Making A Living: Subsistence (Economic & Political Anthro)

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Subsistence Techniques

• 4 subsistence strategies we’ll cover:
  – Foraging, a.k.a.?
  – Horticulture, a.k.a. Shifting cultivation
  – Agriculture
  – Pastoralism

• Subsistence strategies are simply techniques, not social types

• Avoid falling into a unilinear way of thinking
Adaptive Strategies

• Ppl mix techniques of production
• Cohen: adaptive strategies, claims societies w/ common adapt. Strategies usually share other cultural characteristics in common
• Why?
• Similar economic causes tend to yield similar cultural effects
Types of Political Organization

• 4 types: (E. Service)
• Band
• Tribe
• Chiefdom
• Nation state
• Today any of these exist w/in context of the nation state
Foraging

• Foraging: a.k.a. hunting/gathering, wild foods
• No domestication of plants & animals
• Egalitarian, what does that mean?
• Relative equality in distribution of resources & status
• Trop. Foragers: social stratification based on age
• Northern foragers: age & gender
• Thus, No. foragers less egalitarian, why?
• Tropics offer more biodiversity
Foraging cont’d

• Hunting is ↑ presitigious (yet, who contributes more to the diet?)
• On avg. gatherg contrib’s 60-75% caloric intake
• Myth: foragers are always on the brink of starvatn
• Reality: a well balanced & nutritious diet (oft. moreso than our own)
• How to maintain egalitarian dynamics?
• Sharing the arrows & insulting the meat
Foraging cont’d

• Foraging requires far fewer hrs. to make sure everyone is provided for
• How many hrs per wk to do so?
• ~20 hrs. per wk!!! Compare this to our avg. 40 hr work wk, plus overtime, school, etc…
• Modern foragers losing ancestral lands, constant encroach of industrialized nation states
Foraging cont’d

• Foraging requires access to land, if they become lose land, they run the risk of…?
• Excess depletion of resources
• Tropics: Ju’hoansi San of the Kalahari Desert (where?)
• Northern: Inuit of Nunavut
Foraging cont’d

• Modern foragers do not live in isolation, not relics of the past
• They are a part of the modern world system
• Political Organization: band, small sized grp (~100 ppl) related by blood &/or marriage, no formal authority figure/leader
• Why the small sized group?
Horticulture

- Horticulture: a.k.a. shifting cultivatin
- Oft. involves slash & burn techniques
- Portrayed as destructive to the environ., yet, is actually sustainable. Longterm intensive ag. does what to land? [http://www.pbs.org/earthonedge/ecosystems/agricultural1.html](http://www.pbs.org/earthonedge/ecosystems/agricultural1.html)
- Fallowing: allowing land to regenerate
- Planting multiple diff’t crops
- Crops mimic nat’l environ.
Horticulture

• Typically ↓ pop. Density, though some villages can be as many as 1000 ppl.

• Examples: Yanomamo of Brazil (Amazon) & Etoro of Papua New Guinea
Horticulture

• Political organization: Tribe (also possibly chiefdom)
• No formal govt. authority, contrary to pop. portrayal: tribes don’t have chiefs!
• Live in villages, maybe organized into smaller kin groups
Horticulture

- Political organization: Chiefdom
- Intermediate in sz. & complexity
- Features a permanent political structure & differential access to resources
- Typically kin based & may be a hereditary title
Agriculture

• Requires ↑ investmt of means of production
• Irrigatn, ctrl the amt of water used, terracing?
• Maximizing land usage
• Downside: Less crop diversity: few staple crops
• nutritional loss, environmental degredation, assoc. w/ entrenched gender stratification
• http://www.michaelpollan.com/indefense.php
Agriculture

• Enables task specialization
• Suitable for supporting dense populations
• Allows for growth of empires, formation of larger political units (e.g. nation state)
• Industrialized agriculture: assoc. w/ ecocide, & increased social stratification

http://fora.tv/2009/05/05/Michael_Pollan_Deep_Agriculture#fullprogram
Agriculture

• Political organization: typically nation state (though possibly a chiefdom)
• Nation states: high degree of variation in sz. & complexity as well as type of govt: monarchy, democratic republic, theocracy...
• Requires high degree of regulation: legal & judicial system, law enforcement, etc.
Pastoralism

• Caring for herd animals, what animals?
• Do not regularly slaughter their animals, too valuable, rather, subsist off their products
• Dairy, wool, blood, leasing studs
• Typically have to supplement subsistence
Pastoralism

• Migratory patterns:
  – Pastoral nomadism: entire grp moves
  – Transhumance: part of grp moves w/ herds
• Nuer: E. Africa- herd cattle & supplement
• Rainy season: highlands, combo w/agriculture
• Dry seas.: lwr elevatns, near rivers, supplement using?
• Fishing (a type of foraging)
Nuer Political Organization

- Segmentary lineage: associated w/ tribes, system of patrilineal descent groups arranged as components of larger patrilineal descent groups
Economy

• Economics from an anthropological lens, differs emphasis: cross-cultural
• Econ. tends to focus solely on modern powerhouse nations
• Econ concept: scarcity (meaning?)
• Insufficient means, limited availability/supply
• A human universal? Kottak text box, discuss
• No, scarcity is culturally constructed
Economic Anthro

– 3 principles orienting exchange:
  – Market principle
  – Redistribution
  – Reciprocity

• Market principle: dominant in our world capitalist economy

• Val. determined by law of supply & demand

• bargaining
Economic Anthro

• Redistributn: good & svcs move from local level to a ctrl lvl., then redivvied out

• Cherokee ex.: fam. farm sent portn of harvest to leader, this was given to warriors, travelers, etc.

• Modern USA, ex.?

• DMV: fees sent to ctrl lvl,

• Redist. How?
Reciprocity

- 3 types:
  - Generalized
  - Balanced
  - Negative
- The type of reciprocity is correlated with the closeness of the relationship between the parties.
- With balanced, not keeping the balance will cause the relationship to suffer.
Reciprocity cont’d

• Generalized: no accounting kept & no expectation of return “in kind”
  Ex.: healthy relationship between parent & child
• Balanced: expectation of “in-kind” exchange, gift giving relationship
• Negative: attempt to get something for as little as possible (may involve cheating, swindling, etc.) Examples?
Potlatch

• Practiced amongst Pac. NW tribal grps (e.g. Kwakiutl) spaning from N. Cali to Alaska

• Festive event that is part of a regional exchange system, in other words…

• It’s a big party! Not just any party, hosts give away enormous amts of wealth, in Turn they receive? Prestige.
Potlatch

• Suttles & Vayda: serves as a soc. security mechanism, redistributes wealth by converting it to prestige

• Overall, environ is favorable, but resources fluctuate, potlatch creates regn’l alliance

• Diff’t spin on abundance than capitalism

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_gYjQw9Bf4