
UNIT 4 POLITICAL POWER AND DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES

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Learning Objectives



The main objective of this unit is to make the students understand the:

- different types of political organisations existing in human society and their basic features;
- distribution of power and social control mechanisms in simple society;
- different types of conflict resolution systems;

- allocation and utilisation of natural resources in human society;
- distribution of goods and services; and
- marketing exchanges.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Political organisations refers to groups that exist for the purpose of public decision making and leadership, maintaining social cohesion and order, protecting group rights, and ensuring safety from external threats. Political organisations have several features:

- Recruitment principles: Criteria for determining admission to the unit.
- Perpetuity: Assumption that the group will continue to exist indefinitely.
- Identity markers: Particular characteristics that distinguish it from others, such as costume, membership card, or title.
- Internal organisation: An orderly arrangement of members in relation to each other.
- Procedures: Prescribed rules and practices for behaviour of group members.
- Autonomy: Ability to regulate its own affairs. (Tiffany, 1979:71-72)

Social anthropologists cluster the many forms of political organisations that occur cross-culturally into four major types. The four types of political organisations (given below) correspond, generally, to the major economic forms. Societies in the ethnographic record vary in level of political integration- that is, the largest territorial group on whose behalf political activities are organised- and in the degree to which political authority is centralised or concentrated in the integrated group. When we describe the political authority of particular societies, we focus on their traditional political systems. In many societies known to anthropology, the small community (band or village) was traditionally the largest territorial group on whose behalf political activities were organised. The authority structure in such societies did not involve any centralisation; there was no political authority whose jurisdiction included more than one community. In other societies political activities were traditionally organised sometimes on behalf of multilocal groups, but there was no permanent authority at the top. And in still other societies political activities were often traditionally organised on behalf of multilocal territorial groups, and these have been incorporated into some larger, centralised political system (Ember, 2007: 420). Elman Service (1962) suggested that most societies can be classified into four principal types of political organisations: bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states. Although Service's classification does not fit for all societies, it is a useful way to show how societies vary in trying to create and maintain social order. We often use the present tense in our discussion, because that is the convention in ethnographic writing, but the reader should remember that most societies that used to be organised at the band, tribe, or chiefdom level are now incorporated into larger political entities. With a handful of exceptions, there are no politically autonomous bands or tribes or chiefdoms in the world any more.

4.2 POLITICAL POWER: SOME DEFINITIONS

4.2.1 Band

Band is the form of political organisation found among foragers and hunters comprising anywhere between twenty people and a few hundred people, who are related through kinship. Because foraging has been the most long-standing form of political organisation, these units come together at certain times of the year, depending upon their foraging patterns and ritual schedule (Barbara D. Miller, 2002).

Band membership is flexible. If a person has serious disagreement with another person, one option is to leave that band and join another. Leadership is informal, and no one person is named as a permanent leader. Depending on events, such as organising the group to relocate or to send people out to hunt, a particular person may come to the fore as a leader for that time. This is usually someone whose advice and knowledge about the task are especially respected. (ibid)

There is no social stratification between leaders and followers. A band leader is the “first among equals”. Band leaders have limited authority or influence, but no power. They cannot enforce their opinions. Social leveling mechanisms prevent anyone from accumulating much authority or influence. Political activity in bands involves mainly decision making about migration, food distribution, and resolution of interpersonal conflicts. External conflicts between groups are rare because the territories of different bands are widely separated and the population density is low (ibid).

The band level organisation barely qualifies as a form of political organisation because groups are flexible, leadership is ephemeral, and there are no signs or emblems of political affiliation. Some anthropologists argue that “real” politics did not exist in undisturbed band societies. The Guayaki (Amazon basin), the Semang (Malaya peninsula), Iglulik Eskimo, the Kung (Africa), the Cholanaikans (Kerala), Andaman tribes are some examples of Band organisation (ibid).

4.2.2 Tribe

A tribe is a political group comprising several bands or lineage groups, each with similar language and lifestyle and occupying a distinct territory. Kinship is the primary basis of tribal membership. Tribal groups contain from a hundred to several thousand people. They are usually associated with horticulture and pastoralism. Tribal groups may be connected to each other through a **clan** structure in which members claim descent from a common ancestor. Tribal political organisation is more formal than band-level organisation. A tribal headman or headwoman (most are males) is formally recognised as a leader. Key qualifications for this position are being hard working and generous and possessing good personal skills. A headman is a political leader on a part-time basis only, yet this role is more demanding than that of a band leader. Depending on the mode of production, a headman will be in charge of determining the times for moving herds, planting and harvesting, and setting the time for seasonal feasts and celebrations. Internal and external conflict resolution is also his responsibility. A headman relies mainly on authority and persuasion rather than on power (Barbara D. Miller, 2002).

Pastoralist tribal formations are sometimes linked in a confederacy, with local segments maintaining substantial autonomy. The local segments meet usually at an annual festival. In case of an external threat, the confederacy gathers together.

Once the threat is removed, local units resume their autonomy. The equality and autonomy of units, along with their ability to unite and then split, are referred to as a segmentary model of political organisation. This form of tribal organisation is found among pastoralists worldwide. The Tiv (Nigeria), the Nuer (Sudan), the Oran, the Santal, the Bhil, the Gond are examples of Tribal political organisations (ibid).

4.2.3 Big-man and Big-woman Systems

In between tribe and chiefdom is the big-man system or big-woman system. Certain individuals develop political leadership following through a system of redistribution based on personal ties, generosity and grand feasts. Research in Melanesia, and Papua New Guinea established the existence of the big-man type of politics, and most references to it are from this region. Personalistic, favour-based political groupings are found in other regions too.

Unlike a tribal headman, a big-man or big-woman has a wider following across several villages. A big-man tends to have greater wealth than his followers. Core supporters of a big-man have heavy responsibilities in regulating internal affairs-cultivation-and external affairs-intergroup feasts, exchange of goods, and war. In some instances, a big-man is assisted by a group of respected men hailing from big-man's different constituencies.

4.2.4 Chiefdoms

Chiefdom is a form of political organisation with a central leader encompassing several smaller political units. Chiefdoms have larger populations, often numbering in thousands, and are more centralised and socially complex. Hereditary systems of social ranking and economic stratification are found in many chiefdoms, with social divisions existing between the chiefly lineage or lineages and non-chiefly groups. Chiefs and their descendents are considered superior to commoners, and intermarriage between two strata is forbidden. Chiefs are expected to be generous, but they may have a more luxurious lifestyle than the rest of the people. The chief ship as "office" must be filled at all times. When a chief dies or retires, he or she must be replaced. This is not the case with a band leader or big-man or big-woman. A chief regulates production and redistribution, solves internal conflicts, and plans and leads raids and warring expeditions. Criteria for becoming a chief are: ascribed criteria (birth in a chiefly lineage, or being the first son or daughter of the chief), personal leadership skills, charisma, and accumulated wealth. Chiefdoms have existed in most parts of the world.

Anthropologists are interested in how and why chiefdom systems evolved as an intermediary units between tribes and states and what are its political implications. Several political strategies support the expansion of power in chiefdoms: controlling more internal and external wealth and giving feasts and gift exchanges that create debt ties; improving local production systems; applying force internally; forging stronger and wider external ties; and controlling ideological legitimacy. Depending on local conditions, different strategies are employed. For example, internal control of irrigation systems was the most important factor in the emergence of chiefdoms in prehistoric southeastern Spain; whereas control of external trade was more important in the prehistoric Aegean region (Gilman 1991).

An expanded version of the chiefdom occurs when several chiefdoms are joined in a **confederacy** headed by chief of chiefs, "big chief", or paramount chief. Many

prominent confederacies have existed- for example, in Hawaii in the late 1700s and, in North America, the Iroquois league of five nations that stretched across New York State, the Cherokee of Tennessee, and the Algonquins who dominated the Chesapeake region in present-day Virginia and Maryland. In Algonquin confederacy, each village had a chief, and the regional council was composed of local chiefs and headed by the paramount chief. Confederacies were supported financially by contributions of grain from each local unit. Kept in a central storage area where the paramount chief lived, the grain was used to feed warriors during external warfare that maintained and expanded the confederacy's borders. A council building existed in the central location, where local chiefs came together to meet with the paramount chief to deliberate on questions of internal and external policy.

4.2.5 States

State is a form of political organisation with a bureaucracy and diversified governmental institutions with varying degrees of centralised control. The state is now the form of political organisation in which all people live. Band organisations, tribes, and chiefdoms exist, but they are incorporated within state structures.

Powers of the state: socio cultural anthropologists ask how states operate and relate to their citizens. In this inquiry, they focus on the enhanced power that states have over their domain compared to other forms of political organisation. (Barbara D. Miller, 2002)

- *States define citizenship and its rights and responsibilities.* In complex societies, since early times, not all residents were granted equal rights of citizens.
- *States maintain standing armies and police* (as opposed to part-time forces).
- *States keep track of the number, age, gender, location, and wealth of their citizens through census system that are regularly updated.* A census allows the state to maintain formal taxation systems, military recruitment, and policy planning, including population settlement, immigration quotas, and social benefits such as old-age pensions.
- *States have the power to extract resources from citizens through taxation.* All political organisations are supported by contributions of the members, but variations occur in the rate of contributions expected, the form in which they are paid, and the return that members get in terms of services. In bands, people voluntarily give time or labour for “public projects” such as a group hunt or a planned move. Public finance in states is based on formal taxation that takes many forms. **In-kind taxation** is a system of mandatory, non-cash contributions to the state. For example, the Inca state used a labour tax, to finance public works such as roads and monuments and to provide agricultural labour on state lands. Another form of in-kind taxation in early states required that farmers pay a percentage of their crop yield. Cash taxes, such as the income tax that takes a percentage of wages, emerged only in the past few hundred years.
- *States manipulate information.* Control of information to protect the state and its leaders can be done directly (through censorship, restricting access to certain information by the public, and promotion of favourable images via propaganda) and indirectly (through pressure on journalists and television networks to present information in certain ways).

Symbols of State Power: Religious beliefs and symbols are often closely tied to the power of state leadership: the ruler may be considered a deity or part deity, or a high priest of the state religion, or closely linked with the high priest, who serves as advisor. Architecture and urban planning remind the populace of the power of the state. In pre-Hispanic Mexico, the central plaza of city-states, such as Tenochtitlan was symbolically equivalent to the center of the cosmos and was thus the locale of greatest significance. The most important temples and the residence of the head of state were located around the plaza. Other houses and structures, in decreasing order of status, were located on avenues in decreasing proximity to the center. The grandness and individual character of the leader's residence indicate power, as do monuments-especially tombs to past leaders and heroes or heroines (Barbara D. Miller, 2002).

4.3 SOCIAL CONTROL IN SMALL-SCALE SOCIETIES

Anthropologists distinguish between small-scale societies and large scale societies in terms of prevalent forms of conflict resolution, social order, and punishment of offenses. Because bands are small, close-knit groups, disputes tend to be handled at the interpersonal level through discussion or one-on-one fights.

Group members may act together to punish an offender through shaming and ridicule. Emphasis is on maintaining social order and restoring social equilibrium, not hurtfully punishing an offender. Ostracising an offending member (forcing the person to leave the group) is a common means of formal punishment. Capital punishment is rare but not nonexistent. For example, in some Australian Aboriginal societies, a law restrict access to religious rituals and paraphernalia to men who had gone through a ritual initiation. If an initiated man shared secrets with an uninitiated man, the elders would delegate one of their groups to kill the offender. In such instances, the elders act like a court.

In non-state societies, punishment is often legitimised through belief in supernatural forces and their ability to affect people. Among highland horticulturalists of the Indonesian island of Sumba, one of the greatest offenses is to fail to keep a promise which lead to supernatural assault from the ancestors. The punishment may come in the form of damage to crops, illness or death of a relative, destruction of the offender's house, or having clothing catch on fire. When such a disaster occurs, the only recourse is to sponsor a ritual that will appease the ancestors.

Village fission (breaking up) and ostracism are mechanisms for dealing with irresolvable conflict. The overall goal in dealing with conflict in small-scale societies is to return the group to harmony. Data on conflict resolution from nonhuman primate groups also demonstrate the importance of re-establishing peaceful interactions between former opponents as a way of promoting small-group harmony.

4.4 SOCIAL CONTROL IN STATES

In densely populated societies with more social stratification and more wealth increased stress occurs in relation to the distribution of surplus, inheritance, and rights to land. In addition, not everyone else, and face-to-face accountability exists mainly in localised groups. Three important factors of state system of social control are the increased specialisation of roles involved in social control, the formalised use of trials and courts, and the use of power-enforced forms of

punishment, such as prisons and the death penalty. Yet informal mechanism also exists.

4.4.1 Specialisation

The specialisation of tasks related to law and order-police, judges, lawyers-increases with the emergence of state organisation. Full-time professionals, such as judges and lawyers, often come from powerful or elite social groups, a fact that perpetuates elite bias in the justice process itself. Police carry out the duty of surveillance, maintain social order, book cases against the culprits and implement the judgments pronounced in the courts.

4.4.2 Trials and Courts

In societies where misdoing and punishment are defined by spirits and ancestors, a person's guilt is proved simply by the fact that misfortune has befallen him or her. If a person's crops were damaged by lightning, then that person must have done something wrong. In other instances, the guilt may be determined through **trial by ordeal**, a form of trial in which the accused person is put through some kind of test that is often painful. For example, in certain cases, the guilty person will be required to place a hand in boiling oil, or to have a part of the body touched by red-hot knife. Being burned is a sign of guilt, whereas not being burned means the suspect is innocent.

The court system, with lawyers, judge, and jury, is used in many contemporary societies, although there is variation in how cases are presented and juries constituted. The goal of contemporary court trials is to ensure both justice and fairness. Analysis of actual courtroom dynamics and patterns of decision making in the United States and elsewhere, however, reveals serious problems in achieving these goals.

4.4.3 Prisons and Death Penalty

Administering punishment involves imposing something unpleasant on someone who has committed an offence. Socio-cultural anthropologists have examined forms of punishment cross-culturally, as well as the relationship between types of societies and forms of punishment. In small-scale societies, punishment is socially rather than judicially managed. The most extreme form of punishment is usually ostracism and is rarely death. Another common form of punishment, in the case of theft or murder, especially in the Middle East, is the requirement that the guilty party pay compensation to members of the victim's family.

The prison, as a place where people are forcibly detained as a form of punishment, has a long history, but it probably did not predate the state. In Europe, long-term detention of prisoners did not become common until the seventeenth century.

4.5 RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT

Apart from formulation of policies, their administration, and their enforcement, political life also involves the resolution of conflict, which may be accomplished peacefully by avoidance, community action, mediation or the negotiation of compromises, apology, appeal to supernatural forces, or adjudication by a third party. The procedures used usually vary with degree of social complexity; decisions by third parties are more likely to exist in hierarchical societies. But peaceful solutions are not always possible, and disputes may erupt into violent conflicts. When violence occurs within a political unit in which disputes are usually settled

peacefully, we call such violence *crime*, particularly when committed by an individual. When violence occurs between groups of people from separate political units- groups between which there is no procedure for settling disputes- we usually call such violence *warfare*. When violence occurs between subunits of a population that had been politically unified, we call it *civil war*.

4.5.1 Peaceful Resolution of Conflict

Most modern industrialised states have formal institutions and offices, such as police, district attorneys, courts, and penal systems, to deal with various types of disputes and conflicts. All these institutions generally operate according to **codified laws**- that are, a set of explicit, usually written, rules stipulating what is permissible and what is not. Transgression of the law by individuals gives the state right to take action against them. The state has monopoly on the legitimate use of force in the society, for it alone has the right to coerce subjects into agreement with regulations, customs, political edicts and procedures.

Many societies lack such specialised offices and institutions for dealing with conflict. Yet, because all societies have peaceful, regularised ways of handling at least certain disputes, some anthropologists speak of the *universality of law*. E. Adamson Hoebel (1968), for example, stated the principle as follows:

Each people have its system of social control. And all but a few of the poorest of them have as a part of the control system a complex of behaviour patterns and institutional mechanisms that we may properly treat as law. For, “anthropologically considered, law is merely one aspect of culture- the aspect which employs the force organised society to regulate individual and group conduct and to prevent redress or punish deviations from prescribed social norms.” (Hoebel, 2006: 4)

Law, then, whether informal as in simpler societies, provides a means of dealing peacefully with whatever conflicts develop. That does not mean that conflicts are always resolved peacefully. But that also does not mean that people cannot learn to resolve their conflicts peacefully. The fact that there are societies with little or no violent conflict means that it may be possible to learn from them; it may be possible to discover how to avoid violent outcomes of conflicts.

4.5.2 Avoidance

Violence can often be avoided if the parties to a dispute voluntarily avoid each other or are separated until emotions cool down. Anthropologists have frequently remarked that foragers are particularly likely to make use of this technique. People may move to other bands or move their dwellings to opposite ends of camp. Shifting horticulturalists may also split up when conflicts get too intense. Avoidance is obviously easier in societies, such as band societies, that are nomadic or semi nomadic and in which people have temporary dwellings. And avoidance is more feasible when people live independently and self sufficiently (for example, in cities and suburbs). But even if conditions in such societies may make avoidance easier, we still need to know why some societies use avoidance more than confrontation as a way of resolving conflict (Ember et. al, 2007).

4.5.3 Community Action

Societies resort to various methods, to resolve disputes in an amicable way. One such way involves community action in simpler societies that lack powerful authoritarian leaders. Among the Inuit, disputes are frequently resolved through community action. The Inuit believe that spirits, particularly if displeased, can

determine much of a person's fate. Consequently, people carry out their daily tasks within a complex system of taboos. This system is so extensive that the Inuit, at least in the past, may have had no need for formal set of laws.

Nevertheless, conflicts do arise and needs to be resolved. Accordingly, principles act as guides to the community in settling trouble cases. An individual's failure to heed a taboo or to follow the suggestions of a shaman leads to expulsion from the group, because the community cannot accept a risk to its livelihood. A person who fails to share goods voluntarily will find them confiscated and distributed to the community, and he or she may be executed in the process. A single case of murder, as an act of vengeance (usually because of the abduction of a wife or as part of a blood feud), does not concern the community, but repeated murders do (Ember et. al. 2007: 432). The killing of an individual is the most extreme action a community can take- we call it *capital punishment*. The community as a whole or a political official or a court may decide to impose such punishment, but capital punishment seems to exist nearly in all societies, from the simple to the most complex. It is often assumed that capital punishment deters crime. If it did, we would expect the abolition of capital punishment to be followed by an increase in homicide rates. But that does not seem to happen. A cross-national study indicated that the abolition of capital punishment tends to be followed by a *decrease* in homicide rates.

4.5.4 Negotiation and Mediation

In many conflicts, the parties to a dispute may come to a settlement themselves by **negotiation**. There aren't necessarily any rules for how they will do so, but any solution is "good" if it restores peace. Sometimes an outsider or third party is used to help bring about a settlement between the disputants. We call it **mediation** when the outside party tries to help bring about a settlement, but that third party does not have the formal authority to force a settlement. Both negotiation and mediation are likely when the society is relatively egalitarian and it is important for people to get along.

4.5.5 Ritual Reconciliation-Apology

The desire to restore a harmonious relationship may also explain ceremonial apologies. An apology is based on deference- the guilty party shows obeisance and asks for forgiveness. Such ceremonies tend to occur in chiefdoms. Among the Fijians of the South Pacific, there is a strong ethic of harmony and mutual assistance, particularly within a village. When a person offends some one of higher status, the offended person and other villagers begin to avoid, and gossip about, the offender. If the offender is sensitive to village opinion, he or she will perform a ceremony of apology called *soro*. One of the meanings of *soro* is "surrender". In the ceremony the offender keeps her or his head bowed and remains silent while intermediary speaks, presents a token gift, and asks the offended person for forgiveness (Ember, 1993:241).

4.5.6 Oaths and Ordeals

Still another way of peacefully resolving disputes is through oaths and ordeals, both of which involve appeals to supernatural power. An **oath** is the act of calling upon a deity to bear witness to the truth of what one says. An ordeal is a means used to determine guilt or innocence by submitting the accused to dangerous or painful tests believed to be supernatural control (Ember, 1993:241).

4.5.7 Violent Resolutions of Conflict

People are likely to resort to violence when regular, effective alternative means of resolving a conflict are not available. Some societies consider violence between individuals to be appropriate under certain circumstances; which we generally do not consider, and call it **crime**. When violence occurs between political entities such as communities, districts, or nations, we call it **warfare**. The type of warfare, of course, varies in scope and complexity from society to society. Sometimes a distinction is made among feuding, raiding, and large-scale confrontations (Ember et. al. 2007:435).

4.5.8 Individual Violence

Although at first it may seem paradoxical, violent behaviour itself is often used to control behaviour. In some societies it is considered necessary for parents to beat children who misbehave. They consider this punishment and not criminal behaviour or child abuse. Violence between adults can be similarly viewed. If a person trespasses on one's property or hurts someone, some societies consider it appropriate or justified to kill or maim the trespasser. Is this social control, or is it just lack of control? Most societies have norms about when such "punishment" is or is not appropriate, so the behaviour of anyone who contemplates doing something wrong, as well as the behaviour of the person wronged, is likely to be influenced by the "laws" of their society (Ember et. al. 2007: 436)

4.5.9 Feuding

Feuding is an example of how individual self-help may not lead to a peaceful resolution of conflict. **Feuding** is a state of recurring hostilities between families or groups of kin, usually motivated by a desire to avenge an offense- whether insult, injury, deprivation, or death- against a member of the group. The most common characteristic of the feud is that responsibility to avenge is carried by all members of the kin group. The killing of any member of the offender's group is considered an appropriate revenge, because the kin group as a whole is regarded as responsible. Nicholas Gubser told of a feud within a Nunamiut Inuit community, caused by a husband's killing of his wife's lover that lasted for decades. Feuds are by no means limited to small-scale societies; they occur as frequently in societies with high levels of political organisation (Ember et. al 2007: 436).

4.5.10 Raiding

Raiding is a short-term use of force, planned and organised, to realise a limited objective. This objective is usually the acquisition of goods, animals, or other forms of wealth belonging to another, often neighboring community. Raiding is prevalent in pastoral societies, in which, cattle, horses, camels, or other animals are prized and an individual's own herd can be augmented by theft. Raids are often organised by temporary leaders or coordinators whose authority may not last beyond planning and execution of the venture. Raiding may also be organised for the purpose of capturing persons either to marry or to keep as concubines or as slaves. Slavery has been practiced in about 33 percent of the world's known societies, and war has been one way of obtaining slaves either to keep or to trade for other goods (ibid).

4.5.11 Large-scale Confrontations

Both feuding and raiding usually involve relatively small numbers of the persons

and almost always an element of surprise. Because they are generally attacked without warning, the victims are often unable to muster an immediate defense. Large-scale confrontations, in contrast, involve a large number of persons and planning by both sides of strategies of attack and defense. Large-scale warfare is usually practiced among societies with intensive agriculture or industrialisation. Only these societies possess a technology sufficiently advanced to support specialised armies, military leaders, strategies, and so on (Ember, 1993: 494).

4.6 DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES

As Ember (1993, 2007) states when one thinks of economies, we think of things and activities involving money. We think of the costs of goods and services, such as food, rent, haircuts, and movie tickets. We may also think of factories, farms, and other enterprises that produce the goods and services we need, or think we need. All societies have customs specifying how people gain accesses to natural resources; customary ways of transforming or converting those resources, through labour, into necessities and other desired goods and services; and customs for distributing and perhaps exchanging goods and services.

4.6.1 The Allocation of Resources

Herein, we would not go into much depth as this part has been discussed in length in the earlier unit. Thus, a quick recapitulation will be done through an activity. If help is required please refer to the earlier unit.

Activity

Enumerate with examples how the allocation of resources varies between the a) food collectors, b) horticulturalists and c) pastoralists.

4.6.2 The Conversion of Resources

In all societies, resources have to be transformed or converted through labour into food, tools and other goods. These activities constitute what economists call production. In this section, after briefly reviewing different types of production, we examine what motivates people to work, how societies divide up the work to be done, and how they organise work. As we shall see, some aspects of the conversion of natural resources are culturally universal, but there is also an enormous amount of cultural variation (Ember et. al 2007: 307).

4.6.3 Types of Economic Production

Most societies that anthropologists study had domestic – family or kinship based – mode of production. People laboured to get food and to produce shelter and implements for themselves and their kin. Usually families had the right to exploit productive resources and control the products of their labour. Even part-time specialists, such as potters, could still support themselves without that craft if they needed to. At the other extreme are industrial societies, where much of the work is based on mechanised production, as in factories and mechanised agriculture. Because machines and materials are costly, only some individuals (capitalists), corporations, or governments can afford the expenses of production. Therefore, most people in industrial societies work for others as wage earners. Although wages can buy food, people out of work lose their ability to support themselves, unless they are protected by welfare payments or unemployment insurance. Then there is the tributary type of production system, found in non-industrial societies

in which most people still produce their own food but an elite or aristocracy controls a portion of production (including the products of specialised crafts). The feudal societies of medieval Western Europe were examples of tributary production, as was czarist Russia under serfdom (Ember et. al, 2007:307).

4.7 SUMMARY

The main functions of political organisation in simple societies are maintaining social order, promote resolutions for conflicts, to fulfill these functions it has to be organised and should have hierarchical society to give head position to one, whom the rest of the dwellers of that particular society will obey. However, the modern political system has become a threat for the sustenance of the traditional political system. Being dominant the modern political system is attracting the attention of many people in the simple societies. But traditional political system has not become extinct, though there is a possibility that they too might become extinct. When we talk about traditional economic system of simple societies we observe the exchange of goods and services not the money that is being transacted as in modern economic system and in market. These exchanges in simple societies are not merely the exchanges of goods and services but it is to maintain the human relations by the exchanges especially to strengthen the kin relations and inter tribe relations. But again modern market which has more monetary interest rather than maintaining human relations has become a threat to traditional economic system.

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Suggested Reading

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Sample Questions

- 1) Briefly discuss the different types of political organisations and its main features in human society?
- 2) Examine the various forms of punishment and conflict resolution mechanism practiced in human society?
- 3) Write an essay on distribution of goods and services in simple society?