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Q6(a)

Discuss the mechanism of social control in different kinds of political systems

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Anthropology GS 1 · 20 marks · Political Organization and Social Control

4. Political Organization and Social Control: Band, tribe, chiefdom, kingdom and state; concepts of power, authority and legitimacy; social control, law and justice in simple Societies.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the mechanism of social control in different kinds of political systems
- Write about 250 words for 20 marks

Revision summary

Social control matches political scale.

Foragers use gossip and fission.

Nuer feud and peacemakers show tribal control.

Chiefs add tabu and tribute.

States add law and legitimate force, while custom and caste still operate.

Introduction

Social control is how a public makes people keep rules. The mechanism changes with scale: band, tribe, chiefdom, and state do not use the same mix of shame, feud, and law.

Body

Uncentralised systems

- In bands, gossip, ridicule, and fission work. **Turnbull's** Mbuti and many forager ethnographies show walking away as a sanction.
- Tribal segmentary systems use feud and the leopard-skin peacemaker, as **Evans-Pritchard** showed for the **Nuer**. Age-sets and lineage councils, as among the **Maasai** or Indian **Naga** village morungs, bind youth.
- **Radcliffe-Brown** called this the maintenance of social structure. **Malinowski** stressed reciprocal obligation in the Trobriands more than a court.

Centralised systems

- Chiefdoms add ranked offices and tribute. Hawaiian and African chiefships used ritual tabu and redistribution.
- States add written law, police, and tax. **Weber's** monopoly of legitimate force is the extreme. Customary law may still sit under the code, as in Indian panchayats beside the IPC.

Cross-cutting tools

- Religion, witchcraft accusation, and caste ostracism control without a policeman. **Durkheim's** sanction and **Foucault's** discipline name two later readings of the same field.
- Modern NGOs and social media add new shame, but they do not erase kinship control in the village.

Flow diagram

Band shame fission -> Tribe feud council
Tribe feud council -> Chiefdom rank tribute
Chiefdom rank tribute -> State law force
Witchcraft religion caste -> Tribe feud council
Witchcraft religion caste -> State law force

Conclusion

Bands control by exit and shame, tribes by feud and council, chiefdoms by rank and rite, states by law and force. Anthropology studies the mix, not a single ladder of progress.

Facts & figures

Nuer

Segmentary lineage, feud, and the leopard-skin chief as a ritual settler, not a king.

Malinowski

Crime and Custom in Savage Society treated reciprocity as law in the Trobriands.

Weber

The state as monopoly of legitimate physical force, the contrast case for stateless control.

Panchayat

Indian village council that still sanctions marriage and land beside formal courts.

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