

The Archaeology of Tribal Societies

**edited by
William A. Parkinson**



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Preface and Acknowledgements

In 1877, Lewis Henry Morgan made the insightful observation that “It is difficult to describe an Indian tribe by the affirmative elements of its composition.” As I send off this volume to the press, I have a very good idea of what he was writing about.

The ‘germs of thought’ that inspired this publication were sown during a graduate seminar on *Scale and Boundaries in Middle-Range Societies* taught by Robert Whallon and John O’Shea at the University of Michigan in 1997. Several of the theoretical concepts that were discussed and developed in that class provided the initial impetus for writing this book on tribal societies, as well as several other publications, Ph.D. dissertations, and ‘preliminary papers.’ I personally owe a great deal of gratitude to everyone who participated in that seminar not only for the opportunity to exchange ideas with them in the halls of the Museum of Anthropology and at the Brown Jug, but also for the collegial support they have provided me over the years.

Like most good things in archaeology, the publication of this edited monograph took a considerable amount of time and involved a wonderful team of individuals who each contributed their own innovative ideas, harsh criticisms, and invaluable support to produce what I hope is a book that—like the structural organization of tribal societies—will be something more than the sum of its parts. The ideas that underlie the majority of the chapters that make up this volume originally were presented in a symposium Severin Fowles and I organized at the 64th Annual Meetings of the Society for American Archaeology in Chicago, IL, in 1999. In that symposium—‘The Archaeology of Tribal Societies’—Sev and I tried to bring together some of the best archaeologists in the world to comment on the notion of tribe from their own theoretical perspective, and also to present substantive information from their own research contexts that would help us reassess and reevaluate the tribal concept in anthropological archaeology. Michael Adler, David Anderson, Ofer Bar-Yosef, Daniella Bar-Yosef Mayer, James Brown, John Clark, Lawrence Keeley, and Dean Snow all graciously agreed to participate in the symposium and have been on board from the beginning. I want to thank them each for their continual patience and level-headed guidance in helping this book evolve and develop.

The success of the SAA symposium encouraged us to expand the geographic and temporal scope of the edited volume to include ethnographic and ethnohistoric contributions, as well as additional archaeological contributions from different parts of the world. The end result, we hoped, would be more representative of the holistic nature of anthropological discourse, and also would provide specific examples of how different processes within tribal societies are accessible to anthropologists via different research methodologies, be they archaeological, ethnohistoric, or ethnographic. To help achieve this, Donald Blakeslee, Peter Bogucki, Robert Carneiro, Jeffery Clark, David Cheetham, Michael Galaty, Sarah Herr, John O’Shea, Claire McHale Milner, and Elsa Redmond all kindly made outstanding contributions to the cause. I thank them for the enthusiasm with which they took on the task of participating in the volume and for how carefully they considered my own ideas, no matter how under-baked.

Robert Whallon—first as an instructor and later as a publisher—has been very supportive of this task from its inception and has provided invaluable help and support along the way. I would like to thank him for his patience and guidance as this project finally found its way to completion.

I also am deeply indebted to Severin Fowles, who has been a fantastic colleague and close friend since before that graduate seminar held all those years ago. Sev was a co-organizer and co-chair of the SAA symposium in Chicago, and his ideas and influences have continued to permeate throughout the

pages of this book and through my own research. Sev wrote the theoretical framework for the volume (Chapter 2), and the volume would not be complete without his very substantial contributions. I owe him a very special thanks for his continued help in bringing this volume to fruition and for helping me to learn how to be a professional colleague and a dear friend at the same time.

In the years that have passed since this edited volume initially was conceived, I have had the good fortune to interact with several different colleagues at four different universities—the University of Michigan, the University of Cincinnati, Ohio State University, and Florida State University. While these years have been wonderful for fine-tuning my ideas about tribal social organization, they have been less than ideal for my wife, Betsy, who has been forced to find a new position in each new town. To her I owe the biggest thanks of all.

William A. Parkinson
Tallahassee, Florida
December 2001

1. Introduction: Archaeology and Tribal Societies

William A. Parkinson

Do tribes exist? Or are they chimeras, imaginary compounds of various and, at times, incongruous parts, societal illusions fabricated for diverse reasons, but once created, endowed with such solid reality as to have profound effect on the lives of millions of people? The question is practical, because it does have consequences in daily life, and theoretical, because the notion of tribe has played a vital role in various social sciences, perhaps most conspicuously in anthropology.

This is how Morton Fried began his seminal work entitled, *The Notion of Tribe* (1975). In the decades since Fried posed this simple question—‘Do tribes exist?’—anthropologists still cannot agree on its answer. Fried’s own conclusion was that tribes are an aberrant form of social organization that occur only in very specific secondary social contexts (see also Fried 1968).

Most cultural anthropologists—following Fried’s lead—have abandoned the concept entirely. As Elisabeth Colson (1986:5) began one article:

I do not know what is meant by ‘Tribal Societies.’ ‘Tribe’ and ‘tribal’ are slippery terms despite various attempts to pin them down so that they could be used analytically, ‘tribe’ has been used with reference to the whole span of human groups, with perhaps the exception of the nuclear family. *The Tribe On The Hill* which Jack Weatherford published in 1981 is about the United States Congress with its associated staff and penumbra of lobbyists.

Colson’s explicit disdain of the tribal concept should resonate with anyone who has turned on a television recently, only to find so-called ‘reality’ programs about ‘tribes’ of attractive, scantily-clothed, urbanites competing with each other in extreme environments for large cash prizes. The Cleveland Indians have been referred to by their loyal fans as ‘the tribe’ for years, and a recent *New York Times Magazine* contained a piece that used the term to refer to a close-knit group of unmarried friends who find solace in each other in the absence of a

spouse. Of course, the term also has a very specific legal definition in the halls of the United States government (see Beinart 1999; Sterritt et al. 1998).

Like Elisabeth Colson, many anthropologists, because of the semantic and analytical problems associated with the term ‘tribe’, have abandoned it in favor of more descriptive—and usually multi-hyphenated—phrases such as ‘small-scale, semi-sedentary, trans-egalitarian societies’. But given the long—albeit rather jaded—history of the tribal concept within the discipline (see, for example, June Helm’s [1968] edited volume, *The Problem of Tribe*), we should consider the possibility that there may be something salvageable in the concept before we discard it entirely. Even Dr. Colson’s quote, cited above, is from an article entitled “Political Organizations in Tribal Societies.” Thus, despite the fact that the *term* has come to acquire—and always may have had—a variety of different technical and colloquial definitions, the *concept* of tribe, as Fried himself noted, has “played a vital role in various social sciences, perhaps most conspicuously in anthropology” and deserves to be revisited before it is banished forever from our analytical arsenal.

The present volume represents an attempt at doing just this. Using information derived from ethnographic, ethnohistoric, and archaeological sources, the various authors who have contributed chapters to this volume each have made an attempt to assess the utility (or futility) of the concept in the wide variety of different socioenvironmental contexts in which they work. The end result is a volume that can itself be viewed as a collection of ethnographers’, archaeologists’ and ethnohistorians’ perceptions of what the ‘tribe’ concept means and, much more importantly, how they believe the concept can be employed to learn about human social variability in various prehistoric and historic contexts.

The common thread that ties together the various contributions to the volume is the theoretical proposition that although the tribal concept finds its historical roots in the ethnographic branch of

anthropological discourse, it may be a concept that is better approached using information derived from the archaeological—rather than the ethnographic—record. Specifically, the authors were urged to consider whether the long-term perspective available to archaeologists allows them to track subtle changes in social organization that ethnographers are seldom at liberty to witness given the inherently short-term nature of the information at their disposal. Thus, the volume attempts to explore the utility of retaining the tribal concept and redefining it in such a manner that it may be useful for comparing social trajectories in a cross-cultural framework (see Fowles, this volume, Chapter 2). In doing so, we hope to build upon the work of our colleagues who in recent years have tried to retool cultural—or in Flannery's (1995) terminology, social-evolutionary frameworks to focus upon social processes that operate at many different temporal, geographic, and social scales (see, for example, Carneiro 1996; Drennan 1991; Feinman 2000; Neitzel and Anderson 1999; Spencer 1997).

Why 'Tribe'?

The word *tribe* is one of several arbitrary, operational definitions used by anthropologists to facilitate cross-cultural comparison (Bernard 1994; Kuznar 1997). Other examples of operational definitions include the terms *culture*, *band*, *society*, etc. The use of such discipline-specific terminology is a necessary evil within the social sciences, wherein the unit of analysis is seldom clearly defined. Regarding this problem, the late Marvin Harris (1979:15) noted that:

A strong dose of operationalism is desperately needed to unburden the social and behavioral sciences of their overload of ill-defined concepts, such as status, role, group, institution, class, caste, *tribe*, state, and many others that are part of every social scientists' working vocabulary. The continuing failure to agree on the meaning of these concepts is a reflection of their unoperational status and constitutes a great barrier to the development of scientific theories of social and cultural life. (my emphasis)

The 'strong dose' of operationalism suggested by Harris was never taken, and anthropologists concerned with cross-cultural analysis currently find themselves inundated with a plethora of ill-defined terms which each seem to acquire their own definition depending upon the specific context within which they are employed. Nowhere is this

problem more apparent than dealing with the term *tribe*.

The term 'tribe' is used throughout this book not because we wish to rekindle the polemic debate surrounding the supposedly inexorable process of sociocultural evolution (e.g., Band-Tribe-Chiefdom-State [for example, Service 1971]), but rather because the term has a long history in cross-cultural anthropology, and because it denotes a form of social organization generally understood to refer to a wide range of social systems that regularly exhibit some degree of institutionalized social integration beyond that of the extended family unit, or band. Nevertheless, some are bound to find the use of the term anachronistic, since it has come to be replaced by even more ambiguous phrases, such as 'middle range society' (e.g., Feinman and Neitzel 1984). This latter moniker attempts to place tribes somewhere *Between Bands and States* (Gregg 1991), as one book title puts it, and emphasizes the transitional and more ephemeral nature of tribal social systems.

But is precisely this tendency—to view tribes as ephemeral *ad hoc* social constructions—that has resulted in the creation of a number of appellations, such as 'tribelet' (e.g., Bocek 1991), 'rituality' (e.g., Yoffee et al. 1999), and 'transegalitarian societies' (e.g., Owens and Hayden 1997), which frequently apply to only a few historically particular contexts and have no more utility in comparative cross-cultural analyses than does the tribal concept. Although cases occasionally arise when it is necessary to create new terms within the discipline, such neologisms have begun to run rampant within the field, and it is now necessary to begin reassessing their utility. To this end, the research presented in this volume represents an attempt at stressing not the historically particular characteristics of tribal social systems, but their lasting—albeit somewhat elusive—processual similarities, several of which are only accessible via the diachronic perspective of archaeological inquiry.

The remainder of this chapter briefly outlines the development of the tribal concept within ethnography and discusses the various characteristics that have come to be associated with tribal societies in that context. Several of these characteristics derive from models that were dependent upon the synchronic information contained in the ethnographic record—models that were unable to account for social processes that occurred over temporal durations of several decades or centuries.

The following chapter by Severin Fowles then discusses how the tribal concept has been translated

into the diachronic context of archaeological research during the last half of the twentieth century and suggests that it is necessary to shift the subject matter “from types of entire societies to types of cultural processes or historical trajectories.”

A Brief History of Tribe

Since the time of Morgan the concept of tribe has been plagued by the tendency of earlier generations of anthropologists to generate attribute lists that attempt to pigeonhole societies into different classificatory groupings. Early attempts at such classificatory schemes were based upon unilineal evolutionary paradigmatic approaches (see also Spencer 1896; Tyler 1871), wherein 19th century European civilization was envisioned as the ultimate predestined form of social organization to which all societies were inevitably progressing (see Trigger 1990). Several of the characteristics that initially were attributed to tribes within this teleological context continue to plague more recent formulations of the concept, and must be recognized if we are to arrive at an operational definition of the concept.

Morgan's (1851, 1877) initial social typology placed human societies into three developmental ‘stages’ through which he believed all societies necessarily passed—Savagery, Barbarism, and Civilization. Each of these stages was indicated by a particular technological repertoire, and was associated with a particular subsistence strategy and political form. This error—to group together societies based upon a plethora of characteristics which are understood to be intimately intertwined—was perpetuated throughout the following century in the works of various influential authors, such as White, Service, and Sahlins (see Feinman and Neitzel [1984] for an excellent discussion of the problems with ‘typological approaches’). Nevertheless, Morgan's initial discussion of tribal society set the terms for the way in which both the term and the concept would be employed during the next century.

Morgan used the term tribe to refer to linguistically homogeneous cultural units:

Each tribe was individualized by a name, by a separate dialect, by a supreme government, and by the possession of a territory which it occupied and defended as its own. The tribes were as numerous as the dialects, for separation did not become complete until dialectical variation had commenced. Indian tribes, therefore, are natural growths through the separation

of the same people in the area of their occupation, followed by divergence of speech, segmentation, and independence. (Morgan 1895 [1851]:93)

Morgan envisioned tribes as forming due to a gradual outflow, or budding-off, of groups from a hypothesized geographic tribal center. Over time, these emigrants would acquire distinct cultural traits and, eventually, linguistic differences, thus creating new tribes (see Morgan 1851:95).

Morgan cites as a causal factor in the formation of tribes “a constant tendency to disintegration.” This notion persists in even some recent archaeological discussions of tribes, which are commonly understood as regionally-integrated systems that develop out of a quagmire of disaggregated bands (e.g., Braun and Plog 1982). In addition, it is important to note that the principle of segmentation already was present in Morgan's initial formulation of the concept as an anthropological classification of society.

Durkheim's (1893) tangential contribution to the topic also stressed the principle of segmentation, or mechanical solidarity, to distinguish less economically complex societies—what later came to be referred to as bands and tribes—from those societies that exhibit organic solidarity, or economic specialization—chiefdoms and states. Although Durkheim was concerned explicitly with the development of the division of labor, his basic classificatory scheme carried with it the assumption that changing economic strategies occurred hand-in-hand with particular political forms. As Lewis Coser notes in his introduction to *The Division of Labour*:

Durkheim was, by and large, beholden to a structural explanation of moral phenomena. The essential differences between types of society were to be sought on the structural or morphological level. The causal arrow in the analysis of social phenomena went largely from productive relations and structural linkages between people to moral or legal systems of thought. (Coser 1984:xviii)

In Durkheim's work, the concept of segmentation—in the guise of mechanical solidarity—was combined with Marxist structural principles wherein different economic infrastructures produce different forms of superstructures. This basic structuralist concept of segmentation as being characteristic of less economically complex societies heavily influenced not only the pre-war British structuralists, but also the work of later writers, such as Steward, Sahlins, and Service (see below).

During the early decades of the last century, several British anthropologists began working with tribal societies in different parts of the world, bringing a functional-structuralist perspective to the discipline. Influenced by French sociologists writing at the turn of the century, such as Henri Hubert and Emile Durkheim, members of the British school proposed an ethnographic method that combined a focus upon structure and function. This functionalist perspective led Radcliffe-Brown to a methodology that was cross-cultural in nature, and which focused upon each culture as an adaptive and integrative mechanism (see Radcliffe-Brown 1948:ix). The functional aspect of this perspective was based, in large part, upon Durkheim's concept of 'solidarity' (see Harris 2001:516 for additional discussion).

Radcliffe-Brown delineated Andaman social structure as consisting of independent and autonomous small communities, each "leading its own life and regulating its own affairs."

These local groups were united into what are here called tribes. A tribe consisted of a number of local groups all speaking what the natives themselves regarded as one language, each tribe having its own language and its name. The tribe was of very little importance in regulating the social life, and was merely a loose aggregate of independent local groups. Within the local group the only division was that into [nuclear] families. These were the only social divisions existing among the Andamanese, who were without any of those divisions known as 'clans' which are characteristic of many primitive societies. (Radcliffe-Brown 1948:23)

Each of the tribal units occupied a particular territory, and spoke a different dialect. As was the case with Morgan, Radcliffe-Brown defined a tribe as an essentially linguistically homogeneous region that was associated with a particular territory.

E. E. Evans-Pritchard, a student of Radcliffe-Brown's, also assumed an explicitly structuralist perspective of tribal societies in his work *The Nuer* (1940), in which he wrote:

The largest political segment among the Nuer is the tribe. There is no larger group who, besides recognizing themselves as a distinct local community, affirm their obligation to combine in warfare against outsiders and acknowledge the rights of their members to compensation for injury. (Evans-Pritchard 1940:5)

Nuer tribes had no common organization or central administration, although they sometimes formed loose federations. In this formulation, a

tribe was defined in terms of a group which was recognized by its members as constituting a coherent unit, particularly for the purposes of warfare and homicide retribution. Within the various tribal groupings of Nuer society, Evans-Pritchard noted several structural subdivisions:

A tribe is divided into a number of territorial segments and these are more than mere geographical divisions, for the members of each consider themselves to be distinct communities and sometimes act as such. We call the largest tribal segments 'primary sections', the segments of a primary section 'secondary sections', and the segments of a secondary section 'tertiary sections'. A tertiary tribal section consists of a number of villages which are the smallest political units of Nuerland. A village is made up of domestic groups, occupying hamlets, homesteads, and huts. (Evans-Pritchard 1940:5)

Each of these various structural sections formed part of a segmentary system, "by reference to which it is defined, and, consequently the status of its members, when acting as such towards one another and to outsiders, is undifferentiated" (Evans-Pritchard 1940:4). Like his mentor, Radcliffe-Brown, Evans-Pritchard envisioned these segments as integrating at various levels, each level determining the structural 'distance' between the members of different segments.

While the British structural-functionalist perspective proved extremely useful for describing social relations within static cultural contexts, it inevitably failed to formulate the significant socio-cultural laws it had proposed to produce. Harris attributed this failure to the structural-functionalist tendency to allot social structure a central, primary, role to the expense of subordinating other techno-economic parameters (see Harris 2001:524).

The structuralist concepts of segmentation and integration figured largely into Steward's argument that societies should be approached in terms of varying levels of sociocultural integration (see Steward 1955). This idea carried over, in somewhat modified form, into the work of Sahlins and Service (1960). Initially, Steward intended the concept not as a component in cultural evolutionary theory, but as a tool for cross-cultural comparison. During this brief time, the tendency to lump together various political, economic, and social attributes became temporarily uncoupled. In Steward's view, a particular structural characteristic—the level of integration—was used as the primary

unit of societal analysis. It was only later, when the concept was co-opted by Sahlins and Service (1960), that particular levels of integration became equated with particular stages of cultural evolution and were again associated with specific economic, ideological, and political criteria.

Steward (1931) proposed the concept of levels of integration primarily as a tool for cross-cultural analysis as an alternative to what he called the traditional assumptions about tribal societies (Steward 1955:44). This traditional view was based upon three fundamental aspects of the behavior of members of tribal societies, which Steward rejected. He outlined these aspects in the following manner. First, tribal culture was a construct that represented the ideal, norm, average, or expectable behavior of all members of a fairly small, simple, independent self-contained, and homogeneous society. Second, tribal culture had a pattern or configuration, which expressed some overall integration. Finally, the concept of tribal culture was understood to be essentially relativistic—meaning that the culture of any particular tradition was seen to be unique in contrast to cultures of other traditions. Steward (1955:46) suggested that while this conceptualization of tribal culture had been a tool useful for analysis and comparison, it was of little utility in dealing with culture change. In place of this normative perspective, Steward proposed the concept of levels of sociocultural integration.

Steward initially intended the concept of levels of sociocultural integration to be used as a methodological device:

The cultural evolution of Morgan, Tylor, and others is a developmental taxonomy based on concrete characteristics of cultures. The concept of levels of sociocultural integration, on the other hand, is simply a methodological tool for dealing with cultures of different degrees of complexity. It is not a conclusion about evolution. (Steward 1955:52)

He argued that the concept “provides a new frame of reference and a new meaning to pattern; and it facilitates cross-cultural comparison” (Steward 1955:52).

Steward built upon Redfield’s (1941, 1947) distinction between folk societies and urban societies, noting that by establishing an empirically-based typology of integrational levels, it would be possible to examine the incorporation of smaller (what he called ‘simpler’) societies into larger sociocultural systems, “...and to make generalizations about processes which go beyond what Redfield derived from the process of urbanization”

(Steward 1955:53). To this end, Steward defined three basic integrational levels: the nuclear family, folk societies (or multifamily sociocultural systems), and states. He conceded that there are probably several levels of sociocultural integration between these three, but that “these are qualitatively distinctive organizational systems, which represent successive stages in any developmental continuum and constitute special kinds of cultural components within higher sociocultural systems” (1955:54). Steward suggested that the concept of sociocultural levels should be used as an analytic tool in the study of changes within particular sociocultural systems, which each consist of parts that developed at different times and which continue to integrate certain portions of the culture.

Service (1971) built upon Steward’s concept of levels of integration, but reincorporated an explicitly evolutionary component to its initial formulation. Despite the various critiques of his now (in)famous *Band-Tribe-Chiefdom-State* model (e.g. Fried 1968), the strength of Service’s model lies in its focus upon the structural integration of societies:

If the general evolution of society consists, as some have said, of not only a multiplication of groups but also of an increase in specialization into economic and political parts, ritual units, and the like, then tribes have advanced over bands only in the sense of multiplication and integration of parts. This is why the present book chooses as the discriminating criterion of stages the *form of integration*. At each level the integration of parts is carried out differently. (Service 1971:132, original emphasis)

Within this scenario, the defining characteristic of tribal social organization is the structured organization of segmentary units of a similar scale, usually lineages or groups of lineages (bands), via some integrative institution. According to Service, this institution usually takes the form of a pan-tribal sodality, which crosscuts lineages and unites groups of bands into tribes. As Service (1971:100) notes:

A tribe is of the order of a large collection of bands, but it is not *simply* a collection of bands. The ties that bind a tribe are more complicated than those of bands and, as we shall see, the residential segments themselves come to be rather different from bands. (original emphasis)

This contention—that tribes are essentially social segments integrated via some sort of pan-tribal institution—reiterates Steward’s contention

that it is necessary to focus upon levels of integration as a primary criterion for typological classification. But whereas Steward attempted to apply the concept (of levels of integration) as a methodological tool for cross-cultural investigation, in Service's formulation the degree and manner of integration had itself become the typological indicator. Thus, the level of integration—initially intended as a methodological tool—had become, perhaps inevitably a 'conclusion about evolution'.

Also inherent in Service's concept of tribe is a certain degree of fragility, and a tendency towards disunity:

Considering the lack of institutional political means of unity and the absence of organic solidarity, and considering such grave sources of disunity as feuds, it seems remarkable that a tribe remains a tribe. It seems sensible to reaffirm that *external* strife and competition *among* tribes must be the factor that provides the necessity for internal unity. (Service 1971:104; original emphasis)

While the concept of levels of sociocultural integration, as Service used it, provides a method useful for classifying different societal forms, it suffers from a static quality that does not account adequately for the degree of dynamic flexibility documented in the archaeological record. That is, even the roughly-hewn forms of social integration that Service employs suffer from the fact that they are themselves static idealizations of dynamic phenomena. Although Service's model allows for a certain range of variability within each of his forms of social integration (e.g., lineal and composite tribes), it does not account for the basic fact that the social structures, which themselves define the different evolutionary stages, inherently allow for a certain degree of integrative, or 'organizational flexibility' (see Fowles, this volume, Chapter 2; Fowles and Parkinson 1999; Parkinson 1999:44-47). Because this flexibility may not be expressed within the short-term perspective inherent to the ethnographic record, it is a characteristic that can only be actively explored using the diachronic information contained in the archaeological record.

Marshall Sahlins also subscribed to a version of the basic *Band-Tribe-Chiefdom-State* evolutionary scheme and distinguished between bands and tribes in the following manner:

A band is a simple association of families, but a tribe is an association of kin groups which are themselves composed of families. A tribe is a larger, more segmented society. Without im-

plying this as the specific course of development of tribes, we may nonetheless view a tribe as a coalescence of multifamily groups each of the order of a band. (Sahlins 1961:324)

In Sahlins' view, tribes consist of economically and politically autonomous segments that are held together by their likeness to each other (i.e., by mechanical solidarity) and by pan-tribal institutions, which crosscut the primary segments. For Sahlins (1961), the segmentary lineage system is a substitute for the fixed political structure that tribal societies are incapable of sustaining.

Sahlins built upon Steward's notion of levels of integration by linking varying levels of organization with sectors of social relations. Within this 'sectoral model', "relations become increasingly broad and dilute as one moves out from the familial navel" (Sahlins 1968:16). Sahlins understood cooperation and social interaction to be most intense at the tribal 'core'—the homestead and hamlet. Thus, the degree of integration decreases as the level of organization increases, and degrees of sociability diminish as fields of social relation broaden. In his own words:

The model before us is set out in social terms. But more than a scheme of social relations, it is an organization of culture. The several levels of organization are, in the jargon of the trade, levels of sociocultural integration; the sectors, sectors of sociocultural relations. Functions are regulated by levels of organization, and transactions by sectors of relation. (Sahlins 1968:16)

Within Sahlins' holistic approach, tribes can subsume an astonishing array of different societal arrangements, from segmentary tribes to chiefdoms (see Sahlins 1968:20). He envisioned many intermediate arrangements between these two ends of the tribal spectrum. These include: conical clans, segmentary lineage systems, territorial clans, dispersed clans, and local cognatic descent groups.

In addition to trying to blur the line between different social classifications, Sahlins also attempted to decouple the relationship between social forms and economic practices, "while it is true that most tribesmen are farmers or herders, thus cultural descendants of the Neolithic, not all are. The Neolithic, then, did not necessarily spawn tribal culture. What it did was provide the technology of tribal dominance" (Sahlins 1968:3).

Fried's visceral reaction to the *Band-Tribe-Chiefdom-State* model, and to Service and Sahlins in particular, was based upon his paradigmatic assumption that social classification should be based upon the differential access to status posi-

tions available to individuals in different societies. This led to his tripartite classificatory system of egalitarian, ranked, and stratified societies. Since Fried understood both bands and tribes to be essentially egalitarian in nature, he saw no need to subdivide egalitarian societies into two discrete groups. In a series of articles (e.g., Fried 1968) and a book (Fried 1975), he launched a series of attacks upon the concept of tribe, arguing that tribes tend to occur only in secondary contexts, “as a consequence of the impinging on simple cultures of much more complexly organized societies” (Fried 1975:10).

Fried’s critique deserves careful consideration, not least because it constitutes the inception of the replacement of the term tribe by much more cumbersome phrases, such as ‘middle-range societies’. This is unfortunate, for Fried’s arguments seem to augment, rather than discredit the concept of tribe as a construct useful for cross-cultural analysis.

For example, Fried’s contention that tribes form only when less complex societies are affected by more complex ones, seems to beg the question: why do certain societies turn into tribes when they come into contact with states and empires, and others do not? Fried’s inability to answer this simple question exposes the Achilles heel of his entire argument, which is based upon the untenable position that tribes exist only as discretely-defined cultural units, a notion explicable by his dependence upon the ethnographic record. When viewed solely through the short-term perspective available through ethnography, the distribution of tribes across the globe would certainly seem to correlate with those regions which were heavily influenced by historical state-level societies: North America, New Guinea, South America, etc. Nevertheless, a closer look at the archaeology of these same regions would reveal that several tribes had emerged prior to contact, and indeed prior to the indigenous development or impact of state-level societies in these regions. Furthermore, even in the same areas where Fried argued that contact produced tribal systems, he fails to explain why certain societies, such as the Shoshone of California, or the Australian hunters and gatherers, never developed into tribal units, but remained un-integrated bands.

Fried’s formulation of tribal society suffers from a static quality that precludes the possibility for tribes to assume a variety of different configurations throughout their ontogeny. The reason why tribes emerged in some instances of Western contact, and not in others, must have something to do

with the structure of their social relations prior to contact. Some societies exhibited certain structural features—such as sodalities—that allowed them to organize into more, and more complex, integrative units than other societies. These included tribes. Other societies lacked the structural mechanisms necessary to integrate into these more complex units—these were bands. The structure of social relations prior to the time that societies were impinged upon by more complex ones necessarily determined the trajectories these societies assumed after contact. Fried’s inability, or unwillingness, to accept this basic fact can be attributed, at least in part, to his overreliance upon the ethnographic record, which because of its short-term perspective was limited in its ability to track trajectories of change that occur on a much longer diachronic scale.

This tendency—to construct classificatory systems based exclusively upon ethnographic and ethnohistoric examples—resonates throughout all of the models discussed above. Despite this fact, certain threads permeate each of the models, suggesting the existence of some ethnographic patterns that need to be considered while formulating an archaeologically useful notion of tribal social trajectories.

Attributes Associated with the Tribal Concept in Ethnography

This brief overview of the development of the tribal concept in ethnography reveals several attributes that frequently have been associated with the tribe concept. These include:

1. The concept of segmentation, or ‘mechanical solidarity’,
2. A tendency towards entropy, or disunity,
3. The idea that tribes exist only as discrete entities, with well-defined social and geographic boundaries, and
4. The idea that tribes are somehow ‘transitional’ between less complex social forms, such as bands, and more complex forms, such as chiefdoms and states.

Of these attributes, perhaps the only one that should be retained in an attempt to operationalize an archaeological definition of tribal social processes is the concept of segmentation. The rest of the characteristics can be attributed to the skewed temporal perspective offered through the information contained in the ethnographic record—the primary data source for most of the models presented above.

Segmentation

Perhaps the most pervasive characteristic associated with tribal systems in both ethnographic and archaeological contexts is the idea that they are segmented (see Fowles, this volume, Chapter 2, for an extensive discussion of segmentation). As noted above, the idea that tribes can be characterized by segmentary forms of organization can be traced back to Morgan (1851). Durkheim (1984) associated the term with mechanical solidarity, which later authors, such as Sahlins and Service, used to characterize bands and tribes, economically and politically (see also Kelly 1985). This notion carries over into archaeological approaches to tribal societies. Although different authors argue the degree to which mechanical solidarity—as it refers to the redundancy created by a lack of economic specialization between different social segments practicing the domestic mode of production (see Sahlins 1972)—can vary within tribal systems, there is some general consensus that social segments of roughly similar scale and composition replicate themselves at varying levels within tribal societies. The precise manner in which this integration occurs varies considerably within different tribal societies, but as a general rule it must involve at least some regular integration beyond the extended family unit, or band. Several of the papers in this volume address the nature of integration within tribal social trajectories directly (see Redmond, Chapter 4; Fowles, Chapter 5; Adler, Chapter 9), and a good deal of my own research has been dedicated to developing a methodology for modeling integration over the long-term (Parkinson 1999, and this volume, Chapter 18).

Tendency towards disunity

In contrast to the relatively useful idea that tribes are segmented, the notion that tribes tend towards disunity seems to be a vestigial characteristic that has been perpetuated by historical developments within the discipline. In Morgan's initial formulation of the tribal concept, he argued that the reason tribes were segmented was because they were constantly fissioning. This basic notion carried through in the work of Sahlins and Service who saw entropy not as a causal feature in the evolution of tribes, but as the unfortunate result of a lack of centralization. In their view, tribes were plagued by external strife and it was only through constant competition with each other that they managed to sustain any degree of cohesion.

Warre was allotted a primary, central role.

While there does seem to be a tendency for tribes to develop in groups, perhaps indicating some sort of interdependent relationship between them (see, for example, Braun and Plog 1982), the nature of these relationships, and in particular the nature of intra- and inter-tribal aggression, seems to vary widely (see Keeley 1996, and this volume, Chapter 17). At times, aggression in tribal societies consists essentially of intra-tribal feuds, occurring between family units (e.g., the Yanomamö; Chagnon 1983), at other times, it consists of all-out warfare between highly organized confederacies (e.g., the Iroquois, see Snow 1994; see also Ferguson and Whitehead [eds.] 1992, for several examples). While there may, in fact, be some social logic behind these changing patterns of aggression, their existence should not lead us to presuppose a tendency towards disunity. Rather, it is more productive to envision different mechanisms that facilitate fission, at times, and fusion, at other times. This more accurately represents what happens within tribal trajectories, especially when they are viewed from the long-term diachronic perspective of the archaeological record (see, for example, Snow, Chapter 6; Herr and Clark, Chapter 8).

Tribes as discrete entities

Another ethnographic fiction that has been perpetuated by the misrepresentation of tribal systems is the notion that tribes exist exclusively as discrete entities with very well-defined social and geographic boundaries. While some tribal societies certainly do exhibit clear boundaries, others appear as smears across the archaeological landscape, with few discernible internal or external boundaries. The segmented nature of tribal systems, combined with their tendency to fission and fuse given different social and environmental conditions, results in a social picture that assumes discrete boundaries at only isolated moments in time. The tendency of different segments within the system to constantly renegotiate their relationship with each other can preclude the formation of established social boundaries over the long term, usually resulting in a complicated archaeological picture with fuzzy lines approximating the borders between different prehistoric 'groups'. The chapters by O'Shea and McHale Milner (Chapter 11), Blakeslee (Chapter 10), Anderson (Chapter 13), Clark and Cheetham (Chapter 14), Bar-Yosef and Bar-Yosef Mayer (Chapter 15) and myself (Parkinson, Chapter 18) all address the nature of scale

and boundary formation in different contexts, and suggest that the nature of boundaries within tribal social trajectories are in constant (or near constant) states of flux, and can be expected to vary at temporal scales that exceed the purview of ethnographic research. As these studies demonstrate, however, despite their diachronic fluctuation, such boundaries frequently do leave behind material remnants that make them accessible archaeologically.

Tribes as transitional social forms

A final characteristic associated with tribes based upon ethnographic cases is the notion that they are transitional (read *ephemeral*) formations that exist evolutionarily or geographically between bands and states. The idea that tribes are a stage on the evolutionary ladder dates back to Morgan's (1851) unilineal stages of Savagery, which subsumes both bands and tribes, and Barbarism, which subsumes both tribes and chiefdoms. This basic idea was rephrased by Sahlins (1961) and Service (1971), both of whom were heavily influenced by Steward's notion of multilineal evolution, and by the concept of sociocultural levels of integration. Service considered tribes to be transitional between bands, which are segmented and disintegrated, and chiefdoms, which are centralized and ranked. Sahlins, on the other hand, used the term tribal to refer to the range of evolutionary forms that exists between bands and states, including chiefdoms. Within this scenario, tribes are distinct from civilizations primarily because the former are in a Hobbesian condition of war, "Lacking specialized institutions of law and order, tribes must mobilize the generalized institutions they do have to meet the threat of war. Economics, kinship, ritual, and the rest are so enlisted" (Sahlins 1968:12-13). Within the tribal form, Sahlins distinguished between segmentary tribes and chiefdoms:

The segmentary tribe is a permutation of the general model in the direction of extreme decentralization, to the extent that the burden of culture is carried in small, local, autonomous groups while higher levels of organization develop little coherence, poor definition, and minimum function. The chiefdom is a development in the other direction, toward integration of the segmentary system at higher levels. A political superstructure is established, and on that basis a wider and more elaborate organization of economy, ceremony, ideology, and other aspects of culture. (Sahlins 1968:20)

As discussed earlier, Sahlins suggested that many intermediate arrangements stand between the most advanced chiefdom and the simplest segmentary tribe.

Unlike Service and Sahlins, who argued that tribes should be considered evolutionary stages between bands and states, Fried contended that tribes develop only in secondary contexts when band societies are impinged upon by much more complex societal forms. In this case, tribes were seen not as transitional entities on an evolutionary ladder, but as entities that develop in geographically transitional environments. While their views varied dramatically, all three evolutionary models were based not upon long-term processes documented in the archaeological record, but on synchronic, ethnographic examples.

This focus upon the short-term perspective available through the ethnographic record has resulted in the placement of tribes as transitional, ephemeral formations that occur between bands and states, evolutionarily and geographically (see Gregg 1991:1). An archaeological perspective of tribal social trajectories would suggest, rather, that tribes were a dominant social form on the planet for several thousand years following the end of the Pleistocene. The chapters by Galaty (Chapter 7), Anderson (Chapter 13), Clark and Cheetham (Chapter 14), and Bar-Yosef and Bar-Yosef Mayer (Chapter 14) all address the varying temporal lengths tribal trajectories persisted in different parts of the world. In addition, other chapters in the volume, such as those by Carneiro (Chapter 3), Redmond (Chapter 4), Fowles (Chapter 5), Adler (Chapter 9), and Keeley (Chapter 17) all address the variable nature of leadership and political hierarchy within tribal social trajectories, thus providing a framework that allows these processes to be modeled at varying temporal scales (see Fowles, Chapter 2).

Towards an Archaeology of Tribal Social Trajectories

The last thirty years have witnessed the near abandonment of the tribe concept in ethnology in favor of, on the one hand, a tendency towards historical particularism with the analytical emphasis placed upon the cultural variables that distinguish one society from another. On the other hand, this trend has been accompanied by a tendency in archaeology to employ classificatory schemata that basically employ social types that roughly correlate with what previously had been called 'tribes',

such as 'middle-range' or 'transegalitarian' societies. Ultimately, the burden of exploring cross-cultural comparisons between tribal societies falls upon the shoulders of archaeologists, who, with their long-term perspective are capable of identifying and differentiating social processes that occur at temporal scales not accessible to ethnographers or ethnohistorians. Conversely, as several of the papers in this volume demonstrate, ethnographers and ethnohistorians frequently have access to more subtle social processes that are nearly invisible within the long-term view of prehistoric archaeology. But it is only through the profitable combination of both perspectives that we can ever hope to arrive at an anthropological understanding of what it means 'to act tribally' (see Fowles, this volume, Chapter 2).

The remainder of this volume constitutes an initial attempt to redefine and operationalize the tribal concept as a tool for cross-cultural comparison in anthropology and anthropological archaeology. In the following chapter, Severin Fowles discusses how the tribal concept has been translated from its synchronic ethnographic origins into the diachronic realm of archaeology. He then outlines an approach to studying tribal social processes that calls for analysis at multiple temporal scales. The next chapter, by Robert Carneiro, discusses the relationship between the concepts of autonomous villages and tribal societies, and describes the general characteristics of autonomous villages. Together, these three chapters comprise the theoretical framework of the volume.

The next section of the book consists of ethnographic and ethnohistoric perspectives on tribal social organization. Elsa Redmond uses ethnographic information to examine the two temporal dimensions of a Jivaroan war leader's career. Severin Fowles, Dean Snow and Michael Galaty draw from ethnohistoric evidence to discuss the social organization of societies in Africa (Fowles, Chapter 5), northeastern North America (Snow, Chapter 6) and southeastern Europe (Galaty, Chapter 7).

The third section of the book is comprised of archaeological approaches in New World prehistoric contexts. Sarah Herr and Jeff Clark (Chapter 8) discuss the role of mobility in the prehispanic southwestern United States, and Michael Adler (Chapter 9) considers how we might best use our anthropological perspectives the creation, use, and abandonment of public (ritual) architectural space within Pueblo communities. The chapters by Don Blakeslee (Chapter 10), John O'Shea and Claire

Milner (Chapter 11), Richard Yerkes (Chapter 12), and David Anderson (Chapter 13) focus on the Great Plains, the Great Lakes, the Ohio Hopewell, and the southeastern United States, respectively. John Clark and David Cheetham (Chapter 14) then synthesize an impressive amount of information to explore the tribal foundations of prehistoric Mesoamerica.

The final section represents archaeological approaches to studying tribal social organization in the Old World. The chapters by Peter Bogucki, Lawrence Keeley, myself, and Ofer Bar-Yosef and Daniella E. Bar-Yosef Mayer examine prehistoric tribal societies in the Neolithic of Northern Europe (Bogucki, Chapter 16; and Keeley, Chapter 17), the Copper Age on the Great Hungarian Plain (Parkinson, Chapter 18), and in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic of the Near East (Bar-Yosef and Bar-Yosef Mayer, Chapter 15).

While these diverse contributions by no means exhaust the wide range of variability that has been exhibited by social trajectories throughout the world, they nevertheless provide several insights into the various social processes that have, over the years, had a profound and very real effect on the lives of millions of people—they are neither chimera, nor societal illusions, but societies our predecessors chose to call 'tribes'. They deserve our attention as well.

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2. From Social Type to Social Process: Placing 'Tribe' in a Historical Framework

Severin M. Fowles

Introduction

The search for cross-cultural patterning in human organization is a central and distinguishing aim of an anthropological approach to social theory. As a consequence of this lofty goal, however, much of anthropology has of necessity wedded itself to the use of typologies in the course of comparative studies. Whether of particular historical processes, social relations, or entire societies, types of some sort or another are a requisite first step, necessary evils that bring order to the infinite shades of empirical experience and offer an initial rationale for comparing certain social contexts rather than others. But first-round typologies almost always sow the seeds of their own undoing, or at least their own redoing, for the process of cross-cultural comparison is nothing if not a continuous challenge of a type's utility. Only so much variability can be accommodated before utility turns to futility and the type is placed into question.

Such has been the fate of the notion of tribe.

Early on, in the proto-typology days of colonialism, almost all non-European societies—from small Australian aboriginal groups to complex African states—were freely labeled 'tribal.' In the middle of the 20th century, however, 'tribe as other' began to give way to a more refined notion of tribe as a stage of general cultural evolution. Marshall Sahlins helped sculpt tribe into a transitional social form that bridged the gap between simple hunter-gatherer bands and complex states, while Elman Service further whittled the concept down by separating out tribes ('properly so called') from chiefdoms. In so doing, the tribal type had finally received a clear anthropological rendering. "A tribe is a segmental organization," wrote Sahlins:

It is composed of a number of equivalent, unspecialized multifamily groups, each the structural duplicate of the other: a tribe is a congeries of equal kin group blocs...[and] as a

whole is normally not a political organization but rather a social-cultural-ethnic entity. It is held together principally by likenesses among its segments (mechanical solidarity) and by pan-tribal institutions. (Sahlins 1968:190-191)

Clarity, however, is often a double-edged sword. Grouping together all social contexts that appeared to more or less rely on segmentary structures and pan-tribal institutions or sodalities as their primary means of sociopolitical cohesion led to some unsatisfying bedfellows with widely diverse economic practices, social relations, and scales of organization. Rival typological schemes proliferated (see Feinman and Neitzel 1984). By the time that Morton Fried (1975) hammered his own nail into the concept's coffin, Service (1971:157, 1975) was already relinquishing 'tribe' in favor of Fried's looser, more versatile stage of 'egalitarian society'. Furthermore, strong critiques of the neoevolutionary agenda itself soon resurfaced in ethnology as tides again turned toward a historical particularism more akin to Boas than to Morgan or White. By the 1980's, movements toward a more relativistic and politicized ethnology left the entire endeavor of generalization from an evolutionary standpoint to be abandoned as ethically suspect. Archaeology, which could not do without some sort of comparative evolutionary framework, was left to pick up the pieces on its own.

Throughout the 20th century, 'tribe' has been defined and redefined time and again in anthropology, colonial politics, and popular culture and in its travels has accumulated tremendous baggage. Given this, it has been tempting to follow Steward and Faron's (1959:17, 21) lead and take the position that "the term tribe, thus having no clear meaning, will be generally avoided." To do this, however, would be to dodge a central problem. Whereas the other neoevolutionary social types have—to a much greater degree—been the focus of refinement, reevaluation, and, at times, rejection in archaeology, 'tribe' has received com-

paratively little attention. At the end of the 20th century one can openly argue about chiefdoms or hunter-gatherer bands; 'tribe', however, must be hidden behind quotation marks or aliases.

But it is not this essay's intention, nor that of the volume as a whole, to dwell on critiques of the tribal type and the neoevolutionary framework in which it is set. Rather, the initial goal is to evaluate the ways in which the notion of tribe—developed from ethnographic contexts and with a particular evolutionary agenda—has been translated into the diachronic context of archaeological inquiry. Traditionally, this translation process has proceeded in a fairly straightforward middle-range manner, the goal being to establish the material correlates of a 'dynamic' and ethnographic tribal context as they would appear in the 'static' archaeological record. In this essay, however, I will follow the lead of Upham (1990a, 1990b) and others in arguing that such a methodology needs to be rethought. Without diminishing the importance of ethnographic analogizing, one must acknowledge that, in an important sense, the ethnographic record is the more 'static' of the two, limited as it is to the observation of short-term events. Just as a day in mid-summer will not serve as a model for an entire year, neither can a purely ethnographic model of tribal society stand for an archaeological one. Long-term history (archaeological or otherwise) has its own dramas and storylines played out on different stages.

The second goal of this and the other essays in the present volume, therefore, is to explore archaeological alternatives to the short-term models of tribal society. In this search one cannot, of course, do away with typologies altogether—the nature of cross-cultural comparison depends upon them—but one can shift the subject matter from *types of entire societies* to *types of cultural processes or historical trajectories* (cf. Barth 1967; Friedman 1982; Upham 1990b, Mills 2000). As many have emphasized, what, how, and how quickly aspects of a social context change (as well as what does not change) are questions more amenable to archaeological data than is inquiry into the structure of a social context at one point in time. More importantly, if distinctive historical patterns of change can be identified cross-culturally, then these patterns may potentially be used as an alternate means of breaking into the study of sociopolitical evolution. In this essay, I elaborate on this central notion and the ways in which it directly applies to the problem of the tribal type. In doing so, an alternate typological framework is developed that distinguishes

three temporal scales (intra-generational, multi-generational, and long-term) at which different trajectories of change might be productively compared.

Archaeological Translations of The Ethnographic Tribe

But before doing so, it is useful to first briefly review how the ethnographic model of tribal society has been used in archaeology, how it has been translated. What is meant—explicitly and implicitly—when an archaeological context is labeled tribal? This question can be answered on a number of levels and below I review three answers that have particularly wide currency in the literature. The first and most explicit answer involves a structural model of tribal society. The second adopts a more informal trait-list approach. And the third is fully impressionistic, although it very likely is the most accurate representation of how 'tribe' and 'tribal' are used archaeologically.

The structural model of tribal society

If asked to define a tribe, many archaeologists would probably more or less still accept Sahlins' definition, quoted above, and maintain that an archaeological tribal context is one in which relatively equal and functionally independent kin-based social segments cohered into larger communities by means of certain distinctively tribal principles of organization. Haas (1990:172) for example, emphasizes the economic autonomy of segments in his model of tribal society, and both Braun and Plog (1982) and Habicht-Mauche (1993) explicitly describe tribal units as integrated into larger social entities by means of "cross-cutting pan-residential institutions." These two central concepts—segmentary structure and crosscutting sodalities—are the pillars that hold up the formal tribal edifice and deserve to be considered in some detail.

Like so many concepts in anthropology, the ancestry of the concept of segmentation can be traced back to the publication of *Ancient Society*. Morgan's (1974 [1877]) early description of historic Iroquois society as an aggregate of roughly equivalent and equal kinship groups that united at different levels to face periodic challenges was one of the first segmentary models of a tribal organization. Combined with Durkheim's¹ (1893) consideration of mechanical solidarity, Morgan's model set the stage for the later reformations of segmentary structures in British social anthropology

during the 1940's and 50's (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940; Fortes 1953; Barnes 1954; Bohannon 1954; Smith 1956). The neoevolutionary emphasis on tribal segmentation that has been adopted by most archaeologists grew out of these earlier studies and really did little more than clarify the basic form of the model. In Sahlins' (1961, 1968) classic discussions, for instance, segmentation was used to refer both to an equivalency of basic social units (or 'primary segments') and to the manner in which these basic units manage to form collectivities in the absence of permanent and institutionalized positions of leadership. In short, when a perceived need for group action or decision-making arises, primary segments are understood to voluntarily band together into larger second-order segments which can then join forces into third-order segments, and so on until the necessary scale of organization is met. The resultant decision-making hierarchy is largely consensus-based, situational, and unstable. The most powerful examples of segmentary principles are to be found in lineage systems, which naturally take on many of these characteristics; however the principle is not limited to kinship alone. Johnson's (1978, 1982) more recent thinking on sequential hierarchies has placed renewed emphasis on the use of segmentation as a general organizational principle in all manner of consensus-based decision-making contexts.

If segments and the individuals within them are the building blocks of the neoevolutionary model of tribal society, then the social institutions that overlap them are considered to be a form of social mortar or glue. For Service (1962) in particular, the critical aspect of tribal institutions or sodalities such as clans, age-grades, and religious societies is that their memberships cross-cut one another in such a way that individuals find themselves more or less enmeshed in a web of relations, obligated to maintain at least an appearance of civility toward other individuals in their "social-cultural-ethnic entity" or tribe. The result is not a world without tensions and dispute, but it is one in which the lines of fission inherent in segmentary systems are thought to be temporarily neutralized. Kroeber's early study of Zuni society provides one of the classic examples of such a tribally integrated system. In describing Zuni social groups he notes:

Four or five different planes of systematization cross cut each other and thus preserve for the whole society an integrity that would be speedily lost if the planes merged and thereby inclined to encourage segregation and fission. The

clans, the fraternities, the priesthoods, the kivas, in a measure the gaming parties, are all dividing agencies. If they coincided, the rifts in the social structure would be deep; by countering each other, they cause segmentations which produce an almost marvelous complexity, but can never break the national entity apart. (Kroeber 1917)

Clear ethnographic examples of this principle have also been discussed in Brazil (Gross 1979) and South-Central Africa (Gluckman 1965:110-112), to mention but a few.

Taken together these two organizational principles are the heart of a structural model of tribal society, which if evoking a feeling of timelessness undoubtedly does so for two primary reasons. First, though the model no longer holds currency in ethnology, it has been well curated for nearly forty years in archaeological research in close to its initial form. Frequently used terms such as 'middle range', 'kin-based' or 'autonomous village' society have arisen to replace 'tribe' during this time, but they have so far offered little more than semantic alternatives that do little to change the manner in which we understand the social contexts so labeled (but see Carneiro, this volume). Second, the structural model does not make explicit reference to time. On one hand, this timelessness simplifies the transportation of the model between ethnographic and/or archaeological contexts. On the other, it is unavoidably ahistorical and demands that we view a tribe—once an archaeological context can in fact be considered a tribe—as a structure frozen in time until the point at which it is no longer a tribe and the structure begins to thaw (see Upham 1990a).

Be that as it may, if this model is what is really meant when an archaeological context is described as tribal, then we must ask whether or not the evidence used to support such a position is adequate. With respect to a segmentary principle, the strongest and undoubtedly the most widely cited evidence is architectural. Consider the case of the prehistoric Puebloan villages of the American Southwest where a great deal of research has revealed countless examples of clear architectural segmentation that presumably had a basis in a similarly segmented social organization (Adler, this volume; Steward 1937; Varien and Lightfoot 1989:76). Household units that in one time period were constructed as isolated hamlets came to be used as recognizable building blocks of large villages in other periods. The resulting architectural hierarchy has suggested to many that decision-

making in the prehistoric Pueblos rose up through the residential units by consensus (Johnson 1989).²

Research along these lines has been productive and is bolstered by Johnson's (1978, 1982) more theoretical consideration of the underlying logic of information processing within such systems. However, two cautions can be raised with respect to this approach. First, the segmentary structure reflected architecturally in archaeological contexts may well have been of a different nature than those in the ethnographically derived tribal model discussed earlier. A village that existed for a mere decade, for example, would have far exceeded the period of unified action involved in the examples of segmentary lineage systems discussed by Sahlin. At the very least, our understanding of the correlation between architectural and decision-making structures may be incomplete, especially in those cases for which we have no support from direct historical evidence. Second, it must be acknowledged that 'tribal' segmentary principles may at times be difficult to distinguish archaeologically from the equally situational decision-making structures of more 'band-like' groups (e.g., Johnson 1978) or from the conical clan structures of some chiefdoms (Sahlin 1968:24-25, 49-50).

As for evidence of overlapping social institutions, the typical data cited are even more equivocal. Very few archaeological analyses of tribal contexts actually offer such evidence at all, and those that do typically focus upon mortuary data, using the presence of overlapping patterns of associated artifacts as a material signature of overlapping memberships in sodalities. But leaping from skeletons bedecked in arrows to 'arrow societies' is at best tenuous. And even if solid archaeological evidence of cross-cutting sodalities is found, one must still acknowledge that memberships in various groups overlap in almost *all* known societies, including our own. In tribal contexts, such groups are thought to simply bear a greater burden with respect to social integration.

Perhaps then, the structural model—seductive though it may be—is not exactly what is meant when an archaeological context is described as tribal.

The tribal trait-list

Worth considering next are the more casual, but also more tangible, criteria used by many archaeologists to define tribal contexts. When distilled to an essence, these criteria are frequently summed up in the following trait-list, or something

very close to it: sedentary, non-hierarchical (or egalitarian), and small-scale. Regarded loosely, these adjectives characterize a good many social contexts that one would be tempted to consider tribal, and they deal in variables archaeologists are accustomed to measuring. But these casual criteria have not been proposed as a formal definition of tribal society for good reason. Indeed, a less cavalier investigation of the criteria brings to the fore recent reevaluations of each that must be addressed.

A stark contrast between 'sedentary' and 'nomadic', for instance, has been found to drastically misrepresent most non-industrial societies (Kent 1989). As Sarah Herr and Jeffrey Clark (this volume, Chapter 8) point out, the dividing line drawn by neoevolutionists between band-level hunter-gatherers and tribal societies tended to emphasize the emergence of a commitment to agriculture, with increased sedentism being one of the most structurally significant implications of that commitment. Robert Carneiro's (this volume, Chapter 3) impressive synthesis of much ethnographic and archaeological data reemphasizes this general point, that on some level we cannot ignore the reality that agriculture and increased sedentism were critical preliminaries to more complex social forms in much of the world. Herr and Clark's central argument, however, is that by over-emphasizing sedentism the equally important elements of mobility in such systems tend to be ignored. Their work reveals that tribal mobility continues to play a significant structural role over time as it directly affects patterns of intergroup conflict, land tenure, sociopolitical inequality, and religion. As a result of this realization, many archaeologists have resorted to the use of such terms as 'semi-permanent sedentary', 'short-term sedentism', or 'deep sedentism'. Each qualification highlights the observation that many important social dynamics emerge when we view sedentism and mobility as relative concepts figured on a shifting scale.

Much research has also been devoted to complicating the concept of egalitarianism. It is now no longer accepted that the traditional group of 'egalitarian societies' did in fact lack forms of ranking, hereditary leadership, and privileged control of such things as ritual knowledge and land. Elsa Redmond's (this volume, Chapter 4) discussion of Jivaroan war leaders and Fowles' (this volume, Chapter 5) discussion of Tonga prophets provides two concrete ethnohistoric examples of how unbalanced power relations are often found to exist within certain spheres of a society rather than others.

During times of warfare or religious crisis, in particular, otherwise 'egalitarian' or tribal societies may temporarily take on structural qualities more similar to chiefdoms. Privileging one structural pose—in other words, one configuration of social relations—rather than another in analytic models seriously misrepresents by over-simplifying the dynamics present within such historical/social contexts.

In many ways, 'small-scale' is the thorniest of the three criteria commonly attributed to tribal contexts. Individuals and social groups more often than not interact on very different economic, religious, political, and military levels, and to define a social or organizational scale based upon one such sphere would be limiting at best. Even with respect to one manner of social interaction—for instance, political decision-making—scale is an elusive variable that often shifts dramatically from moment to moment as the types of decisions change. Furthermore, archaeologists face the special problem of having to construct their own boundaries in order to make scalar estimates, and all too often the latter are drawn to accommodate preconceived notions of tribal scale rather than the patterning within the archaeological record itself. Lekson's (1999) recent efforts to throw away such preconceptions and vastly enlarge the scale of the Chacoan system in the American Southwest reveal how problematic this issue of drawing a boundary around a 'tribe'—or even around a network of social interaction, for that matter—can be. Given these challenges, the 'small' of small-scale says very little.³

If there remained any lingering hope that a trait-list approach might still be used as a means of social classification, Feinman and Neitzel's (1984) ambitious ethnographic review of New World 'middle-range' or 'intermediate' societies during the mid-1980's should have ended all such optimism. Even keeping in mind the problems and inconsistencies of the ethnographic data they employed, their study clearly indicated both (1) that continuous, non-modal variation is to be found in nearly every social attribute that has been used to differentiate types from one another, and (2) that very few of these variables can be shown to correlate even loosely with one other. They concluded that trait-list approaches are simply incapable of dealing with significant amounts of variability. In Chapter 17, Lawrence Keeley also offers a complementary critique, noting the degree to which the classic tribal type overlaps with both the band and chiefdom types.

On an even more basic level, however, it should also be clear that reducing ongoing systems to particular states also demands that we ignore the reality that all individuals and social groups are, in an important sense, warehouses of organizational options. As Salzman puts it:

[t]he crucial fact, often overlooked or de-emphasized, is that every society provides alternatives—*institutionalized alternatives*—for many if not all major areas of activity: alternative organizational forms, alternative productive activities, alternative value orientations, alternative forms of property control. This results in fluidity and variability as people switch back and forth between activities, between organizational forms, and between priorities. (Salzman 1980:4)

By ignoring this central point, trait-list approaches have done much to block entry into dealing with historical dynamics among tribal or any other sort of social contexts.

Impressions of Tribe

Barring other definitional options, it is probably not misconstruing matters to fess up to the fact that what we really mean when we call a social context tribal is frequently something much more impressionistic. To begin with, the term commonly signifies that the social context in question is big, but not too big. A number of attempts using ethnographic data have been made to specify precisely how big is too big (Naroll 1956; Carneiro 1961, 1967, 1987; Chagnon 1983). While these studies have met with some success in identifying broad scalar thresholds that probably speak to some biological aspects of human information processing (Johnson 1982; Kosse 1990, 1996), it remains the case that the scale of decision-making at any particular time is only very loosely correlated with other aspects of human social life.

Second, the label typically signifies that no solid evidence of elites—such as elaborate burials or large, specially constructed residences—has yet been uncovered. While the use of negative evidence may feel unsatisfying, this criterion is indeed essential to the tribal ideal given that in almost any archaeological context presently considered tribal, the discovery of one or two truly 'elite' burials (e.g., in an elaborate mortuary complex surrounded by preciousities and a crew of sacrificed attendants), would be enough for most scholars to bump the case in question up from a tribe to a chiefdom—regardless of other evidence to the contrary.

In short, when employed casually, ‘tribe’ or ‘tribal’ do a better job of indicating what the social phenomenon in question is not—not too big, not too small, and not too centralized or chiefdom-like. Which is to say that the ‘tribe as other’ perspective of the early 20th century has not entirely disappeared. Tribe has overtly come to assume the middle-range in the continuum of human social forms, a theoretical empty space betwixt, between, and only loosely bounded by its sibling evolutionary types (cf. Gregg 1991). Morgan’s (1974:103) late 19th century sentiment, in this sense, continues to hold currency: “It is difficult to describe an Indian tribe by the affirmative elements of its composition” (see also Steward 1963:44, footnote 3).

Recognition of the various problems with the structural, trait-list, and impressionistic translations of the ethnographic model of tribal society, however, has not yet led to the development of substantially more satisfying typological alternatives with which to enter into the cross-cultural analyses so central to anthropological understanding. Michael Adler’s chapter (this volume, Chapter 9), for example, takes a critical look at how archaeologists in the American Southwest have recently sought to characterize prehistoric Puebloan groups using the dual processual model developed by Blanton et al. (1996) in Mesoamerica. As Peregrine (2001:37) and others have recently emphasized, the corporate and network strategies distinguished in this model “do not define societal ‘types’ nor do they define a unilineal evolutionary trend,” and it is in this way that many have found the model to hold promise (Mills 2000). While this may be true within theoretical discussions of the model, we must acknowledge that describing a society as dominated either by corporate or network strategies immediately places that society within a very definite typological classification. Thus both early Basketmaker pit house settlements of the American Southwest and the Classic Maya have been classified as societies dominated by “network” strategies, while the later Puebloan village communities and Teotihuacan have both been classified as societies dominated by “corporate” strategies. To be sure, the dual processual model does realign traditional typological relationships in novel ways; however it remains to be seen whether our understanding of individual societies will be enhanced by the new cross-cultural typology that has been constructed.

Realignments in a similar vein have, of course, been attempted previously. One need only look back to Southall’s (1956) development of the segmen-

tary state model to understand the Alur followed by the concept’s subsequent application by other scholars to a range of social contexts elsewhere in the world. The segmentary state was defined as “one in which the spheres of ritual suzerainty and political sovereignty do not coincide” (Southall 1988:52), and thus there were certain structural similarities between leadership in such societies and segmentary tribes (or, as Fortes and Evans-Pritchard [1970:13] referred to them, “Group B” societies). Segmentation came to be thought of as a social and political strategy that could be analyzed across societies that were traditionally thought of as fitting into very different social types. The problem, however, was that all social contexts have some segmentary characteristics and, consequently, the extremely broad comparisons that resulted from the cross-cultural study of segmentary contexts only offered limited insight.

As Adler (this volume, Chapter 9) notes, the recent archaeological interest in dual-processual, heterarchical, and other models is, ultimately, symptomatic of modern desires to break apart the essentialism of classic neoevolutionary types. This, then, is our principle problem. Given that we can perceive a group of archaeological social contexts that feel similar enough to merit detailed comparison, how and on what level can we best go about learning from the differences and similarities within that group? Along what course might we continue to explore evolutionary processes through cross-cultural comparisons without lapsing into a heavy-handed essentialism? The answer to these questions undoubtedly involves a move beyond straightforward translations of ethnographic models. Though we may be attracted by the readiness of such models, the data with which we work are often not so accommodating. Qualitatively more historical, archaeological remains speak in terms of archaeological time (Smith 1992) and resist being treated as the residue of a suspended ethnographic moment. Because of this, archaeologists more often than not deal in historical trajectories rather than in societies, per se. With respect to the problem of tribal society, we therefore stand to profit from an analytic framework that reflects this reality and concerns itself less with characterizing the political, ideological, or economic qualities of a society—in other words, with what a tribe is—and more with what happens over time in tribal contexts.

In the remainder of this essay I explore this position of ‘tribal is’ as ‘tribal does’—that a framework based upon types of trajectories or processes

as opposed to total societies is a productive change of focus.

Towards the Study of Tribal Trajectories

Enough work has been devoted to the search for particular characteristics with which to clearly demarcate tribal versus other forms of organization. Enough work has also been devoted to exploring the shortcomings of this approach. As noted above, the essays in the present volume represent an attempt to build from a different starting point: a desire to compare trajectories of change rather than to compare the synchronic attributes of idealized societies. In a way, the search for particular tribal characteristics is akin to asking 'what color is a chameleon?'—it simply poses the wrong question. One must instead investigate the variability of colors over time and space and from there ask how and why these colors change. The ultimate goal of this sort of questioning is an understanding finally of how and why the very patterns or rhythms of change may have themselves evolved. In tribal studies such an approach is particularly relevant, for the critique of the tribal type has emerged not only from the observed variability between contexts that one would be tempted to label tribal (Feinman and Neitzel 1984), but even more powerfully from the observed organizational variability that is exhibited within particular social contexts as they developed over time.

Consider, for example, Fried's (1968, 1975; see also Kroeber 1955; Berndt 1959; Helm 1968) influential rejection of the notion of tribe in the 60's and 70's. On one level, Fried argued that crystallized tribal collectivities may have only ever existed as secondary phenomena in the context of contact between states and decentralized egalitarian groups. The subtext of this argument, however, is that if historical data can show that the socially bounded tribes of the colonial world had been unbounded, unmobilized, and fluid prior to European contact, then to talk about tribe as an autonomous developmental type of society is misleading. But does it really come as a surprise that individuals and groups changed their behaviors and organized themselves differently in a substantially changed sociopolitical context? The more interesting question, it seems, is why some indigenous groups mobilized (or were able to be mobilized) into 'tribes' while other groups (many in Australia and Africa, for example) did not—or were not able to—centralize and in some cases even became more loosely

bounded (a process that has been described as 'detrribalization' or 'devolution', Berndt 1959). Also in need of explanation is why some large prehistoric 'tribal' social formations did emerge from or cycle between smaller ones in relative isolation from chiefdoms or states (see Fried [1968:12] and Sahlins [1961:326], as well as O'Shea and Milner, this volume, Chapter 11, and Parkinson, this volume, Chapter 18).

Ultimately, we must realize that what ethnologists rejected was the idea that the relatively sharp political/ethnic boundaries between modern 'tribes' had a temporal reality beyond that inscribed into them by more complex societies. Well-bounded and stable tribes, they concluded, were simply secondary products of colonialism. Fair enough. But if archaeologists were too quick to impose the synchronic tribal model of ethnology onto its diachronic data, it would be equally premature to immediately accept the ethnologists' subsequent critique. Indeed, the very malleability of social boundaries in such contexts over time is what many archaeologists have found to be *most* characteristic of the tribal type (Fowles and Parkinson 1999). Perhaps this is the natural outgrowth of the archaeological need to determine social boundaries through patterning in material remains rather than through the use of tribal names created, or at least rigidified, by state governments. If one does not have labels such as Chimbu, Kalinga, or Nuer with which to contend, one need not become preoccupied with whether or not these labels actually reflect meaningful social units. Perhaps this position also stems from the fact that the end goal of archaeological investigations into tribal contexts is almost never a characterization of particular 'tribes' per se. More often, for example, one finds conclusions drawn about various 'phases' within the historical trajectory of a given region (see, for example, O'Shea and Milner's, this volume, Chapter 11, discussion of the Juntamen Phase in the Upper Great Lakes, and Blakeslee's, this volume, Chapter 10, discussion of the Nebraska Phase on the Central Plains).

Regardless, archaeological engagement with the problem of tribal society has shifted the focus of the debate in an important direction, a point that can be clearly seen in many of the chapters in the present volume. Snow's (Chapter 6) examination of migration and ethnogenesis among the historic Penobscot, for instance, might be directly contrasted with Fried's (1968:6) discussion of the shifting nature of ethnic identity. Ethnicity in tribal contexts, Fried emphasized, was malleable and

easy altered to fit the politics of the moment. Thus he concluded that ‘tribes’ do not exist in any important ethnic sense. Far from being grounds for a complete rejection of the tribal concept, however, Snow’s study reveals that that it might instead be worth viewing a certain amount of flexibility in ethnic identification as highly *characteristic* of tribal groups, as something that an archaeology of tribal society must accept as a necessary background to its investigations.

Indeed, if one examines the ethnographic and ethnohistoric records with sufficient care, it becomes clear that the critique of the notion of a rigid or stable tribe was truly the critique of straw men. Consider, for example, Oliver’s (1968) discussion of the American Plains where the congregation of the buffalo into large herds in the late summer and autumn led many native groups to aggregate during the summer and disperse in the winter. Such a yearly alternation between aggregation and dispersal demanded that society be organized at a variety of levels. Thus Oliver concluded that the True Plains groups, such as the Teton Dakota, alternated yearly between a “band-level” sociopolitical organization governed by local hereditary leaders and a “tribal” organization governed by temporarily chosen warriors (1968:256, see also Carneiro 1967:241). Such a situation also existed in many Central Brazilian societies, for which Gross has documented a yearly shift between nomadic foraging groups and villages of up to 1,400 people. Rather than viewing the two seasonal organizations as elements within a single social structure, Gross importantly concluded that it was best to view these groups as having two distinct social structures that are implicated at different times of the year (Gross 1979:333). His sentiment mirrors Gearing’s (1958:1149) important observation that resulted from a study of Cherokee ethnohistory: “In a word, a human community does not have a single social structure; it has several.”

Elsa Redmond’s (Chapter 4) ethnohistoric analysis of the development and social role of Jivaroan war leaders also brings attention to this central point, however with an emphasis on the overlap between ‘tribal’ and ‘chiefly’ organization, classically defined. She reveals that one might profitably consider Jivaro groups as chieftaincies headed by powerful chiefs during war, but as more decentralized and egalitarian during times of peace. The Jivaro clearly have different organizational strategies that they employ selectively as the larger sociopolitical context changes, and it would therefore be inaccurate to paint one picture of Jivaro

society. Rather, the society must be discussed as comprised of a set of strategies—both egalitarian and hierarchical—over time.

The inherent inaccuracy of descriptions in which social groups are characterized as having a single state—a state which has, of necessity, been stereotyped from an aggregate of observed behaviors—is a problem also addressed by Barth (1967). Barth noted that social change tends to be either dramatically misrepresented or not represented at all when we do not clearly distinguish between (1) the elements of a formal social system that may be continuously preserved and (2) the organizational options within that system that may change with ease and without significant ramifications to the underlying nature of the system itself. The objective, he argued, should rather be to characterize a social context “as a statistical thing, as a set of frequencies of alternatives” (see also Meggitt 1979:122; Smith 1960:148).

Such are the observations that anthropologists have made over the limited historical purview of ethnographic fieldwork. Archaeologists and historians engaged in the analysis of longer segments of social trajectories have, of course, encountered much greater temporal variability in organizational strategies. As Upham (1990b) nicely summarized, confrontation with such variability has played a large role in the late 20th century shift in archaeology from the use of stage-based evolutionary frameworks to more processual frameworks of continuous change. The contrast between these approaches might be viewed schematically as graphs of organizational structure versus historical time. Figure 1, for example, represents the neoevolutionary use of ideal-typic social models to characterize the process of general evolution. This is the classic stage-based approach that is theoretically conceptualized as a sort of stepping from one level of sociopolitical integration to another. Figure 2, on the other hand, represents what Upham describes as a more processual approach in which organizational variation is considered to be continuous and ever-changing, with few, if any, clear boundaries between broad social types.⁴ Thus, when those who have adopted such a model are compelled to engage in cross-cultural comparison they typically prefer to refer to societies that fall within a middle-range of organizational variability, rather than within a social type, *per se*.

While the continuous change model (Fig. 2) has refocused attention on historical process and in this sense is consistent with the goals of the present volume, two strong objections must be

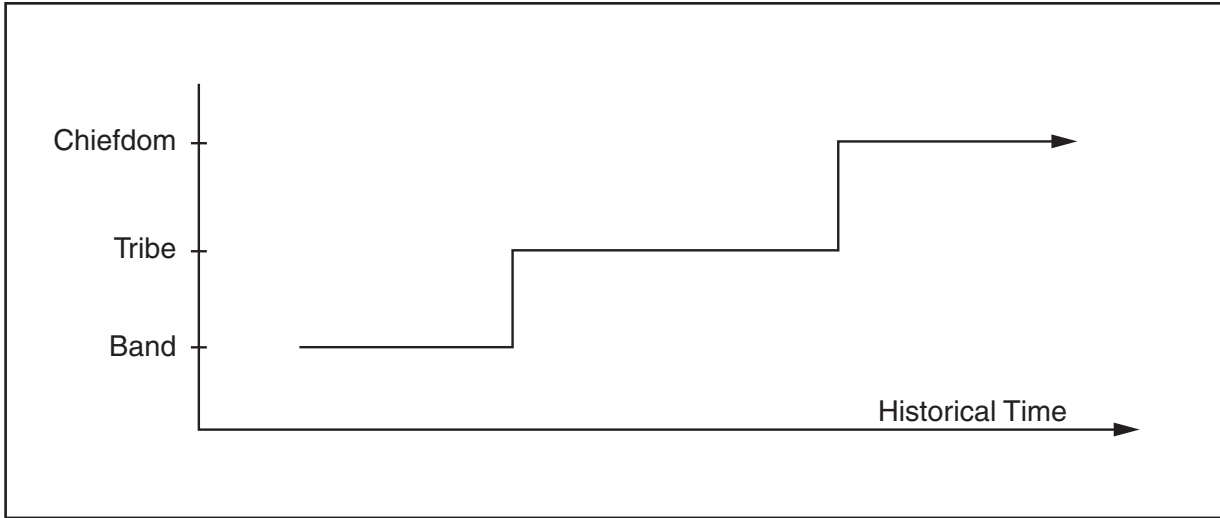


Fig. 1. Stage-based or ideal-typic model of general evolution.

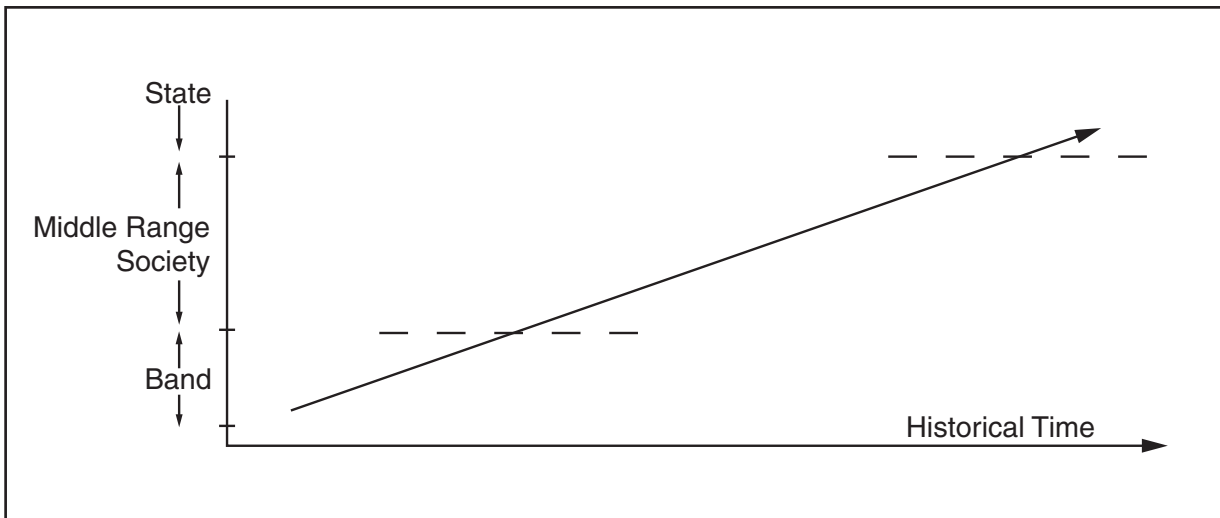


Fig. 2. Continuous model of evolution. Social types are arbitrarily defined as ranges of organizational variability.

raised. First, nearly all proponents of the model use Feinman and Neitzel's (1984) study of non-state organizational variability in New World ethnography and ethnohistory to substantiate their position. Feinman and Neitzel's study and others like it, however, are not based upon cross-cultural analyses of diachronic patterns of change. Rather, they are compilations of ethnographic snapshots, the utility and accuracy of which has already been questioned above. Such data do not, therefore, directly speak to the question of whether or not the evolution of any *particular* society will follow pat-

terns of continuous or discontinuous organizational change over time.

More importantly, however, the continuous change model does little better than the stage-based or ideal-typic model in acknowledging our central observation that societies are bundles of organizational options that are drawn upon to meet changing needs over time. If ethnologists have been able to document cyclical temporal patterns that vacillate between 'band' and 'tribal' levels of organization over the course of the year, or between 'tribal' and 'chiefdom' levels as societies shift in and out of

times of warfare, then a study of tribal trajectories should at least attempt to incorporate such realities. Indeed, once one accepts the position that tribal contexts must be viewed as a set of ever-shifting structural poses over time, the problem then becomes to explore the nature, underlying structures, and different trajectories of these shifts.

To do this, it may prove useful to follow Friedman's (1982) lead and conceptualize historical trajectories as evolving through relatively cyclic patterns of change (see also Parkinson, this volume, Chapter 18). Figure 3 offers a picture of what such a model might look like graphically using the same basic axes of organizational form versus historical time as used in Figures 1 and 2. Of particular note in Figure 3, however, is that typologies of social organization—whether expressed as an idealized single organization or a certain organizational range—have been eliminated in favor of a typology of patterned historical change. That a social context may at one moment in time be structured in classically 'tribal' fashion but at another appear more like a 'band' or a 'chiefdom' is therefore not only unproblematic, but expected. Much more important are the qualities of the organizational dynamic in time, the shape and tempo of the trajectory as it shifts between organizational forms. The ultimate challenge is to explore whether or not such a dynamic might be used to better characterize and compare those societies—or, at least, a useful subset of those societies—that we impressionistically label as 'tribal'.

Adoption of a comparative framework founded upon types of historical trajectories, however, carries with it certain conditions, foremost of which is that one develop a heightened concern with the temporal scale of inquiry. (Pre)history undoubtedly operates at many levels with different processes only coming into focus at different degrees of magnification. In an interesting approach to the subject, Donald Blakeslee (this volume, Chapter 10) uses fractal imaging as a metaphor with which to better appreciate this quality. As he suggests, there is a sense in which it is useful to view the archaeological record as having fractal qualities with patterns over the shorter terms always embedded within patterns over longer terms. However, at each scale of inquiry, the nature of the questions as well as the data relevant to those questions will vary.

Such observations have always been influential in defining processualist approaches toward understanding social change (e.g., Bailey 1981; Binford 1986; Butzer 1982; F. Plog 1974) and they

have taken on new significance with the growing archaeological interest in historiography—especially that of the *Annales* school—during the past fifteen or so years (e.g., Barker 1995; Bintliff 1991; Hodder 1987; Knapp 1992; Preucel and Hodder 1996:14). But our ability to deal with processes at these different scales is also central to much contemporary debate in archaeology, as well. Many who have embraced agency approaches, for instance, have taken the position that prehistoric archaeologists can deal effectively with the short time span of individuals and individual events, and that any understanding of long-term processes must include the repercussions of human motivations as they develop over that time span (e.g., Clark and Blake 1994; Hodder 2000). Those not so enamored with agent-centered approaches have tended toward Binford's (1986:27) position that:

the observations by ethnographers and historical figures, while perhaps documenting something of the internal dynamics of cultural systems, cannot be expected to be necessarily germane to an understanding of a much slower and larger-scale process of change and modification

—a position not entirely different from Marx's (1991:15, orig. 1852) contention that although individuals "make their own history," the production process is always conditioned to a large degree by the inherited social circumstances over which the individual has no control (see also Lévi-Strauss 1963:23). At issue in such positions are not only the appropriate temporal scales of analysis, but also the relative privileging of one scale or another with respect to explanatory power (see Peebles 1991:114).

Regardless of the position taken, clearly identifying the scale of the processes under investigation and their potential relations to processes operating at other scales can only help matters. An example of an impressive analysis along these lines—albeit one based upon ethnohistoric and ethnographic data—is Friedman's (1979) classic discussion of Kachin groups and the evolution of the Asiatic state, in which three temporal scales are effectively juggled. In that work, competition between individuals and families in a particular agrarian context is presented as the short-term engine that has driven the Kachin through cycles of successive *gumsa* or egalitarian social formations and *gumlao* or ranked social formations. Friedman suggests that this mid-level cycling was, in turn, enough to propel the Kachin towards a major systemic contradiction as each mid-level cycle

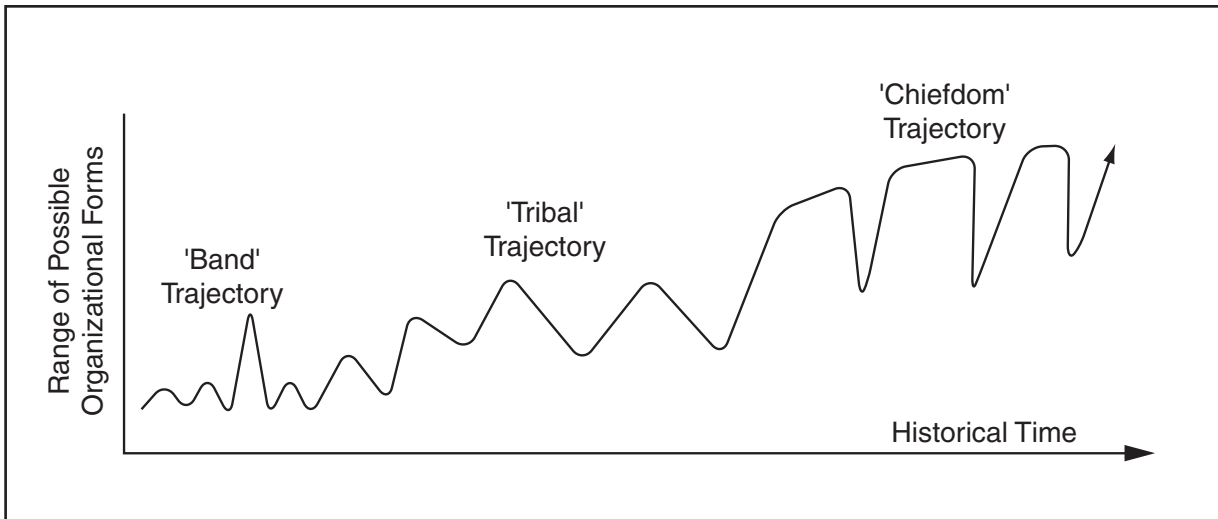


Fig. 3. ZzzEvolution as types of social trajectories.

added to the degradation of the local ecological setting. The result was a systemic contradiction that was sufficiently severe to bring about the development of an Asiatic state. Whether or not one takes issue with Friedman's discussion on empirical grounds, he nevertheless offers an integrated historical model that is sensitive to issues of temporal scale and succeeded in relating one scale to another (see also other explicitly Marxist analyses by Kristiansen [1982], Bender [1990], and Parker Pearson [1984] that work along similar lines).

Ultimately, however, we must be cautious that one totalizing model is not permitted to colonize all of our levels of analysis. Braudel's central insight was that explanation must be permitted to vary with temporal scale. The point at which models—Marxist or otherwise—come to be universally applied in law-like form is the point at which we cease to explain or provide insight into social phenomena (Braudel 1980:50). As a consequence of this heightened concern with temporal scales, therefore, a comparative framework founded upon types of historical trajectories necessitates that we be receptive to a more eclectic use of models as we attempt to weave the various scales of inquiry into a fuller understanding of particular contexts. It may simply be impossible to satisfactorily explain processes occurring over certain temporal scales using certain theoretical approaches. It is in this sense that Brumfiel's (1994) pragmatic suggestion that archaeologists must entertain both agent-centered and system-centered approaches gains further relevance. A full understanding of systems or

structures—from those of the long-term to those of the short—must undoubtedly consider the context of their actual construction and perpetuation, in the actions and multifarious goals of individuals over historical time. But the converse is equally true. Inquiry into individual actions and goals—in prehistory, in particular—would be little more than a tacit reification of untested philosophical positions on human nature in the absence of a sensitivity to the larger inherited structures within which individuals maneuver. The analytic coin in this sense must have at least two faces.

These concerns must be kept in mind as we move from a comparative framework dealing in ethnographic-based models toward a more historical one. Tribal studies of the past two decades have already begun this movement as emphasis has been increasingly placed upon problematizing the process by which regionally integrated 'tribal' systems come about (Braun 1977; Braun and Plog 1982; Creamer and Haas 1985; Haas and Creamer 1993; Plog 1990; Saitta 1983; Voss 1980, 1987). The archaeological use and redefinition of the term 'tribalization' to describe this process highlights the tension that persists in our attempts to translate an ethnographic model of tribal society into archaeological time. Already, in this sense, tribe is being transformed from state to process (Haas 1990). Nonetheless, the subject matter overtly remains the becoming or emergence of a particular organizational state.

What is called for, it seems, is continued work in the same spirit as past tribalization studies, but without the emphasis on particular end states.

Movement through successive formations must itself become the central subject of interest and the basis of a typological system.

A Comparative Framework for the Study of Tribal Trajectories

Toward this end, it may be useful to recognize three rough temporal scales at which different historical processes can be thought of as operating: 1) intra-generational, 2) multi-generational, and 3) long-term. Such a tripartite scheme will feel familiar, for it echoes others of long-standing, in particular Braudel's (1972, 1980) *event-conjoncture-longue durée* framework (see also the temporal frameworks in Bailey [1981] and Butzer [1982]). But these similarities are partly superficial. Below I offer descriptions and discussions of these scales that have emerged from thinking about the specific sort of data with which archaeologists tend to deal.

Intra-generational processes

At one end of historical time are those short-term events and processes that occur within the duration of individual lifespans (up to about 25 or 30 years). Intra-generational processes are, by definition, limited to the duration of a human's lifetime. Thus, when individuals participate in such a process, they are much more likely to be cognizant of the effects of their actions given that the whole of the process can be directly experienced. As a result, explanations of intra-generational processes must contend with the intentions of individuals at a much deeper level than explanations of longer-term processes.

Dealing effectively with intra-generational processes demands fine chronological control and often a wide diversity of data about brief periods of time. Because of this, such processes are the traditional domain of ethnographic and ethnohistoric studies. This is not to say, however, that prehistoric archaeologists are incapable at operating at such a level. Indeed, archaeological data does tend to be highly personal (Hodder 2000). Each artifact in some manner is the record of a short-term sequence of behaviors by an individual or small group. The problem is that most of these data are only indirectly relevant to our broader anthropological questions at the intra-generational level and must be used creatively to say anything at all. Nonetheless, intra-generational processes are at least an aim of much archaeological work.

Examples of intra-generational processes that are of particular relevance to archaeological studies include:

- (1) Seasonal settlement mobility.
- (2) Village fission-fusion cycles.
- (3) Periodic shifts of organization between times of peace and times of war.
- (4) The ascendancy of leaders by achievement.

Among these and the many others that could be listed, the typically frequent shifts in settlement location in many tribal trajectories is a problem given special attention in the present volume.

In Chapter 12, for example, Richard Yerkes builds a case for viewing the Ohio Valley Hopewell as highly mobile peoples who supplemented a predominantly hunting and gathering economy with low-level cultivation. Large-scale ceremony at major earthwork centers and elaborate patterns of regional trade were strategies that evolved to maintain a wide network of social ties between otherwise autonomous local groups, but these strategies, he argues, did not curtail the frequent, intra-generational settlement relocations that were necessitated by the economy. Consequently, Hopewell domestic settlements in the Ohio Valley have been found to be ephemeral, with thin middens, little to no architecture, and no evidence of substantial storage features.

John O'Shea and Claire Milner (this volume, Chapter 11) develop an elegant model of tribal organization in the Juntunen Phase of the upper Great Lakes that depends upon the existence of a similar settlement dynamic. Their analysis focuses upon the material indicators of the group boundaries (e.g., shrines, burial mounds, and natural landmarks) that structured Juntunen Phase social interaction. O'Shea and Milner suggest that 'band'-level boundaries marked the territories within which groups relocated seasonally in order to exploit different natural resources. In most years, the scale of interaction and decision-making was thus relatively small. During periodic times of resource scarcity, however, multi-band organizations emerged as large groups of people descended on a few resource-rich areas. Such episodic aggregations were characterized by intense interaction and a correspondingly high degree of ritual and ceremonialism.

In both the Hopewell and Juntunen Phase cases, large population aggregations did periodically occur, though only in ritualized contexts and for relatively brief periods of time. As O'Shea and Milner point out, these occasional aggregations ensure that the regional community has a predict-

able structure for the community members. However, the underlying dynamic was governed by frequent settlement relocations that had the effect over time of enhancing decision-making autonomy at a small-scale. Community members retained an ability to 'vote with their feet' to a significant degree. As many have suggested, the leisure to respond to social conflict with mobility rather than the institutionalization of strong positions of leadership has undoubtedly played a critical part in keeping many tribal groups 'tribal' over the long run (Kent 1989; Trigger 1990).

As noted above, a unifying aspect of all intra-generational processes is that they are solidly within the realm and perception of individuals. Whether the movement of one's camp, the soliciting of supporters, or the slitting of throats is involved, the actions are calculated and can analytically be attributed to the initiative of particular persons. As such, intra-generational processes are frequently most appropriately understood and modeled in terms of agent-centered approaches.

Multi-generational processes

When a process extends beyond the individual's lifetime and becomes multi-generational, one can no longer simply speak in terms of the agency of the individual in the same manner. Multi-generational processes necessarily result from the composite decisions of multiple individuals. They mark an important movement away from those just described because in order to surpass the actions and goals of an individual, they must in some way become entrenched in a social context and be inherited by the following generation(s) of individuals. Inasmuch as this is true, the nature of explanation must tend more toward the structural. Individuals do indeed witness parts of these processes and may be keenly aware of their place within the longer sequence of events. However he or she might seek to influence those events during their lives, the individual can nonetheless only affect the trajectory of the total process to the degree that he or she is able to change the inheritable structures within which the process is taking place. The complex interplay of structure and agent thus comes to the foreground in a dramatic manner during the analysis of multi-generational processes.

Due to the time span involved, it is rare that an ethnographic project is able to operate effectively at the multi-generational level (cf. Foster et al. 1979), at least in the absence of complimentary ethnohistoric documents from which to build. For

archaeologists and ethnohistorians, however, this temporal scale tends to be the goal of much research particularly when regional chronologies are achieved that utilize periods of 150 years or less. Correspondingly, the sorts of processes involved are familiar subject matter to prehistorians. Included among the many multi-generational processes frequently considered are:

- (1) The development of religious traditions.
- (2) The entrenchment of leadership in a particular lineage or social group.
- (3) The assimilation of immigrant groups.

Regarding the latter, Sarah Herr and Jeffrey Clark (this volume, Chapter 8) focus on what they rightly emphasize are migration *processes*—rather than events—in the American Southwest that necessitated sequential periods of social reorganization over multiple generations. By drawing on a number of examples from across the Puebloan world, they reveal the complex relationship between the context of migration and the organizational shifts that result. In their Grasshopper Plateau and Tonto Basin cases, immigration into previously occupied regions at times resulted in the coresidence of groups who purposely maintained markedly distinct traditions and social identities, especially in the generation directly following movement into an area. At times, it appears that immigration introduced a new element of hierarchy as the 'latecomers' were forced to live on the margins where they had more restricted access to land, religious authority, and social positions of prestige. In contrast, Herr and Clark also consider an interesting example from the Silver Creek Drainage in which migrants moved into a previously unoccupied frontier. In this case, a different process was initiated in which the 'firstcomers' attempted to attract followers and to develop their own system of prestige over time through the construction and use of Great Kivas. In each example, the organizational changes triggered by migrations became part of the social structure inherited and elaborated on by successive generations.

In most tribal contexts, though, significant social inequalities—however they are introduced—are difficult to maintain over the long-term. This is the theme of Fowles' consideration of leadership among the historic Tonga of south central Africa in Chapter 5. Fowles uses ethnographic and ethnohistoric data to argue that would-be Tonga leaders did exploit religion in their efforts to accrue social power and that over time some kin-groups were able to solidify relatively strong positions of influ-

ence and prestige. As inequality bred increasing resentment, periodic 'egalitarian rebellions' ensued, initiated by those who were being disempowered. He concludes that such multi-generational cycles of leadership—not an actual state of equality—is what results in the particular brand of 'egalitarianism' so frequently associated with tribal society. It is through such rebellions that an ethic (if not a practice) of equality comes to be written into social organizations over time.

Understanding multi-generational processes such as those discussed above necessitates a shift in theoretical focus. Just as discussions of kinship lineages must involve a greater emphasis on structure in contrast to discussions of the individuals within those lineages, so do multi-generational processes demand that we move beyond solely agent-centered approaches. Why certain social relations, behaviors and ideas are inherited or discarded by a group over time raises questions of social reproduction and cultural transmission (Boyd and Richerson 1985) and leads to new concerns with historical contingency, social adaptation (cf. Braun 1991), and more generally with the structures that underlie individual action.

Long-term processes

At the far end of historical time are those processes that occur over the long-term (hundreds or thousands of years), generally beyond the precise record-keeping and active experience of the individuals and groups involved. As such, there is little opportunity for the individual to be truly aware of his or her actions within the larger process. Actions performed in the hopes of fulfilling shorter-term goals may be imbedded within long-term processes that have a life of their own in the sense that they are not truly propelled by 'goals' at all. In Marxist terms, such processes are frequently viewed as the unforeseen consequences of human action. To a much greater degree, it may be useful to deal with these processes in analyses on a structural level.

Long-term processes are the traditional domain of archaeological inquiry, for the necessary chronological purview to understand such processes tends to be very great. As such, an appreciation of the long-term is considered by many to be one of archaeology's principle contributions to the human sciences (Hodder 1987). Long-term processes that are often a focus of research include:

- (1) Shifts in subsistence strategies.
- (2) Cycles of aggregation and dispersal.

- (3) The development of a group ethnic identity.
- (4) The development of increasingly regional social networks.

That the nature of explanation must shift as research turns to address such processes is clearly shown in William Parkinson's (this volume, Chapter 18) consideration of settlement changes between the Late Neolithic and Early Copper Ages on the Great Hungarian Plain. To understand these long-term processes, Parkinson adopts an explicitly structural perspective, and through a careful analysis of shifting patterns of integration and interaction he concludes that the same basic segmentary structure was perpetuated in this context during both time periods—a combined length of some one thousand years. The introduction of pastoralism, he argues, elicited a shift in the structural arrangement of those segments but did little to affect the underlying—or, in his words, latent—structural potential of the society's tribal adaptation. Parallels to this case have been found in other contexts as well (e.g., Dean 1970), suggesting that such long-term cycles represent a truly cross-cultural tribal pattern. Importantly, Parkinson emphasizes that it is precisely this ability of tribal societies to shift through organizational forms with ease that makes them adaptive over the long-term.

In addition to change within a certain range of organization, however, the long-term is also, of course, the level at which one typically considers the *evolution* of a trajectory out of what we might consider a tribal dynamic and into a dynamic of some other sort. In their major synthesis of Mesoamerican data, for example, John Clark and David Cheetham (this volume, Chapter 14) raise the very interesting observation that only a relatively small segment of the developmental history of this part of the world can appropriately be considered tribal. Institutionalized social ranking, they conclude, emerged a mere four centuries or so after settlement patterns shifted toward sedentary agricultural villages. From a long-term evolutionary perspective, then, Mesoamerican tribal trajectories must be viewed as having been relatively unstable and transitory.

Explanation at multiple temporal scales

Parsing analyses into multiple temporal scales, of course, accomplishes little if no effort is ultimately made to consider the manner in which the processes operating at these scales interrelate. Longer processes are of course of necessity constituted out of shorter ones, and shorter processes

are always embedded in longer ones. By drawing attention to the relative brevity of the Mesoamerican tribal phase, for example, Clark and Cheetham effectively challenge research to explore the shorter-term dynamics that may have driven the speedy emergence of institutionalized social ranking.⁵

Indeed, as the reader will note, all of the chapters in the present volume already integrate these scales to the degree permitted by their data; in most cases the phenomena under discussion could not be understood otherwise. Peter Bogucki's (this volume, Chapter 16) consideration of household cycles in the Brześć Kujawski Group, for example, emphasizes the flux of prestige and status over time as Neolithic immigrants settled and established a tribal social context in northern Poland. He uses as his starting point a theoretical consideration of the potential variability in wealth that might be expected both between and within longhouse households over time. Whereas from the perspective of the long-term, the Brześć Kujawski Group is best described as a more-or-less egalitarian society in which power and wealth did not accrue in the hands of any one lineage or social group, the intra- and inter-generational processes of change reveal a somewhat different scenario. Accumulation of wealth was clearly a preoccupation of households, so much so that Bogucki suggests that we view them as characterized by an 'ideology of accumulation'.

Perhaps the most characteristically 'tribal' aspect of this situation, however, was that the copper, shell, worked bone, etc. that an individual or household was able to procure during one generation does not appear to have been passed on to the next. Instead, they were buried in large amounts with the deceased in a manner similar to that discussed by Mauss (1990) as the conspicuous destruction of wealth. In this practice, we find a familiar contrast between a conscious ethic of accumulation on an intra-generational level by individuals and households that was held in check on an inter-generational level by burial rites that had the effect of taking wealth out of circulation. Bugocki is thus able to use the complex burial data as a window into the waxing and waning of the economic standing of households from one generation to the next.

To consider a second example, Michael Adler's essay (this volume, Chapter 9) investigates the leadership strategies employed in the aggregated Puebloan villages of the Taos District, New Mexico. Rather than seeking to outline a general structure for the society in these villages, Adler concerns

himself initially with the short-term patterns of rise and fall among ritually based social groups through time. In the course of this study, the Picuris notion of "sponsorship" emerges as a central mechanism of leadership. Sponsorship, as Adler documents, is a type of social control and leadership in which a degree of decision-making power is temporarily vested in the representative of a sodality or social group only so long as that group serves the interests of the community as a whole.

In the case of Picuris Pueblo, for example, Adler reveals that the eldest male of a ritual society might control access to a kiva only so long as the principle ceremony held therein was the responsibility of that society. Should the ceremony cease to be practiced for whatever reason, the society would no longer hold a unique right to leadership, and the operation of the kiva would revert back to the community as a whole. Adler points out that on a multi-generational level this form of leadership tends to place a limit on the degree of power that any one ritual society might develop, a situation that he is also able to document in the construction, maintenance, and abandonment cycles of kivas at the prehistoric village of Pot Creek Pueblo. Over the long-term, such dynamics result in the familiar ambiguity and fluctuations of leadership that typify what we think of as 'tribal' social traditions.

David Anderson's (this volume, Chapter 13) deft synthesis of over 4,000 years of tribal variability in the Southeastern United States provides a final example of how one might attempt to juggle multiple analytic scales and diverse theoretical approaches. From the perspective of the long-term, Anderson reemphasizes Braun and Plog's (1982) suggestion that the emergence of regional tribal networks can be viewed on a general level as a form of risk minimization strategy to buffer stresses introduced either through population increase, environmental change, or a combination of the two. In order to understand how this general adaptation developed, he focuses in upon shorter processes, in particular on the development of mound-building traditions.

Anderson notes, for instance, that the earliest large-scale constructions during the Middle Archaic appear to have been produced by peoples that were ritually integrated into regional communities, but were not yet politically centralized in any archaeologically observable way. Over time, however, group construction projects in many areas came to be more closely associated with the burial of relatively high status individuals, a structural shift that undoubtedly played a critical role in the develop-

ment of increasingly regional social networks. Ultimately to understand how and why this shift took place, Anderson further suggests that archaeologists need to look with yet greater resolution at the repeated developmental sequences of individual mounds and mound groups. It is at this short-term level that one can begin to question why individuals and social groups may have consciously chosen to participate in group construction projects during their own lifetimes.

Of course, the data required to satisfactorily explore many temporal scales simultaneously is only rarely available in archaeological contexts. But as a discipline, archaeology is expertly accustomed to the task of working with patchy and incomplete datasets. It is out of this reality that creative modeling invariably begins.

Conclusion

As a neoevolutionary type, 'tribe' was intended to be used as a concept that could be stretched over the long-term to describe a cross-cultural stage of 'general evolution' within the variable, particular trajectories or 'specific evolution' of individual social contexts (Sahlins 1960). There may yet be important work to be undertaken towards these ends, however in the present volume this traditional typological approach has been laid to the side. Instead, emphasis has been placed on a comparative typology of historical processes at multiple temporal scales. By its nature, much of a society's organizational dynamic tends to elude ethnographic observation and so did not enter into the classic ethnographic literature on evolutionary typologies. Given this, the study of tribal trajectories has become a problem of social theory for archaeologists and historians.

Useful typologies must work upwards from the specific to the general. In this spirit, the case studies included in this volume begin at the specific level by considering individual historical trajectories of change at a variety of temporal scales. On one hand, this approach highlights the variability between the social contexts that, for better or for worse, have been considered tribal or middle-range. Robert Carneiro begins this task in the following chapter by distilling from the world ethnographic database a synthesis of the array of social organizations that have contributed to our modern sense of the tribal—or, following his model, 'autonomous village'—type. The succeeding chapters extend our understanding of tribal variability by considering fluctuations in the organization of particular 'tribal'

societies through time. More than simply confounding our impressions of what a tribe is, these case studies offer a comparative database with which to explore the possibility of a typology of historical trajectories and to develop new generalizations in those areas in which generalization is warranted. Ultimately, it is these sorts of studies that may lead to a fuller understanding of what—if anything—it means to act tribally.

Notes

¹See Middleton and Tait (1958:8, footnote 1) for a succinct description of the difference between Durkheim's mechanical solidarity and later British notions of segmentary systems.

²See also Marcus and Flannery (1996) for a discussion architectural segmentation at the site of San José Mogote during the 'tribal' phase of development in the Valley of Oaxaca.

³See Trigger (1978:156-157) for a review of past attempts in ethnology to establish the scalar limitations of tribal society. Carneiro (1967), Kosse (1996), and Feinman and Neitzel (1984) also tackle the problem of scalar organizational thresholds with their own cross-cultural databases.

⁴One might reasonably critique this contrast by arguing that both models were really subsumed within the neoevolutionary framework through the differentiation between 'general' and 'specific' evolution (Sahlins 1960). Continuous change (Figure 2), in this sense, should be thought of as a characteristic of specific evolution, or the development of a particular society along a historical trajectory. Change between idealized social types (Figure 1), on the other hand, should simply be thought of as a heuristic model with which to understand and compare cases of specific evolution. While valid, this critique does not directly affect the argument developed in the essay.

⁵This challenge has, of course, already begun to be met in Mesoamerica though analyses by Clark and Blake (1994), Blake and Clark (1999), and Marcus and Flannery (1996).

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3. The Tribal Village and Its Culture: An Evolutionary Stage in the History of Human Society

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From the end of the Paleolithic to the onset of chiefdoms, human beings throughout the world lived in small, simple, autonomous villages. While these villages varied widely in culture, there was nonetheless a broad underlying similarity in the way in which those who resided in them made their living and conducted their lives. The period involved here, that generally equated archeologically with the Neolithic, was one of village self-sufficiency, both political and economic. It was a period which represented a *universal stage* in socio-cultural development. Preceding it were the hunter-gatherer bands of the Paleolithic. Following it, came a form of society consisting of large multi-village polities ruled by a powerful chief. In some parts of the world, such as the ancient Near East, the autonomous village stage lasted but a few millennia before giving way to its successor. In other parts, like New Guinea and Amazonia, it exists to this day.

Frequently—as in the title of this book—the autonomous village stage is labeled *tribal*. I hesitate to use this term for the form of culture I wish to describe because ‘tribe’ has a variety of different meanings, and has been the subject of much controversy. Thus, before proceeding further, it may be useful to present some of the background to this controversy and to see how it will affect the treatment of village cultures which is to follow.

Conceptions of the Tribe

In 1955 Kalervo Oberg proposed a typology to characterize successive levels of culture in South and Central America. The three lowest of these levels, as Oberg designated them, were (1) homogeneous tribes, (2) segmented tribes, and (3) politically organized chiefdoms. Much impressed by this typology, and seeing that the categories Oberg had proposed merely as *types* were in fact evolutionary *stages*, Service set forth his own typology, the now

famous sequence of *Band, Tribe, Chiefdom, and State* (Service 1962).

While Service perceived the tribe as having a number of forms which were “adapted ...to varying local circumstances,” he nevertheless saw tribal society as having “general characteristics as a level or stage in evolution ...” (Service 1962:111). Many of these characteristics, especially those having to do with kinship and marriage, Service recognized as being retentions from an earlier band type of society into a village type. But the tribe was something beyond mere villages. The essence of it, according to Service, was not the internal culture of each village, but the external means by which several villages were linked together. And, unlike the chiefdom, these means were not political:

... tribes are not held together by the dominance of one group over others, nor are there any other true or permanent political-governmental institutions. Presumably a great many societies of tribal potentialities merely fissioned, but those that became tribes all had made certain social inventions that had latent integrating effects. *To ask what these are is to ask what a tribe is.* (Service 1962:112-113; emphasis mine)

Service then went on to enumerate the structural features which had permitted villages to establish closer relations with one another, thus forming a tribe:

The means of solidarity that are specifically tribal additions to the persisting band-like means might be called *pan-tribal sodalities*.... Probably the most usual of pan-tribal sodalities are clans, followed by age-grade associations, secret societies, and sodalities for such special purposes as curing, warfare, ceremonies, and so on. (Service 1962:113)

Not long after the appearance of Service’s four stages of social evolution, the scheme was criticized by Morton Fried (1966). Fried’s principal

objection centered on the stage of “tribe,” which he argued should not be considered a universal stage in socio-political development. On the contrary, Fried believed it was only a response to the dislocation and disruption undergone by aboriginal societies as a result of European contact. Service (1968:167) readily accepted Fried criticism, and recanted, deciding to “abolish” the tribe as a general stage in his typology of socio-political evolution. Indeed, he went a step further, truncating his evolutionary sequence by collapsing it from four stages to three, and renaming them: (1) Egalitarian Society, (2) Hierarchical Society, and (3) Archaic Civilization (Service 1968:167).

But the world did little note nor long remember Service’s emendation of his own sequence. In fact, Service himself showed signs of having recanted his recantation, because three years later, in the revised edition of *Primitive Social Organization*, he retained the ‘tribe’ as a stage in his evolutionary sequence, noting only that “the law and order imposed by colonial power could have the effect of restricting or even reducing the territories controlled by the tribal kin group without otherwise disturbing the tribe” (Service 1971:126).

In his book *Tribesmen*, published in 1968, Marshall Sahlins did not hesitate to embrace the concept of tribe. In fact he stretched its meaning to the maximum. Tribes, he wrote, “represent a certain category of cultural development, intermediate in complexity between the mobile hunters and ... gatherers and early agrarian states such as the Egyptian and Sumerian” (Sahlins 1968:vii). So broad was Sahlins conception of the tribe that the category of chiefdom was submerged within it. But for Sahlins the tribe was more than just a category. It was a stage: “Tribes occupy a position in cultural evolution. They took over from simpler hunters; they gave way to the more advanced cultures we call civilizations” (Sahlins 1968:4).

To Sahlins, as it was to Service, the essence of the tribe was the overarching set of structures which enabled autonomous local communities to establish close ties with other communities, thus forming a wider network of social relations. Accordingly, he wrote:

The constituent units of tribal society ... make up a progressively inclusive series of groups, from the closely-knit household to the encompassing tribal whole. Smaller groups are combined into larger ones through several levels of incorporation. The particular arrangements vary, of course, but the scheme might read some-

thing like this: families are joined in local lineages, lineages in village communities, villages in regional confederacies, the latter making up the tribe. (Sahlins 1968:15)

Sahlins (1968:21) also pointed out the transient nature of much of tribal organization:

Certain groups may ally for a time and a purpose, as for a military venture, but the collective spirit is episodic. When the objective for which it was called into being is accomplished, the alliance lapses and the tribe returns to its normal state of disunity.” A related feature of tribal organization was the attenuation of cohesiveness as one proceeded toward the outer limits of the tribe: “The social system... becomes weaker where it is greater: the degree of integration decreases as the level of organization increases, and degrees of sociability diminish as fields of social relation broaden. (Sahlins 1968:16)

We see, then, that the essence of the tribe as depicted here consists of the supra-village links or ties between communities—the “pan-tribal solidarities” of Service. But it is important to emphasize that the building blocks from which the tribe is built are *villages*. Furthermore, the usual condition of these villages is one of economic self-sufficiency and political autonomy. Accordingly, it seems fitting to devote the lion’s share of our treatment of “tribal culture” to the constituent units that make it up. Then, after having done so, we will be in a better position to examine again those supra-village links which, for certain occasions and under certain conditions, tie villages together to form a tribe. These tribal ties can then be examined to discover what means they provide for taking the next great evolutionary step, namely, the formation of chiefdoms. At this point, the autonomous village has been surpassed, and a categorically new form of socio-political structure has been created.

Autonomous Village Culture

Accordingly, this paper will describe the general features of autonomous village-level culture. In this description, I will emphasize its most widespread characteristics but will also indicate its variant forms. The result will be a picture familiar to anyone who has ever delved into a classic “tribal” ethnography, a picture of a distinctive, cohesive, and well-adapted mode of life which at one time was shared by the ancestors of us all.

While this culture is most typical of the mode of life associated with the Neolithic, it must be

kept in mind that many of its elements had already come into being during the preceding Paleolithic period. They formed part of a body of culture traits invented by nomadic foragers over the course of hundreds of thousands of years, and bequeathed by them to their Neolithic heirs.

These pre-Neolithic culture traits, which I call *substratum traits*, were ones that did not require a settled mode of life or an agricultural subsistence in order to arise. We know this because most if not all of them are found among contemporary hunters and gatherers, such as the Yahgan of Tierra del Fuego, the !Kung San of the Kalahari Desert, and the aborigines of central Australia. I list several of these traits here to give some idea of their nature and to impart some small notion of how many of them there are:

- food taboos
- puberty rites
- hunting magic
- cordage
- basketry
- fire making
- body painting
- shamanism
- trade
- warfare
- marriage
- kinship terms
- sexual division of labor
- origin myths
- polygyny
- infanticide
- cremation
- personal souls
- belief in spirits
- an afterworld
- soul loss theory of disease
- witchcraft
- musical instruments
- constellations named
- omens
- numeration

We shall meet many of these traits again in the course of our survey of autonomous village culture.

The Roots of the Neolithic

The rise of settled village life is usually associated with the coming of the Neolithic. In point of fact, though, the first settled villages occurred earlier—during the preceding Mesolithic period in northern Europe, and the Archaic period in the

eastern United States. With the decline of big game hunting in Europe, bands of foragers settled down along the coast, and began to rely more heavily on fish as their main source of protein. In North America, a similar shift took place, with riverine resources becoming increasingly important to subsistence. The relative inexhaustibility of fish (compared to that of game) permitted small groups of people who still lacked agriculture to settle securely in one locale.

Originally, the Neolithic period was defined by the presence of ground stone tools, especially axes, which replaced, or at least supplemented, chipped stone tools. Stone axes were the implements which early Neolithic farmers used to fell the forests in order to clear their garden plots. However, it wasn't long before archeologists came to see that agriculture and pottery were even more important than ground stone tools in providing the hallmarks for this period. Agriculture and pottery thus joined stone axes to form the great triumvirate of traits diagnostic of the Neolithic. That having been said, we are now ready to begin our survey of this form of culture.

Village Size

Settled village life, in contrast to a nomadic band existence, was one of the fundamental features of the Neolithic. Along with the expansion of sedentism, the Neolithic saw an increase in community size. A typical Paleolithic band ranged in size from about 20 to 50 persons, and the earliest agricultural villages were probably not much larger. However, Neolithic subsistence, which was based on agriculture, permitted villages to grow significantly in size. A population of 80 to 100 may perhaps be considered typical for early Neolithic villages, but in time, and in certain favored habitats, villages attained a much larger size. A population of several hundred became possible, and in some areas, such as the Southwestern United States, villages sometimes exceeded a population of 1,000.

On the average, though, following the coming of the Neolithic, community size probably only doubled or tripled. However, the increase in the total *number* of communities was much greater than the increase in their average *size*. In fact, villages proliferated greatly. I once estimated (and it was little more than a wild guess) that around 1000 B.C. the number of autonomous villages reached a maximum of about 600,000, the largest number there have ever been at any one time (Car-

neiro 1978:213). After that, while the sheer number of villages continued to increase, they were being absorbed into chiefdoms and states more quickly than they arose, so that the total number of *autonomous* villages existing in the world as a whole actually declined.

Constraints on Village Size

The size an autonomous village can attain is limited at both ends of the scale. At the lower end, a village may contain as few as 15 persons, but apparently no fewer. When its population threatens to fall below this level (as happened in the case of the Nafukuá in the Upper Xingú region of Brazil), a village finds it difficult to carry on its customary activities, and is likely to join with another village in order to remain above the minimum viable size. Accordingly, when the Nafukuá fell perilously close to this level, they moved in with the neighboring Matipú.

But if the minimum viable size of a village in the Upper Xingú can be as low as 15, this figure is possible only because there is no warfare in the region. Where warfare is present, a village's minimum viable size may be substantially larger. Napoleon Chagnon (1968:40) reports for the Yanomamö of southern Venezuela, among whom warfare is endemic, that minimum village size is around 80. Below this figure, a village would be unable to muster enough fighting men to adequately defend itself against attack.

Warfare, in fact, may be an important factor in leading a village to grow substantially larger. The Kayapó of central Brazil, who until recently were markedly warlike, had villages as large as 600 or 800. And there is evidence to suggest that in seeking military advantage, several Kayapó villages in the past had coalesced into one. The same may have happened in the case of Acoma and other Pueblo villages of the Southwest.

Turning to the upper end of village size, it is safe to say that autonomous villages almost never exceed a population of 2,000, and rarely approach it. Generally speaking, even when it is considerably smaller than this, a growing village has a tendency to fission. If arable land is freely available, and if no strong, overarching political controls exist to keep a village united, then whenever internal strains and stresses reach a certain point, a hostile confrontation may take place between dissident factions, and if the argument between them cannot be resolved, one of the factions will hive off and establish a village of its own.

Village Splitting

Village splitting is a very interesting phenomenon. It has occurred in the life history of practically every autonomous village ever studied, yet it has received virtually no theoretical attention. Basically, village splitting involves two elements which operate in opposite directions: *internal pressure* and *external constraints*. The former is largely the result of an increase in population. The bigger the village, the greater the pressure for it to split. I once speculated that this pressure is proportional, not to the first power of the population, as one might suppose, but to the *square* of the population (Carneiro 1987:100). If this conjecture is true, then a village of 200 persons would not be twice as likely to split as one of 100 persons, but rather, *four* times as likely.

The external constraints that serve to put a brake on village splitting are mainly of two sorts. As I have noted, as long as there is plenty of arable land available, a dissident faction will find it relatively easy to split off and found a new village of its own. But if the surrounding area has become increasingly filled in, and thus land for a new settlement is less readily available, then the village is more likely to patch up its differences and remain intact.

As mentioned above, war is an important determinant of village size. A Yanomamö village may remain at a size larger than its residents find comfortable but which may nevertheless be tolerated because of the advantage that having a large number of warriors confers on the village.

Less obvious factors, such as accusations of witchcraft, may also affect village size. When I revisited the Kuikuru in the Upper Xingú in 1975, I found that about a third of its residents had moved out of the village and into that of the neighboring Yawalapití out of fear of witchcraft allegedly being practiced by a man in their home village.

Settlement Patterns

With regard to settlement pattern, two questions readily arise: What kind of locale does a village choose to settle in? and, How long will it remain there? The principal factors at work in determining the answer to the first question are subsistence requirements, defensibility, and accessibility to water. The interplay of these three factors, along with a few others like being close to clay for pottery making, and other raw materials, determines the location of the site. For almost all auton-