Political Organizations

Concepts of Power and Authority
Political Systems

• Power = ability to exercise one’s will over others

• Authority = socially approved use of power
Political Organization

• Patterned ways to legitimize power

• Authority is used to regulate behavior

• Political Ideology
Cross-cultural Approach

• Main Themes:
  • Political structure
  • leadership
  • social control or order
  • warfare
Levels of Political Organization

- Bands
- Tribes
- Chiefdoms
- States
BANDS

- Small groups of people
  - usually nuclear families

- foraging economies

- bands tend to be independent
BANDS

- Importance of personal relationships
  - through ties of marriage, kinship, trade

- No formal leaders
- Little differential Authority

- Leadership based on talents and respect
BANDS

• Social Control - informal
  – gossip, ridicule and avoidance
  – banishment
  – supernatural sanctions
BANDS

- Conflict resolved informally
- Fighting = family feuds, personal
- No formal organization of war
TRIBES

• Culturally distinct population
  – members consider themselves descended from the same ancestors or as part of the same PEOPLE

  – shifting horticulturalists

  – organized by village life, descent groups
TRIBES

- Kin-based social system
- linked by RECIPROCITY and REDISTRIBUTION

- Formal governments are lacking
- more effective regulatory mechanisms than bands

- Nominal Leaders
Yanomami Headman

• Authority is limited
• leads by example and persuasion
• serves as mediator
• leads by generosity
TRIBES

• Social Control
  – informal means
  – based on public sentiment
  – “ordeals”
TRIBES

• Warfare
  – raiding other villages
  – linked to kin-groups
  – war is grounded in material or ecological conditions
  – ritual combat
CHIEFDOMS

• Associated with sedentary agriculture
• few chiefdoms remains today

• based on the concept of Hereditary Inequality
  • Chiefly
  • Common
CHIEFDOMS

• Centralized Leadership
• Formal office of Chief

• closely related to Redistributive Exchange Patterns
CHIEFDOMS

• Social control
  – Chief has authority to make Judgements, to Punish and to Resolve disputes
  – his word is law
  – limited to the chief’s presence
STATES

- Is a hierarchical, centralized form of political organization

- Involves a central government that has the legal monopoly over the use of FORCE
STATES

• Based on formal LAW

• Class-based social systems
  – system of social stratification based on non-relatives!
STATES

• Have the ability to expand indefinitely
• Incorporation of a variety of political administrative bureaucracies

• Maintain armies
STATES

• Social control
  – maintained through government
  – individuals are members through Citizenship
  – not kin networks
  – sense of being “One People”
  – concept of Nationality
  – government creates Public Policy
STATES

• Intervenes in every aspect of the economic process = taxation

• Passes Laws

• Uses force to uphold judiciary decisions
STATES

• Rebellions and Revolutions

• State wins loyalty through Ideology
STATES

• Warfare
  – costly
    • lives; destruction

  – leads to increased political centralized control