competencies of the individual incumbents. This is only a part, though an important one, of Weber's conception.

Hierarchy and Authority

We find tendencies in some segmental societies that in certain circumstances might logically become aggrandized to create at least the beginnings of an hierarchical society. Above all, it seems likely that an individual who had acquired a personal following would like to have his own descendants bask in the same glory. A New Guinea tribe, as described by Kenneth Read, exemplifies this point particularly well.

Among the Gahuku-Gama of the Eastern Highlands, the normal authority system is that of standard egalitarian society, seniority among males—a familistic conception based on age-sex statuses. Read says (1959, p. 427):

But beyond this level of segmentation authority is achieved. The most important men are "big men" or "men with a name," individuals who attract followers and wield influence because, in the first instance,

they possess qualities which their fellows admire. There is some expectation that a son will succeed his father. People believe that the character of the parent is transmitted to his offspring, and a man of eminence may be likely to seek and to encourage in his son the qualities which inspire confidence and dependence. Indeed, the son of a "big man" may have a slight advantage over others—access to greater wealth, for example—and various pressures may induce him to emulate his father.

Read's point, however, is that charisma still wins, normally, because in a society that is "tradition-directed," in Riesman's familiar terminology, it is the "autonomous" individuals, superior as leaders, who usually win out. The "strength" of a man may be manifested or proved in various contexts, of which at one time warfare was probably the most important. Dancing ability and gift-giving have continued to be important institutionalized occasions for demonstrating superiority. Gift-giving "places the recipient under an obligation to the donor, who, for the time being, has a measure of advantage over the other person. This applies equally—perhaps more clearly—to gift-giving between groups" (ibid., p. 428). Read elaborates interestingly about the strains and tensions that occur in a type of society that is essentially still egalitarian ("equivalence" governs the relations of age-mates and intergroup contacts) but that grants more prestige to leadership than more egalitarian societies.

In some New Guinea tribes the "big-man" is called a "center-man," focusing more attention on the circumstance, gift-giving, that is so closely associated with the nearly achieved institutionalization of this form of personal power. He is a center-man in the sense that he attracts a cluster of followers. His bigness is manifested in various ways, but the most notable are the giveaway feasts that demonstrate his ability to attract goods, especially pigs, from his followers in order to give a lavish feast to some other group. In this, the competitive aspect, and the fact that he or his group will receive goods in turn at some other time for him to redistribute, the feasts resemble the well-known *potlatch* of the American Indians of the North Pacific Coast.[1]

1. The exaggerated status rivalry manifested in the North American Northwest Coast potlatches seems to have been caused by a breakdown in the social structure (involving primogeniture, ranking by birth order, and

At any given time, a big-man and his followers may resemble an embryonic *chiefdom,* as defined in chapter 2: leadership is centralized, statuses are arranged hierarchically, and there is to some degree a hereditary aristocratic ethos. The big-man's group is much smaller, usually hundreds rather than a thousand or so, but a more important distinction is that since it rests on a purely personal form of power it is short-lived and unstable as a structure. Above all, since the power of the big-man is his charismatic magnetism, he has no formal means to enforce his authority and his command elicits only a voluntary response from his followers.[2]

How could a big-man turn an apparent embryonic chiefdom into a real one? The answer, as suggested by Read above, seems to lie in the tendency for people to believe that the character of a man is transmitted to his sons, particularly to his first-born. A review of the well-known chiefdoms of Polynesia and Micronesia, the southeastern United States, the islands and coasts of the Caribbean, many African societies, and Central Asian pastoralists reveals that inheritance of status by primogeniture must be a nearly universal feature of chiefdoms.[3] It is entirely reasonable to suppose that as this natural tendency toward primogeniture becomes stabilized as a custom or rule, just by that much has the group increased the stability and power of its leadership over time—and probably its size as well—as it has institutionalized the power of its leadership.

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the chiefdom form of organization), which left many hereditary statuses open for occupancy. Population loss due to European diseases was a large factor in this breakdown.

    In addition, the amount of European trade goods coming into the society in exchange for sea otter pelts created opportunities for ambitious potlatchers to achieve prestige. It is entirely possible that the areas in New Guinea where big-man status rivalry was strong were also areas of a certain amount of structural breakdown.

    A good discussion of the big-man system of the Tiv of Nigeria is found in Bohannan (1958).

    2. A classic report on big-man activities in the Solomon Islands is recommended reading: see "A Leader in Action" by Douglas Oliver (1955, pp. 422–439).

    For accounts of the functions of potlatches on the Northwest Coast see Suttles (1960, 1968), Piddocke (1965), and Vayda (1967).

    3. There are a few matrilineal chiefdoms with inheritance and succession moving to sister's son, but it seems to be normally the sister's *eldest* son. The line doesn't matter greatly, since the ranking by relative age is what gives the lineage its basic distinctiveness.

Redistribution also seems to be closely allied to the rise of and perpetuation of leadership. And to the extent that redistribution is extended and formalized, so may be the power of the leader, as his position as redistributor becomes more useful or necessary. Conversely, the better the leadership, and the more stable, the more it may be instrumental in extending and formalizing the exchange system. And of course once the society comes to depend heavily on the system, it depends on the continuity of the leadership.

Sedentary chiefdoms normally inhabit areas of variegated natural resources, with numerous ecological niches requiring local and regional symbiosis.[4] Some are located in mountain valleys with variations in altitude, in northerly or southerly exposure, in access to streams or lakes, and so on. Others are found in coastal regions with highly variegated land and sea resources, requiring overall coordination and redistribution in order to effectively hunt whales, net schools of halibut, or trap, smoke, and box salmon (the latter, for instance, during the tremendous spawning runs on the northwest coast of North America). The strong suggestion where this kind of distribution occurs is that certain geographic circumstances will favor the development of redistribution, and when combined with embryonic leadership like the big-man system, will tend to promote leadership toward a status hierarchy with an institutionalized system of central power. It may have typically happened, details aside, just so.[5]

Figure 1 shows a mountain valley with a rapid stream gradually slowing and meandering over a rich alluvial bottom and finally forming a swamp at the lower end of the valley. At the

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    4. The lowland Maya may seem exceptional, but their case will be "explained away" in chapter 10. "Sedentary" was specified because some chiefdoms are nomadic herders. It would seem that such herder-predator groups require not only good permanent leadership for their military adventures, but also for the important and frequent redistribution of booty and herds.

    5. There are so many ethnological examples of chiefdoms in this kind of ecological setting, a setting which so stimulates a regional symbiosis, that I chose this model for the illustrative discussion to follow (cf. Sahlins 1963; cf. also Patterson's discussion of the Peruvian valleys [1973, pp. 95–100]). But it should be noted that diversification and specialization of local skills in a geographically homogeneous environment could provide the same redistributional impetus. This would be so especially when combined with the necessity for highly organized long-distance trade in necessities (see Rathje 1972).

upper end of the valley is a flint outcrop, and four miles away at the lower end of the valley the swamp hosts an array of fine reeds for arrowshafts, as well as food and cover for migratory waterfowl.

A horticultural hamlet has long occupied the bottomlands, growing an assortment of maize, beans, squash, peanuts, tobacco, and a few spices and herbs. This hamlet, A, eventually grew to the point that a daughter hamlet, B, was founded farther downstream where the land was not quite so good for maize, being boggier, but with the compensation of better tobacco, good fishing, more waterfowl, and good reeds. Next, a related group comes over the mountains and are peacefully allowed to settle in the northern end. This group, C, finds that maize, beans, and squash do only fairly well in the rocky soil, and tobacco not at all. The proximity to good forest hunting, especially for deer, is a compensation, as is the presence of the flint outcrop for stone tools and projectile points.

This simple sketch will do. Assuming that peaceful relations prevail, presents will be exchanged reciprocally among families of the three hamlets. A is not so dependent on the exchanges as the others, however, having a better all-around agricultural production, and being equidistant between the localized hunting and flint areas of the upper valley and the ducks, reeds, and tobacco of the lower. These desirable items would be exchanged in balanced reciprocity among the villages, but village A is in a particularly advantageous position. Not only is its status highest, because it is the original site, and its production higher, because it is in the best all-around location, but for these reasons it may also be larger. In addition, being centrally located it can more easily receive B's specialties than can C, and receive C's specialities better than can B. Other things equal, the reciprocities are likely to go from A to B and back, and A to C and back. A, then, by simply storing the goods acquired from B and later giving a part of them to C (along with some of its own production), gradually becomes in part at least the "magazine" of the valley, and A's reciprocities at that time turn into true redistribution. If A village has an adequate big-man, the situation turns very much to his advantage, raising his status and helping perpetuate his position. Meanwhile, the local specialization is so advantageous that it

FIGURE 1 / *Sketch of Villages in Area of Diversified Resources*
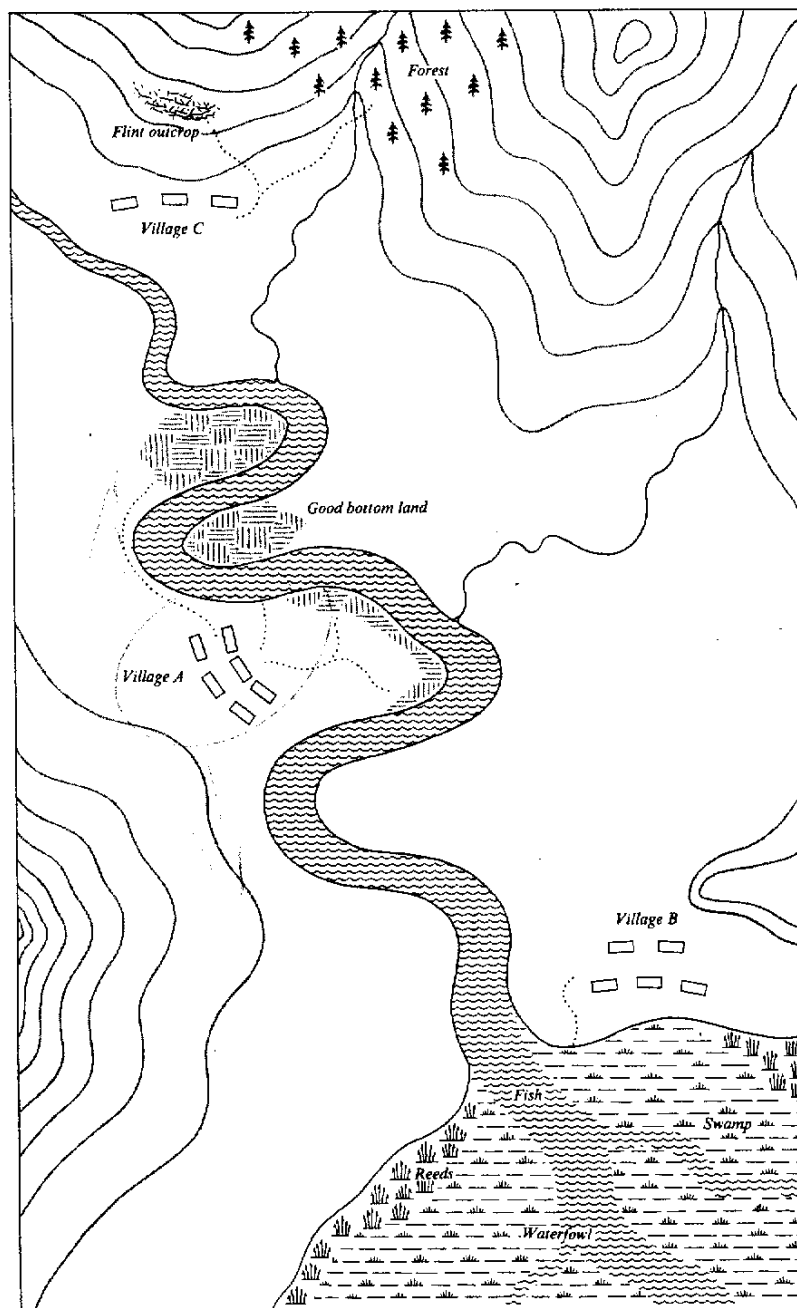
naturally increases, so that C village may give up maize-growing altogether, depending on A for its supply, while B may give up tobacco-growing.

Production thus increases, population grows, new hamlets are probably formed (by fission, as well as possibly by accretion), and the power of A—and above all, the society's *need* for A's power—increases proportionately. A village is the *chiefly* village. A's chief has founded the highest-ranked descent line, for what would be more natural than that A's oldest son be gradually trained into the succession? Calculated intermarriages with other villages establish high-ranked cadet lines with B's chiefly line higher than C's, C's higher than D's, and so on. It seems to be a universal aristocratic principle that the oldest are the highest. This situation is abetted by a circumstance found normally among chiefdoms, that sons of high aristocratic lines but lowest in inheritance prospects (a last-born, for example) are those who form the new daughter villages or marry into them.

As charismatic power is perpetuated in a line, becoming instituted as an inherited hierarchy of offices, it not only can increase the effectiveness of the local specialization and redistributive network, but increasingly take on other tasks as well. Chiefs can subsidize craft specialties so that a family line of good flint workers, for example, can increase its skill by giving more time to it. A chiefly line is likely to become a priestly line, as well, interceding with its ancestral gods in favor of the society. Chiefdoms known ethnologically seem to be typically, perhaps universally, theocracies. Ancestor worship is the typical form the priestly cult takes, adding it as a sort of cultural overlay to the original shamanism and mythology. The chiefly line is usually considered the direct descendants of the founder of the line and of the society as a whole, now exalted in status as the major deity. Such conceptions greatly strengthen the capacity of the governing hierarchy to do better some additional necessary and useful jobs. A centralized government can make war more effectively, can preserve peace more effectively, and can solve internal problems of governance in ways not possible in egalitarian society. Most visibly, many of them have commanded public labor in the building of massive monuments.

A chiefdom in good working order seems to be held together because it can accomplish the above functions well, especially redistribution—here, in fact, is the organismic model of society so beloved of the classical sociologists. The chiefdom was a very widespread form of organization, possibly because, being so successful in comparison to egalitarian tribes, it transformed its neighbors, or neighbors transformed themselves in emulation. It is also possible that a successful new chiefdom might go on expanding by accretion as well as internal growth to the point where it could not rule successfully. If such growth and dissolution were in fact usual, it would help account for the spread of chiefdoms: An expanding chiefdom transforms its new parts, if they were egalitarian societies, into small-scale replicas of the original central chiefdom simply by adopting their leaders into the prevailing hierarchy. If the whole splits into parts, for whatever reasons, the parts will all be chiefdoms, however small. It is probably the cycle of expansion and contraction that caused chiefdoms to appear rather suddenly and to diffuse so rapidly in the archaeological record.

Redistributional leadership and status, stabilized through time by primogeniture, transforms the kinship structure of the society. Thus the lineages or clans of egalitarian society become, in Paul Kirchhoff's words (1959), "conical clans," wherein all collateral lines of descent as well as individuals in the families are ranked in terms of the birth order of the founders and of the order of each successive generation of perpetuators of the line and its proliferating cadet lines. This genealogical ranking is familiar in history among the ancient Celtic peoples of Great Britain, in the European aristocratic class, and apparently among the Semitic "tribes" of the Old Testament. The use of the term "clan" by Kirchhoff presents semantic difficulties because it is normally used for the egalitarian kinship order of "common" (equal or generalized) descent from a founder. Raymond Firth (1936) called the conical group a *ramage,* from an Old French word meaning "branch." His term seems preferable because its etymology calls attention to the "branching and rebranching" of the genealogy, ranked according to distance from the "parent stem" (see figure 2). But Kirchhoff was quite correct in his argument

that the "conical clan" (ramage) can evolve to a higher order, the state and archaic civilization. (He was wrong, however, in his assumption that the egalitarian clan was a "dead end." The solution must be, simply, that a chiefdom stage of development was interposed between egalitarian society and the state.)

FIGURE 2 / *Scheme of Ranking of Chiefly Ramage, Reflecting in Genealogy the Rank and Precedence of the Villages*
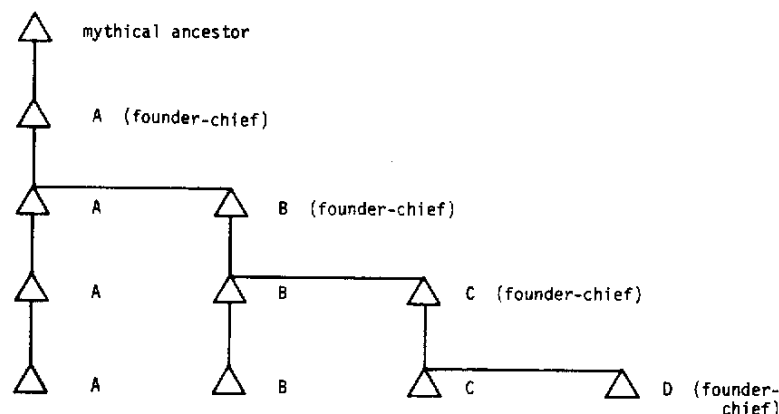
Evidently the chiefdom and its ramage kinship structures are governments in some senses, differing from peoples in a "state of nature." Obviously some new political inventions were created. We have already mentioned hereditary inequality, primogeniture, permanent leadership, and hierarchical authority. In these respects, and in some others, chiefdoms would seem to resemble societies of the historical feudal epoch in Europe. Inasmuch as Marx, notably, and others as well, had invested this feudal epoch with the characteristics of an evolutionary stage preceding the capitalist nation-state, it may be well to discuss briefly the differences and similarities between chiefdoms and feudal societies. There are, in fact, some interesting parallels, although the discontinuity remains significant—mainly because European feudalism was a particular historical variety of a political type, but not a stage itself.

Primitive Chiefdoms and Feudalism

European feudalism, of which eleventh-century France is often taken as the classical form, combined three distinct characteristics, any one of which, and sometimes two in combination, can be found in abundance in the world of primitive and peasant communities. These are: (1) the building of an hierarchy of personal relationships of a peculiarly voluntary type, usually called *vassalage;* (2) a landholding regime of *fiefs*, featuring the relationship of agricultural workers to it as serfs; and (3) an economic system of local, near-sufficiency—usually called the *manorial system*—which (like the political system) remained decentralized after the breakup of the Roman Empire.

The first feature of feudalism, vassalage, was the one emphasized by the great French authority, Marc Bloch, who said (1932, p. 204):

In the absence then of a strong state, of blood ties capable of dominating the whole life and of an economic system founded upon money payments, there grew up in Carolingian and post-Carolingian society relations of man to man of a peculiar type. The superior individual granted his protection and divers material advantages that assured a subsistence to the dependent directly or indirectly; the inferior pledged various prestations or various services and was under a general obligation to render aid. These relations were not always freely assumed nor did they imply a universally satisfactory equilibrium between the two parties. Built upon authority, the feudal regime never ceased to contain a great number of constraints, violences and abuses. However, this idea of the personal bond, hierarchic and synallagmatic [bilateral] in character, dominated European feudalism.

The second, the tenure system of fiefs, was, as implied in Bloch's definition above, closely related to the purely personal bond of vassalage. To some writers (especially Marxists), however, the land tenure system is more the essence of feudalism, however importantly related to vassalage, because it refers to *relations of production*. Such an authority as Maurice Dobb (1946), for instance, uses serfdom, the involuntary form of dependence in land tenure, as fully synonymous with feudalism.

But the relationship of vassalage to the fief and serfdom in

European feudalism is not a necessary one in the rest of the world. The big-man system of New Guinea and the patron-client relationship in many areas of Africa, for example, are very reminiscent of the voluntary "followership" of feudalistic vassalage. But they have nothing, or very little, to do with any kind of dependent land tenure system. On the other hand, we are familiar with many modern cases of fieflike land tenure systems featuring wealthy privileged owners and debt-bound serflike peasants (*latifundia* and *hacienda* systems in colonial Latin America come to mind), but which may have no vassalage whatsoever in the system.

The third characteristic of feudalism is the relative self-sufficiency of the great manors, left high and dry after the breakup of the political and economic structure of the empire. This kind of local reconstitution after the dissolution of some greater polity has happened again and again in history, with subsequent partial reconstitution always a likelihood. If that were all that defined feudalism, then we must conclude that it is always a very probable historical phase of any empire, but certainly not a stage in the *development* of a polity—it may be best construed, in fact, as a (possibly temporary) devolution rather than evolution.

The historical peculiarity of Europe's feudal devolution, as compared with other more plain devolutions, such as that of twelfth-century Japan, was that it involved a former imperial union of societies of two disparate kinds, the Northern European (especially the Germanic) chiefdoms and the more southerly parts of the classical Greco-Roman civilization.

European feudalism, then, was historically of a very complex, and perhaps unique, sort. For this reason it cannot be considered a stage in evolution, or even a usual case of devolution. Only one of its elements, voluntaristic vassalage, has widespread counterparts in the rest of the world. Vassalage seems typically—perhaps universally—a feature of those societies variously denominated as big-man or patron-client systems. And when these systems become institutionalized as the power bureaucracies of hereditary chiefdoms, they resemble in certain important respects the hereditary aristocracies of late or postfeudal times in Europe. But none of these chiefdoms combine those features with the complicated land tenure systems and the devotion in political unity of Euro-

pean feudalism closely enough to be classed with it. This is not to say that the parallels are without interest.

Law

As we saw in the previous chapter, "man in a state of nature" is not an unfettered, natural man. Very powerful forces of social control inhere in small face-to-face societies; this is especially so in primitive societies where the individual normally spends his whole life among his kinsmen. Since escape is impossible he cannot recover by moving to some new group the esteem he might have lost by a social mistake in his own group. Cooperation, alliance, love, reciprocities of all kinds are totally important to the survival of any individual in primitive society. This must be why such people seem so extraordinarily sensitive to the reactions of the group to any social action. Praise and blame, affection and withdrawal, and other such socio-psychological sanctions are extremely powerful reinforcers in small societies of stable membership, and it has been noted over and over by many observers of egalitarian societies how carefully social customs, especially in etiquette, are observed—"custom is king."

Sidney Hartland's *Primitive Law* (1924) is perhaps the strongest exponent of the idea that uncoercive custom is the primitives' law. In a typical statement (p. 138), he says that the primitive "is hemmed in on every side by the customs of his people, he is bound in the chains of immemorial tradition . . . these fetters are accepted by him as a matter of course; he never seeks to break forth."

Another ethnologist, W. H. R. Rivers, in his *Social Organization*, says (1924, p. 169): "Among such peoples as the Melanesians there is a group sentiment which makes unnecessary any definite social machinery for the exertion of authority, in just the same manner as it makes possible the harmonious working of a communal ownership and insures the peaceful character of a communistic system of sexual relations."

Statements like these were a great annoyance to Bronislaw Malinowski (1934), who argued against the idea that primitive peoples were so enthralled by custom. He also argued tellingly that

powerful negative, though not physical, sanctions do exist in "savage society."[6] I think he is correct that there are powerful negative sanctions, such as, importantly, the withdrawal of normal reciprocities.[7] But since these are not instituted and administered by official authority with privileged force, there are many critics of Malinowski who would deny that law in found in primitive, pre-state societies.

A modern specialist, E. A. Hoebel, sees law as composed of three necessary elements: privileged force; official authority; and regularity (1954, p. 28). Robert Redfield, like Hoebel trained in law but practicing ethnology, states that "law is . . . recognizable in form: in formal statement of the rules, and in forms for securing compliance with the rules or satisfaction or punishment for their breach" (1967, p. 5). These definitions do not argue explicitly, however, that the coercion of "privileged force" and "punishment" come about necessarily with the advent of the state. They are not conceived in such evolutionary terms.

It may be that only evolutionists are convinced of the connection between legal punitive force and the state. Walter Goldschmidt says (1959, p. 99): "A true state involves the legitimate monopoly of power in the hands of its rulers." Stanley Diamond would definitely separate custom from law, with this distinction defining rigorously the difference between primitive and civilized societies: "Custom—spontaneous, traditional, personal, commonly known, corporate, relatively unchanging—is the modality of primitive society; law is the instrument of civilization, of political

6. He should have said, in the savage society he studied (the Trobriand Islanders); Malinowski too frequently generalizes about the primitive world using evidence from this single society—which, it may be relevant to note, was a low-level chiefdom.

7. It may be useful to quote one of Malinowski's statements on this point (1934, p. xxxvi):

"This positive aspect of compliance to primitive custom, the fact that obedience to rules is baited with premiums, that it is rewarded by counter-services, is as important, in my opinion, as the study of punitive sanctions; and these latter consist not in a punishment inflicted deliberately *ad hoc,* but rather in the natural retaliation of non-compliance in counter-services, of criticism and dissatisfaction within the relationship and within the institution. Any *mala fide* failure to discharge the duties fully and adequately meets with a whole series of rebukes, reprisals and disservices which must needs end in a complete disorganisation of the cooperative group, whether this be the family, the guild or the tribe."

society sanctioned by organized force, presumably above society at large, and buttressing a new set of social interests. Law and custom both involve the regulation of behavior but their characters are entirely distinct; no evolutionary balance has been struck between developing law and custom, whether traditional or emergent" (1971, p. 47).

Many others have argued in this vein at length. And it would seem that the pre-Malinowski view of the significance of custom may be making a comeback. Simpson and Stone, historians of law, state (1948, p. 3): "Despite the recent challenge of Malinowski, the orthodox explanation of the effectiveness of social control in a kin-organized society still seems the most satisfactory. The pressure of a body of custom sanctified by a belief in its supernatural origin points to social opinion and the fear of the gods as the two major weapons in the armory of rudimentary social control."

Certain problems related to the custom versus law argument are semantic, so it may be well to get them out of the way before confronting the ethnological evidence, which will require some new kind of adjudication of the argument. First of all, what does *custom* mean? We do not want to bother now with an individual's habits ("It is my custom to take a walk before breakfast"); we are concerned with the conventions of the collectivity. But these may be of two distinct kinds. Morris Ginsberg was conscious of this problem when he decided that the term *usage* would refer to "those actions habitual to members of a community, which do not possess normative character or lack the sanction of moral constraint," and that *custom* would mean "not merely a prevailing habit of action or behavior, but . . . a judgment upon action or behavior. . . . Custom, in other words, is *sanctioned* usage" (1921, pp. 106ff.).

This dichotomy is suggestive of some real differences but seems unnecessarily strict, for it could be argued that *any* deviation from conventional usage may be sanctioned to some extent in some society by some kind of disapproval from somebody. It would be hard to predict, cross-culturally, just which deviations from normal behavior would elicit strong public negative sanctions: singing a traditional song incorrectly; not wearing the "proper" hair style; a mistake in greeting style; belching; killing your clan's

totem. A breach of any of these, and any of a thousand more, could be severely punished by the collectivity in some society or other. But then some of those thousand customs might also be ignored in the breach. I shall try to avoid this problem by always using the modifier *sanctioned* when indeed sanctions are attached to a custom.

Sanctioned customs are forms of social control that are reinforced positively or negatively. The positive sanctions are normally some kind of approval by the public, or some part of it. Negative sanctions are disapproval of a breach of custom, normally withdrawals of friendship and the expected reciprocities that Malinowski emphasized above. Again, as in the case of positive sanctions, the disapproval is a social punishment—by the public, or some part of it. That is, the sanctions are not applied by an official authority who stands as a "third party"; the only third party in segmental society is a person or group who has a familistic sort of authority, such as a wise, aged relative who might work as conciliator or arbitrator.

Law, on the other hand, implies a centralized, permanent authority standing above the familistic statuses.[8] It is in making the clear distinction between the rule of custom in segmental societies and the addition of law to custom in hierarchical societies that the emphasis on forceful coercion applied by the state was created. As the famous historian of law Paul Vinogradoff put it (1920–22, vol. 1, p. 95): "The state monopolizes the making and enforcing of laws by coercion, and did not exist in ancient times." Force and a political structure, the state, that monopolizes its use are usually, therefore, important elements in definitions of law that make the distinction between sanctioned custom and law.

But none of those who make this distinction have recognized the problem posed by the chiefdoms that apparently precede the state. A chiefdom stage lies between the segmental, egalitarian society and the coercive state. In a chiefdom we find one essential of true law, the authority structure that can act as a third party above the familistic level. But chiefdoms lack the coercive physical sanctions related to the monopoly of force practiced by states.

8. Apparently this is what the historian of law, William Seagle (1946), had in mind when he insisted on the significance of a *court* as the central element in law.

Note that this assumption about chiefdoms and states, and the question of the universality of the chiefdom stage in evolution, is a "given" at this point in our discussion. Its factual basis will be more fully explored in succeeding chapters.

It seems useful to divide law into its two kinds, public law and private law. Public law will refer here to the legal problems that persons (individuals or groups) have with the authority structure. Its context of greatest significance for our present purposes is that of reinforcement, as in cases of treason or *lèse majesté*. Private law will refer to legal contentions between persons (individuals or groups) themselves, which are mediated by the authority structure. (The functions of public and private law in chiefdoms, with examples, will be discussed more fully in the sections of this chapter titled "Reinforcement" and "Mediation.")

Inasmuch as we are at present interested in chiefdoms, it seems evident that we need a definition of law that will apply to them, but which will still enable us to talk about the differences between chiefdoms and states. Leopold Pospisil's experiences in the ethnology of law (1972) are useful here, particularly since his major work on the Kapauku Papuans (1958) faces the problem of the present chapter, since it is devoted to a chiefdomlike society (but rather a low-level one). He describes cases of conflict resolution as *legal* when the decisions possess four attributes: authority, intention of universal application, *obligatio*, and sanction (1972 and elsewhere).

Legal authority requires an individual (or group, like a council) powerful enough to enforce the verdict by persuasion or threat of force. (In a chiefdom, it should be added, a legal authority is likely to combine with this function still others of a political, military, economic, or priestly nature, and these are likely to give him various enforcive powers.) Disputes are frequently mediated by an authority who uses his powers of persuasion to induce compliance with his attempted arbitration. Such interference seems more informal and "primitive," or familistic, than if he were to render a *decision* that the litigants are forced to accept. This latter seems more legal to us, involving as it does the familiar uses of an authority working as a judge. But Pospisil points out (1972, p. 16) that in either case the producer of the solution was not the disputants but the "third party," a legal authority. It would seem,

however, that the ability of the legal authority to enforce decisions rather than to function by suasion, as a kind of wise man, is a measure of the power of the hierarchy, of its ability to command.

But there is an important qualification to be made. A decision made by an authority is not for that reason necessarily legal; it may be political and thus expediently variable from one context to another. The decision partakes of greater legality if it incorporates the "intention of universal application." Whenever a previous case can be found that is similar to the case being considered, and which was satisfactorily solved, there is a normal tendency to use the earlier case as a precedent. Frequently, trouble cases may be quickly composed by an authority who simply calls attention to the earlier case. In other words, the third party in the case seems to find the solution informally, rather than by making an arbitrary decision. Even if the case "goes to court" and an authority has to render a decision more formally, it is still easier for him to get compliance, to strain his power less, when he has even a partial precedent. But the first case, the precedent-setting one, had to be a true *decision,* and if legal, always incorporates the intention of further application in like cases. (Of course it may have been a bad decision, not followed subsequently at all, but the *intention* of precedent-setting must have been there if it were to be a legal decision.) A difficulty with this criterion is that of discovering its presence (Lundsgaarde 1970).

Obligatio, the third attribute of law (ibid., pp. 22–23), "refers to that part of the legal decision that defines the rights of the entitled and the duties of the obligated parties." This is not yet sanction, but rather a statement as to the nature of the unbalanced relationship of the litigants. Sanction, while closely related, refers to the resolution of the conflict by restoring an equitable relationship. (In familiar modern courtroom terms, when a court comes to a factual verdict of "guilty" it is a statement of the disturbed *obligatio* relationship between the litigants; the actual sentencing is the imposition of the sanction.)

The attribute *obligatio* is particularly useful in discussing law in a theocracy. Much of such a society's reinforcement of its rules and social arrangements is religious, having to do with morals, conscience, and especially tabus. Violations of these are, so to speak, "crimes without victims"; the punishment of these

crimes, if any, is imaginary and supernatural; and the litigious relationship is not between living persons. This is not to say that such things as religious tabus are not important: They may be so successful as a society's punishment-reward system that forceful sanctions may be only very rarely imposed. *Obligatio,* in other words, stands well apart from sanction in theocracies, in contrast to modern society, which often confounds the two.

Punitive sanction involving force is regarded by some anthropologists as the exclusive criterion of law, as we have seen, but it seems clear that while such sanction may be one of the usual ingredients of modern law, not all uses of sanction are in a legal context. Most prominently, a great many *ad hoc* political decisions carry sanctions, yet they are not law. As discussed above, political decisions are expediently variable and thus do not carry the intention of universal application, although they may impose sanctions.

Sanctions need not be always, or even often, of a physical nature. They may be economic (like fines and damages), and especially in a theocratic society, they may be psychological punishments (a public reprimand by a high priest, for example), or socially negative (as in excommunication, withdrawal of rewards, services, and normal reciprocities). Nor are the legal cases themselves in primitive society, in chiefdom theocracies especially, necessarily or even mostly concerned with physical violence. Private crimes are frequently "breaches of faith" concerning reciprocities, and public crimes, instances of *lèse majesté.* These latter crimes may be viewed in two separate ways in a theocracy: (1) a crime (as in a violation of a tabu) against the person of the paramount chief, or to a lesser extent, against someone in authority but lower in the hierarchy; and (2) an attack against any traditional custom or belief that somehow injures the authority of the ruler. (Such a thing as the breaking of a tabu is a legal offense only when there is *obligatio*—an offender and a person, like the chief, who is somehow "injured" by the act.) Such breaches of the law are usually something like expressions of contempt, or a curse, and if unpunished somehow weaken the authority system, which is largely based on ideological, supernatural, cultural grounds.

As we have seen in some of our quoted examples, emphasizing such coercive sanctions as violence in states has led these writers

to identify law with force and both with states. We shall consider this in later chapters by analyzing some actual cases, but at this point we need to consider an argument of Pospisil's that has theoretical relevance. If a law is desirable to most members of a group and if they consider it binding, it may in time seem to an observer to be like a custom, in contrast to laws that may have to be enforced by the state, at least sometimes, against the will of many of the people. A customary law, according to Pospisil (1972, p. 30), is "internalized" so that not only do the people feel it desirable, but when it is broken the malefactor feels guilt or shame. If a law is too new, or for some other reason not sufficiently accepted and internalized, a forceful repression may be called for; but later, or in some other society, the same law may be upheld by conscience or public opinion alone. In times of social or demographic breakdown, for example, crimes without victims (such as public drunkenness) that had been prevented in stable times by psychological states of shame might have to be repressed by physical punishment or fines.

Thus the difference between the two kinds of laws is not qualitative and cannot be taken as exact or specific characterizations of the difference between state and primitive non-state. But we do want to bear in mind for later reference that the origin of the state may be accompanied by a sudden increase in the number of repressive laws, by more severe repression, and perhaps by new kinds of laws. And it is very likely that the new state will have a more visible, more formal, and more explicit judicial and punitive machinery. To the extent that the laws are new, they will not yet be internalized or even widely accepted, which might create further need for repression. We may at this point continue to accept this monopoly of force and the presence of a judicial apparatus as indicative of "stateness," but not necessarily of law. Both states *and* chiefdoms have the most necessary ingredient of law, a central authority that can create rules of behavior, enforce them, and judge the breaches of them.[9]

9. Morton Fried (1967, pp. 90–94) states his basic approval of Pospisil's definition of law, but disagrees with some of his applications of it to simple egalitarian societies. I agree with Fried, but think the problem is easily remedied if we make explicit now what was stated in the previous chapter: That *familistic* authority mediating *domestic* quarrels are found in all societies and are not *law*. Let us therefore add the simple proviso

Nonlegal Reinforcement

The same personal-social familistic sanctions that characterized egalitarian society remain within the component face-to-face residential groups of a chiefdom. But in addition, there are new political norms, rules, and sanctions that will reflect (in these groups) the new features of the social system, particularly those relating to the maintenance of the new hierarchy of status and authority. Also, since chiefdoms are larger and more complex than egalitarian tribes, there are new problems regarding the interrelation of groups.

One important form of punishment/reward that remains as a carry-over from the previous stage is the familistic admonishment/praise form by which an elder person guides and educates the younger toward conformity. But at one point the status of elders over youths is confused by the higher status of one person over another if he comes from an elder *descent* line but is in fact a younger person than another. It would seem that a youth simply avoids the confusion of confronting an older person (higher than he in age-status) when the elder is lower in descent-line status. It is difficult to confirm this judgment from enough examples in the ethnographic literature, but the very absence of examples may bespeak such avoidance. On the other hand, in some chiefdoms —those of Polynesia come to mind—young aristocrats could be deliberately cruel to elderly commoners, which suggests that perhaps the latter do the avoiding. But above all, the tabu system of extreme social distance between ranks is the best example (to be discussed in chapter 9).

The development of a permanent redistributional system not only seems to have been closely associated with the origin of chiefdoms, but also contributes powerfully to the ongoing maintenance and reinforcement of the sociopolitical authority hierarchy,

that legal authority is *supra*-familistic. Another possible amendment is implied in our present chapter: that the authority and sanctions need not be *secular* alone (as Pospisil and others believe); in chiefdoms, and undoubtedly in the archaic civilizations, the authority is typically sacerdotal and the sanctions supernatural. Our more evolutionary perspective thus excludes from formal-legal types of societies certain segmental examples and admits more hierarchical societies than Pospisil's.

as was emphasized earlier. It reinforces the structure mainly in two important ways: (1) the authority structure is also the structure of main and lesser redistributors—it is the basic supply system—and hence it is obviously necessary to the whole society; (2) allied to this aspect of the supply system is the fact that a redistributor could punish by withholding goods from any dissident subchief or group. All this is obvious enough.

Along with redistribution, one of the most powerful of the new politically integrative ingredients is ideological: the hierarchy of the authority system has become supernaturally sanctioned in mythology. The original founder becomes an ancestor-god, other ancestors are lesser gods, the living chief is nearly divine, lesser chiefs less divine, and the supernatural world and the living world are reflections of each other ("on earth as it is in heaven"). The Polynesians are the most striking examples of this arrangement. They even posited a kind of supernatural force, *mana*, which flowed from the ancestors in varying amounts of power, greater in first-borns and diminishing with each successive birth. Thus the paramount chief is the "holiest" (fullest of mana), and each lower step in the authority hierarchy is manned by a person having the appropriately lesser amount of mana.[10] Such beliefs, it may be imagined, give enormous stability to the social structure, making every status absolutely hereditary in theory, as well as mostly in fact.

Inasmuch as supernatural beings support the extant structure, additional stability is undoubtedly created by fear, by supernatural terrorism. The ancestors must be placated with sacrifices (sometimes human) and great ceremonies in their name must be held. These are evidences of the belief that the gods can punish by withholding rain or migrations of game, or by sending pests and diseases. Alternatively, the gods can also send benefits: They can bestow good luck in war, assure fertility, cure diseases, send rain, and so on. All of these and still other supernatural rewards and

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10. *Mana*-like conceptions are widespread among theocracies. A particularly close analogy in Africa is found among the Tiv (see Bohannan 1958), who believe in *tsav*, an innate spiritual power held in varying amounts by individuals.

punishments are mediated by the priest-chiefs, and thus they are themselves greatly enhanced in importance.[11]

Ceremonialism in and of itself has a great socially integrating effect, especially when rituals and ceremonies involve the attendance of large numbers of people and are for the purposes of the whole society. This latter aspect is in a sense a technological function of the authority system; the priest-chief is "getting something done" toward a good harvest, for example, by assuring a rainfall after the ceremony. That is good. But he needs the presence of his people and perhaps the actual participation of large numbers of them, dancing, chanting, clapping, or praying. All this is a common effort for the common good, but *led by authority*. This kind of ceremony is thus organismic in its nature, like the redistributional system. But it also has an important social-psychological dimension as the people collaborate in large groups with little likelihood of friction under such circumstances. And apparently the larger the group the greater the social intoxication of the melting of the individual into the collectivity.

The paramount chiefs and the highest priests were frequently, though not always, the same person. But always the priesthood sanctified the chief, celebrated his life crisis rites, and in general supported the hierarchy by ritual and ceremonial means. Sometimes, as in Polynesia, priests were of special orders who resided in, and were custodians of, certain temples and images of gods on a full-time basis, but always these temples and gods were in the service of the authoritative bureaucracy, supporting it at every turn. This is not to say that there was no other religion in chiefdoms. The curing shaman of egalitarian society probably continued this "oldest profession," as did magicians, soothsayers, witches, and other practitioners of primitive supernaturalism. But these remained largely unorganized, whereas the hierarchy of priests was an important facet of the organized hierarchical society of chiefdoms.

In the classic chiefdoms the negative sanctions reinforcing the integrity of the society—the public laws—were typically

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11. Netting (1972) has written a particularly good analysis of the primacy of religion in the institutionalization of power in stateless societies in Africa.

supernatural punishments such as curses or denunciations by a sacerdotal authority. The crime, something like treason in our society, was interpreted as *lèse majesté*, an offense against the person—hence the rule—of the high chief or of members of the hierarchy. In most chiefdoms, any failure to obey orders could be interpreted as an offense against the chief, and therefore against the gods. *Sacrilege* or *sin* may be an accurate conception of this kind of breach. It may well be that the hierarchy of the first chiefdoms, having the perpetuation of their regime much before their minds, soon promoted the *lèse majesté* sort of law. Hence the origin of an inchoate code of laws probably coincided with the maintenance problems of the new chiefdoms. What could be more natural, as the chiefdom expanded and secured itself, than for the leadership to expand the range of actions to be considered as "offenses against the hierarchy and the gods"? (The tabu systems of the ancient Polynesians, again, are the most complex example of this process.)[12]

Leadership

Leadership in action, normally with respect to concerted group projects, may be only sporadic in chiefdoms. But as already indicated in another context, the most significant group activity in chiefdoms is redistribution, which not only enables a leader to become a permanent fixture but also requires that he do his job well. This means that he must be able to command labor in agricultural and craft production, and then he must equitably and wisely decide how the goods are to be allocated. Among the important uses of the goods is to store certain of them, not only to later subsidize public labor and craftsmen, but as capital for uses in contingencies like war or a great feast for important visitors.

Such powers are economically and socially useful, having, as mentioned, a politically integrative effect. But the storehouse of a chief has still another political effect. David Malo, a native Hawaiian historian, describes it this way (1903, pp. 257–58):

12. A. M. Hocart said (1936, p. 139), "The Fijian chief has only to extend his precincts and interpret widely the traditional rules of ceremonial behavior in order to acquire a criminal jurisdiction, and increase his interference with the life of his subjects."

It was the practice for kings [i.e., paramount chiefs of individual islands] to build store-houses in which to collect food, fish, *tapas* [bark cloth], malos [men's loin cloths], *pa-us* [women's loin skirts], and all sorts of goods. These store-houses were designed by the Kalaimoku [the chief's principal executive] as a means of keeping the people contented, so they would not desert the king. They were like the baskets that were used to entrap the *hinalea* fish. The *hinalea* thought there was something good within the basket, and he hung round the outside of it. In the same way the people thought there was food in the store-houses, and they kept their eyes on the king. As the rat will not desert the pantry . . . where he thinks food is, so the people will not desert the king while they think there is food in his store-house.

It is evident that a well-managed redistributional system, by its very nature, contributes to solidarity. Most obvious, and most often remarked upon, is its organismic quality: The specialized parts depend on the functioning of the whole. But Malo's point is important, too. A head of a household growing an abundant surplus of yams, for example, probably does not mind too much giving up some of the surplus to the chief, since he knows he will later acquire things that he needs but does not produce. The exchange seems necessary and beneficial to the yam-grower, and his perception of the benefit to him is not in terms of his own dependence on a system or organism, but to the chief himself. Hence, "organismic solidarity" in truly political terms also results in personal loyalties to the administration.

Of course the most dramatic administrative uses of leadership—and for which the redistributional surplus is very useful—is in warfare. But we leave matters of foreign war-making and peace-making for another section of this chapter, "External Relations"; at this point we need only to refer to the role of leadership in preventing rebellions—i.e., internal, or "civil," war.

It has been mentioned that chiefdoms seem to have a propensity for growing to the point of imbalance or too much organizational stress. Perhaps they simply get too large to be governed by the still relatively primitive means of governance and communication. But this seems too vague; one wonders how, more specifically, a chiefdom breaks up. In any society, there are always some dissatisfied, dissident elements—centrifugal forces are always at work. In a large chiefdom, constituent elements are made up of little chiefdoms, replicas of the paramount chiefdom, and hence

capable of their own hierarchical self-government. Some may be led by arrogant, ambitious, and able chiefs who want independence merely to fulfill themselves in successful competition; some may be genuinely oppressed or exploited, and resentful of this circumstance. Sahlins (1968, pp. 92–93) emphasizes this factor, thinking of Polynesia at about the contact period. He visions a sort of primitive class-struggle:

Advanced Polynesian political systems were overtaxed. In Hawaii and other islands cycles of centralization-decentralization appear in the traditional histories: periodic violent dissolution of larger into smaller chiefdoms and, by the same means, periodic reconstitution of the great society. Sydney Parkinson accompanied Captain Cook to Polynesia and left an important account, but Northcote Parkinson would also have understood it. The expansion of a chiefdom seems to have entailed a more-than-proportionate expansion of the administrative apparatus and its conspicuous consumption. The ensuing drain on the people's wealth and expectations was eventually expressed in an unrest that destroyed both chief and chiefdom.

There is no way to tell how much the above kind of unrest characterized chiefdoms outside the large Polynesian Islands, nor whether even in those islands it was always the primary cause of administrative breakdown. But certainly sometimes large chiefdoms break up simply because of the desire of secondary chiefs to become paramount chiefs in an independent area of this own, for whatever reasons. As we shall see in later chapters, chiefdoms that preceded the native states in parts of Africa were given to that kind of movement. If, however, all potentially dissident groups were involved in society-wide efforts, solidarity of the whole is benefited.

One of the most visible results of the capacity of the theocratic chiefdoms to administrate is the use of labor in building public works. The most imposing and usual of these are the monuments of the theocratic order, pyramids or burial mounds and temples. The leadership apparently can as easily require a certain amount of man-days per community for a public project as it can a certain proportion of a crop—perhaps more easily, since the primitive work schedule allows for long seasons of inactivity between plantings and harvests.[13]

13. See Erasmus (1965) for interesting experiments on the building of monuments.

The levy on the public for labor must be very like the raising of an army—it is a conscription of men in either case. With respect to military affairs, it is probably unnecessary to argue that the centralized administration of chiefdoms makes for much more powerful armies—in size and in tactical coordination—than are possible in egalitarian societies, which depend on a kind of voluntarism. Chiefdoms, or at least some of them, are able to conscript a rather large proportion of able-bodies men, sometimes as age-grades, and among herding chiefdoms it would seem that nearly all grown men could be made available at certain seasons for military forays, since the herds could be watched over by women and children when in a safe place.

Mediation

It may be taken as axiomatic that because chiefdoms have a larger population and more centralization than egalitarian tribes and bands they will not only have more occasions for mediation but also a greater ability to do so. This does not mean that they create bodies of formal laws (or codes), nor that a formal court meeting and procedure is worked out, but only that we do find authority at work in the context of ending quarrels that threaten the integrity of the society. It makes a significant difference between hierarchical society and egalitarian society that the authority of the former is capable of intervention, rather than simply generalized public opinion aroused by an occasion such as a song duel or athletic contest.

As stated earlier, this discussion is essentially descriptive rather than an attempt to settle the semantic debates among anthropologists as to whether law is everywhere or is found only in states. Let us merely agree now that when a true state administers a codified set of laws with formal procedures and backed by force, an institutional structure has appeared that is visibly very distinct from a group of old men in Australian society giving some advice or help in settling an argument. Our problem is that chiefdoms lie somewhere between institutionalized modern law courts and primitive familistic customs with their informal public sanctions. All have the same mediating functions, but the means are distinct. Chiefdoms seem to have the beginnings of lawlike institutions,

so that even the strictest definition of law would allow such characterizations as "inchoate law" or "law-stuff." However, we do want to talk about the system of mediation as it really is. As anthropologists repeatedly point out, there is danger of ethnocentrism if we stick too closely to modern legalistic terms when talking about primitive societies.

First of all, we should not expect to find in chiefdoms such extreme formality and explicitness in the law and legal procedures that enable us in modern society to so easily distinguish between "going to court" and "I'll tell your father on you." We must be watchful not to let sheer formalism be our only criterion of an adjudicative legal process. As an example of a relatively informal procedure that still conforms to Pospisil's criteria of adjudicative law-making, let us take an example from a New Guinea Papuan society investigated by Pospisil himself (1968, pp. 49–50):

The Kapauku "process of law" starts usually as a quarrel. The "plaintiff" accuses the "defendant" of having performed an act which causes harm to the plaintiff's interests. The defendant denies this or brings forward justification for his action. The arguments are usually accompanied by loud shouting which attracts other people, who gather around. The close relatives and friends of the parties to the dispute take sides and present their opinions and testimony by emotional speeches or by shouting. If this sort of arguing, called by natives *mana koto*, goes on unchecked, it usually results in a stick fight . . . or in war. . . . However, in most instances, the important men from the village, and from allied communities, appear on the scene. First, they squat among the onlookers and listen to the arguments. As soon as the exchange of opinions reaches a point too close to an outbreak of violence, the rich headman steps in and starts his argumentation. He admonishes both parties to have patience and begins questioning the defendant and the witnesses. He looks for evidence that would incriminate the defendant, at the scene of the crime or in the defendant's house. . . . This activity of the authority is called *boko petai,* which can be loosely translated as "finding the evidence." Having secured the evidence and made up his mind about the factual background of the dispute, the authority starts the activity called by the natives *boko duwai,* the process of making a decision and inducing the parties to the dispute to follow it. The native authority makes a long speech in which he sums up the evidence, appeals to a rule, and then tells the parties what should be done to terminate the dispute. If the principals are not willing to comply, the authority becomes emotional and starts to shout reproaches; he makes long speeches in which evidence, rules, decisions, and threats form inducements. Indeed, the

authority may go as far as to start *wainai* (the mad dance), or change his tactics suddenly and weep bitterly about the misconduct of the defendant and the fact that he refuses to obey. Some native authorities are so skilled in the art of persuasion that they can produce genuine tears which almost always break the resistance of the unwilling party. A superficial Western observer confronted with such a situation may very likely regard the weeping headman as a culprit on trial. Thus, from the formalistic point of view, there is little resemblance between the Western court's sentence and the *boko duwai* activity of the headman. However, the effect of the headman's persuasion is the same as that of a verdict passed in our courts. There were only five cases in my material wherein the parties openly resisted and disobeyed the authority's decision.

A noticeable feature of this instance is that the authority did not himself truly *adjudicate* the matter so much as use his good influence to compose the differences of the two parties, and even involve public opinion to some extent. Having no police to back him, he exercised his power, which was that of authority alone, with considerable caution—not at all as an "authoritarian" leader. Like a good arbitrator, he tried to involve both sides in an acceptable solution by his powers of persuasion. This may be taken as a sign that the power inherent in his particular office was not really very great. For other reasons, as well, the Kapauku society seems to me to qualify as a chiefdom, but at a rather low level. But it is for this reason an interesting case, revealing the embryonic essence of chieftainship.

More-developed chiefdoms, like those of some of the Indians of the southeastern United States, the circum-Caribbean Indians, and the Africans and Polynesians, were much more thoroughgoing theocracies than the Kapauku; the authority positions were seen much more as buttressed by supernatural power. The evidence seems to show that the chiefs had more confidence, even arrogance, in rendering decisions as to guilt, restitution, or punishments.

External Relations

All of the foregoing instances of reinforcement, leadership, and mediation have as a main function the preservation of the society. To the extent that they are successful—especially in preventing feuds and other tendencies toward fission—the society can grow, by natural increase and by accretion. And of course, the

larger and better governed, the better the society can wage war and peace in its external relations.

Such a society can wage war more effectively, obviously, because military achievements depend so heavily on leadership and discipline; but less obvious is the significance of the authority in making and preserving peace in the society's foreign affairs. If, for example, an alliance is made between two neighboring chiefdoms, it would normally mean that peaceful relations obtain between individuals of the two groups, and that they come to aid each other in case of an attack by a third group. But these relations have to be guaranteed; the authority might make the treaty, but it is no good if he cannot command the obedience of his people in maintaining it as individuals. Also, prominently, intersocietal relations are typically maintained by reciprocal exchanges of presents, people (in marriage), and hospitality. And if the two groups can exchange local specialities that the other lacks, amiable relations are better assured. All of the above depend upon the chief's ability to command labor and goods from his society.

If a society with a central authority can wage both war and peace better than an egalitarian society, which will predominate in its history? Is there more war or more peace in the chiefdom stage? Logically, when there is war it will be on a larger scale than among egalitarian groups, and more conclusive because more organized. This itself might tend to limit the number of wars. In addition, chiefdoms have a better capacity than egalitarian societies to subjugate (Otterbein 1964), rather than merely intimidate. In other words, war might be infrequent because considerably more total; but the question of the number of wars in chiefdoms simply cannot be resolved conclusively.

An important way of waging peace is by means of trade, and sometimes rather unusual institutions arise out of the necessary coincidence of peace and trade. Among the Kalinga of the Philippine Islands, for example, an exchange of specialized goods between independent regions was a powerful deterrent to war. Traders (or better, carriers) of the goods elaborated a widespread network of trade partners, that they might enjoy hospitality and safety in their visits. They made themselves ceremonial brothers, with ritual obligations and even the incest prohibitions of true brothers (i.e., their children could not marry). This institution

became the basis for peace pacts between the regions, negotiated by the trade partners, who thus became ambassadors of a sort, spokesmen for their own regions in relation to others. These *pangats*, as they were called, became prominent internally as well, as mediators of disputes.

Since important trade relations between two societies are a deterrent to war between them, we may also reasonably suppose that chiefs are much inclined to foster such relations, since the subsequent chapters, the rise of civilizations out of chiefdoms be an important buttress to their authority. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, the rise of civilizations out of chiefdoms depended heavily on the organismic solidarity achieved by regional symbiosis and more distant trade as manipulated by the political authority.

The Limits of the Political Organization

It should be remembered that a segmental primitive society tends to muster different-sized groups from one time to another, particularly when the occasion or functions of the gatherings are different. The boundaries of the society are indistinct for this reason. There are of course numerous exceptions to this generalization, particularly when the society is a relatively sedentary horticultural village of the self-contained (endogamous) type. These are found frequently in the South American tropical forest and elsewhere and are probably caused by the tremendous depopulation and deculturation to which these societies have been subjected for many generations (Wagley 1940).

One of the most important reasons for the indeterminacy of political boundaries in the usual segmental society is the ephemeral nature of the leadership. It follows that to the extent a chiefdom comes to have a permanent office of paramount chief, then to that extent his following will be known and discernible "on the ground." This does not mean that territorial boundaries will be always fixed, for this would vary by type of economy—herders differing from intensive agriculturalists, as an obvious example. But the society itself is named, its membership known, and it occupies a specific space at any given time. Sometimes a sedentary chiefdom's name is also the name of its territory.

One of the main functions of an authority system is to integrate the society. To the extent that it does so the people are integrated on a relatively permanent basis, and thus the society is more distinct. Territoriality need not be the sole criterion of membership in the society, but it is a frequent one, and if not, membership is still known by some means. One of the consequences of this factor is that fissionable tendencies are overcome, as is the considerable voluntariness that characterizes egalitarian societies with respect to what associations or sodalities individuals belong to.

It must be remembered that although a well-organized chiefdom has its known membership, this is only at a given time, for they do have increasingly fissionable tendencies as they grow in size. The waxing and waning of chiefdoms over a long period of population growth should cause a wide dispersal of a common pattern of culture, although finally manifested by numerous politically distinct societies. Here we are addressing one of the most serious problems in the cross-cultural, statistical method in anthropology: What is the *unit* to be counted? It is hard enough to decide what a sociopolitical unit is, especially in egalitarian segmental society. Such units grow in distinctness and permanence, as well as in size and complexity, during their evolution, but are they also unit cultures? It seems clearly evident that a distinct society will manifest a culture, but that the culture will not necessarily be a distinctive one in most respects, peculiar to that society alone among its neighbors.

But there are ways in which certain new cultural traits might arise as characteristics of a particular chiefdom. In matters of religious ideology and ritual, items can be added and subtracted almost at will by theocratic leadership. A new chiefdom, for example, might want to distinguish itself, and especially its chiefly lineage, from the parent society and lineage by elevating new gods and diminishing or abolishing old ones, along with the rituals associated with them. A society can change elements of its culture in some respects, and even its social structure, for political reasons (Leach 1954). Changes in the tabu system in Hawaii may be taken as a prime example of this power, which is so much more inherent in chiefdoms and states than in egalitarian societies. But of course such changes are limited mostly to theocratic aspects of the culture.

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The Origins of Civilization in Mesoamerica

MESOAMERICA is the term used by modern anthropologists to refer to the complex geographic region in which there have been found several examples of American Indian societies that participated in the development of a native civilization. The region includes the highlands and lowlands of central and southern Mexico and Guatemala and the lowlands of Salvador, British Honduras, and part of western Honduras. The geographical differences are enormous and the consequent variations in cultural adaptation correspondingly great. On the one hand, in the arid highlands, dense populations were agglomerated by virtue of intensive agriculture (irrigation, drainage, and terracing); on the other hand were lowlands of greater rainfall and more extensive agriculture, with more-scattered populations. The best-known examples of these two-types are the highland city-states of the Valley of Mexico (where Mexico City is found today) and the lowland Maya-speakers of Yucatán and the neighboring region of the Petén, in Guatemala.

The archaeological record reveals that in Mexico there existed for a very long period a hunting-gathering economy, with social

groups consisting of small nomadic bands scattered widely over the landscape. The beginnings of cultivation in Mexico were small in scale, and the shift from primary dependence on hunting-gathering to agriculture very slow. According to MacNeish's work (1964) in the Tehuacán Valley, agriculture began in about 7200 B.C., and took until about 2500 B.C. (the "Purrón" phase) before agricultural products constituted about 70 percent of the people's diet. Pottery appeared in the valley about this time, implying somewhat sedentary villages, which in turn suggests an important dependence on agriculture. By this time many of the important Mexican crops were in cultivation: maize, beans, squash and pumpkin, avocado, chile, cotton, tobacco, tomato, and cactus (principally nopal and maguey).

Sanders and Price (1968, pp. 24–25) use this Purrón phase (2500 B.C.) to mark the beginning of the Formative period, an epoch during which most of the important cultural inventions occurred that were related to the continued development and spread of settled agricultural villages. They see the Formative stage as ending with the emergence of the various climactic local developments called Classic: Teotihuacán (in the central Plateau), Monte Albán (Classic Zapotec in Oaxaca), and the lowland areas typified by Tajín in Veracruz and Tikal and others in the Petén of Guatemala. The probable dates range from B.C./A.D. for Teotihuacán to 600 A.D. for Tajín. The most important developments of the Formative period were the gradual intensification of agriculture, continuous population growth (manifested by greater numbers of archaeological sites and their larger size), and the transformation of small simple villages into stratified societies and states (ibid., p. 29). Other experts differ in certain respects of nomenclature and dating (especially Coe 1962), but the basic notion of evolutionary growth in complexity is common to all, and the order of precedence by which the Formative became the Classic period in these regions seems to be agreed upon (table 1). They will be discussed below in that order.

Teotihuacán (ca. B.C./A.D.–800 A.D.)

The Valley of Teotihuacán is a side-valley of the huge Valley of Mexico, lying on the northeast side about twenty-five miles from Mexico City. The archaeological site of Teotihuacán in its Classic

TABLE 1 / *Stages and Periods in Mesomerica*

Mesoamerica a Whole		Central Gulf Coast	South Gulf Coast	Central Plateau	Oaxaca		Highland-Coastal Guatemala	Lowland Maya	
Late	1500 A.D.	Cempoalla	Soncuautla	Aztec	V	M o n t e	Chinautla	Mayapan	
Post-classic Early	1200 A.D.	Tajin III	Upper Cerro de las Mesas	Toltec (Mazapan)	IV		Tohil	Chichen Toltec	
	900 A.D.			Coyotlatelco	III b		Pamplona Amatle	Tepeu	
Classic Late	600 A.D.	Tajin II	Upper Tres	Metepec	III a	A l b a n	Esperanza	Tzakol	Civilization
Early		Upper Remojadas II	Zapotes	Xolalpan Tlamimilolpa Miccaotli Tzacualli	II		Aurora Santa Clara Arenal	Chicanel	
Terminal Protoclassic	300 A.D.	Upper Remojadas I	Middle Tres Zapotes	Patlachique Chimalhuacan	I		Miraflores		Chiefdom
	B.C./A.D.	Lower Remojadas	La Venta	Ticoman			Providencia Majadas	Mamom	
Formative Late	600 B.C.	Trapiche	Tlatilco Amacuac	?			Las Charcas		Tribe
		?	La Venta Pre-Complex A	Early Zacatenco			Arevalo Ocos		
Middle	1500 B.C.		San Lorenzo						
Early			?	Coatepec					
	2500 B.C.			Purron					
Paleolithic				Abejas					
	7200 B.C.			Coxcatlan El Riego Tepexpan— Ixtapan					

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phase was undoubtedly the largest and most important urban center in Mesoamerica. Sanders believes that the Teotihuacán Valley population reached 150,000.[1] The urban center itself grew to cover about two thousand acres. The most striking evidence of large populations and of some kind of political control are the enormous Pyramids of the Sun and Moon, the Temple of the Feathered Serpent, and many other large civil and religious buildings. There is little doubt that Teotihuacán grew faster than its neighbors during the Formative period and was able to dominate them. In short, Teotihuacán was undoubtedly the first true urban civilization in Mesoamerica, unless Monte Albán in Oaxaca also qualifies (Sanders and Price 1968, p. 140). At any rate, the development of Teotihuacán was clearly primary, uninfluenced by the example of neighbors.

On the basis of the relationship of urban density and political development that we have seen in previous chapters, we might expect that the dominating power of Teotihuacán approached that of a true empire. In a summary of the evidence, Bernal (1967, p. 98) points out that all of the localities occupied in the classic period in the Valley of Mexico other than Teotihuacán are small towns and villages. This suggests a complete domination by the urban center. But how far outside the Valley of Mexico this power extended is of course difficult to know for certain. Some evidences and professional opinions, to be cited later, bear on the question of empire.

The huge basin that is the Valley of Mexico probably was the dominant cultural power in Mesoamerica since the origin of the first urban center there. The dominance of this area in Mexico was retained throughout the colonial and modern eras. It is natural, therefore, that a great deal of archaeological effort has been expended there. From early in this century until midcentury archaeologists were mainly interested in pottery analysis, chronology, and site description. In the 1950s and intensifying in the 1960s, broader analytical interests have become predominant, involving regional surveys and test excavations that are problem-oriented within an evolutionary-ecological theoretical framework.[2]

1. Personal communication, 1973.
2. Interpretive syntheses by Armillas (1951) and Sanders (1956) were probably the first catalysts for these broader studies. Since 1960 a

Since the region is decidedly arid, the growth in population was related to the development of water-controlled agriculture (i.e., irrigation of dry lands and drainage of swampy lands, and eventually, reclamation of lake beds), and of extensive transportation of products by water. This latter feature assumes considerable importance because the Mesoamericans lacked animal transport. In terms of population density, therefore, the geographical features of the basin—especially the lakes and rivers—meant that a large amount of coordinated labor had to be used to expand the agricultural base. But once that labor was expended, the fertility of the soil and the control over the water were tremendous compared to the earlier period of dependence on rainfall and flood alone.

Prior to the rise of the city, the Teotihuacán Valley was occupied for about one thousand years by sedentary agriculturalists practicing a form of agriculture dependent on rainfall and involving the cultivation of swiddens.[3] The settlement pattern of that period suggests a tribal form of organization. By 300 B.C. the population had grown considerably and a series of tiny chiefdoms were formed. According to Sanders and Price,[4]

Between 300 B.C. and B.C./A.D. several striking changes in the eco-system occurred: The population probably doubled every generation, settlements shifted to the alluvial plain, and toward the end of this period, at least half of the population was concentrated into a single, huge, sprawling, nucleated center at the site of the Classic city. Millon (1964) feels that at this time Teotihuacán was already a city and that there was extensive architectural activity. By the time of Christ, there was at least valley-wide political integration, comprising an area of approximately 500 km². The subsequent history of Teotihuacán is one of expansion of the size of this nucleated center, increase in density

large number of coordinated researches have been made: Sanders's regional surveys and excavations in the Teotihuacán Valley, Millon's intensive surveys at the Teotihuacán urban center (Drewitt 1966; Millon 1964, 1966, 1967; Spence 1968), Parsons's surveys in the Texcoco and Chalco regions (1968b, 1969, 1970, 1971), and Lorenzo's interdisciplinary work (1968) are some of the more important.

3. Swiddens are nonpermanent agricultural plots produced by cutting back and burning off the plant cover.

4. (1968, pp. 140–41). Sanders was for several years the head of the Teotihuacán Valley Project, and has amassed plentiful data on settlement patterns. Price (1971) has provided an excellent overview of irrigation systems.

and socioeconomic differention of the population of the center, and expansion of the orbit of its political influence. By the Miccaotli phase Teotihuacán had certainly reached the status of a city and the Teotihuacán culture the status of a civilization. The subsequent history of Central Mexico was one of cyclical rise and decline of urban civilizations with changing centers of political and economic power.

It is probable that the subsistence and demographic base for the founding of the huge city was the installation of an irrigation system. Sanders' Teotihuacán Valley Project found indirect evidence that in the Early Classic period the Lower Valley (an alluvial plain) was irrigated by springs; floodwater apparently was controlled in the Middle Valley. The slopes were probably also terraced and irrigated with floodwater (Sanders and Price 1968, p. 149.)

Water control is, of course, of tremendous significance for agriculture, so obviously so that there is no need to go into the particulars here. The result of such control, an increased and consistent food supply, must be regarded as "permissive," as an enabler, so to speak, without which a dense population, above all a city, could not be sustained. But does it *cause* a city? And does it *create* a controlling bureaucracy? Because so much controversy and speculation have surrounded this possible relationship, it seems preferable to defer discussion of its role in Mesoamerica's rise to civilization to near the end of this chapter, after other Mesoamerican regions have been discussed. At this point it is sufficient to note that the rise to urban status of Teotihuacán seems to have been accompanied by the development of systematic water control.

It has often been said that in the development of civilization urbanism is a necessary component—that city and civilization imply each other. We need not try to settle this point now, but since Childe (1950), Adams (1966), and many others do believe this, it is well to discuss the factors involved in the rise to urbanism as well as the origins of the civilization itself.[5]

Sanders (1956) has emphasized that the highlands of Central Mexico have numerous environmental areas and smaller niches

5. The population of the urbanized Valley of Teotihuacán rose to 85,000 by about 400–500 A.D. (Parsons 1968b, p. 875) or to 100,000, according to Sanders and Price (1968, p. 149).

that vary greatly in type of soil, amount of rainfall, kinds of irrigation possibilities (springwater, terracing for flood control, bottomland canals, drainage, and so on), altitude, forests (for wood and game), lakes (for salt and fish), and scattered mineral deposits (for obsidian, basalt, and lime). Such "symbiotic regions" normally are involved in exchanges of the varying kinds of produce; and as the exchanges become customary, regional specialization is increased. One important result of the specialization is greater efficiency in production, which in turn helps provide for an enlarged and denser population.

Specialization is also likely to have a significant social or political result. As Flannery and Coe (1966) have pointed out, in such complicated environments reciprocal exchanges between villages are not nearly so effective as a coordinated system of redistribution. Redistribution is necessarily by plan and acquiescence of the producers since the reciprocity is delayed. That is, a village producing maize and needing obsidian does not have to find an obsidian-producing group that needs maize in order to effect an immediate balanced reciprocity. Instead, it can at harvest send the regular surplus of maize to the redistribution center and acquire other things as it needs them. But for redistribution to work, it needs a coordinating center, a redistributor—an "authority" who can plan and who can make equitable-seeming allocations. The redistributive system, as we have seen in the preceding materials on the ethnology of chiefdoms, is the economic exchange aspect of this kind of power structure. And the positive feedback is apparent: The more centralized and organized the authority center, the better the redistribution and related specialization works; the better the redistribution works, the more necessary and beneficial will be the authority center. They ascend together the path toward civilization, in a pattern of mutual reinforcement.

As the system improves, the role of the authority is strengthened, which in turn makes it able to widen its scope. This seems evident particularly in the increased ability of the center to subsidize specialized craftsmen and public labor, as evidenced so strikingly in the art work and massive monuments so characteristic of the rise of early civilizations.

Redistribution, we see ethnologically, is closely associated with a ramage form of residential organization, and according to evi-

dence analyzed by Sanders and Price (1968, pp. 155–157) this pattern must have been characteristic of the whole Mexican basin. Once this form of centralized authority exists in local organization, the possibilities of expansion and inclusion while retaining the centralization are increased.

Redistribution and its associated power center can also have a pacifying effect over a wide area. When a population concentrated through the redistributive system finally occupied all of the adjacent agricultural niches, there were two normal alternative results: competition and cooperation. Competition frequently resulted in warfare, which *may* have resulted in a special form of cooperation, wherein the defeated submitted to collaboration with others under the direction of the erstwhile alien authority. Such a consequence seems actually rare in the primitive world, and possibly is feasible only in the context of chiefdoms evolving into a state.

Jeffrey Parsons's (1971) regional surveys in the Valley of Mexico have suggested that the rise of the Teotihuacán center involved such local hostilities. In his words:

. . . We have the impression of a highly competitive situation in Terminal Formative times throughout the Valley of Mexico. This era saw two primary centers of roughly equivalent size and power (Tezoyuca-Patlichique Teotihuacán and Cuicuilco [ca. 200 B.C.–B.C./A.D.]), together with numerous secondary centers, struggling amongst themselves, on various levels, for access to strategic productive resources and trade routes [pp. 197–98].

There should be mentioned now another rather different and special kind of competition, the disturbance caused by migrations of predator peoples. In highland Mexico such invaders were known in myth as Chichimec, nomadic warriors from the arid northern frontier called the Great Chichimeca. Teotihuacán was in fact destroyed in the eighth century A.D., and perhaps this was a consequence of invasion. Tula, a city-state at the center of the Toltec empire, had developed on the northern outskirts of the Teotihuacán civilization, and may have been itself dominated by the warrior invaders. Following a period of military and political dominance over much of Mexico (as far south as Yucatán), Tula was destroyed in the twelfth century A.D., after a series of invasions from the north (Sanders and Price 1968, p. 33). (Among the

later "Chichimec" invaders were the Aztec, who grew to dominate most of highland Mexico by the time of the Spanish conquest.) It is difficult to assess the historical accuracy of these legends of Chichimec invaders, but even if the times and places are inaccurate, it does seem likely that there were such invasions, since the legends were so widely known. It seems impossible otherwise to account for them. At any rate, they were less-developed borderland peoples who made use of the existing state structure. We shall see more of this phenomenon in subsequent chapters.

If Sanders and Price are correct in their data and analysis, then all of the above features were involved in the origin of civilization at Teotihuacán.[6] It remains now to discuss more briefly the few other major civilizational centers in Mesoamerica.

The Oaxaca Valley (ca. B.C./A.D.–900 A.D.)

The archaeological record in the Oaxaca Valley shows a long span of development through the Formative and Classic periods, lasting until the Spanish conquest. Although the Oaxaca Valley's development was fairly typical of highland Mexico, and although it shared the Teotihuacán calendar, hieroglyphs, and many of the widespread art styles, the circumstances and form of adaptation differed from Teotihuacán in some important respects. The most important and most fully excavated site in the Oaxaca Valley is Monte Albán, an elite ceremonial center.

The valley lies in the southern highlands of Mexico and is the site of the present-day city of Oaxaca. The average elevation of the valley floor is about five thousand feet, a semiarid climate with rainfall mostly confined to the summer season. The valley floor is a rather flat alluvial plain, with little erosion. The farming system of the valley was intensive, with some small-scale water control by villages, but without an integrated canal system.[7]

Canal irrigation on a large scale is nowhere practical in the Valley of Oaxaca, where springs are small and surface flows are not sufficient

6. There has been no criticism of this thesis to date.

7. We are fortunate that an intensive interdisciplinary field investigation, begun in Oaxaca in 1966, has yielded important data on irrigation systems, demography, and political growth. Most of the data in the following pages are from Kent Flannery et al. (1971). Blanton (1973) supplies additional new data on settlement patterns.

for irrigating more than a small area. However, because of the unusually high water table, shallow-well irrigation is widely practiced, and this technique, which requires relatively little effort and can be performed on an individual family basis, can be traced back to at least 700 B.C. and probably earlier [Flannery et al. 1971, p. 169].

This "pot irrigation" involves digging a series of shallow wells in the fields and hand-dipping for water with large pots, which are then poured over the individual plants. It is, of course, laborious, but highly productive. Outside this area of intensive gardening, small-scale irrigation canals were formed in the upper areas of the piedmont, but this was a relatively small area. Other areas were dry-farmed, with periodic fallowing. Since the valley was surrounded by mountains, there were also zones of differential rainfall. Eventually most of the various physiographic niches were in production. The agricultural zones were probably "symbiotic," and thus participated in a redistributional system, and the attendant specialization probably raised production considerably on an overall basis (Flannery and Coe 1966).

Flannery et al. (1971, pp. 159, 176) feel that the organization that preceded the Classic period at Monte Albán was of the chiefdom type. Such a feeling, of course, cannot be conclusive, but is based on the indications of rank differences (especially burials of theocratic chiefs), redistribution, trade, monuments, and specialized artists and craftsmen.

By about B.C./A.D., as mentioned above, characteristics of the civilization of the central highlands had developed at Monte Albán. The Classic phase thus not only began at about the same time as that of Teotihuacán, but for unknown reasons the demise of the two centers was also nearly contemporaneous. Coe (1962, p. 127) says that ". . . by the end of Monte Albán III-B, about A.D. 900, all inhabitants had left Monte Albán, and this and other centres of civilization in the Valley of Oaxaca fell gradually into ruin. Later peoples, like the Mixtecs, used the old Zapotec site as a kind of consecrated ground for their tombs, . . . perhaps in an attempt to establish their continuity with the native dynasties which had ruled here for over a thousand years." I can find no other contemporary instances of such disasters and no other suggestion of barbarian invasions. But since the struggles elsewhere with nomadic invaders were taking place within this same narrow time span

(700–900 A.D.), it does seem probable that the abandonment of Monte Albán was related to warfare. However, there is no evidence of earlier invasions related to the origin of the civilization; and in fact we cannot even be sure that Monte Albán was the product of a true empire similar to Teotihuacán.[8]

Kaminaljuyu (ca. 600 A.D.–?)

The importance of this site on the outskirts of Guatemala City is its very long history. The area was occupied continuously from the beginning of the Formative period into the Late Classic. It is the only true urban Mayan site that has been excavated in the highlands, suggesting that a Mayan urban and hydraulic development could have preceded and influenced the lowland nonurban civic centers based on swidden horticulture.

This does not mean that Kaminaljuyu was itself a primary center of empire. There is a strong indication of Teotihuacán influence in the style of sculpture and painting and in the architectural style (Thompson 1954, p. 74). According to Sanders and Price (1968, p. 166), this latter point is of great significance:

The reasons for stressing the diffusion of architecture as evidence of expansion of states are obvious: a local group may well purchase portable foreign objects as exotic household furniture or even bury them with their dead but (particularly where the local society has a highly evolved religious system) such a group does not voluntarily supply the manpower required for the construction of monumental civic buildings to serve foreign gods. The introduction of large-scale ceremonial architecture of a foreign style in a local sequence, therefore, is evidence that the foreign power in some manner has secured control over the surplus labor of a local population.

These authors (pp. 168–69) argue that the site of Kaminaljuyu represents an actual colonization from the Central Plateau, including some military forces. The Guatemalan site was an un-

8. Recent work on the city of Monte Albán by Richard Blanton (1973) has revealed a defensive wall, a reservoir, and a nearby irrigation system, which he thinks indicate competition in the valley between major centers, and an attempt by the city at defensive self-sufficiency in terms of food and water. He also mentions a continuing study (unpublished) of carved stone monuments by Joyce Marcus, who finds that the replacement of local styles in Monte Albán III by one single overlay style (as well as some scenes depicting conquest) suggests a probable Monte Albán empire.

usually strategic location for controlling access to the lowlands of the Pacific Coast, so rich in the highly prized cacao. This pattern is well documented for the later Aztec's domination of the cacao trade; the Aztec could have been simply following an older arrangement first begun by Teotihuacán. At any rate, here is evidence of highland domination of at least some lowlands. As we discuss the lowlands below we must consider the possibility of lowland nonurban polities as being secondary (or, indeed, perhaps tertiary), that is, due to outside creative influences.

The Lowlands

There is much disagreement as to whether the lowlands could have developed a civilization of the pristine or primary kind. True urban centers have not been found in the lowlands, nor the various forms of water control and terracing that were characteristic of the highlands, nor specialized agricultural zones leading to a high development of economic symbiosis. Sanders and Price believe that political organization, civilization, and urbanism in the New World in general were in their origin and development functionally related to hydraulic agriculture in arid environments (1968, pp. 202–10 and elsewhere).

Michael Coe disagrees. He asserts that the "basic" Mesoamerican pattern, from the Formative period until conquest times, was of "elite centers," clusters of architectural and monumental art and religious works, and residences of ruling and priestly hierarchies, whereas the mass of the people, the swidden agriculturalists, lived in scattered villages and hamlets. This is of course the lowland pattern. Coe, moreover, believes that Mesoamerican civilization actually began in the lowlands and spread from there. Specifically, the earliest and primary source was the Olmec civilization of southern Vera Cruz and Tabasco on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico (1963, p. 83). Miguel Covarrubias also argued this in 1946 (p. 80), and according to James A. Ford (1969, p. 15), "most investigators agree that Olmec culture is the principal ancestor of later high cultural developments."

The Olmec Culture (1500–800 B.C.) ● Many Olmec artifacts and art works *are* truly distinctive and of specialized craftsmanship, and

an early radiocarbon date has been established for the principal sites (Ford 1969, p. 15). The most important Olmec site of La Venta flourished between 1200 and 800 B.C. (Ford 1969, p. 188); thus, a major part of this culture is within the Middle Formative period. "There is not the slightest doubt that all later civilizations in Mesoamerica, whether Mexican or Maya, ultimately rest on an Olmec base" (Coe 1962, p. 84).

We may be having semantic troubles here, specifically as to what is meant by the word *civilization*. Sanders and Price associate it with the development of the state, recognizing at the same time the difficulties of inferring reliably from archaeological evidence the fundamental political and social distinctions between chiefdoms and states (1968, pp. 54–57). But many people, Mesoamerican archaeologists particularly, associate civilization with the appearance of only a few indicators, such as a refined art style, a specialized architecture, or writing and a calendar. All of these are, to be sure, found typically among developed archaic civilizations throughout the world. But are they found *only* among true states or empires, or can they, at least singly, anticipate the state? We know, ethnologically, that they can be found in prestate societies—in chiefdoms, that is. The chiefdoms of the southeastern United States had various kinds of monuments; the carving art of the Northwest Coast Indians was highly specialized; the Pueblo Indians had a calendar; the Polynesians' calendar and astronomy, carving, monuments, and so on, were all remarkable. All of these examples demonstrate the chiefdoms' ability to subsidize specialists and control some amount of public labor.

According to Sanders and Price (1968), agreeing in principle with my own earlier definitions (1962), the difference between a chiefdom and a full civilization is evidently a difference in degree (amount, size, excellence) in the above characteristics; the qualitative difference is the legal-repressive aspect of the sociopolitical structure. Sanders and Price see this aspect—indicative of the true state—as making possible greater size and density of population, better and larger military force, and many more kinds of products of specialization. Later in this chapter we will examine evidence against the thesis that the state was necessary for these cultural developments.

It seems that the Olmec culture may have been called a civilization because some investigators have identified a "sophisticated" or "masterful" art style with "civilization." Coe says (1962, p. 84) that "the hallmark of Olmec civilization is the art style." That art style is basically represented in stone carvings, from colossal stone heads, stelae, and altars to tiny jade figurines and pendants. The Olmec style was highly distinctive, featuring the well-known "baby face" and jaguar motifs. One problem in assessing the power and priority of the Olmecs is how to account for the later wide distribution of some of the distinctive Olmec styles and motifs: Was it due to the spread of an Olmec religious cult? Trade? Emulation? There is no answer to this except that we do know that all three are commonplace causes of a wide distribution of elements in an art style. Hence, the simple fact of this distribution cannot be considered good evidence that an Olmec "power" or "empire" caused the spread of these elements.[9]

As for the monumental civic (or "elite") centers, the largest is that of La Venta, with other smaller, more recently excavated, centers at Tres Zapotes and San Lorenzo. Excavations, surface collections, and test-samplings at these sites suggest that the Middle Formative period of Olmec populated a rather smallish district about 125 miles long and about 50 miles wide (Coe 1962, p. 86). The ritual centers, or civic architecture, at these sites are clay constructions of pyramids, plazas, tombs, and mounds. The largest monument, the pyramid at La Venta, is 240 by 420 feet at the base and 110 feet high. It is the largest of its period, but much smaller than the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacán (689 by 689 feet at the base and 210 feet in height). As Sanders and Price admit, though they do not class the Olmec culture as a state, "the size and complexity of these three Olmec centers implies the presence of a well organized social system with some professional administrative and craft personnel" (1968, p. 28). But in their view (and in mine, from ethnological evidence), specialized personnel are as indicative of chiefdoms as they are of states.

In discussing the Olmec, particularly the distribution of so-called Olmec artifacts and motifs, Sanders and Price say in sum-

9. Kent Flannery (1968) argues cogently that this art style probably accompanied symbiosis in important economic trade.

mary (ibid., p. 122): "What the archaeological evidence suggests is that the South Gulf Coast [Olmec] Chiefdoms were larger in population and constructed more imposing civic centers than elsewhere in Mesoamerica during Middle Formative times. Even this generalization is subject to argument, however; and there may have been equally imposing centers on the Chiapas-Guatemala Coast, or at Monte Albán and Kaminaljuyu during the Middle Formative phase, centers whose development may have been quite independent of happenings in the 'tropical heartland.' "

At any rate, during the Formative period development of the Olmec region may well have been faster and the swidden agriculture more productive than in the arid highlands, where the greater potentiality of hydraulic agriculture had not yet been achieved (ibid., p. 134). Robert Heizer (cited by Coe 1962, p. 88) has calculated that the largest center, La Venta, required a supporting population in the hinterlands of at least 18,000, since the main pyramid alone probably took about 800,000 man-days to construct. If so, this was a very large chiefdom.

But we should refrain now from adjudicating this question, for it could go either way. An important point is that the Olmec culture needn't be classified as a state just because its art was so developed, or because its monuments were so large. "800,000 man-days" could bespeak large numbers of days instead of large numbers of men.[10] And large-scale monuments are also, of course, related to the presence or absence of building materials. As Erasmus says (1965, p. 279), "the Maya were living on a great natural erector set—their rocky limestone peninsula—and they chose to play with it."

It is possible that full civilizations occurred only in a few places in lowland Mesoamerica and then only in the Late Classic period, 600–900 A.D. (Sanders and Price 1968, p. 142). Possibly, also, the lowland societies should not be treated as examples of the independent origin of civilization, for they were undoubtedly strongly influenced by the highland empires. Nevertheless, they must be discussed, especially because of their characteristic non-urban organization and other demographic peculiarities, and be-

10. On inferences to be made from massive monuments, see Kaplan (1963) and Erasmus (1965).

cause their agricultural system was so different from that of the highland societies.

Tajín and Tikal (ca. 600 B.C.–B.C./A.D.) • On the Central Gulf Coast of Mexico, Tajín was the major center for a large nuclear area. This was apparently one of the first centers comparable to Teotihuacán or Monte Albán to arise in the lowland areas. Tikal, in the Petén of Guatemala and the largest of the Mayan cities, was the other possible rival to Tajín, and so distant from Teotihuacán that it deserves separate consideration.

Tajín was located in the tropical rain forest in northern Veracruz. The monumental center, constructed around 600 A.D., had a great pyramid. The center was abandoned and burned around 1200 A.D., probably a consequence of the widespread Chichimec invasions. Stylistically, the monuments and the arts show strong influence from Teotihuacán, suggesting that Tajín originally may have been a colony of Teotihuacán satellites (Coe 1962, pp. 119–23). Sanders and Price (1968, p. 142) point out, also, that its florescence seems to have taken place in Late Classic times, after Teotihuacán had collapsed and left a power vacuum. A satellite power in origin, in other words, it was able when freed from domination to itself dominate a large lowland area—an area large enough, at any rate, to supply the labor to build a huge monumental center.

Tikal, in the Petén region of northern (lowland) Guatemala, seems to have been the largest and one of the earliest of the regional ceremonial centers of the areas occupied by lowland Maya.[11] Its development occurred in the Late Formative period (600 B.C.– B.C./A.D.), so it is roughly contemporaneous with Kaminaljuyu in highland Guatemala.

The great court of Tikal—the ceremonial center—has two huge temple-crowned pyramids, at each side, together with a number of smaller temple-pyramids on platforms. For the total complex includes adjacent platforms with dwelling (or "caste"-like) compounds and still other pyramids and buildings (Thompson 1954, pp. 3, 62–64).

But Tikal lacked truly urban population concentrations. Build-

11. A smaller site nearby, Uaxactún, has the oldest dated monument but does not challenge for early status of urban statehood as much as Tikal.

ings that had possible dwelling rooms were probably the residences of a sacerdotal-temple-craftsmen class. According to Sanders and Price (1968, pp. 162–66), Tikal was in striking contrast to Teotihuacán in demographic and settlement patterns. Surface surveys showed that the population was nucleated in hamlets arranged mainly on level ridge-tops or natural terraces—with none of the overall planning that characterized Teotihuacán.[12]

Haviland (1969) estimates the population of the core area of 65 square kilometers as 39,000, which Sanders reduces to 26,000 (because the average figure of 5.7 persons per nuclear family is too high). Sanders (1972, p. 125) estimates the density of this core together with the surrounding populated area as an average of 200 per square kilometer—assuming that all of the Late Classic houses were simultaneously occupied—which is, as he says, a dubious assumption.

This is far from "urban," in either estimate. On the other hand, it is too densely settled for all the people to have subsisted by their own swidden agriculture. Either they must have been supported in part by tribute collection from a wider region (as was, of course, labor for public buildings), or else the dwelling groups were not nearly all contemporaneously occupied. But even if the elite residences of the civic center were completely occupied, they housed a population of only about two or three thousand.[13]

Tikal was the largest and most nucleated site of swidden (lowland) agriculturalists in Mesoamerica, yet very far below the size, density, and complexity of Teotihuacán. Even the civic architecture reflects the difference in population scale. The civic compound at Teotihuacán (called the Ciudadela) and market alone cover as much ground as all of the buildings at Tikal. Think of the differences if the Teotihuacán pyramids of the sun and moon and their associated complexes were added! If lowland Maya "city-states" were in fact states, they were clearly nonurban—as even the case of Tikal, the largest, attests.

12. Interestingly, Puleston and Calendar (1967) have discussed the possibility that modest defensive earthworks may have surrounded the hamlets.

13. It should be observed, however parenthetically at this point, that the lack of urbanization was probably not due to the inherent deficiencies of swidden agriculture based on root crops—for such gardening can be very productive (cf. Carneiro 1961; Bronson 1966).

How, then, to account for Tikal? Evidently the intermediate position of Kaminaljuyu in highland Guatemala was the key. This city was probably a colonylike appendage of Teotihuacán, and in turn may have formed itself as a nuclear center over a set of symbiotic regions that included Tikal and other lowland chiefdoms of the Petén. Sanders and Price believe—and this seems reasonable from ethnological experience—that groups of low-level, nonurban swidden agriculturalists can become altered structurally by becoming a functioning part of an imperial network, particularly as this might intensify any tendency toward centralization and redistribution already present. The new outside power would immeasurably strengthen the position of the local elite, and make that elite in turn receptive to the use of techniques of government that originated in a hydraulic highland civilization (Sanders and Price 1968, pp. 204–205).[14]

City, State, and Civilization in Mesoamerica

The case for Teotihuacán as an important site of the development of a primary civilization in highland Mesoamerica seems well established. The more-or-less contemporary development at Monte Albán may have been also primary and independent, or it may not, but most likely it depended on Olmec influence. There are formidable mountain obstacles between the two valleys, which also are about two hundred fifty miles apart. This problem of independence presents no major difficulty for the present, however, since the Oaxaca development does not require any modification of our generalizations about Teotihuacán. To be sure, there was one interesting ecological divergence with respect to water control, but this has no bearing on the matter of Monte Albán's possible independence: The functional-ecological significance of the form of water control is the same whether the state development was independent or not.

14. It may be remembered that after the collapse of Teotihuacán a power vacuum occurred in Central Mexico until Tula finally succeeded Teotihuacán as a controlling center. It is of interest that following the fall of Teotihuacán there was a fifty- to sixty-year cessation of building activity at Tikal (ibid., p. 206). This and much other evidence support Rathje's (1972) hypothesis of the great significance of long-distance trade in stimulating the rise of the centralized lowland polity.

The other highland site, Kaminaljuyu in Mayan Guatemala, was apparently a colony of the Teotihuacán empire. Its significance is that it demonstrates how truly extraordinary was the wide influence of Teotihuacán. Also, its presence seems to afford a plausible explanation for some of the developments in the lowland Maya region (the Petén). This should be viewed as a provisional judgment at this point, however, since we do not want such a problematical case to influence subsequent generalizations.

A major problem has to do with the relations of highlands and lowlands and with the question of donor and receiver in the origin and spread of civilization. Archeologists who have worked with Olmec and Mayan materials have, in the past at least, tended to consider these—particularly the Olmec—as the source of "high culture." The rich developments in Olmec art did in fact antedate others, and judging from the subsequent wide distribution of Olmec-like art motifs, calendar, writing, and architecture—all of which are indicative of a complex specialized redistributional government—Olmec influence must have been great and widespread. The culture of the lowland Maya also had a wide influence, and its sheer excellence is agreed upon by all art historians and archaeologists. Both the Olmec and the Maya qualify as true civilizations, except that of Childe's ten criteria the urbanism is only modest and there is no evidence of a repressive secular state apparatus.

The urbanism so characteristic of Teotihuacán, contrasting with the much smaller "elite," or ceremonial, centers in the lowlands, must be due to special local factors that do not directly bear on the question of the development of civilization. Sanders and Price (1968, pp. 235–39) conclude their important book by emphasizing that the problem of urbanism is distinct from that of state and civilization, a caution we will do well to heed.

The question of the repressive state as an important indicator of civilization is obviously a much more difficult problem. Sanders and Price accept this criterion. The distinction is in terms of the presence of a qualitative demarker: statelike means of integration, mostly having to do with repressive force. But such things are not visible archaeologically, at least in these cases, and we should be careful that we speak of something real, something other than a verbal device or guess. Sometimes something looking like violence is

depicted in iconographs, to be sure, but this violence seems to be related to sacrificial victims, war prisoners, military episodes, and the like.

The rise of states in the ethnohistorical record reviewed in earlier chapters taught us, most importantly, that the uses of force in internal repression were against "princes" or other aristocratic pretenders at time of crisis or succession, and in external relations, to create or maintain a foreign conquest. There was, in other words, no evidence of violence used by rulers against a class or stratum of the original society. Furthermore, the manifested violence can be taken normally as a sign of the failure of internal and external integrative and peacemaking devices to operate effectively.

It would seem, judged only provisionally at this point, that the major differences between the important highland societies like Teotihuacán and Tula and lowland examples like the Olmec and the Maya have to do with *degrees* in the amount of urbanism, amount and distance of trade, intensity of agriculture and overall population density. Local ecological factors, as Sanders and Price emphasize, can be used to account for these. In all of the characteristics of civilization other than urbanism and the repressive state controls, however, the lowland cultures were at least the equal of the highland cultures (indeed in some ways superior). It would seem, then, that we can consider them both as civilizations. This would mean, of course, that neither urbanism nor state violence is a necessary factor in the *development* of civilization—as we have stated before.

12

The Origins of Civilization
in Mesopotamia

THE GREATEST AND most obvious difference in the
geography of both Mesopotamia and Egypt when compared with
Mesoamerica and Peru lies in the relatively greater diversity in
the latter areas. Both Mesopotamia and Egypt are basically great
arid river valleys with little of the ecological variability of the
New World regions. That variability, as we have seen, is due to
great differences in mountain altitudes, creating cold, temperate,
and tropical zones with great differences in rainfall and in kinds
of native flora and fauna. But Mesoamerica and Peru had only
small watersheds for their irrigation systems, contrasting greatly
with the tremendous magnitude of the Nile and the Tigris-Eu-
phrates drainage areas. V. Gordon Childe (1942, p. 106) has
made a great point of the significance of these rivers not only
for large-scale irrigation, but also as arteries of commerce and
communication that must have stimulated urbanization.

The availability of large domesticable animals for both food
and labor in the Old World is another obviously significant dif-
ference. The Mesoamericans had no draft animals, and the Peru-

vians had only the llama, of some use in transport in the high-lands and for wool. In contrast, Mesopotamia had the donkey and ox for labor (the horse was late and not much used), while cows and calves were obviously important for milk and meat, and goats, pigs, and sheep were plentiful (Kramer 1963, pp. 109–110). As for vegetable foods, the Old World had several storable cereals of great importance, but the New World had its maize, beans, and squash complex, also storable. Cultivation methods differed in the two regions, of course, but it is difficult to see any great significance in this, since both were highly intensive.

The Formative Era (ca. 5000–3500 B.C.)

The Tigris-Euphrates lowlands (like the Nile Valley) did not have sufficient rainfall for nonirrigated agriculture, although a crop planted in an area of annual flooding sometimes could come to maturity before the soil completely dried out (Butzer 1971, p. 215). It is more likely, however, that plant and animal domes-tication first occurred in upland areas of greater rainfall.

"Neolithic" (early Formative) farming communities found their best environment for general overall development in the piedmont zone between the Mesopotamian lowlands and the Zagros mountains of Kurdistan and Luristan. Most of this land is in Iraq, and is called the Assyrian steppe. This intermediate zone had sufficient rainfall in winter for dry farming and large rivers for irrigation in dry seasons or in areas of insufficient rain-fall, so that a transition toward irrigation, little by little, or par-tial, was possible. Adams (1962, p. 112) says that irrigation farm-ing probably originated there.

It is thought that after about 1,000 years the early part-farming communities of the Mesopotamian uplands finally developed their economy to a mixed herding-farming basis by about 6000 B.C. (Hole et al. 1971, pp. 279–88). The basic products were emmer wheat, barley, sheep, and goats. The population was sparse and the communities small at first, but between 5500–5000 B.C. small-scale irrigation was introduced in some areas, which enabled more of the lowlands to be utilized (ibid., p. 308). By 4000 B.C. the basic economy of the formative Mesopotamian-Khuzistan period was evident. The probable population of "Susiana proper" (the

heartland named from the famous type-site of Susa) at this time was over 15,000 (ibid., p. 303).

Although sedentary agricultural villages characteristically de-veloped in the uplands and highlands, they took a further devel-opment as people gradually moved into the alluvial lowlands of the Tigris-Euphrates system. Apparently the lowlands were not widely habitable by sedentary groups until irrigation became fully employed and the villages were freed from a partial dependence on hunting and gathering wild food. Additionally, transport and some kind of exchange corridor had to be established in order to get raw materials like hardwoods (for boat-building) and stone from the distant highlands. But once the required developments in population size and in technology were achieved, the lowlands had enormous potential for further evolutionary growth into truly urban societies.

The aforementioned dependence on irrigation made for an obviously more intensive agriculture, and the absence of stone greatly facilitated plowing. The river systems, naturally, provided fish, mollusks, and aquatic birds in abundance, and equally ob-viously, a potentially great transportation system. Easy and effi-cient transportation has two aspects, it should be remembered; it not only facilitates the passage of goods and people, but also stimulates a wide diffusion of inventions, discoveries, and ideas in general. As William McNeill says (1963, p. 31):

The local peculiarities of desert river banks do much to explain the direction of social evolution among the pioneer agricultural com-munities that penetrated the lower reaches of the Tigres-Euphrates Valley after about 4000 B.C. The larger geographical setting of this habitat also stimulated human ingenuity by both inviting and neces-sitating long-distance transport and communication on a comparatively massive scale. This meant that the stimulus of contacts with strangers was never long absent from the early settler's horizon. Boats and rafts could move with ease along the rivers, lagoons, and bayous of the region itself, and sail along the shores of the Persian Gulf (and beyond) without encountering any but the natural difficulties of wind and waves. Overland, too, no geographical obstacles hindered pack trains on their way to the mountains that ringed the Mesopotamian plain to the north, east, and west. The fact that the alluvium of lower Mesopotamia lacked stone, timber, and metals supplied ample incentive for travels. In proportion as the valley dwellers required these commodities, they had either to organize expeditions to find,

prepare, and bring back what they needed, or else to persuade neighboring peoples to exchange local stone, timber, or metals for the surpluses of the plains. As specialization progressed within the social structure of the valley peoples, such trade between hill and plain assumed an increasing scale and importance; and the emergent cities along the rivers became centers of communication and stimulus for the whole surrounding region.

An important difference between Mesopotamia and the Mesoamerican and Peruvian areas is the great significance of pastoralism in the Old World region (as well as the aforementioned use of oxen for plowing). The "mixed economies" of the Mesopotamian uplands used wild foods to supplement domesticated animals and dry farming. As further development went on and less-provident environments became utilized, pastoralism became increasingly a specialization in the grasslands where agriculture was difficult. Thus, as time went on, two distinct kinds of cultures became increasingly divergent. The partly independent and partly complementary nature of these cultures' association varied, sometimes characterized by trading, at other times by symbiotic relationships, and at others by raiding. Again, it is important to remember that there are two sides to a symbiosis of two such societies: Both sides are economically better off because of the specialization, and so they need each other; but pastoralism is a rather mobile way of life and leads to military superiority of a certain kind, an offensive, raiding, predatory kind of warfare—as we saw with the Ankole state (chapter 6). That "the Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold" must have been a very significant factor in the lives of the victimized farming communities.

About 3500 B.C. the alluvial plain of Sumer in the far south fostered a rapid development of culture. The Sumerians seem to have been the first to break through to urbanization. And by about 3000 B.C. they also had developed writing—which is, of course, of great significance to us, for at that point we merge archaeology (prehistory) with documentary history.

The late Formative type-site named Al Ubaid gives us some idea of the widespread kind of Sumerian culture immediately preceding the rise of the great cities. The farming people lived in reed-and-clay constructions, huddled together in villages that were

relatively self-sufficient and politically autonomous. There were no evidences of defensive fortifications, and apparently peaceful contact and trade were widespread. The date palm and fish were important additions to the cereals and goat and sheep herds; apparently holdings of cattle were centralized as the property of the palace-temple (Adams 1955, pp. 9–10).

Technological advances in the Formative bespoke a great increase in craft specialization. As McNeill describes it, ". . . The rapid pace of technical progress, the heavy requirements of time for production with existing techniques, the uniformly high artistry, and the increasingly complex, exacting, and capitalized nature of the operations argues strongly that most of them were able to devote fulltime to their specialized pursuits" (ibid., p. 11). As we have seen in the ethnological chapters, such specialization requires the kind of centralized redistributional system characteristic of chiefdoms and primitive states.

The chiefdom elsewhere is always theocratic, and this was clearly the case in Sumer (Adams, 1966, p. 121). Even at such an early stage as the Ubaid (around 3500 B.C.), the temple was the most imposing structure (or set of structures), and was not only a "house of worship" but a sanctuary, a palace, and a storage place and redistributive center. "The construction and above all the frequent re-construction of temples, which might be of very substantial size, go to show that the Ubaid people had already so to speak created the characteristic form of early civilization in Mesopotamia, the sacred city whose economic, social and religious life was centred on the temple and its priests" (Clark 1969, p. 103).

The Florescent and Protoliterate Eras (3500–3000 B.C.)

Following the spread of Neolithic irrigation farmers throughout the southern alluvium, a few special locations underwent rapid development in size and complexity. One of the most striking, and today best-known archaeologically, is that of *Warka* (Sumerian *Uruk*, Semitic *Erech*). Warka has become the type-site for the early Florescent era (3500–3000 B.C.), as Ubaid serves for the late Formative.

It is, of course, difficult (or dangerous) to estimate population figures from the size of monuments, but certainly a really great growth in the size of monuments is suggestive. Adams (1966, p. 126) estimates that the temple and mound at Warka alone was worth 7,500 man-years in the building. So much of the archaeological work in Mesopotamia has been concerned with these temples that we may as well begin with a brief description, with emphasis on Warka.

A characteristic kind of temple is the stepped platform, or ziggurat, on which a temple-tower was raised (the tower of Babel was an example). The temple and the city and its land was the property of one particular ruling patron-god (Eanna [Anu] in the case of Warka). Nearby complexes of living quarters enclosed by a wall have been suggested as evidence of a progressive detachment of the temple's personnel from direct involvement in the life of the community (Adam 1966, p. 126). This is perhaps to be expected, for we have seen in earlier chapters that with the growth of a theocracy there is a tendency toward a "separation of powers," with the priestly power increasing its social distance from the masses and from the more mundane military and economic matters, although retaining important or ultimate decision-making powers.

The artificial mound itself at Warka was forty feet high and covered an area of 420,000 square feet, dominating the flat plain for many miles. The building and walls, including the sides of the mound, were coated with a mud plaster covering the sundried brickwork, which in turn was covered with tens of thousands of fire-baked clay cones stuck into it to form complex patterns of design. This complexity is noted because it is further evidence, beyond the sheer size of the monument, of a great deal of labor and planning.

The temple continued to be the focus and organizer of religious, economic, and political life during the Florescent period. As the cities grew so too did the crafts, including pottery and carpentry, as well as metallurgy. The presence of wood and metals from great distances show the increasing ability of the administrators of the temple to collect and ration foodstuffs, to exchange with foreigners, to transport goods, and above all to store and to redistribute both finished goods and raw materials. This com-

plex function of the theocratic chiefdom must have tremendous political significance, for it would have made both individuals and potential disruptive factions very conscious of the practical benefits dispensed by the regime—and as "gifts" of the god that the regime stood for. Adams (1955, p. 12), evaluating the nature of the monumental structures as temples, concludes that "a stage in which the economic controls of this highly sophisticated (if not quite urbanized) society were more important and more formalized than its political ones, and were primarily of a theocratic nature, can thus be isolated with considerable assurance."

Most of the important technological and economic developments had become well established by Protoliterate times (around 3000 B.C.). Writing appeared in the form of simple pictographs that were rapidly becoming conventionalized among scribes and record-keepers, thereby to undergo further development, as did the related numerical notation. The improved plow, wheeled carts, sailing rafts and boats, and the use of bronze for tools and weapons all were established early in the Protoliterate era, and remained basic to later Mesopotamian civilization.

There is a possibility that in the Protoliterate era there existed a short-lived political institution that departed somewhat from pure theocracy. Jacobsen argues (1943) from his study of early texts that the cities held meetings of an "assembly" of adult male citizens guided by a council of elders. The Protoliterate texts are difficult to interpret and too scanty for us to make very much of the above interpretation. In any event, the much more complete texts of the early Dynastic period do not reveal any important survival of the "assembly" or any such oligarchy (Frankfort n.d., p. 78). It is mentioned here with no attempt at evaluation and with the reminder that Gearing has described from ethnohistorical data a similar-sounding institution among the Cherokee (see chapter 8).

The Dynastic Era (ca. 2900–2500 B.C.)

Authorities agree that sometime early in the third millenium B.C. an increasing secular political trend grew into an established hereditary military kingdom in several of the lower Mesopotamian cities, hence their use of the label *Dynastic era*. It is also agreed

that this political trend was accompanied by increased militarism and warfare.[1]

The fifteen to twenty independent Sumerian cities grew increasingly "urban," probably by concentrating defensively. Kish and Warka may have held as many as twenty to thirty thousand inhabitants (Adams 1955, p. 14). Adams feels that the origin of kingship was closely related to the demographic situation (ibid.): "Since virtually the whole of the era is marked by some evidence of warfare it may be suggested that population had expanded nearly to the limits that the land would afford by the end of the preceding era, and that what followed was a chronically precarious balance between population and food resources. Under these conditions, the rise of kingship may have been largely a self-generating process."

Adams has here, as have many others in other contexts, ascribed warfare to population pressure and competition among the independent cities, the implication being that the competition was over arable lands lying somewhere between. As an example, he cites the ". . . long history of internecine rivalry between Lafash and Umma over border territories . . . ; under such a chronic state of emergency there was neither time nor disposition for the war-leader to relinquish his powers" (ibid.). McNeill agrees that as population grew and swamps and deserts were reclaimed the buffer zones between cities ceased to exist and their lands came to abut one another's, causing "perennial friction and chronic war" (1963, pp. 41–42). A standing army, and perpetuation of the military rule, is also felt to be related to the problems of the incursions of raiding nomads. "In proportion as war became chronic, kingship became necessary. Concentration of political authority in the hands of a single man seems to have become the rule in Sumerian cities by 3000 B.C." (McNeill 1963, p. 43).

But the question remains, what means and circumstances transformed rule by a military chief into a political "kingship" with built-in guarantees of perpetuation beyond the rule of the man himself? The idea that omnipresent military threats or needs

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1. Adams (1955, p. 13; and 1966, p. 133); Childe (1936, p. 125); Clark (1969, p. 106); Frankfort (n.d., p. 87); McNeill (1963, pp. 41–46). These authorities are either anthropologists, or historians (Frankfort and McNeill) who are anthropologically sophisticated.

tend to perpetuate military bureaucracy and power seems sensible, but as we have seen in other chapters (especially the case of Shaka Zulu), the consolidation of a true legal state is still difficult to achieve. Such a thought carries the further suggestion that perhaps the first dynastic cities were not yet full-fledged states. At least this question is something for later consideration.

Stratification and the State • As we saw above, Adams and others have presented the idea that chronic warfare led to a secular military rule, with the suggestion that this is the cause of the Sumerian city-state. But Adams has another theory, presented years later, which we suppose has superseded, or at least supplements the above (though he does not say so). This theory is an important modification of Childe's modification of the Morgan-Marx-Engels (and later, Leninist) theory of the origin of and nature of the state. Inasmuch as these latter were discussed in chapter 2, they will be mentioned only very succinctly here.

A crucial element in Adams's theory is the increase in "stratification." Whereas Morgan had cited the growth of private property as the cause of the state (which, according to Engels, then came about to protect the propertied class from the propertyless), Adams (1966, p. 80) emphasized "the system of stratified social relations, of which rights to property were only an expression." Adams felt that "probably most would also tend to question Morgan's implicit assumption that the substitution of territorically defined communities for ethnically defined ones was both a necessary and a sufficient cause for the growth of the institution of private property." He did agree with Morgan about "the general shift [Morgan] posited from ascriptively defined groupings of persons to politically organized units based on residence." But "class stratification," Adams feels, "was the mainspring and 'foundation' of political society."

What is meant by *stratification*, and what are the evidences for it? Apparently stratification for Adams is a synonym for *class*. This is not stated, but they are used rather interchangeably. Adams does not formally define stratification, but does define class (1966, p. 79), as describing "objectively differentiated degrees of access to the means of production of the society without any necessary implications of sharply reduced mobility, class consciousness, or overt

interclass struggle. . . ." And in this sense, he says, "the early states characteristically were class societies."

Adams believes that the common citizenry of the Mesopotamian cities were organized as "conical clans," citing indirect evidence for this (1966, p. 94). The argument is even more acceptable in our present context, since our comparative study of the ethnologially known states and chiefdoms has shown the probable universality and the functional utility of what we call *ramages,* forms of kinship that involve the institutionalization of inequality by heredity. But it may be well to point out that the ramage (conical clan) is typically characterized by political, or bureaucratic, differentiation accompanied by symbols of high-low status, but with no significant or meaningful "objectively differentiated degrees of access to the means of production" among them. That is, it is typical of chiefdoms that priests or chiefs (and their immediate families) do not produce foodstuffs, but accept or require "gifts," or taxes, or tribute for partial redistribution—(a part is withheld). But this is not what Marx and Engels meant by differential relations to the means of production. They were thinking of *owners* of land or machinery, versus *nonowners* (slaves, serfs, or wage-workers). The relation of a priest-chief—redistributor to the agricultural workers in a chiefdom is best seen as a *political* power relationship, not an economic relationship that grew out of the unequal acquisition of wealth in a market economy. At any rate, there is no need to posit a class relationship that necessarily must have been founded on economic ownership. It is the power relationship itself that we are investigating, and so far it looks as if it began with an unequal power to make redistributive exchanges (and unequal access to gods rather than goods).

But let us see what evidence Adams (1966, pp. 95–110) finds for the development of class stratification. In the late Ubaid period there was little distinction in the kind of grave goods that could be taken as signifying important status differentiation. In the Warka and Protoliterate periods greater variations began to appear, and in the late Protoliterate still further differentiation was evident at the excavations at Ur, but none of these show a very complete stratification. There is more complete evidence that burials in Early Dynastic times showed status differences based on wealth.

The written records of the Early Dynastic period confirm these archaeological suppositions.

At the bottom of this society was a class of slaves, not numerous but usually working at important "semi-industrialized" tasks such as weaving cloth. These slaves seem to have been war captives, sometimes referred to as "foreigners." The bulk of the population was of various kinds of peasantry with varying degrees of control over the land they worked. Some proportion of them were still organized as primitive kinship units. Professional artisans, of course, had varying degrees of skill, and worked at tasks of varying importance, so that it is probably not reasonable to attempt a classification of them on an economic basis—it may be best to treat them as a kind of residual category. At the top of the society were the ruler and the aristocratic, or princely, families. Adams thinks that they headed "manorial estates" of varying sizes. One cannot know if they were literally manorial, meaning privately owned and administrated for private profit, since a simple political jurisdiction over a unit of *persons,* however regionally defined, could give the same appearance without any implication of ownership in the marketplace sense of the term.

We cannot disagree with the conclusion that some kind of social differentiation appeared in Dynastic times, if not earlier. But all the evidence relates to status differences, which probably were related to political or bureaucratic distinctions, not economic ones. I cannot find the "differential access to the means of production" definition a very meaningful one. Originally, I think, this definition was accepted by Marxists because of the assumption that classes "struggle" because of this economic inequity. (It should be noted that Adams does not seem firm, or even very explicit, about this—in the statement about Morgan quoted, he wanted to substitute "class stratification" for "property" as the "mainspring" and "foundation" of political society. But perhaps his first definition of class was not meant to imply that "differential access" had to do with property.)

Childe had been a strong proponent of the class oppression theory of the rise of the state in Mesopotamia, especially in his widely read and influential *Man Makes Himself* (1936). Henri Frankfort disputes this directly (n.d., pp. 69–70).

To speak of the "surplus" of food which must be produced in order to maintain officials as well as merchants and craftsmen, and to imply that the officials must have been a parasite class which kept the farmers in subjection, leaves out of account several circumstances, of which the most important is the climate of the country. Wherever there is power there is, inevitably, abuse of power. But the rich soil of Mesopotamia, if well watered, produces food in abundance without excessive or continuous toil. Labor in the fields was largely seasonal. At seed time and harvest time every able-bodied person was no doubt on the land, as was the case in medieval England. But the farmers were not a separate class or caste. Every citizen, whether priest, merchant, or craftsman, was a practical farmer who worked his allotment to support himself and his dependents. Once the seed was sown and the harvest gathered, plenty of time remained in which special skills could be developed, taught, and exploited.

It is hard to see how Frankfort knows that everyone worked in the fields, but his point is well taken that oppression, repression, or exploitation for the production of the "surplus" simply do not follow from the evidence and from the nature of the agricultural production. It is also hard to understand how he knows that crafts and home industry were not separated. But his argument has merit, judging from what we know ethnographically of simple agricultural societies. Since we do not really *know*, however, it is best to leave the question in abeyance—which means that we do not accept as a given, as Childe did, that agricultural "surplus" equals "exploitation" of one class by another, which in turn means that the state originates to repress one class in the interest of the other. Once founded, of course, a state takes on many new functions, especially self-protection, which is itself normally a maintenance of the status quo, but also takes the form of military protection against competing societies.

Competition and Warfare • There is ample testimony that the evolution of the Mesopotamian society from the time of the earliest sedentary villages to the great Babylonian empires was accompanied by a commensurate rise in the amount and extent of warfare. And, to repeat perhaps unnecessarily, the warfare was of two distinct kinds, between rival competitive neighbors and between the sedentary cities and raiding nomads. These involve distinctly different strategies and organization.

Once southern Mesopotamia became more or less "filled up" in the Dynastic period in Sumer, rival cities waged both war and peace, and both of these are simply two aspects of an external political strategy. A city defeated by another may become its tributary, but probably unwillingly and apparently for only a short time because the means of permanently consolidating or federating regions were still lacking. Probably, too, one city was not greatly superior militarily to all others until the time of Sargon. Peace was waged also in terms of alliances among neighbors against rival confederacies, but since these strategies were military only, rather than economically symbiotic, they tended to be ephemeral.

It may be an important suggestion, in comparing the Mesopotamian Dynastic era with Peruvian North Coast valleys of the equivalent late Florescent era, that the relative lack of success in both areas in uniting into larger polities was because the cities and the coastal valleys were quite similar economically to their neighbors. The larger "empires" like Tiahuanaco and Akkad (and, for that matter, Teotihuacán in Mexico) all involved geographically distinct zones so that the imperial bureaucracy could create an economic symbiosis having enough importance to confer political benefits through the planned exchanges of important goods.

The other kind of warfare, that of defense against raiding pastoralists, is of course difficult to wage because of the great mobility of the predators. It is also almost impossible to wage peace against them except for sometimes "buying them off," a chancy and short-term solution usually.

The difficulty the agriculturalists had with wandering predators was persistent in Mesopotamia. This very persistence throughout millenia undoubtedly had a powerful effect, creating no-man's-lands and buffer zones in areas that might otherwise have been economically productive. The other side of this coin is particularly important: With increasing pressure from nomads on people in the intermediate zones, they had to choose either to become nomads themselves or to join the larger sedentary polities, thus increasing the nomadic population as well as that of the cities. It may well be that the unprecedented rise of true urban agglomerations in southern Mesopotamia, which was also the first zone of fully sedentary occupation, was partly caused by the very impossibility of such a complete adaptation in the upland steppes.

(These intermediate areas in the north were in fact late to develop.) It is important to emphasize again the simple fact that military considerations influence not only the overall size of a population but its dislocation and relocation, ultimately toward a characteristic distribution.

As Adams points out (1972, pp. 61–62), there was a significant increase in the sedentary population during the Ubaid period until the early centuries of the fourth millennium. The distribution was of dense clusters of villages and towns near rivers and streams. It is not known whether this population increase was natural or due to immigration.

In any case, the most extensive development of the urban institutions characteristic of Sumerian civilization came after this period of population growth, in the last centuries of the fourth millennium. . . . at least in a few centers like Uruk the process of growth not only was explosively rapid but was accompanied by profound structural changes, with massive fortifications, palaces, and political hierarchies shifting the emphasis away from temples and their associated priesthoods. But the important point is that this urbanization involved redistribution of the population rather than a further increase. It was accomplished, in other words, only through widespread rural abandonment and the more or less forcible relocation of former villages and townsmen in wholly unprecedented urban agglomerations.

The Imperial Era (ca. 2500–1500 B.C.)

The very geographical peculiarity of Mesopotamia that tempted nomads also led to internecine warfare and attempts at conquest among the cities themselves. As Childe explains (1936, p. 125), they all depended on the two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, for life itself, and for "the importation of . . . exotic substances from common sources." And therefore,

. . . disputes about lands and water rights were liable to arise between the several autonomous cities. Just because all relied on the same foreign trade to bring them the same necessities for industry, commercial rivalries were inevitable amongst sovereign states; the contradiction between an economic system that ought to be unitary and political separatism was made manifest in interminable dynastic wars. Our earliest documents after the temple accounts, in fact, record wars between adjacent cities and treaties that temporarily ended them. The ambition of any city dynast was to obtain hegemony over his neighbors.

The Akkadian Empire • Around 2500 B.C. the attempts at empire began to have some wide success, but they were not long-lived. Sargon of Akkad, about 2370 B.C., was apparently the first to found an imperial dynasty that lasted through several reigns (about a century). This dynasty ruled over all of Mesopotamia and apparently either subjected or overawed the upland barbarians.

Sargon, according to tradition, began his political career as a cup-bearer to the king of Kish, a city on the northern borders of the Sumer. (Sumer was the southern part of Lower Mesopotamia.) Eventually he became a successful military leader, who, after defeat in several neighboring cities, founded his own city Akkad (Agade). From Akkad, he continued his campaigns ever southward until all of Sumer was tributary to him. Such a conquest was not new to the Sumerians, but all previous incursions, like their own internecine wars, had been rather ephemeral in their results.

Akkad was founded in a strategic military position in the transition zone between the barbarian steppes and the civilized south. It is likely that it is for this very reason that Sargon was so successful; he was able "to unite barbarian prowess with civilized technique" forming a combination superior to either (McNeill 1963, p. 46.) Sumerian culture had influenced the middle and upper regions of Mesopotamia without conquering them, so the new city that Sargon built in Akkad had an important Sumerian foundation, but without the rigid priest-and-temple structure of the old Sumerian cities. Priests and temple communities existed in Akkad, but since the city was created by the military, the secular and military parts of the society were ascendent and remained so.

Another possibly important feature of the rise of the Akkadian empire lay in the differences in the original cultures of the northern Semites and the southern Sumerians. The Sumerians had been sedentary irrigation agriculturalists for many hundreds of years. Many of the Semitic-speaking peoples of the upper rivers and steppes had been nomadic herdsmen, and even after they adopted irrigation farming (around 2500 B.C.) they still had an important symbiotic connection with the neighboring herdsmen. Thus, united Mesopotamia held two subcultures, the older, aristocratic, sophisticated, theocratic cities of Sumer and the newer, powerful,

more secular fortresses of the northern frontier. McNeill feels that the pastoral heritage of the Semites was a powerful factor in causing the transition to irrigation farming to take a new form (1963, pp. 46–47):

No doubt the obvious rewards of irrigation induced this change; but it occurred within the framework of a social system which had developed to suit the needs of pastoralism. Above all, this meant a society led by tribal chieftains, whose function it was to direct the co-operative effort needed to safeguard the flocks and move them from pasture to pasture. As irrigated agriculture took root in Akkad, this sort of traditional authority was extended and transformed: chieftains began to mobilize and supervise the work gangs needed to build and maintain irrigation works.

It has been noted how often an older set of cultural forms and institutions takes on new life when transplanted to a new locality and taken up by a new people. There seem to be two related reasons for this: The borrowers are likely to choose only the obviously best of the range of variations in such things as irrigation techniques; and (2) the borrowed elements may find themselves adapted to unfamiliar uses and means, which may (or, of course, may not) give rise to new combinations of greater evolutionary potentiality. Both of these factors appear to account for the ascendency of Akkad, particularly in that the adaptation of farming was related to secular rather than religious management. This and the pastoral military heritage created not only a stronger city but also one more purely a secular state rather than an elaborate chiefdom or theocratic near-state. McNeill summarizes this development as follows (1963, p. 50): "The successful transplantation of Sumerian high culture up-river among the Akkadians marked an important stage in the expansion of civilization. The sociological barrier which had hitherto restricted civilized life to communities organized and led by priesthoods was for the first time transcended."

The Akkadian secular rule of the military, the economy, and the irrigation system was able to expand much more easily into the up-river hinterlands. And probably of great significance was a new role Sargon invented for himself: He made it possible for his name to be invoked along with the gods in the swearing of an oath upon an agreement. At first glance, this looks like an attempt

at self-deification, to reestablish an important theocratic feature— and perhaps this is so. But the practical significance was that if an agreement sworn on such an oath were broken, or perjured, the ruler was committed to uphold the right of the injured party. This amounted to Sargon's constituting himself as a court of appeal for the whole land, independent of the cities. This was an important step in the development of a true code of law, law whose origin was political, not religious (Frankfort n.d., p. 86).

The Sargonic empire lasted through four generations until it was successfully overthrown by an invasion of Gutians, who themselves ruled a loose empire for about a century until overthrown by internal revolt. The Third Dynasty of Ur ruled Sumer and Akkad for another century, after which a complex series of disorders and wars beset Mesopotamia until about 1700 B.C., when Hammurabi united the country from his own city of Babylon, still farther to the north than Akkad. But Hammurabi's dynasty, like the others before him, had a life-cycle of only about a century before it succumbed to new barbarian breakthroughs. So repetitive was this rise-and-fall that it helped precipitate the many cyclical theories of the state alluded to in chapter 2.

The Structure of Empire • But despite the disorder—and in some respects because of it—Mesopotamian civilization underwent certain structural and institutional developments that were to provide the foundations of empires and cities throughout the Near- and Mideast (and possibly beyond) long before the Christian epoch. Beginning in Akkadian times, first of all, the political trend was toward ever-larger territories that experienced, apparently (or even necessarily), a slow development of the political, bureaucratic, and military means of control. Writing and mathematics continued to develop in connection with statecraft, while economics, law, religion, and ideology were modified also in accordance with new political demands. Related to all of these was an increase in the scope of the economy, especially in the movement of goods and materials.

For the trend toward larger polities to succeed, it had to involve a transfer of some political loyalties, at least of some bureaucrats, from local cities to the larger polity. One obvious way to encourage this was to supplant some of the local higher officials

with foreigners loyal to the emperor. Naram Sin (grandson of Sargon) replaced local rulers and priests with his own relatives; and in time, as his royal officialdom proliferated, it may be supposed that bureaucratic personnel became more and more professionalized—increasingly loyal to their own organization and its purposes, which of course were also mainly the purposes of the empire.

The bureaucracy—secular, priestly, and military—must have been immensely aided by written communication and numerical notation. Simple pictographic writing and numerals had been used in Sumer to keep temple accounts and to record economic contracts. With the growth of the empire came a greatly increased need for writing and arithmetic, and so their development expanded. Politically, the significance of the writing of law codes must have been of tremendous importance. Establishing a uniform system of royal justice throughout the realm brought the representatives of the imperial court into direct contact with the affairs of local persons and groups, and in time made the bureaucracy, in its legal aspect, ever more useful and necessary. It could in this way undermine local leaders who formerly administered mere local customs, rather than the law of the land (cf. McNeill 1963, p. 54 and *n.* 38). (We may suppose, with McNeill, that there were royal law codes antedating the famous one of Hammurabi.)

The political significance of writing, as we have noted before, extended to ideology. Religious mythology when transmitted only orally was subject to unconscious, unintentional change, but when written it became codified and "official." Changes could be made for political reasons—to lower the status of one local god or raise that of another (as in the famous *Epic of Creation,* which elevated the Babylonian god, Marduk, to supremacy).

The increase in economic activity in the Imperial era poses a problem in interpretation. There are those who see any evidences of movements of goods as "commerce," from which it follows that private entrepreneurs had appeared to become a "merchant class." The famous economic historian Karl Polanyi (in Polanyi et al. 1957) tellingly disputes this simplistic, ethnocentric interpretation. Carriers of goods, bureaucratic representatives of the empire, even ambassadors of a sort, all may be empowered to negotiate exchanges and determine equivalencies and quality, but no un-

earned middle-man's increment remains in their coffers. An appointed carrier-representative may operate on commission, or salary, but in any case the "price" will be a politically determined, bureaucratically negotiated one, not the product of supply-and-demand fluctuations in a free market. It is only in this latter sense that a "merchant class," by profiteering, could become wealthy and politically powerful and thus influence the nature of the political state in the Marxian sense.

This is not to say that there was no "market" in another sense of the word. A peasant village's "market" is preeminently a meeting *place* rather than a price-determining institution like the stock market. Such a place is useful for people to come together to exchange the surpluses of their own household economies. No city or village bureaucracy can easily regulate such a complex yet picayune affair, and probably few even bothered to try—though they probably did try to police it, tax it, settle disputes, and so on. But even if the prices are mostly determined by haggling, supply-and-demand, or irrational ideology—if prices that is, are unregulated by bureaucracy—this does not produce "merchants" powerful enough to be politically significant as a "class." It is undoubtedly the insignificance of these exchanges that allowed them to be so unregulated.

But neither the presence nor absence of a propertied merchant class by the time of Hammurabi can be proved. To me it seems very doubtful that such a class existed, but for our present purposes it is irrelevant: We are concerned with earlier times, the Dynastic era of Sumer and the early Akkadian period, in order to judge the significance of the "class" or "stratification" factor and to discover its nature, and clearly its origin in those times was not entrepreneurial.

Adams says (1966, p. 155) that for the Early Dynastic period of Sumer "much of the intercity trade was either subject to royal demand or under direct royal control." The agents responsible for the exchanges were officials, not free entrepreneurs, and were organized in a hierarchy. This does not mean that those same persons could not have engaged in some private trade, but only that their power, whatever it was, arose from their bureaucratic position, not from their private wealth gained through trade. In the Akkadian times of greater military endeavors, ". . . patterns of

trade probably were still closely interdigitated with exactions of booty and tribute within the spreading realm of Akkadian control" (ibid., p. 156).

It seems evident that although a strong case can be made for the economic significance of the exchange of goods in relation to the bureaucracy, this very exchange did not create a *class* of entrepreneurs of any political significance. If anything, a case could be more easily argued that the development of government made possible an increase in the amount of distant exchanges of goods, rather than vice versa, and that the exchanges reciprocally strengthened the bureaucracy engaged in them. But it should be emphasized that this claim is being made for the political significance of *distant* and *important* exchanges of goods, for it is these that must have been officially planned and managed—not the petty exchanges made for general household requirements by private individuals. But even if the whole population of a city on market-day act like "penny capitalists" (Sol Tax's phrase for his Guatemalan Indian villagers), this should not create a *class* of rich entrepreneurs as the basis of a repressive state in ancient Mesopotamia, any more than it did in a modern Guatemalan village.

The First Urban Civilization

Just as in Mesoamerica and Peru, Mesopotamia exhibits a long developmental period of theocratic rule leading to a "classic" period, followed by an increase in warfare and the successive rise and fall of military empires. And, as in the preceding cases, an increase in the size and numbers of cities accompanied this development—but without the "regional symbiosis" that seemed so fundamental in the New World regions. In the Mesopotamian lowlands the specialization was more technological than ecological.

The size of the individual Mesopotamian cities poses the problem of cause-and-effect in the development of governance. Did they require controls because of their size, or did the presence of the military and the protection of the cities foster their growth? Certainly the two grew together, but it seems likely that the two distinct kinds of military problems, protection against nomads and against rival cities, must have been a prime factor in the growth

of the cities. We must also recognize, of course, that intensive plant and animal domestication had to accompany the growth of urban centers.

But, as we have also noted in earlier chapters (especially with respect to Teotihuacán), not only does military pressure tend to make the city population grow, it discourages political dissidents from leaving. Thus the rather normal centrifugal tendencies in any large polity tend to be overcome by the centripetal force of the beneficial features of membership in the polity—especially the benefits of its protection.

This is again a case whereby Carneiro's (1970) circumscription hypothesis needs amending. I believe that when geographic circumscription is present the political effect is as Carneiro says—but I would call it another instance among several of the factor of governance by benefit. This general factor is, so far as I can see now, a universal in the formation of all persevering power relationships. Redistribution and economic well-being in general, priestly intervention with the gods, protection, and so on are all helpful in political integration when it is apparent that they are superior benefits compared to the alternative of moving away (or, as in more modern politics, of overthrowing the government). Carneiro emphasizes only one of these factors, the geographic isolation of the ecologically well adapted, highly productive society. But, we should add at this point, another sort of ecological factor is the military adapation of nomads and settled intensive agriculturalists. Their competition creates a polarizing tendency, with some of the societies becoming increasingly nomadic and aggressive, on the one hand, and others increasingly intensive farmers with a sedentary defensive strategy, on the other hand. This results in the appearance of geographical isolation, as in part it is; but it is caused mostly by military specialization, and relatively empty intermediate no-man's-lands might therefore appear to be more unproductive than they really are.

The other form of warfare, between the cities themselves, resulted eventually in forms of statecraft (governance by force or threat of it) that were developed in external affairs, culminating in Sargon's empire and the various successors. But Mesopotamian *civilization* preceded these developments, just as the military em-

pires of Mesoamerica and Peru were preceded by civilization there. And, it seems evident, successful conquest to be made permanent depended on not only military might, but on the prior development of a governmental bureaucracy capable of undertaking new tasks.