People Without Government

Brian Morris

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Contents

sociated with horticultural societies that lack the plough, in which one finds developed political systems in the form of chiefdoms, and where there is what Poewe (1981) described as a complementary dualism between men and women. In these situations, subsistence agriculture is the domain of women, and men are actively engaged in hunting and trade. Given their dominance in the subsistence sphere, women are not necessarily excluded from the public domain, and may be actively involved in public rituals and political decision making. All the classical matrilineal societies that have been described by anthropologists essentially follow this pattern — the Bemba, Yao and Luapula of Central Africa, the Trobriand Islanders, the Ashanti of Ghana, the Iroquois and Ojibwa of North America. All express a high degree of gender equality, sexuality is positively valued, and there is an emphasis on sharing and reciprocity, but significantly there is little evidence of "mother goddess" cults. Such cults are bound up with the state and hierarchy, which is why they continued to flourish as an intrinsic part of Latin Christianity and Hinduism. There seems indeed to be a close correlation, as Harris suggests, between gender equality, matrilineal kinship, and the emergence of chiefdoms among horticultural societies.

Gender equality with regard to property, as in Egypt, may well have been restricted to the political elite; but in any case it co-existed, as Biehl points out, with an extremely hierarchical social structure focused around the pharaoh and a vast theocracy. The expansionist warfare, capital punishment, and ritual sacrifices that were characteristic of most of these theocratic states — both in the Fertile Crescent and in the Americas — is generally overlooked or even dismissed by ecofeminist scholars. In the same way, Diop is an apologist for African states and the caste system as a form of social organisation.

Matriarchy has two distinct foci of meaning, which Bachofen tended to conflate. One is its connection with ch- thonic deities that associate the earth with motherhood; the other is with matrilineal kinship, which is a social group or category whose membership is determined by links through the female line. In social terms, the two meanings are not coterminous, for whereas mother goddess cults are associated with theocratic states and advanced agriculture, matrilineal kinship is associated with horticultural societies that lack both domestic animals and plough agriculture. Out of 564 societies recorded in the *World- Ethnographic Survey*, David Aberle found only 84 (15%) where matriliny was the predominant form of kinship. He thus thought matriliny a "relatively rare phenomenon" (1964: 663). Contrary to Diop's theory, matrilineal kinship is found throughout the world, but it is mainly found among horticultural societies that have developed chiefdoms. It is not found where there is intensive agriculture, nor generally among pastoralists, nor where state structures have developed — for patriarchy is intrinsically bound up with the state. Bachofen was of the belief that matriarchy was "fully consonant" with a situation where hunting, trade, and external raiding filled the life of men, keeping them for long periods away from women, who thus became primarily responsible for the household and for agriculture. Thus one may conclude that matriliny — but not mother goddess cults — seems to be particularly as-

1. Two Images of Humans

Western social science and eco-philosophy are perennially torn between two contradictory images of the human species. One, associated with Thomas Hobbes (1651), sees human social life as a "war against all," and human nature as essentially possessive, individualistic, egotistic and aggressive, it is a basic tenet of the "possessive individualism" of liberal political theory (MacPherson 1962).The other, associated with Rousseau, depicts human nature in terms of the "noble savage" — of the human species as good, rational, and angelic, requiring only a good and rational society in order to develop their essential nature (Lukes 1967: 144–45). Both these ideas are still current and have their contemporary exemplars. In the writing of many ecofeminists and Afrocentric scholars, a past Golden Age is portrayed — in which peaceful social relations, gender equality, and a harmony with nature were the rule — before the rise respectively of bronze age culture and colonialism (Eisler 1987, Diop 1989). Both these images share a similar theoretical paradigm which sees human relations as solely "determined by some natural state of human beings" (Robarchek 1989: 31). The contributors of the volume *Societies at Peace* (Howell and Willis 1989) all eschew, along with Robarchek, this biological determinism, and emphasise an approach that dispenses with "universalistic definitions," suggesting that human behaviour is never culturally neutral, but always embedded in a shared set of meanings. Yet they argue strongly that "sociability" is an inherent capacity of the human species, and all the essays tend towards the tradition of Rousseau. But countering biological and deterministic approaches to culture should not lead us to endorse an equally one-sided cultural (or linguistic) determinism that completely oblates biology.

2. What is Politics?

Anthropologists' past contribution to political science focuses specifically on two important fields. One is in outlining the politics of societies without centralised governments; studies by Malinowski on the Trobriand Islands and Evans-Pritchard on the Nuer have become classics. The other is in the analysis of micro-politics, particularly of political leadership, village politics, and the relationship between politics and symbolism (Bailey 1969, A Cohen 1974).

Order and power are intrinsic to social life. A human society has, by definition, both order and structure, and operates with regularised and relatively fixed modes of behaviour. Humans without society are not human, for society is basic to the human condition, as Marx long ago insisted (see also Carrithers 1992). So is power.

Power is a relationship, and implies the ability to get others to do what you want them to do. Power may mean influence — convincing others by monetary rewards, by logical argument, or by the prestige of one's status. Or it may mean coercion — the implied or overt threat of injury. But power is intrinsic to any social group. The question for anarchists, therefore, is not whether there should be order or structure, but rather, what kind of social order there should be, and what its sources ought to be. Equally, anarchists are not Utopians who wish to abolish power, for they recognise that power is intrinsic to the human condition. As Bakunin expressed it:

> All men possess a natural instinct for power which has its origin in the basic law of life enjoining every individual to wage a ceaseless struggle in order to insure his existence or to assert his rights. (Maximoff 1953: 248)

What anarchists strive for is not the abolition of power but its diffusion, its balance, so that ideally it is equally distributed

exist — as for the ancient Egyptians and the Inca — who incarnate deities associated with the sun, that the earth is deified, and motherhood ritually.emphasised. For it was precisely among such theocratic societies based on intensive agriculture that there was a necessary emphasis on the land and on the reproduction of the labour force. Neither Babylon nor Egypt was an egalitarian paradise to the nomadic Hebrew pastoralists, but both were places where they were enslaved and subject to forced labour. In an important sense, then, the deification of the earth as female and the emphasis on fertility — both of the land and of women — is a central tenet not of matrilineal societies like the Iroquois but of the patriarchal ideology of theocratic states. This ideology was clearly expressed in the writings of Francis Bacon, who identified women with nature, and advocated the knowledge and domination of both. Sherry Ortner ("Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" 1974), suggests an explanation for supposedly universal male dominance (patriarchy) by linking such dominance to an ideology that equates women with nature. For Ortner, then, mother goddess cults are a reflection of patriarchy, not of a matricentric culture. One feminist anthropologist has indeed argued that the myth of matriarchy" is a fiction, and is used as a tool to keep woman "bound to her place" (Bamberger 1974).

When we thus examine the early theocratic states of Crete and Egypt, which are alleged to be matricentric paradises that exhibited gender equality and a peaceful social environment, what do we find? According to Janet Biehl (1991) what we find are highly developed bronze-age civilisations which, like theocratic states, were hierarchical, exploitative, and oppressive. The theory of Gimbutas — that hierarchy emerged when a group of pure pastoralists arrived out of the Eurasian steppe and conquered pristine neolithic farmers — is a naive simplification of European history, and scholars like Renfrew and Mallory would seem to agree. (Biehl 1991: 43, Renfrew 1987: 95–97, Mallory 1989:183–5)

female, still less of the whole universe. Equally, although there is a matrifocal emphasis among many hunter-gatherers (Morris 1982) there is little emphasis on descent groups, and the key social groups are the family and band. Kin groups may have salience for ritual or marriage purposes, and may have totemic significance, but often, as with the Australian Aboriginals, these are as likely to be patrilineal as matrilineal. Among small-scale horticulturists in Melanesia and Amazonia, as we noted above, patrilineal kinship has ideological stress, raiding and homicide are endemic, and male initiation put a focal emphasis on the training of young boys to be fierce warriors and to dominate women. Mary Mellor (1992: 141–150) has drawn on this ethnographic material to question the assumption that clan-based societies are necessarily peaceful, or exhibit gender equality. Even matriliny, she remarked, was "no guarantee against male violence" (47).

There is an unwarranted assumption among many feminist scholars that matrilineal kinship, gender equality, and mother goddess cults go together, and necessarily entail each other. What is of interest is that cults focused on the mother goddess and on the earth mother find their richest elaboration not among hunter-gatherers, nor among small-scale horticulturists, nor indeed among societies that have a focal emphasis on matrilineal kinship — like the Iroquois and Bemba — but rather among theocratic states based on advanced agriculture, as Bachofen suggested.

In an important survey of politics and gender among hunter-gatherers and small-scale horticulturists, Collier and Rosaldo (1981), much to their surprise, found little ritual celebration of women as nurturers nor of women's unique capacity to give birth. Motherhood always formed a natural source of emotional satisfaction among women, and was culturally valued, but among such people fertility was not emphasised, and the deification of the mother as source of all life was generally absent. It is where there are complex states, where divine rulers

(Barclay 1982: 16–18). The notion that anarchists endorse unlimited freedom, as Andrew Heywood suggests (1994: 198) is a serious misunderstanding of anarchism. Anarchism does not imply license; rather it repudiates coercive power.

Authority, as Weber long ago explored (1947), is power that is considered legitimate by members of a community. But, as Barclay stresses, such legitimacy may be more in terms of "tacit acquiescence" rather than in the unconditional acceptance of power, and, citing Morton Fried, he notes that legitimacy is the means by which ideology is harnessed to support power structures.

The function of legitimacy is "to explain and justify the existence of concentrated social power wielded by a portion of the community and to offer similar support to specific social orders, that is, specific ways of apportioning and directing the flow of social power" (Fried 1967: 26). All human societies, therefore, have political systems, but not all have government, for the latter is but one form of political organisation.

In the preface to the classic survey *African Political Systems* (1940), A.R. Radcliffe Brown defines political organisation as "maintenance or establishment of social order, within a territorial framework, by the organised exercise of coercive authority through the use, or the possibility of use, of physical force" (xiv). He went on to suggest that the political organisation of a society "is that aspect of the total organisation which is concerned with the control and regulation of the use of force"(xxiii).

Such a definition, which is clearly derived from Weber in its dual stress on territory and coercive force, essentially refers to government, and is thus too limiting as a definition of politics. Weber had defined power *macht*\ as the "probability that one actor within a social relation will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance," and defined a group as political "if and in so far as the enforcement of its order is carried out

continuously within a given *territorial* area by the application and threat of physical force" (1947:152–54).

Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, in their introduction to *African Political Systems*, found such definitions of politics too restrictive, and noted that ethnographers who, like themselves, studied such societies as the Nuer and Tallensi — societies which lacked centralised authority — were forced to consider "what, in the absence of explicit forms of government, could be held to constitute the political structure of the people" (1940: 6). In the study a simple division is made between two main categories of political system, those societies having centralised systems of authority — that is, having a government or state (societies such as the Bemba or Zulu), and those societies which lack centralised authority, such as hunter-gatherers and the aforementioned Tallensi and Nuer.

Although acknowledging that there is an intrinsic connection between people's culture and their social organisation, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard emphasise that these two components of social life must neither be confused nor conflated. They note that culture and type of political system vary independently of one another, and that there is no simple relation between modes of subsistence and a societies' political structure. But they acknowledge that, in a general sense, modes of livelihood determine the dominant values of a people and strongly influence their social organizations, including their political systems. They suggest that wide divergencies in culture and economic pursuit may be incompatible with what they describe as a "segmentary political system," characteristic of the Nuer, Tallensi and the Logoli. In the latter system there is no administrative organisation or government, and the local community, not the state, is the key territorial unit. Membership in the local community they suggest, is acquired as a rule through genealogical ties, whether real or fictitious, and they write:

by the chalice, the drinking cup. This Golden Age of female-oriented society that existed in "old Europe" (which Diop had argued was based on pas- toralism and patriarchy) was either slowly transformed, or suddenly shattered — according to the archaeologist Marija Gimbutas (1974) — by marauding pastoralists migrating from the Asian steppes around 4000BC, or patriarchy was facilitated by the rise of a military dictatorship, as in Babylon and Egypt (as Sjoo and Mor contend, 1987; 253). Both theories contend that European neolithic culture was radically transformed from a peaceful, sedentary, egalitarian, matrilineal society to one based on patriarchy. There was a "patriarchal shift" in old Europe, and the patriarchal society that emerged was based on pastoralism, with its warrior ethic. Its socio-cultural correlates were: the worship of male sky gods, the desacralisa- tion of the natural world, and an attitude of domination towards nature, gender and social hierarchy, private property, and the state. In this process the mother goddess cults were suppressed. This transition, according to Eisler, represents a "cataclysmic turning point" in European history, and the new patriarchal culture that emerged is symbolised by the blade. A society based on partnership between men and women gave way to one based on domination — including the domination of women by men. Eisler presents this as a new theory of cultural evolution. But it is hardly new: it is a Euro-centric restatement of the theory of Bachofen and Engels. Yet when we examine the ethnographic record concerning the religion of hunter- gatherers, or even some small-scale horticultural societies, neither matrilineal kinship nor mother goddess cults loom large. The religious ideology of the Khoisan hunter-gatherers of Southern Africa and of the Australian Aborigines hardly offers much support for the universality of mother goddess forms of spirituality. Although there is a close identification with the natural world, particularly with animals (through totemic spirits) or through spirits of the dead, there is little evidence among foragers of the deification of the earth itself as

- religion based on male deities

- gender hierarchy and domination

- sexual jealousy

- control over nature

- nuclear family

- private property

- individualism

- linear conception of time

- greed and violence

- BLADE

What is of interest, however, is that although Diop equated matriarchy with Black Africa, many classical scholars seem to follow their Victorian forebears in conflating race, culture, and language — contemporary ecofeminists see the historical dialectic between the two social systems as occurring within the European context itself. Sjoo and Mors account of the "ancient religion" of the mother goddess largely focuses on Europe and on the cultures of classical antiquity — Egypt, Greece, Crete, and Sumeria. Riane Eisler's theory of cultural evolution, expressed in *The Chalice and the Blade* (1987), focuses almost entirely on the European context and makes no mention of Africa at all. Eisler's thesis is fairly straightforward and represents an elaboration and popularisation of ideas put forward long ago by Bachofen. This suggests that the cultures of old or ancient Europe were based on settled agriculture, were matrifocal, peaceful, ecocentric and focused on mother goddess cults that emphasised the life-generating and nurturing powers of the universe. Gender equality was the norm. It was symbolised

The lineage principle takes the place of political allegiance, and the interrelations of territorial segments are directly co-ordinated with the interrelation's lineage segments. (11)

The simple equation of politics with hierarchy and coercive power was also challenged by Pierre Clastres in his classic study *Society against the State* (1977). Like Barclay, Clastres belongs to a long anarchist tradition that goes back to the end of the Eighteenth century. The study is focused on the "leader as servant and the human uses of power among the Indians of the Americas." The book is appropriately entitled *Society against the State*, for, like Tom Paine and the early anarchists, Clastres makes a clear and unambiguous distinction between society and the state, and suggests that the essence of anarchic societies, whether hunter-gatherers or early Neolithic peoples, is that effective means are institutionalised to prevent power being separated from social life.

The classical definition of political power in the Western intellectual tradition, evident in the writings of Nietzsche and Weber, as well as those by anthropologists, put a fundamental emphasis on control and domination. Power is always manifested within "a relationship that ultimately comes down to coercion...the truth and reality of power consists of violence" (1977: 4). The Western model of political power, which stems from the beginning of Western civilisation, tends to see power in terms of "hierarchized and authoritarian relations of command and obedience" (9). Such a viewpoint, Clastres argues, is ethnocentric, and immediately leads to puzzlement by ethnologists when they confront societies without a state, or without any centralised agencies. Such societies are conceptualized as *missing something*, as incomplete, as lacking...a state. In social contexts where there is neither coercion nor violence, is it then possible to speak of political power? Scholars have thus been led to describe power in the Trobriand Islanders or such

societies as the Nilotic people of the Sudan as being "embryonic" or "nascent" or as "undeveloped." History is then seen as a one-way street, with Western culture as the image of what "societies without power will eventually become." But Clastres contends that there are no human societies without power. What we have is not a division between societies with power and societies without power (stateless societies) — for "political power is universal, immanent to social reality" (14) — but rather a situation in which power manifests itself in two modes — coercive and non-coercive. Political power is thus inherent in social life; coercive power is only a particular type of power.

Clastres notes how the first European explorers to South America were bemused and bewildered in describing the political life of the Tupinamba Indians — "people without god, law or king" — but felt at home in the hierarchic states of the Aztecs and Incas, with their coercive and hierarchic political systems. For Clastres, then, political power as coercion or violence is the stamp of *historical* societies, and it is the political domain itself which constitutes the first motor of social change.

In examining the philosophy of the Indian chieftainship, Clastres argues that the chiefs lacked any real authority, and that most Indian communities of South America, apart from the Incas, were distinguished by "their sense of democracy and force for equality" (20). Reviewing the ethnographic literature, Clastres suggests that four traits distinguished the chief among the forest tribes of South America. Firstly, the chief was a peace-maker, responsible for maintaining peace and harmony within the group, though lacking coercive power. His function was that of pacification, and only in exceptional circumstances, when the community faced external threat, was the model of coercive power adopted. Secondly, the chief must be generous with his possessions; as Clastres quotes from Francis Huxley's study of the Urubu, you can always recognise a chief by the fact that he has the fewest possessions and wears the shabbiest ornaments (22). Thirdly, a talent for oratory, Clastres suggests,

Aware, however, that there seems to be no historical evidence for matriarchy, feminist scholars have used terms like "communal matrifocal systems" or "matristic" to describe the more or less egalitarian communities that existed in the Palaeolithic (hunter-gathering) and Neolithic (agriculture) periods. Generally speaking, ecofeminists have tended to ignore anthropology, and have focused more on archaeology and classical studies, especially on mythology. They, like Diop, present us with a highly simplistic bipolar conception of human history. The latter is described in terms of an opposition between ancient matriarchies and a patriarchal system centred on men. We have the same kind of gnostic dualism that Diop presented in his postulate of two cradles of humanity. Sjoo and Mor (1987) cogently outline this dualism, and it may be summarised as follows:

Ancient matriarchies

- religion based on deities associated with mother/earth

- gender equality partnership

- no sexual jealousy

- harmony with nature

- matrifocal kin group

- communalism

- holism

- cyclic conception of time

- nurting

- CHALICE

Modern Patriarchy

anthropology, Diop's work hardly captures the complexity of the history and culture of either Africa or Eurasia.

But here I want to focus on the writings of some eco- feminists, especially those who espouse the "wisdom of goddess spirituality" (Spretnak 1991).

Whereas early classical scholars, like Bachofen, Harrison, and Murray, saw chthonic deities as co-existing with male deities associated with the sun or sky — Ra, Apollo, Zeus, Amun — and implied that the latter deities came to have primacy only with the development of patriarchy and state structures, many ecofeminists now see the goddess as a Cosmic Mother, a universal deity existent in all cultures prior to patriarchy. The male deities seem to be identified not with state structures — mother goddess cults find their apotheosis in the theocratic states of Egypt and Crete — but with a later period of history with the emergence of imperial states and/or capitalism. Mother goddess cults are thus seen as a universal phenomenon, an expression of ancient women's cultures that once existed everywhere (Sjoo and Mor 1987:27).

While the proponents of the hunting hypothesis, like Ardrey (1976), suggest that all aspects of human life — language, intelligence, sociality, and culture — are derived from the hunting way of life, ecofeminists suggest the exact antithesis of this, and that cultural life is essentially the creation of women. As Sjoo and Mor proclaim, "women created most of early human culture" (1987: 33). To refute hunting proponents and these ecofeminists, it is probable that most basic life-tasks were shared, and thus human culture is the creation of both men and women.

Contrary to Bachofen, who emphasised the "materiality" of matriarchy — based as it was on organic life — and thus associated spirituality with patriarchy, contemporary ecofeminists reverse this distinction and loudly proclaim the spirituality of matriarchy.

is both a condition and an instrument of political power, such oratory being focused upon the fundamental need of honesty, peace, and harmony within a community. Fourthly, in most South American societies, polygamous marriage is closely associated with chiefly power, and it is usually the chief s prerogative, although successful hunters may also have polygamous marriages. As polygamy is found among both the nomadic Guayaki and Siriono, hunter-gatherers in which the band rarely numbers more than 30 persons, and among sedentary farmers like the Guarani and Tupinamba, whose villages often contain several hundred people, polygamy is not an institution that is linked to demography, but is rather linked to the political institution of power.

All these traits are fundamental expressions of what constitutes the basic fabric of archaic society, namely that of exchange. Coercive power, Clastres suggests, is a negation of this reciprocity. Accepting Murdock's contention that the atavism and aggressiveness of tribal communities has been grossly exaggerated, Clastres highlights the importance of marriage alliances, especially cross — cousin marriages, in establishing multi-community structures. He refers to these as "polydemic structures" (53). He also emphasises that among the Guayaki (Ache) foragers there is a fundamental opposition between men and women, whose economic activities form two separate but complementary domains, the men hunting and the women gathering. Two styles of existence are thus seen to emerge, focused on the cultural opposition between the bow (for hunting) and the basket (for carrying), which evokes specific reciprocal prohibitions. Importantly, for the Guayaki hunter, there is a basic taboo that categorically forbids him from partaking of the meat from his own kill. This taboo, Clastres suggests, is the founding act of an exchange of food which constitutes the basis of Guayaki society.

Clastres emphasises the fact that a subsistence economy did not imply an endless struggle against starvation but rather an

abundance and variety of things to eat, and that, as with the Kalahari hunter-gatherers, only three or four hours were spent each day in basic subsistence tasks — as work. These communities were essentially egalitarian, and people had a high degree of control over their own lives and their work activities. He argues that the decisive break between archaic and historical societies was not the neolithic revolution, and the advent of agriculture, but rather stems from a "political revolution," the emergence of the state. The intensification of agriculture implies the imposition, on a community, of external violence. But such a state apparatus is not derived, Clastres argues, from the institution of chieftainship, for in archaic societies the chief "has no authority at his disposal, no power of coercion, no means of giving an order" (174). Chieftainship thus does not involve the functions of authority. Where then does political power come from? Clastres tentatively suggests that the origins of the state may derive from religious prophets, and concludes by noting that while the history of historical society may be the history of class struggle, for people without history it is "the history of their struggle against the state" (186).

The key point of Clastres' analysis, later confirmed by John Gledhill (1994: 13–15), is that it provides a critique of western political theory which tends to identify political power with violence and coercion, as well as highlighting an important lesson to be derived from anthropology, namely that it is possible for societies to be organised without any division between riders and theuruled, between oppressors and the oppressed. It also suggests that we look at history not in terms of typologies, but rather as an historical process where, within specific regions, societies with states have co-existed with stateless populations .which have endeavoured to maintain their own autonomy and to resist the centralising intrusions and exploitation inherent in the state; (Gledhill 1994:15). It is also worth noting that anarchists have always made a distinction, long be-

it, from matriarchy to patriarchy is thus seen by him as an important turning point in the history of gender relations (109).

The writings of Bachofen have had an enormous influence. Engels considered his discovery of matrilineal kinship — the original "mother-right gens" — as a crucial stage in human evolution; as on par with Darwin's theories in biology. In an often quoted phrase Engels suggested "the overthrow of mother right was the world historic defeat of the female sex" (1968: 488). Feminist anthropologists who have been influenced by Engels — such as Reed, Leacock, and Sacks — have thus strongly argued against the idea that the subordination of women is universal. They suggest that women have been significant producers in virtually all human societies, and that in many societies — particularly matrilineal societies — women have shared power and authority with men. Their activities were not necessarily devalued, and women often had a good deal of social autonomy, that is, they had decision-making power over their own lives and activities (Sacks 1979: 65–95; Leacock 1981:134).

Anthropological and historical studies in recent decades have indicated the complexity and diversity of human cultures, and have posed the question of whether matriarchy (however conceived) can be viewed simply as a cultural stage in the evolution of human societies. Yet in various ways Bachofen's bipolar conception of human history still has currency. For example, Bachofen has an unmistakable presence in the writings of the Senegalese scholar Cheikh Anta Diop (1989), though Diop gives Bachofen's thesis a strange twist — giving it a geographical and racialist interpretation. Thus matriarchy is seen as having flourished only in the South (Africa), and has, as its correlates, a settled agrarian way of life, a territorial state, gender equality, burial of the dead, and an ethic of social collectivism. Patriarchy in Africa is linked to the intrusions of Islam. For all his scholarship, and his attempt to provide a more authentic

5. Matriliny and Mother Goddess Religion

Matriarchy as an original form of social organisation was a central doctrine of many early anthropologists. The writings of Jacob Bachofen (1967) on classical mythology and religion were particularly influential. Bachofen suggested that "all civilisation and culture are essentially grounded in the establishment and adornment of the hearth," and that matriarchy was an intermediate cultural stage in the development of human society, between hunter-gathering and the rise of the city-state. It was associated with the development of agriculture, mother-right (which did not necessarily imply the political domination of women), reciprocal rather than a Promethean attitude towards nature, and a religious system that emphasised humanity's dependence on the earth. But although Bachofen suggested that at this stage of human evolution women were "the repository of all culture," he also emphasised that in all the classical civilizations — Egypt, Greece, Rome — an intrinsic relationship existed between phallic gods like Osiris (associated with water as a fecundating element) and female deities like Isis, who were equated with the earth, even though the latter were given more prominence. Whenever we encounter matriarchy, Bachofen writes, we find it bound up with "chtho- nian religions,"focused around female deities (88). He also makes the interesting observation that whereas the tran-sience of material life goes hand in hand with matrilineal kinship, father-right is bound up with the immortality of a supramaterial life belonging to the "regions of light". With the development of patriarchy in the classical civilisations of Egypt and Greece, "the creative principle is dissociated from earthly matter", and comes to be associated with such deities as the Olympian gods" (129). With the "triumph of paternity," humans are seen as breaking the "bonds of tel- lurism" (earthly life), and spiritual life rises over "corporeal existence." The "progress," as Bachofen views

fore Deleuze, between organisation and order imposed from above.

3. Societies without Government

An important tradition within anthropology has been to interpret the political systems of non-capitalist societies in terms of typologies that are essentially taxonomic and descriptive. Following the earlier neo-evolutionary approach to politics, associated with Service (1962) and Fried (1967), Lewellen (1992) has suggested four types of political systems, based on their mode of political integration.

The band-type of political organisation is characteristic of hunter-gathering societies like the !Kung of the Kalahari, the Inuit of Northern Canada, and the Mbuti of Zaire, as well as of all prehistoric foragers.

Tribes Although Lewellen notes the problematic nature of the concept of "tribe," he advocates the use of the term on both logical and empirical grounds. In evolutionary terms there must be some political term that is midway between the band level of political organisation associated with hunter-gatherers, and centralised political systems. Cross cultural systems also reveal certain features which tribal societies have in common, although they also show wide variations with respect to the existence of age-sets, pan-tribal sodalities, and ritual associations. Lewellen outlines the political in three tribal contexts, that of the Kpelle, the Yanomamo, and the Nuer, and also considers the Iroquois as examples of this type of political system.

Chiefdoms transcend the tribal level in having some form of centralised system and a higher population density made possible by more efficient productivity. There may be a ranked political system, but no real class differentiation. Lewellen describes the Kwakiutl and pre-colonial Hawaiians as being typical chiefdoms.

Finally, there is the *state-level* of political integration, which implies specialised institutions and centralised authority in order to maintain, through coercive force, differential access to resources. The key feature of the state is its permanence. Lewellen gives a descriptive outline of the pre-colonial Inca and Zulu states.

4. Three Contexts of Politics

In an important review of the literature, Marvin Harris (1993) emphasises the salience of bio-sexual differences in the understanding of gender hierarchy in human societies. The basic differences between men and women, in terms of stature, musculature, and reproductive physiology, provides, he suggests, a "starting point" in attempting to understand gender. Cultural determinism therefore does not counsel us to ignore biology, and nor does the emphasis on biological difference imply a simple biological determinism such that "anatomy is destiny."

Such biological differences, Harris suggests, are clearly related to one of the most ubiquitous features of early human societies — both contemporary hunter-gatherers and prehistoric foragers — namely the division of labour by sex. With few exceptions, such as that of the Agta of Luzan — where women hunt wild pigs and deer with knives and bows and arrows (cf. Dahlberg 1981) — among hunter-gatherer societies men are the primary hunters of large game. They thus become specialists in the making of hunting weapons, such as bows and arrows, spears, harpoons, boomerangs and clubs — weapons that could also be used to injure or kill other humans. But the association of men with hunting, and with the control of weapons, did not necessarily entail gender hierarchy. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that among many foragers (and some subsistence cultivators) the sexual division of labour is com-

to do with their feminine nature: there is plenty of evidence of women's involvement elsewhere in armed combat, and of them being enthusiastic supporters of war and torture. "It was lack of power and not lack of masculinity," Harris writes, that prevented women in pre-industrial societies setting up matriarchal systems (1993: 69).

In *Cannibals and Kings* (1977: 92–93), Harris suggests that matrilineal forms of organisation were a short-lived phase in the development of primitive states. He writes:

> Matrilocality being a recurrent method of transcending the limited capacity of patrilineal village groups to form multi-village military alliances, it seems likely that societies on the threshold of statehood would frequently adopt matrilineal forms of social organisation. (92)

He cites Robert Briffault and several of the classical authors to suggest that many early European and Asian states had exhibited a matrilineal phase, a context in which marriage was matrilocal, women had relatively high status, and a cult of female ancestors was found. But this phase, as said, was short-lived, and few states, ancient or modern, have matrilineal kinship systems. As he puts it, "With the rise of the state, women again lost status… the old male supremacy complex reassert(ed) itself in full force" (1977: 93).

Although matrilineal kinship has virtually ceased to be a topic of interest among anthropologists (cf Moore 1988, Ingold 1994), it has been of central concern to many Afrocentric scholars (Diop 1989) and ecofeminists, who have offered us lyrical accounts of a universal egalitarian matriarchy that existed prior to patriarchy and to the formation of the city-state, which is linked to the incursions of nomadic pastoralists from the Eurasian steppe. Given that matrilineal kinship is closely linked, as Harris suggests, with the rise of chieftains, I shall conclude this essay by critically discussing this literature.

Among hunter-gatherers, and such village-based, small scale horticulturists as the Yanomami, Semai, and Sambia, there is close correlation between the degree of internal warfare — armed raids — and the degree to which gender hierarchies develop, the degree that is, of male domination over women. But this correlation does not hold, Harris suggests, when we move to societies with a more complex political system, those constituting chiefdoms. Such chiefdoms typically engage in warfare with distant enemies, and this, he writes, "enhances rather than worsens the status of women since it results in avunculocal or matrilocal domestic organisations" (1991: 66).

In more complex, multi-village chiefdoms, where men undertake long sojourns for the purposes of hunting, trade, or warfare, matrilocality tends to prevail. In this context women assume control over the entire domestic spheres of life. External warfare is therefore associated, Harris suggests, with matrilineal kinship and a high degree of gender equality.

The classic example of this association of external warfare and gender equality — Harris puts an emphasis on warfare rather than on hunting or external trade — is that of the Iroquois. These matrilocal, matrilineal people resided in communal long houses whose activities were directed by senior women. The in-marrying husband had little control over domestic affairs, agriculture being largely in the hands of the women. The political system of the Iroquois consisted of a council of elders, of elected male chiefs from different villages. Senior women of the long houses nominated the members of this council, but they did not serve on the council. However, they could prevent the seating of any man they opposed, and by controlling the domestic economy had a great deal of influence over the council's decisions. In the public domain they thus possessed by indirect means almost as much influence as men (Brown 1975). However, this situation did not entail a matriarchal situation, Harris contends, for the women did not humiliate, exploit or harass their men. This however had little

plementary, and gender relations are essentially egalitarian, as Clastres implied. Also, in early human communities, scavenging and group hunting by all members of the community was probably widespread (Ehrenreich 1997). Harris cites the studies of Leacock (1983) among the Montagnais-Naskapi foragers of Labrador, Colin Turnbull's (1982) studies of the Mbuti of Zaire, and Shostak's (1981) biography of Nisa, a !Kung woman, to indicate that women in foraging societies have a high degree of autonomy, and that egalitarian relations between the sexes is the norm. But Harris deems that gender roles in foraging societies aren't completely complementary and egalitarian, for in their role as healers, and in the realm of public decision making, men often tend to have a significant edge over women in almost all foraging contexts (1993: 59). Although organised violence is not found among the IKung of the Kalahari, Harris argues that they are by no means the "peaceful paragons" as depicted by Elizabeth Marshall Thomas in her book *The Harmless People* (1958). Violent arguments frequenly occur, and homicide is not unknown.

Significantly, Richard Lee found that in 34 cases of interpersonal conflict over a five year period — half of which involved domestic dispute between spouses — it was the man who initiated the attack in the majority of cases, and of the 25 cases of homicide, though the victims were mainly men, all the killers were also men (Lee 1979: 453). Citing one comparative study (Hayden et al 1986), Harris suggests that where conditions entail the development of feuding among hunter-gatherers, then this correlates with an increased emphasis on male dominance — for then a warrior ethic and male aggressiveness is given cultural prominence.

Warfare is organised conflict involving teams of armed combatants; among the !Kung however, such warfare did not exist, and there was a virtual absence even of raiding. This is consonant with a situation where gender equality is the norm. Yet, as Harris suggests, many band societies engage in inter-group

warfare to varying degrees, and thus possess well-developed forms of gender hierarchy. He also cites the ethnographic accounts of the Australian aborigines, although also noting that in these societies women had a considerable degree of independence.

Besides an ethos of sharing, complementary gender rites, and a general level of gender equality among foraging societies (see Woodburn 1982, Kent 1993), there is also an important emphasis on consensus. This is clearly brought out in George Silberbauer's essay on the G/wi (1982).

The G/wi of the Central Kalahari, Botswana, were studied by Silberbauer between 1958–66, when they were still primarily autonomous hunters and gatherers. Since then, the region has been increasingly penetrated by Tswana and Kgalagadi pastoralists.

The social and political community of the G/wi is the band, which is conceptualised in terms of a group of people living in a specific territory and controlling the use of its resources. Membership of the band is primarily through kinship and marriage, but membership is open and not exclusive, so non-G/wi can become members. Within the band there is movement and flux, and a continuing pattern of separation and integration between the various householders that constitute it. This enables the local group to successfully exploit environmental resources. To do this, Silberbauer suggests, political processes must be "integrative without weakening inter-household dependence which would cripple the autonomy" of the household — for people's survival depends on this autonomy. Kinship, which has universalistic properties, is important in ordering relationships within the band.

Decisions affecting the band as a whole are arrived at through discussions, involving all adult members. Such discussions tend to be informal, and seldom take the form of set-piece public debates. Disputes and arguments are addressed in public, but these are done indirectly, as direct confrontation between

plore the socio-historical context of the Semai; encapsulated as they are within a wider economic system, they are people who have, through the centuries, been harassed and exploited by outsiders. Dependency has equal emphasis, and there are important moral imperatives to share food, and to avoid conflict and violence. Paramount emphasis is thus given to the values of nurturance, generosity, and group belonging. The protection and nurturance by the kin community is described as "the only refuge" in a hostile world — although the dangers are expressed by Robarchek in terms of a cultural image rather than as stemming from a political reality.

But this emphasis on sharing, dependency, and nonviolence co-exists with an equally important emphasis on individual autonomy. A sense of individuality, of personal autonomy, and of freedom from inter-personal constraints, is stressed from the earliest years of childhood — and at extremes this may entail for the Semai emotional isolation, fragility in marriage ties, and a lack of empathy towards others.

Other Asian forest people have been described as peaceful societies, and exemplify a similar cultural pattern to that of the Semai. In her account of the Chewong, for example, Signe Howell (1989) suggests that for these people, "To be angry is not to be human, but to be fearful is." On the basis of the ethnographic data, she questions whether aggression is an intrinsic part of human nature. Gibson, likewise, in his discussion of the Buid of the Philippines — also shifting cultivators like the Semai and Chewong — suggest that these people are a society "at peace," for they place a high moral value on tranquility, and a corresponding low value on "aggression." But Gibson sees these moral attitudes as the product of historical processes in which the Buid were consistently the victims of outside forces. Their culture cannot therefore be seen simply as an effect of innate psycho-biological capacities, nor in terms of their adaptation to the forest environment (1989: 76).

each territory has a politico-religious leader (Ruwang), but his authority is limited. Neither the community, as a collective, nor any individual, owns land: all products of the forest are shared equally among members of the household. Piaroa social life, according to Overing, is very unformalised, and a great emphasis is put on personal autonomy. They see great virtue in living peacefully, and in being tranquil, and their social life is free of most forms of physical violence. Coercion has no place in their social life, and any expression of violence is focused on outsiders. Gender relations are neither hierarchic nor antagonistic, and the ideal of social maturity is the same for both men and women — one of "controlled tranquility"(87).The portrait of Piaroa society thus accords with that suggested by Clastres.

The Semai people of Malaysia were the subject of an important early study by Dentan (1968) — who significantly described them as a "non-violent" people. In recent years they have been portrayed, Robarchek (1989) suggests, in terms of both the images that we earlier described — as both the quintessential noble savage, and as bloodthirsty killers. Robarchek, in his ethnographic account of these people, whose social life is seen as "relatively free of violence," steers between these two extremes, and sees the Semai as an example of a peaceful society — along with the Mbuti of the Ituri forest, the Kalahari bushmen, the Tahitians, the Inuit, and the Haluk (Turnbull 1961,Thomas 1958, Levy 1973, Briggs 1970, Spiro 1952). But the emphasis on non-violence does not necessarily imply a lack of egoism or individualism, and Robarchek suggests that among the Semai there is a psycho-cultural emphasis on individualism and autonomy, as well as on nonviolence, nurturance, and dependency — a theme I explored in my study of another Asian forest community, the Hill Pandaram (Morris 1982). The themes of danger and dependency, according to Robarchek, are ubiquitous in the Semai's social life. Danger is felt to be omnipresent — from the natural world, from spirits, and from outsiders. However, Robarchek does not ex-

opposing individuals is seen as a breach of etiquette. During the summer and autumn, joint camps are formed, but these are unstable groupings, and their composition is always based on a preference for one another's company. These groupings — or "cliques" as Silberbauer calls them — form an ephemeral segmentation of the band.

Leadership of the band is evident at all phases of decision making, which is initiated by someone identifying or communicating a problem that needs a resolution.

Leadership is apparent to the degree that someone's suggestion or opinion attracts public support, and it shifts according to context or relevant expertise. Public decisions cover a wide field, ranging from domestic disputes to the location of the next camping site. Decisions are essentially arrived at by consensus, but this by no means entails a unanimity of opinion or decision. It rather implies a situation where there is no significant opposition to a proposal. All members of the band have the opportunity to participate in the decision. As consensus implies an element of consent, it negates the notion of coercion — and the general openness of the band as a social unit prevents coercive factions from emerging.

Silberbauer thus concludes that the style of band politics is facilitative rather than coercive, and leadership is authoritative rather than authoritarian, an individual striving for the co-operation of others in the activities they may wish to undertake. He distinguishes such consensus politics from a democracy — which involves equal access to positions of legitimate authority, and is essentially an organisational framework for the making and execution of decisions. Silberbauer suggests that the common definition of political action in terms of coercive power or physical force, suggested by Weber (1947: 154) and Radcliffe-Brown (1940: xxiii), noted above, is too narrow and selective, and is inappropriate in the context of consensus politics. It leads, he suggests, "to the paradox that, as there is no locus of power, such a polity has no authority. This is,

of course, nonsense for it is the very fact of consensus which lends authority to the decision" (1982: 33). A second context discussed by Harris is that of village organised societies, where subsistence is derived in part from rudimentary forms of agriculture, and where armed raiding is almost endemic. The two classic contexts are the Yanomami of Venezuela — the subject of important studies by Chagnon (1968) and Lizot (1985), and the village communities of the New Guinea highlands. The Yanomami, described as the "Fierce People" by Chagnon, train boys from an early age to become warriors, to be courageous, cruel and vengeful. Young boys learn their aggression and cruelty by practising on animals. Armed raids are undertaken at dawn on rival villages, and women taken as captives. Successful men are polygamous, and there is a pervasive pattern of ill-treatment towards women, who are beaten and harassed. About a third of the deaths in some Yanomami villages result from armed combat, and the overall homicide rate is high — five times greater that of the !Kung (Knauft 1987: 464).

The abuse and mistreatment of women is equally evident among many New Guinea communities, who, according to Harris, are the "world's most ardent male chauvinists" (1993: 65). The central institution of these societies, the Nama, a male initiation cult; essentially trains men to be fierce warriors, and to subordinate women. Among the Sambia, as described by Gilbert Herdt (1987), there is a rigid segregation of the sexes, the men being engaged in fighting and hunting, the women tending to the pigs, and doing what Herdt describes as the routine cultivating of the gardens. Men avoid all contact with children, and fear intimacy with women, their main activities being focused around the secret male clubhouse. Through complex initiations boys become members of what Herdt calls a "clan-based warriorhood," centred on a local hamlet. Through ritual fellatio, semen is passed from men to boys, and the loss of semen through heterosexual activities is feared — as contact with women is believed to be polluting. Sexual antagonism

is therefore characteristic of Sambia relationships, and constitutes for them a psychological reality. Hie co-ordinating institution of this patrilineal society is the men's secret society; it is a dominating force in Sambia social life, and an instrument of political and ideological control of men over women.

But not all village-based communities that practise horticulture — with hunting as an important subsidiary activity — are characterised by male dominance and an ethic of violence.

Joanna Overing (1989) brings these two contrasting perspectives together in "Styles of Manhood," her account of the Shavante and Piaroa,. The Shavante of Central Brazil, also studied by Maybury-Lewis (1971), have a gathering economy, supplemented by both hunting and horticulture. But hunting is more than simply an economic activity, for hunting is intrinsically linked with male sexuality, providing the hunter with a public stage for a stylised display of virility. Masculinity is thus defined in terms of self-assertiveness, violence, and a belligerent temper — such belligerence being instilled in boys from an early age. Gender antagonism or "sexual bellicosity" is thus intrinsic to the Shavante definition of manhood, as is ritual violence against women. Men have political supremacy, and violence occurs both within the community, and in hostilities with outsiders. According to Maybury-Lewis, much of Shavante life is a function of politics, and such politics is based on competition between groups of males (1971:104).

Overing notes that this description of the Shavante is in accordance with Collier and Rosaldo's (1981) depiction of the culture of a "bride service society," where hunting, killing, and male sexuality are ideologically linked — a depiction, she feels, which is based on a rather selective examination of the ethnographic material.The Piaroa style of manhood, Overing suggests, stands in extreme contrast to that of the Shavante. Living in Southern Venezuela, the Piaroa, like the Shavante, combine gathering with hunting and garden cultivation — as well as fishing. They are — relatively speaking, highly egalitarian: