### Structural Functionalism
- **Goals**: To show how particular institutions serve to maintain the equilibrium of the whole society.
- **Unit of Analysis**: A society, tribe, social group, etc., usually treated as an ideal whole; this group was considered for analytical purposes as a closed system insofar as little regard was paid to the wider environment.
- **Analytic Approach to Time**: Synchronic; society is viewed as though outside of time, in ideal present.
- **Attitude toward Change**: In some writings, there was simply no interest expressed in change; society was treated in a purely structural fashion; in other writings, change (in the sense of adaptive adjustments of the parts) was emphasized, but the whole was seen to be in equilibrium.
- **Key Terms**: Structure, function, equilibrium, integration.
- **Examples**: *African Political Systems*, ed. by Fortes and Evans-Pritchard; *The Nuer*, by Evans-Pritchard.

### The Process Approach
- **Process Theory**: To define the processes involved in political competitions and in implementing public goals.
- **Unit of Analysis**: The "political field," a flexible and relative concept referring to any area in which political interaction takes place; may involve a part of society or extend beyond social or ethnic boundaries.
- **Analytic Approach to Time**: Diachronic, or "in time"; analysis may focus on actual history or on ideal processes of change through time.
- **Attitude toward Change**: Conflict, tension, and change are viewed as the normal condition of society.
- **Key Terms**: Process, competition, conflict, power, legitimacy, support.
- **Examples**: *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, by Leach (transitional); *Political Anthropology*, ed. by Swartz, Turner, and Tuden.

### Action Theory
- **Goals**: To describe individual strategies for gaining and maintaining power.
- **Unit of Analysis**: The "political arena," an area in which individual actors or small groups vie for political power. Political arenas may be, or be comprised all or in part of, factions, patron-client relations, parties, elites, and other informal para-political groups.
- **Analytic Approach to Time**: Diachronic, but often focused on the actions of individuals within the duration of the anthropologist's fieldwork.
- **Attitude toward Change**: Change within a political arena is virtually constant, though there may be a relative stability of the wider system.
- **Key Terms**: Strategy, manipulation, decision making, roles, goals, games, rules.