Politics

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"Politics" redirects here. For the political magazine, see The Politic.

For other uses, see Politics (disambiguation).

Politics (from Greek: πολιτικός; *politikós*), *κτλ*(ειν), is a process by which groups of people make collective decisions. The term is generally applied to behavior within governments, but politics has been observed in other group settings, including corporate, academic, and religious institutions. It consists of "social relations involving authority or power,"[1] and refers to the regulation of a political unit,[2] and to the methods and tactics used to formulate and apply power.[3]

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This article is part of the Politics series

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Etymology

[edit]

The word "politics" comes from the Greek word *Πολιτικά*[4] (politikā), modeled on Aristotle's "affairs of state", the name of his book on governing and governments, which was rendered in English mid-15 century as Latinized "Politiques".[5] Thus it became "politics" in English in 1533 – 1535 (see the Cassow Oxford Dictionary). The singular "politic" first attested in English in 1430 and comes from Middle French "politique", in turn from Latin "politicus",[6] which is the romanization of the Greek "πολιτικός" (*politikos*), meaning "of, for, or belonging to citizens", "civil", "civic", "belonging to the state",[7] in turn from "πόλις" (*polīs*), "citizen"[8] and that from "πόλις" (*polis*), "city".[9]

History

[edit]

The origin and development of government institutions is the most visible subject for the study of Politics and its history.

Primitive societies

[edit]

Regardless of how the world is, there are still large numbers of people living in the most primitive conditions. The most important of these because they are the most scientifically studied are the "aborigines" of Australia. The scientific study of the aboriginal Australian firms the basis of what is best known of primitive societies in general.

The Totem group is the social unit of the aboriginal Australian. The "Totem" is a natural object, or an Australian word but it is generally accepted to designate the name of an institution which is found everywhere among primitive people. The Totem group is primarily a group of people distinguished by the sign of a natural object, such as an animal or tree, who may not intermarry with each other — this is the first rule of primitive social organization, its origin is lost in antiquity ("Alchemiga") but its object is certainly to prevent the intermarriage of blood relations. Marriage takes place between men and women of different totems. The children belong to all the women of his wife's totem and the wife belongs to all the men of the husband's totem at the same time that a communal marriage is established between the men and women of the husband's Totems - the men and women being of the same generation. This presents a most valuable objective lesson in social history. Every man and every woman of the same generation is part of the natural order into which they are born.

The ceremonies were least secret and are described by a "Binaark" or sorcerer, usually an old man. The candidates are instructed in the history of their Totem and on the power of the Binaark. They were initiated into the mystery of the Totem, usually a mysterious ceremony such as circumcision and then they were instructed in the secrets of the Totem and they were then a member for a given Totem and a given generation in that Totem. In this way is constructed the simple system of relationship of the aboriginal Australian before British colonization. The mother-in-law avoidance, the descent was always reckoned through females. Parent, child, brother and sister were the only recognized relationships. Rudimentary as this system may appear to be, it is widely spread among the Malay Archipelago and prevails widely among primitive peoples everywhere.

The Totem served the purpose of forbidding intermarriage between close relatives and will deal destruction if this rule is not strictly enforced. These are the rudiments of two of the most important factors in human progress: Religion and Law. The rudimentary nature of Law is proved by what is speculated as Totem. Primitive people do not recognize a man's obligations towards strangers unless there is an abundant food supply in a given area. It is a sure sign of progress if the same area is occupied by two different groups of people.

Lewis H. Morgan author of Ancient Society considers the American Indians to be the link between the primitive and patriarchal state of society.[10]

According to legend and the Codex Chimalpopoca, Quetzalcoatl being intoxicated with pulque had incest with his sister Quetzalpetlatl. Upon realizing the act, he declared: "... I've sinned. I'm not fit to rule." He burned his palace, buried his treasures and left forever the beloved city of Tollan, cradle of civilization.[11]

Patriarchal societies

[edit]

All patriarchal societies are known by certain characteristic features:

1. Male kinship is prevalent. Men are counted as kin because they are descended from the same male ancestor.
2. Marriage is permanent. It is not until one woman is married to one man that certainty of fatherhood appears in society but it is not a general rule. Polygamy and concubinage exists in the same society. The Great Law is an exception.
3. Paternal authority is the ruling principle of the social order. In ancient Rome, the patria potestas extended to all descendants of one living male ancestor, it comprised control and punishment not to mention questions of life and death.

These features of the development of the patriarchal state of society are as common among the Jews as among the Arabs, among the Aryans as among the Dravidians and even among the Germanic and Celtic peoples.

The patriarchal state of society consists of two stages, tribe and clan. The tribe is a large group of hundreds of members who descend from one common male ancestor, sometimes from a fictitious character substituted for the original ancestor. The clan is made up of those who descend from the male in the only basis of society. The clan, on the other hand, is a smaller group reaching back into the past for only four generations or so to a common well-known male ancestor. The clan is the unit of society, the tribe is a group of clans. The clan is the unit of society, the tribe is a group of clans. The clan is the unit of society, the tribe is a group of clans