

1. Introduction: Archaeology and Tribal Societies

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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 translat-

ed 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 Coster 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 1968:516 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 1968:524).

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;
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), Don Blakeslee (Chapter 10), David Anderson (Chapter 13), John Clark and David 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 Michael Galaty (Chapter 7), David 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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