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# The Evolution of Politics and The Transition from Political Status to Political Office

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**Donald V. Kurtz**

*University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee*

*University of Texas, San Antonio*

## ABSTRACT

*Most explanations of sociopolitical evolution rely on material and environmental forces. Recent theory explained political evolution by emphasizing the practices of political agents and denigrating the role of material forces. Laudable though this latter theory is, it still projects the either/or explanation that social scientists seem to be unable to live without. This paper suggests the model of the genetic pulse to integrate material and environmental forces with forces related to the political practices of political leaders and the ideologies they disseminate among their political communities. According to the model of the genetic pulse the evolution and effectiveness of leaders' politics influences greatly the material and environmental forces of evolution and provide a better, more integrated explanation for political evolution than previous theories. This is demonstrated by accounting for the evolution of the political office and the assured power it provides leaders.*

## INTRODUCTION

Theories that suggest that political evolution is impelled by causes other than material forces, such as ideologies, have not been well received in anthropology since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Carneiro, for example, spoke for materialists when he argued that 'ideas are not uncaused causes' (2002: 96). The role of the individual agent as an energetic force in political evolution also is unpopular with anthropologists. Y. A. Cohen summarized this point of view,

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arguing that anthropologists who study sociocultural adaptation 'are concerned with social groups, not individual persons' (1968: 5).

These arguments represent a misdirected scholarly orthodoxy and epistemological bias. Ideas may not be 'uncaused causes'. But ideas that are actualized materially through the practices of individual political agents can and do have an impact upon materialist forces of evolution that tempers the explanatory privilege accorded them. Irrigation, for example, has been theorized as a prime mover for the evolution of urban state formations (Wittfogel 1957). The protracted debate over this theory rarely addressed the role ideas might have played in the development of hydraulic works. Yet, if irrigation is important in social evolution, it is due at least in part to the fact that someone, I submit political leaders, saw benefits to their power by expanding and/or intensifying hydraulic systems. The material outcome of the practices of political leaders, such as hydraulic works, represents the actualization of the ideologies leaders bring to their enterprise of acquiring power to enable their politics (Mouffe 1979; Kurtz and Nunley 1993; Kurtz 1996).

Later I will suggest a model of the *genetic pulse* to explain how *the evolution of leaders' politics* helps to account for *political evolution*. As opposed to models of evolution that rely either on singular causes or causes that are exclusively materialist, the model of the genetic pulse will integrate material and environmental forces and the political practices and political ideologies of political leaders. Service (1971) concluded that evolution is too complex to be explained by a single prime mover. I suggest that political and social evolution are too complex to be explained by theories that exclude either material or non-material forces, and that to account for evolution the relationship between the political practices and ideologies of leaders and material and environmental forces has not received the attention it deserves.

## **POLITICAL AGENTS, PRACTICES, AND POLITICAL EVOLUTION**

In a paper rich in ideas Roscoe (1993) suggested a model that inserted the role of the political agent into the discourse on political evolution. Roscoe identified political evolution *as the increased*

*centralization of the power of political agents and the increased nucleation and density of the political communities* with which the agents are affiliated. He rejected the role of material and environmental forces in evolution. Instead Roscoe argued that the competitive political practices of political agents as they engaged in interest-based political struggles were the major motivations of political evolution. He also noted that the agent's role in political evolution has been 'dimly sketched'. That is a scholarly periphrasis for the fact that anthropologists have ignored the role of the agent in political evolution. There is no good reason why the energetic practices of sapient, praxis-biased political agents should be excluded in explanations of political evolution. It also follows logically from Roscoe's (1993) argument that if the practices of political agents can be demonstrated to be significant forces in political evolution, then the impact of their ideologies on sociopolitical evolution in general can not be dismissed so easily.

In the social sciences the idea of 'practice' refers to what people do when they engage in social actions. In the 1970s the idea of practice was reconstituted as a theory that addressed the role of power and conflict in social and political relations (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1979; Ortner 1984). 'Practice' thereafter has been nearly synonymous with political practice. Giddens's (1979) theory of *structuration* was especially influential in these developments.

The theory of structuration asserts that social structures are both the medium and outcome of the competitive practices and conduct of agents that occupy those structures (Giddens 1979). According to structuration theory, social structures contain contradictions to which leaders respond. Their responses induce changes in social structures that trigger other contradictions which elicit other responses from leaders. And so it goes, a positive feedback of a helix-like Hegelian dialectic of contradiction, reaction, change, contradiction, and so forth. Giddens identified the major contradiction that impels structuration as a *dialectic of control*. In this contradiction political agents try to centralize their power and control over political communities that strive for autonomy from that control while at the same time relying on it to respond to problems beyond their control (Giddens 1979).

Roscoe (1993) used Giddens's idea of structuration as a point of departure to develop his own theory of political evolution. In his theory Roscoe rejected Giddens's idea of the *dialectic of control* and replaced it with the idea of the *effectiveness of control*. According to this idea the contradiction between the autonomy of political communities and the centralization of control by political leaders is balanced better and with less conflict by the effectiveness with which leaders use their power to reconcile the contradiction between their control and community autonomy. Roscoe claims that the effectiveness of leaders' control is crucial to political evolution because it helps to promote the *centralization* of their power, reduce community *autonomy*, increase the *nucleation* and *density* of political communities, and render *more manageable the social and political problems* to which the leaders respond.

*Time* is another dimension of structuration. According to Giddens, time includes the temporal span across which the political practices of agents are able to induce the evolution of social structures. Roscoe adds *distance* to this prescription because it helps to account for the amount of time political leaders can practice their politics. As a proposition Roscoe argues that political evolution is an epiphenomenon of the relationship between the *distance* leaders have to travel between political communities and the *time* that allows leaders to practice politics and respond to community problems.

Roscoe's theory is powerful and elegant. But it is incomplete, and some of its assumptions are certainly arguable. He did not identify either the nature of the practices leaders use in their politics or how political practices in general impel political evolution. And his general denigration of material and environmental factors as forces of evolution needs to be qualified. For example, the emphasis he himself places on population density – a material factor as I think of it – as an evolutionary impetus may not survive scrutiny (Claessen 2000). Below I subsume the practices of leaders in the model of a genetic pulse *to explain how the effectiveness of leaders' politics* in conjunction with material and environmental forces results in an evolution of politics that drives political evolution.

## THE EVOLUTION OF POLITICS

My idea of political evolution differs from Roscoe's. To me political evolution is represented by the differentiation and specialization of political roles (leaders, such as big men, chiefs, priests, bureaucrats), institutions (lineages, secret societies, government bureaucracies) and the concomitant organizational complexity of social systems. The evolution of politics, on the other hand, accounts for the process by which the effectiveness of leaders' politics results in leaders accumulating power and authority and gradually *entrenching* their authority and ideology in the institutions of their political communities. The entrenchment of their authority and ideology is, I suggest, a powerful force in social evolution in general.

To begin to explain how the evolution of politics impels political evolution it is helpful to recall what politics is all about. Politics is a process driven by political agents, especially leaders, who are dedicated to amassing and deploying power to attain public and private goals in competition with other political agents. As we shall see below, politics has two dimensions: normative and pragmatic (Bailey 1969). In normative politics leaders' practices are presumed to accede to moral and ethical precepts and expectations of behavior imposed by their political communities. This is the public face of politics. Pragmatic politics is all about what leaders can get away with to attain their goals without incurring negative reactions from their political communities. This is the off-stage, occult face of politics. Despite leaders' testimonials to the contrary (Richard Nixon: 'I'm no crook!') and political practices as different as Eskimo rituals that bring communities together to resolve conflicts, the moots of Nuer elders, or parliamentary debates in modern democracies, the ethics of normative politics is commonly sacrificed to a pragmatic politics that test what leaders and their competitors can get away with.

Roscoe's (1993) model is a parsimony of harmonious ideas. But the explanation of political evolution that I propose requires additional conceptual tools. I use the model of a *genetic pulse of evolution* (Kurtz 2001) to introduce the tools that are necessary to account for an integrated theory of the evolution of politics.

## THE GENETIC PULSE OF EVOLUTION

I think of the *genetic pulse* as an abstract congeries of impulses that emanate from the dynamic interaction of material elements, environmental conditions, ideational constructs, and human practices. Within this congeries the effectiveness of leaders' politics is critical to the evolution of politics and the result largely of how leaders relate to impulses that emanate from five conceptual domains: the *contradictions* within social structures to which leaders respond recursively through their practices; the *quotidian altercations* in social life that demand the attention of leaders; and the *praxes* by which leaders integrate theory and practice to increase and deploy strategically their *political power* and disseminate *authoritative ideologies* through the practice of *hegemonic cultururation* (Kurtz 1996, 2001).

*Contradictions* are those discrepant principles and practices in social life that are characterized by two or more entities that are constituted by virtue of being integral and mutually interdependent features of a social structure and potentially in conflict by virtue of their relationship (Callincos 1988). Contradictions are important sources of leaders' politics because they evoke responses from leaders who, through their politics, attempt to resolve them. Since contradictions characterize all social institutions, attempts by leaders to resolve them lead inevitably to evolution in the qualitative pattern of a society's statuses and roles (Gluckman 1965). But evolutionary changes do not occur quickly. More likely evolution is at least partly the result of the cumulative responses of leaders over time to the *quotidian altercations* that contradictions induce.

*Quotidian altercations* (Kurtz 2001) refers to those surface disturbances, struggles, and conflicts that recur and persist in social life and frequently are beyond community control (Gluckman's 1965). The ethnographic record suggests that the resolution of quotidian altercations is a crucial function of leaders' practices. Mediation is the most common practice leaders bring to these altercations. Arbitration is an alternative if mediation fails and if leaders have the power to arbitrate. As social organizations evolve the practices by which leaders respond to quotidian altercations require increasingly sophisticated *praxes*; contradictions simply become

more complicated and quotidian altercations increase in number and complexity.

To practice politics effectively every leader has to develop a political *praxis* – a union of theory and practice – to direct the strategies by which he or she reproduces and deploys power and disseminates ideologies to attain their goals. Leaders who do not have or cannot develop a clear and confident praxis will find it difficult to succeed, even if they control considerable political power. Leaders with a developed praxis often displace those who have more power but no effective praxis. Under certain conditions, for example social discourses on capital punishment (Foucault 1979), or unpredictable events, such as the assault on the New York trade center on September 11, 2001, leaders may develop a formidable praxis where an alternative or less mature praxis existed previously. The success of a praxis always depends on leaders' skills in acquiring and deploying *political power*.

Most social science ideas of *political power* derive from Weber's (1964 [1947]) notion that power is the ability of 'A' to bend 'B' to his or her will. When Weber proffered this idea, *circa* 1919, it was novel. But it has persisted without much amendment by social scientists. For example, social scientists have not devoted much attention to the properties of power that provide some with the capacity to force others to do things. This capacity is endowed by what I believe to be axiomatic: political power derives from the control of resources (Kurtz 2001).

The ethnographic record suggests five potential resources of political power that can be subsumed under two categories. The first category, *material resources of power*, includes *tangibles* (pigs, dollars, cattle, and the like) and *human* resources (allies, supporters, benefactors, and the like). The second category, *ideational resources of power*, includes *ideologies*, *symbols*, and *information*. The most evocative convergence of leaders' *ideational power* universally is effected through their practice of *hegemonic cultururation*.

*Hegemonic cultururation* refers to the mechanism by which leaders through their practices interface Gramsci's idea of *hegemony* as an '*intellectual and moral leadership*' (Gramsci 1971: 57) with his idea of *culture* as '*the habit of connecting cause and effect... enli-*

vened by (*political organization*)' (Gramsci 1917, cited in Buttigieg 1987: 20). Hegemonic cultururation is a response to the question: why do people surrender a portion of the result of their labor to a ruling class (Harris 1959)? It also accounts for ideology as a change-inducing force in political evolution. Finally, hegemonic cultururation is fundamental to any political economy. It addresses how leaders inculcate an *ideology of work* into the thoughts and practices of members of their political communities, the goal of which is to reproduce leaders' political power (Kurtz 1996, 2001).

The inculcation of an ideology of work throughout a political community serves two major functions. It is the primary political strategy by which leaders persuade people to produce gross surpluses of goods and materials above their minimum *per capita* levels of biological necessity. It also is essential to the creation of a political economy that will maintain the tangible base of leaders' political power. Of course, not all political economies produce gross surpluses.

To hold their status as leaders in those precapitalist economies that do not produce gross resources leaders may be required to redistribute all and sometimes more of the goods that the community provides to them in recognition of their status. These economies have weak leaders and their redistribution practices may be identified more accurately as a vertical reciprocity; the difference in status between leaders and others is simply not great and people in these economies do not produce a surplus of goods. That does not mean that these leaders neglect their hegemonic cultururation. An ideology of work aimed at creating gross surpluses is induced most emphatically in that prototypical exhortation by leaders universally – weak and strong – that good citizens work and produce more (listen to your leaders) (Orans 1966; Fried 1967; Applebaum 1987; Kurtz 1996; Kurtz and Nunley 1993). If these exhortations are successful strong leaders increasingly redistribute less than their communities provide and subsidize their political practices with the difference.

Leaders emphasize the value of work (cause) and argue that it is for the common good (effect). Of course, it is. But the production of gross economic surpluses also is crucial to the success of lead-

ers' power and politics because gross surpluses usually benefit leaders more than the citizens of their political communities. Gross surpluses do not trickle down equally throughout a political community as a result of some redistributive, 'supply-side' prestidigitation. Instead, the surpluses are mobilized by leaders as a major reservoir of their tangible power. The only magic practiced here is the hegemonic beguilement of leaders' discourses to convince people otherwise.

A successful hegemonic culturalization results ultimately in a citizenry that believes that their cultural ways of doing things, especially in their economic practices, are naturally occurring practices instead of the products of political persuasion. Hegemonic culturalization in short helps leaders to reproduce the cultures of their societies in ways that accommodate the interests of the leaders. Hegemonic culturalization contradicts Carneiro's assertion that 'ideas are not uncaused causes' (2002: 96) by demonstrating that neither are material forces of evolution 'uncaused causes'.

None of the forces of change in the genetic pulse work to the exclusion of others. Nor do they have equal impact. Instead they are historically and ethnographically situational, contextual, and contingent, always fomenting in the social, cultural, and physical environments of political communities, evading epistemological priority; at any given historical or ethnographic moment some pulse or pulses may be more important than others. The various pulses therefore are difficult to weight statistically or otherwise establish their potential causal significance. But, as we shall see below, when in the course of political evolution leaders become the incumbents of political offices the power they control allows their politics to become more effective.

The model of the genetic pulse provides the conceptual tools to develop an integrated theory of sociopolitical evolution. It suggests that the evolution of institutionally complex societies in settings such as circumscribed environments are not simple reductions to material and environmental forces alone. Instead political evolution is energized by the synergy of material forces, environmental factors, political practices, and an ideological hegemonic culturalization that impact on the institutions, culture, and human practices of po-

litical communities. A theory of political evolution integrated around the model of the genet pulse is, I suggest, necessary for evolutionary studies at large. But because the material and environmental factors of the pulse have received priority attention in studies on sociocultural evolution, in this paper I will emphasize the political and ideational factors of the pulse and relate them to material and environmental factors where they are relevant.

A methodological challenge to this integration is where to begin the analysis. Most materialist models depict a general evolution whereby the institutionally least complex society, nomadic hunters and gatherers, give way incrementally to more institutionally complex societies that culminate in agricultural urban state formations. To develop the complexities of the genetic pulse in a model of general evolution requires more space than this article allows. But another way to address the significance of the genetic pulse for political evolution is to explore a critical break in the evolution of politics that marks the most important transformation in political structures that occurs in the evolution of politics. That is the point at which the *political status* that leaders hold metamorphoses into the *political office* that leaders occupy as incumbents. Since politics on each side of the break differ markedly, the status – office break has profound implications for the nature of the politics leaders practice and the political power upon which those practices rely.

### **POLITICAL STATUS – POLITICAL OFFICE**

A brief and generalized profile of the political attributes of status leaders and office holders reveals the following. *Status leaders* are the least powerful. They are represented ethnographically by episodic leaders of nomadic hunters and gatherers and that category of leaders associated most commonly with horticultural societies and identified as big men. The category of big men is the focus of this paper.

Melanesian big men provide the predominant model for the category. However, status leaders who *approximate* this type model also are found in North America, South America, and Asia (Kurtz 2001). It is from this category of status leaders that *some*

individuals, under certain circumstances, metamorphose into the office holders that anthropologists identify as chiefs. Unless I identify them specifically I use the nomenclature 'big men' to refer to that broader category of status leaders.

Big men extend across a continuum from very weak to very strong. Typical big men dominate the middle of this continuum and are the most commonly referenced ethnographically. Typical big men must build their political power from scratch; it is always unstable. Tangible resources do not exist in great variety and are difficult to acquire and sustain. Followers are whimsical. Political symbols and ideologies, even their hegemonic cultururation, are embryonic. Little information is available to leaders that is not available to everyone.

Still, big men use their power building practices and hegemonic cultururation to develop the potential of their social and physical environments to provide them resources of power. Their careers begin when as young men they work hard and long – hegemonic examples to others of the value of work – to provide themselves a base of material power. In Melanesia, for example, their praxes include opening gardens and raising pigs to provide that resource foundation. Subsequent praxes include investing their pigs, yams or other resources in feasts or other rituals. These redistributions allow them to obtain credit, acquire followers, and develop trading partners from whom they may make additional gain. As well as developing their tangible power, big men must expend it to obtain and retain power.

Since weak and typical big men have little credit the vertical reciprocity by which they subsidize feasts and other redistributions cause them often to be the most materially challenged members of their political communities. Regardless of what big men do, they have no guarantee of power to support their politics beyond that which they create themselves. As a result, power is neither the deciding determinant of big men's authority nor what distinguished them from others of their communities. Instead the capacity of the authority and legitimacy of big men is *allocated* to them by their political communities to the extent that they comply with the values, morals, and ethical expectations the authority code of leader-

ship established by their political communities (Swartz, Turner, and Tuden 1966). Failure to comply may cause the communities to withhold or withdraw their support. At that point the material and ideational resources of big men dry up, their political status and support evaporate, and they are relegated to the condition of ordinary persons in their communities. Except for the most powerful big men who attempt to pass their power to their offspring, status leaders come and go easily.

The situation is different for *office holders*. Office holders, the incumbents of political offices, are represented by chiefs, heads of state formations, and their respective bureaucracies. As a category office holders are more powerful than status leaders. Still, strong status leaders may control more resources and therefore more power than weak chiefs. But because of the nature of the office even weak chiefs have a more secure foundation of power. This is because the office presents a curious structural conundrum.

Structurally a political office is an abstraction. But it is an abstract entity that is vested with sources of permanent power that only its incumbent has the right to access. The reservoirs of permanent power that incumbents enjoy changes the character of politics and the relationship of the genetic impulses that drive the evolution of politics.

The power vested in a political office includes rights to tangible and ideational resources. Tangible resources include the control of trade routes, goods in the form of taxes and tribute, access to treasuries, command of military forces, slaves, and the like. Ideational resources include legitimating ideologies, fashions of authority, symbols of power, and rights to mystical forces that can make good things happen – sufficient rains, good harvests, healthy people – and bad things – droughts, locusts, plagues – go away.

A leader may squander the power of the office to the point that he or she loses the support upon which his/her legitimacy and, perhaps, their incumbency relies. But it is rare that the power of a political office is fully depleted; some always remains upon which the next incumbent may build, or squander. Sometimes the loci of power and the sources of legitimating support may change.

In some cases the incumbent of the highest ranked office may lose power to subordinate offices. For example, the power of kings of feudal states of Medieval Europe and emperors of Tokugawa Japan was subordinate to the power of their vassals and lieges. Nonetheless, they did retain their roles, largely symbolic, as heads of states and, in Europe especially, continued to control power which successors gradually augmented and used to regain supremacy.

With the emergence of the office leaders' praxes become more long term, thereby theoretically more effective, depending on their skills of course. The office provides leaders the resources that allow them to plan into the future and build more power; power begets power. Leaders' hegemonic cultururation continues unabated, just as it does today. But agents other than leaders who either support existing leaders or challenge them competitively also now strive to inculcate their own ideologies into the minds and practices of inhabitants of political communities. By the time the political office emerges, a work ethic has already been inculcated into political communities. Leaders must now figure out how to sustain the gross surpluses it causes people to produce. Coercion becomes a more important factor, especially for leaders who lack the support of their communities.

The most commonly cited distinction between those involved in the status-office break, big men (status leaders) and chiefs (office holders), is the ability of chiefs to pass their authority and power to others, usually through primogeniture, and the inability of big men to do so. An explanation of exactly how the transition from status leaders with unstable power to an office holder endowed with access to permanent power takes place remains in the realm of theory. Some archaeologists (Earle 1991; Gilman 1991) suggest that chiefs emerge at the point where strong leaders seize control of economic power. Dramatic indeed. But unlikely. This theory does not account for the ultimate permanency of the office unless, in an unlikely scenario, succeeding chiefs continue to seize and hold economic power despotically. Instead, ethnographies suggest that in the initial formation of the office incumbent chiefs may not control as much tangible power as big men. Still, as noted, the power of a weak chief is by virtue of the power vested in the office ideo-

logically more secure and powerful than the status of a powerful big man.

A more likely theory to account for the emergence of the office is supported by the ethnographic record and addresses political processes that occur in the *interstitial limen* that exists between the evolution of big men into chiefs. It shows that some strong big men who risk the rejection of their political communities can succeed in transferring their authority and power to their offspring (Oliver 1955; Allen 1981, 1984). If they get away with this transfer an office is nascent. If an initial heir to an office is able to transfer its authority and power to another, and his heir to yet another the office matures and its powers may increase. An office becomes an infallible and ideologically profound political institution when aspiring leaders challenge an existing office holder, a coup or rebellion perhaps, but not the existence of the office (Gluckman 1963). Bailey (1969) provided a model that helps to account for what happens in this interstitial limen when a critical mass of the factors in the genetic pulse evokes the transition from political status to political office.

### THE DIALECTIC OF POLITICAL TEAMS

Bailey (1969) established a dialectic between two political structures, moral and transactional teams, whose members' politics are regulated by rules regarding their practices. According to Bailey, one team (moral) is always transcendent and leads a political community; at least one other team (transactional) always aspires to replace it. In Bailey's model transactional teams lurk in the wings of every moral structure waiting to show that they can do the job better.

A *moral team* is composed of a leader and a *core* of committed supporters and occupy offices of government. The politics of a moral team is *public* and regulated by *normative rules*, the ethics of which are understood and agreed on publically. As a result a moral team is on front stage constantly and under the scrutiny of its political community. Because it is presumed to serve the long term interests of its political community a moral team is relatively *un-*

*specialized*, dedicated to *multiple goals* that require an *interconnectedness of supporters and their functions*. As a result a moral team tends to become *rigid* and *bureaucratic*.

A *transactional team* is composed of a leader and followers, sometimes *hirelings*, who join the team for what they can get. The politics of a transactional team approximates that associated with status leaders; its power base is uncertain and insecure. The composition of the team can be *fluid*. Followers may come and go as their expectations are fulfilled, or as they become disillusioned or otherwise out of sorts with the leader. Tangible power is in short supply. Its politics is governed by *pragmatic rules* which are imminently expedient; 'dirty tricks' are common practice, planned back stage where transactional leaders usually develop their strategies. The team's goals are *specialized* and *focused*, often at displacing an existing a moral team so to access the powers of the offices the moral team occupies. Leaders of transactional teams aspire to legitimacy – support that insures their long term status or incumbency (Kurtz 1984). If a transactional team does replace an existing moral team it tries quickly to emulate the practices of the moral team to establish its legitimacy. Sometimes, as occurred with Hitler's National Socialist Party, it becomes despotic. Any moral team has this potential.

If structuration is, as Giddens (1979) argues, the medium and outcome of the practices of leaders within those structures, Bailey's (1969) model reveals it clearly. Bailey derived his model from political processes he ascertained primarily in complex state formations, particularly contemporary Great Britain and the Kingdom of Swat in Northern Pakistan. As such the model applies best to more complex political communities. Its application to the processes in the limen between status and office requires some adjustment to make it universally applicable. Such an adjustment requires an even more fundamental and universal contradiction that accounts for conditions in which status leaders do not enjoy the legitimacy afforded by formal rules of succession to political offices (Goody 1966; Kurtz 2001).

## THE GENETIC PULSE AND THE POLITICS OF THE INTERSTITIAL LIMEN: BIG MEN TO CHIEFS

Without acknowledging it Bailey identified a major contradiction in the evolution of politics. I refer to it as the contradiction between *legitimacy* (moral teams) and *aspiration* (transactional teams). This contradiction is, I suggest, fundamental to the politics of leaders who are incumbents of political offices. An even more fundamental contradiction that is indicative both of status leaders and office holders is that between those who are in positions of leadership – the *ins* – and those who aspire to but do not hold positions of leadership – the *outs*. The attempts by leaders to resolve the persistent contradiction between legitimate moral and aspiring transactional teams and that between the more prosaic ins and outs of leadership help to account for how leaders and their followers are replaced and superseded in all political communities, even the simplest. These practices also address those possible scenarios in more complex societies where an incumbent who may occupy an office legally, installed by a court decision perhaps, does not enjoy legitimacy based on the support of the majority of his or her political community.

I also suggest that the universal contradiction of the ins and outs of leadership and the more restricted contradiction of legitimacy and aspiration account better for political evolution than either the dialectic of control (Giddens 1979) or the effectiveness of control (Roscoe 1993). Each of these contradictions relies on control mechanisms that presume the old functional idea that politics is concerned with the maintenance of order (Radcliffe-Brown 1940).

Politics by definition is fraught with competitions and conflict. This makes a special difference when the genetic pulse reaches a critical mass in those *interstitial limens* between the evolutionary stages that most evolutionary model project, for example bands, tribe, and so forth. Such stages are, after all, functional constructs. It is in the liminal interstices between these constructs that the components of the genetic pulse interact synergistically and impel the evolution characterized by the differentiation and specialization of sociopolitical roles and institutions.

As societies evolve quotidian altercations increasingly are both social and political in nature. By responding to either leaders are forced to develop new political praxes which, in turn, evoke other problems that require new praxes. The intensity of the politically and socially induced quotidian altercation in the limen are influenced by the structure and organization of the societies in which the transition from status to office takes place. In this limen the social and political tension can be intense and leaders, such as big men, may develop new praxes to cope with them. This is more likely to happen under some conditions than others.

It is well known that the office of chief evolved in patrilineal-patrilocal societies. One of the more curious anthropological conundrums is why chiefs and heads of many preindustrial state formations are so common in societies that emphasize the status of women through the practice of matrilineal descent. The Trobriand model of the chiefdom has provided the type case for this phenomenon. However, the avunculocal postmarital rule of residence which accounts for the peculiar situation in which the mother's brother of a dominant Trobriand matriline becomes a chief is not the most common pattern in matrilineal societies. Nor is it the best to account for the politics that causes chiefs to emerge so commonly in them (Allen 1981, 1984). Politically more provocative models that account better for the existence of chiefs in matrilineal societies are associated with matrilocal (Divale 1975) and patriloc postmarital residence (Allen 1981, 1984) in Melanesia.

In patrilineal patrilocal societies individuals who aspire to leadership have to compete with relatives. This results in a politics in which the competition and conflict that are the essence of politics are constrained by obligations of kinship that often mute more aggressive practices. However, matrilocal and patrilocal postmarital residence in matrilineal societies in Melanesia and elsewhere scatters related male widely over an area (Divale 1975; Allen 1981, 1984). As a result of this dispersion politics becomes the avocation of unrelated men and is therefore largely devoid of constraints imposed by kinship. In these settings the political practices of big men often approximate a no-holds-barred Tammany Hall-style *realpolitik* between transactional type teams and results in some of

the strongest big men identified in the ethnographic literature (Allen 1981, 1984).

Politics in matrilineal societies, especially those that practice patrilocality, as in Vanuatu (Allen 1981, 1984), also give rise to parapolitical voluntary institutions, such as graded societies and secret societies. These associations bring together leaders, followers, and aspirants to leadership in informal, impersonal transactional-like relations; moral teams directed by normative rules are inchoate. Under these conditions only the most powerful leaders – or the shrewdest risk takers – are capable of passing their authority and power to an heir to try to insure the posterity of their hard-gotten resources of power and preclude their appropriation by competitors. If, as noted, this is accepted by a political community it may result in the origin of the political office. The limen between political status and political office is characterized by a critical mass of structural and ideological preconditions and social and political problems that seem to render the birth of the office inevitable.

The powerful big men who are ensconced in this liminal space between the status and office also are embedded in nucleated and densely populated political communities. Roscoe (1993) analyzed two Polynesian island communities to suggest that the nucleation and density of political communities were the result of leaders' practices and not the circumscribed environments these islands represented. Briefly an environmentally circumscribed environment refers to one that is resource rich and surrounded by natural features, such as rivers, mountains or oceans, beyond which less productive and hospitable environments exist, such as deserts or oceans. According to this model, less institutionally complex societies within a circumscribed environment evolve as they respond to material and environmental forces that incrementally induce changes in their social organizations. Populations grow. Technologies change to feed them. Societies nucleate and increase in density. Trade expands. Wars develop over space and resources. The conquest and appropriation of others' territories by some culminate in the formation of agricultural urban states and empires (Carneiro 1970; Service 1975).

The model of the genetic pulse may challenge the primacy of material and environmental explanations of evolution. But it also acknowledges their primacy when it is deserved. Roscoe's (1993) rejection of the primacy of the material and environmental forces associated with a circumscribed environment is not convincing. The ethnographic and archaeological records suggest that the nucleation and density of political communities in circumscribed environments, such as Roscoe's islands, are just as likely to result from the reluctance and inability of people to move out of these environments as they are from the practices big men in those environments.

Regardless of how nucleation and density are achieved, they do allow big men considerable time to practice their politics by reducing the time they must spend traveling between scattered communities as, for example, Kaokan big men were required to do on Guadalcanal (Hogbin 1964). Where the politics of big men is rendered more efficient because they have more time to practice politics, big men spend more time developing complex exchange relations that augment their resources of power. Since not all leaders or aspiring leaders are equally successful, the most successful leaders develop deep layers of debtors from whom they can demand support.

These big men also are likely to recruit younger men and groom them as part of their team and support network. Many of these young men aspire to higher positions of leadership. They see their attachment to big men as a chance to compete in the politics of their communities, best their mentors, and become head of their own transactional team. These accomplishments require astute praxes. Most young aspirants end up only as allies of powerful and praxis-shrewd leaders. Those who commit themselves to a leader may become part of the foundations of a moral team, should the politics of a powerful big man allow him to cross the liminal divide and establish the office of chief.

Leaders' practices also set the stage for evolution by stimulating changes in political economy through hegemonic cultururation. The ethnographic record suggests that successful big men push to the limit the potential of their social and physical environments to generate political power. As we saw, the inculcation of an ideology of

work is fundamental to this process. Big men are sensitive to the power potentials of their environments and the praxes of successful big men are shrewd enough to tap that potential. Holding on to power is, however, difficult. The vicissitudes of their environments and the competition they face from aspiring big men work against it. But powerful and successful big men that succeed in the liminal interstice between status and office have an evolutionary edge that is not available to typical big men. They are heirs to the consequences of the ideology of work inculcated hegemonically by typical big men into the shared consciousness of their political communities. Powerful big men in the limen between status and office have a population already convinced that it is proper to work longer and harder and then surrender a measure of the surpluses they produce to their leaders. Leaders across evolutionary time and space expand this potential, encouraging work, belittling those who shirk it, and generating symbols to convince the people of their right to lead (Oliver 1955; Sahlins 1960; Fried 1968; Kracke 1978; Allen 1981).

A sound political economy, culturally defined of course, is the foundation of any leader's legitimate authority (Kurtz 1984). One component of such a political economy is the redistribution by wise leaders of some of their appropriated surpluses back to the people who produce them. But as political economies and societies become more complex, leaders also increasingly skim more of what is provided them to support their followers, politics, and increasingly sybaritic life styles. It is a testament to the success of leaders' hegemonic cultururation that political communities in the limen between status and office, big men and chiefs, think that the appropriation of the fruits of their labors by their leaders is acceptable behavior.

At that point in evolutionary time where leaders by themselves are not sufficient to cope with burgeoning internal problems, they develop alternative praxes. Recall that the authority of status leaders is allocated by their political communities. In the limen between big man and chief, successful big men and incipient chiefs begin to use their power to support trusted followers to whom they *delegate* authority to act on their behalf. They become charged

with resolving quotidian altercations, collecting taxes, directing community labor, and so forth. These delegated authorities help leaders in the long term to entrench their authority in other institutions of their political communities. Delegation also begins to influence directly the complexity of the social organization of political communities. Entrenchment by leaders becomes that part of the evolution of politics that drives social evolution in general. It is increasingly effective as an evolutionary force as leaders acquire secure bases of power.

The entrenched authority and power of legitimate office holders (none are ever totally legitimate) gradually allows them to begin to change the priorities of the genetic pulse. Material and environmental conditions persist as factors in evolution, and the practice of leaders regardless of their power is never independent of them. But I suggest that as big men become chiefs, transactional teams are subordinated to transcendent moral teams. And as the power vested in the office grows and expands over and penetrates political communities, leaders gradually subordinate the material and environmental forces of the genetic pulse to their political ends. This culminates in the influence heads of states and their governments exert on the genetic pulse. This does not mean that leaders, even the most legitimate and powerful, are able to dominate their political communities totally. Despite the power at the disposal of leaders it is never sufficient to allow even the most powerful to subvert all sources of dissent and autonomy that challenge them. In the most powerful and legitimate modern state formations, such as the United States, aspiring leaders in the wings of government always exist, hoping to replace the prevailing moral structure. This is the essence of the immutable dialectic of legitimacy and aspiration.

The end result of the practices of big men that metamorphose into the office holders of chiefdoms is a transformation in the influence of the factors of the genetic pulse. The politics of typical big men, as suggested previously, has less of an impact on the evolution of politics and political evolution than material and environment forces. The advent of the office begins to alter that equation. The reliable source of power the office provides leaders enables them to initiate changes that previously responded largely to

material forces. Office holders begin to reconstitute the organization and culture of their political communities. They define who belongs to the community, their freedom of movement, what constitutes proper behavior, the structure and size of households and kin groups, and so forth. Some think these practices are peculiar to certain kinds of despotic political formations (Wittfogel 1957). That depends on how leaders establish and enforce their policies. Hegemonic cultururation is politically and economically cheaper than coercion, as praxis shrewd – not necessarily wise or benevolent – leaders know, and goes a long way toward convincing people that what their leaders tell them is good for them. Power makes all things possible and in the course of sociopolitical evolution it is increasingly manifest in the practices, ideologies, and symbols which leaders bring to bear upon the material and environmental forces of evolution.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper I suggest that political evolution is impelled by an integrated synergy of material forces, environmental conditions, practices of political leaders, and ideologies they inculcate into the members of their political communities. Since material and environmental forces have received most attention in theories of evolution, I emphasize how the evolution of politics expressed in the practices of political leaders promotes political evolution.

I have not developed a model of evolution that accounts for changes in stages of social and political integration. Instead, I suggest that the factors that impel the transition from leaders who hold political statuses to leaders who are incumbents of political offices provides a major insight into understanding how the effectiveness of leaders' politics promotes political evolution. Leaders who are not incumbents of political offices do not have a permanent or secure base of political power. Incumbents of political offices do because the office by definition has powers vested in it that only its incumbent has the right to access. This changes the nature of politics and the impact of politics on political evolution.

The practices of leaders who are not incumbents of political offices set the stage for subsequent political evolution. But the im-

part of their practices on political evolution are largely subordinate to material and environmental forces. The practices of leaders who can access the powers of their office change this equation. They become increasingly influential in political evolution. Material explanations of evolution at best only imply these practices. This is a prejudicial oversight. Leaders are by nature 'political men (persons)' who strives to increase their power. The construction and deployment of political power by leaders is a major motivation for qualitative changes in social systems because the practices of leaders are the most persistent institutional pulse in any social formation.

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