
1. How are political typologies/classifications useful and valid?
2. Note the main characteristics used in developing classifications, and think of how these implicitly structure anthropological thinking about politics.
3. How do the mode of economic subsistence and environment figure in political formation?
4. Note the typology in Figure 2.1—and note Lewellen’s six main cautions about employing such a chart.
5. What are the distinctive political features of bands? What sorts of “political problems” were addressed by bands?
6. What are some of the basic problems with the concept of “tribe”? Why then would some anthropologists persist in using the term? What do those using the concept believe to be its key characteristics?
7. How does the category of tribe stand apart politically from other categorizations?
8. How is a chiefdom distinguished from a tribe?
9. Does the reading provide an answer to this question: if the Yanomamo were incapable of uniting beyond the village level, and there was no political integration of the entire group, then what made them identifiable as Yanomamo?
10. Some of the political features of chiefdoms seem to be quite “advanced” in terms of the degree of stratification and concentration of power. What then stops anthropologists from lumping in such entities with states?
11. What in particular are the defining features of states? Are the anthropologists quoted in this reading, or Lewellen himself, referring to “modern” states?
12. Why have “ethnicity” and “nation” come to rival the earlier categorizations developed by political anthropologists?