

**PREHISTORIC SECRET SOCIETIES:
AN ETHNOARCHAEOLOGICAL MODEL OF
ORIGIN AND IDENTIFICATION**

by

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ABSTRACT

This research is an attempt to understand the conditions that favor the emergence of prehistoric secret societies, how and why they operate within a bounded population, and how one may recognize their existence in the archaeological record. It begins with the generation of a model, including plausible processes necessary for the emergence and maintenance of prehistoric secret societies. Based on theoretical analysis, I produce a speculative model of conditions under which secret societies may be expected to emerge and an operational definition of prehistoric secret societies. Testing the soundness of my model involves comparing each component to the theoretically expected conditions that should obtain in societies where secret societies occur as well as in societies where they should not occur.

I postulate that secret societies can emerge and be maintained, if, and only if, certain conditions obtain with a community, namely inequality, centralized control of surplus resources, and hierarchical power structures. To determine if the occurrence of secret societies corresponds to the conditions proposed by my model, I compare my operational definition against eight ethnographic cases studies – six non-egalitarian cultures with provisionally identified secret societies and two egalitarian case studies lacking such institutions. As my model postulates that secret societies should not emerge in the latter social conditions, the two egalitarian cases studies are used as a form of control group. The purpose of comparing my arguments against these eight ethnographic case studies is to obtain a limited initial indication to either support, refute, or confirm my theoretical model.

Based on the evidence accrued from my ethnoarchaeological investigation, I argue that my proposed model and operational definition of prehistoric secret societies is tentatively confirmed. While the constraints of this study only permit the examination of eight case studies, the results nevertheless provide an initial assessment of the goodness of fit and utility of the proposed definition and model of secret societies. Although limited in scope, this investigation establishes that the model and operational definition are theoretically and empirically grounded and, as such, have the potential of aiding in the interpretation of archaeological sites.

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CHAPTER 1

*"I know that is a secret, for it is whispered everywhere."
~ Congreve ~*

INTRODUCTION

This research is an attempt to understand the conditions that favor the emergence of prehistoric secret societies, how and why they operate within a bounded population, and how one may recognize their existence in the archaeological record. At all levels of social organization, secrecy enables individuals and groups to manipulate and control their environment by denying outsiders vital information about themselves. Secrecy, or the selective concealment and disclosure of information, generates boundaries between intimate groups, families, kin, and larger organizations. Knowledge restrictions define, extend, or contract the degree and type of social relations between such units. Information control sets in motion a dynamic process between insiders, those in possession of restricted information, and outsiders, those to whom information is denied, as each tries to pursue its respective goals. In the arena of economic and political hegemony, the basic function of secrecy provides a mechanism to exercise control over people outside one's immediate family (Arnold 1993; 1996). Knowledge, when it is restricted, transforms into a commodity. As dictated by the law of supply and demand, secrecy increases the value of exclusive knowledge thereby enhancing the prestige of those who possess it (Daraul 1961). As a result, secrecy may be manipulated to improve one's economic position, as well as facilitate an individual's achievement and retention of political power (Tefft 1980). Once secrecy is institutionalized, socially valuable knowledge may be used to create, maintain, and advance individual and collective self-interest. Consequently, secrecy can be exploited as a hegemonic mechanism through which an individual or group may generate opportunities to legitimize their dominion over others and secret societies constitute one manifestation of the use of secrecy for a specific purpose.

How and when did cultures, at different time periods and in different parts of the world, develop secret societies? Discussions pertaining to historic clandestine groups are prolific, while investigation into this distinctive cultural phenomenon is largely

unexplored in the field of prehistoric archaeology. Attempting to answer this question has broad ranging implications for understanding prehistoric political and economic development, a cultures' trajectory toward greater complexity, and may provide insights into prehistoric aspects of inequality, elitism, and the developmental structure of power. An understanding of how secret societies develop may aid in accurately interpreting individual sites, as well as add a much-needed component to the study of hegemony. Prestige, wealth, and control of resources involve processes of social interaction that include information control and control over economic relationships. In return, research into prehistoric secret societies may also contribute to other disciplines, such as sociology and anthropology, whose interests include the study of economic and political structures within human cultures.

METHODOLOGY

This investigation explores the social conditions associated with the emergence of prehistoric secret societies. Given the growing number of good ethnographic case studies containing detailed information and compelling evidence from archaeological sites¹, the topic of prehistoric secret societies need no longer be neglected. Utilizing a multi-disciplinary research strategy, drawing on archaeological, anthropological, and sociological theory, a model is generated based on an operational definition of prehistoric secret societies. Evidence will be presented that confirms the proposition that prehistoric secret societies are primarily hegemonic mechanisms for the generation, maintenance, and advancement of aggrandizing individuals. The best indicators of complexity sufficient to enable hegemonic structures to surface and be maintained are institutionalized inequality, ideological elitism, and hierarchical power constructs based on the centralized control of surplus resources, including trade in prestige goods.

I argue that prehistoric secret societies may first begin to emerge as a formalized hegemonic subgroup within a community in non-egalitarian hunter-gatherer-horticultural societies. It is in transegalitarian cultures that inequality and hierarchical power constructs become socially prominent. In such an environment, exclusivity of knowledge may be used to control access to key decision-making processes, trading, and power

¹ Chapter 8 Hopi (Arizona), Levant (Syria), Caves (Southeastern Italy).

relationships. Secret societies thus can facilitate the creation of dominating elite factions. I do not suggest that the emergence of secret societies is preordained in all prehistoric cultures that reach a certain organizational level; I argue, only, that it is at this level of complexity that conditions favorable to the development of secret societies may first obtain. Studying this intriguing cultural development from the standpoint of prehistory is important not only for its intrinsic interest, but for its theoretical significance. Half a century ago, Kroeber suggested that we might come to understand the dimensions and limits of human nature by taking stock of “extreme expressions found in particular cultures, and of the various activities and qualities of a culture” (1955:199). To understand the multifaceted implications of such enigmatic institutions as secret societies, the ethnographic case studies used to evaluate my model represent some of the more extreme expressions of secret societies. These case studies have been extensively documented, providing sufficient ethnographic detail for a comprehensive understanding of each. Using Kroeber’s methodology to compare six extreme non-egalitarian cultures, I will determine if, and how, secret societies operate in each group. Ethnographic analogy is an effective means of establishing and assessing archaeological models. Moreover, it is a useful means of generating archaeological statements and assumptions regarding the relationship between known ethnographic behavior and observable material remains. Additionally, the strength of such methodology lies in its empirical nature, as it will inevitably lead to the model being discarded, revised, or affirmed. Once refined or validated, the model may then be used pragmatically in the field to aid in the identification and interpretation of prehistoric secret societies in the archaeological record.

Utilizing an ethnoarchaeological research strategy, my investigation into prehistoric secret societies proceeds in five steps:

1. It begins with the observation that a potentially interesting and distinctive phenomenon occurs within human cultures, one that people frequently refer to as a secret society. Very little is known regarding secret societies in prehistoric cultures. As model building and model testing is a well established process in areas where little information exists, I begin by generating a model, including plausible processes necessary for the emergence and maintenance of secret societies, and present the

markers that may be used to identify and interpret this distinctive phenomenon in the archaeological record.

2. The second step in the process is the formulation of a theoretical model of conditions under which secret societies may be expected to emerge. This is a heuristic, exploratory model meant to be a reasonable guess to be tested later with ethnographic data. This model is established using available theoretical ideas on secret societies.
3. Based on these analyses, an operational definition of secret societies is generated, one that can be used consistently across space and through time.
4. My operational definition is then examined in eight ethnographic case studies to determine, in a preliminary fashion, if the occurrence of secret societies corresponds to the conditions postulated by my model (i.e., that they occur initially in transegalitarian societies).
5. Using one of the six non-egalitarian cases studies, I outline the distinctive material signatures of secret societies present in the ethnographic record that have the possibility of being observed in the archaeological record. My model provides evidence suggesting that secret societies differ in a number of ways from private associations, and that these differences can be consistently identified archaeologically. I have already noted that secret societies constitute a phenomenon of general interest (step 1). I will now proceed to review the extant theoretical perspectives on secret societies (step 2).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Before one can, with any profit, adequately discuss the emergence of a secret society and the impact that prehistoric secret societies possibly had on social development, it is essential to be clear on their nature and the ways in which they differ from other associations. To date, little archaeological material has been brought forward substantiating the existence of prehistoric secret societies, with even less discussion regarding their theoretical origins and the role they played in cultural development. Of the few theories put forward over the past century, none is adequately developed to address the issue of prehistoric secret societies. Moreover, each theory fails to sufficiently explain the conditions favorable for the emergence of secret societies.

The earliest systematic investigation into the structure of historic secret societies is Georg Simmel's sociological work written at the turn of the last century. According to Simmel, "a secret society is a group whose existence is concealed from the public," or, alternatively, "a group whose existence may be open, but whose goals, rituals, and structure are concealed from the public" (Simmel [1908]1950:346). Simmel's first definition is too restrictive. Given its premise, investigation into such phenomena would be an effort in futility, as outsiders would never know of their existence. As secret societies must recruit their members from within the larger community, it is unreasonable to assume that the wider public will never know of their existence. The latter definition is also highly restrictive in that the secret society's general goals, rituals, and structures can be known publicly while the society's deeper secrets remain a mystery (Daraul 1961:7). Although Simmel's definition of a secret society is inadequate for the purpose at hand, his work contains a number of important arguments regarding the purpose and function of secret societies.

Internal hierarchical ranking and centralized control of recruitment are argued, by Simmel, as essential components in all secret societies. Simmel ([1908]1950:349-51; 366-7) details the dynamic whereby new members enter into the society at the lowest level. At this stage, novice members are granted only the most basic access to the society's secrets and progressively gain access to deeper mysteries as they advance through the ranks. Those in the highest positions control all lower ranks by dictating recruitment and promotion within the society. For Simmel, a secret society's hierarchical structure is due to psychological factors, an innate love of hierarchical planning, to such a degree that preexisting cultural dynamics within the community are relatively unimportant and unrelated. Although it may be argued that humans are predisposed to move away from chaos towards order, a culture's norms and mores both influence and constrain the structural form that organizations may take. If the culture in question did not accept ideas of ownership and inequality, it would be virtually impossible for an organization based on unequal possession of resources to develop, regardless of mental predilection. Simmel further understands secret societies as "an expression of moral badness" (Simmel [1908]1950:331). This is potentially accurate in historic cases; however, in prehistoric cultures it seems highly unlikely that an organization would be

permitted to develop unless it conveyed some benefit to the larger community. In transegalitarian structures, if an organization emerged that was viewed as detrimental to the group; the larger community would attempt to stop its development within the population. Clark and Blake (1999) discuss such checks and balances placed on potential aggrandizing individuals or organizations by the larger community. In brief, they examine the socio-political mechanisms that operate in egalitarian and transegalitarian societies that maintain egalitarian ideologies while discouraging or preventing aggrandizing efforts. The mechanisms that operate to maintain an egalitarian ethos result from either human-environmental interactions or social mechanisms. The former includes social mobility in response to unpredictability in the availability of food resources and the under-exploitation of naturally occurring food resources (Clark and Blake 1999:59). The latter includes such mechanisms as social ostracism or accusations of sorcery or witchcraft, crosscutting organizations, and intra-group fission. Ostracism or accusations focus the community's disapproval on the individual's transgression. Crosscutting organizations, such as moieties or age-set groups, tend to reduce the potential for the accumulation of individual status. Intra-group fission means that individuals can decide to detach themselves from the larger community at any time. Thus, an aggrandizing individual or group cannot rely on the populace for labor and resources if everyone's interests are not being met. Clark and Blake argue that these factors conspire to prevent potential aggrandizers from attaining and maintaining status, power, and wealth (Clark and Blake 1999:60). However, there are also a range of political and economic strategies discussed by Clark and Blake (1999:61) that aggrandizers can use to overcome these egalitarian leveling mechanism (i.e. alliances with rivals within the community or with other leaders in neighboring communities and investment in labor in producing resources that are highly predictable). Once the leveling mechanisms are lessened or surmount, aggrandizing individuals or groups are able to establish and maintain the socially unequal conditions necessary for the emergence of secret societies.

Congruent with the idea that some individuals consciously strive for prestige and power, Simmel ([1908]1950:349) argues that secret societies are deliberate strategies that enable a few prominent individuals to dominate a community for their own selfish

objectives. He sees secret societies as exceptionally rational and planned constructions, envisioning their formation as manufactured by a central power reflecting the builders' fixation on control and aspirations toward elitism (Erickson 1981:194). This has significant relevance to prehistoric secret societies associated with complex social, political, and economic structures. Simmel notes that all secret groups pursue their own purpose with the same inconsiderateness for all purposes outside itself which, in the case of the individual, is precisely called egoism" (Simmel [1908] 1950:367). This underlying notion of self-interest is fundamental to a hegemonic interpretation of secret societies. Exchange theory elucidates some of the important issues that this striving for self-aggrandizing power initiates.

Exchange theorists assume that social relations consist of individuals "offering or not offering things to one another, and demanding, accepting or avoiding things from one another" (Bredemier 1978:452). In other words, exchange is intrinsic to all social relations and in adapting to their environment people "obtain things from it, dispense things to it, avoid things that are in it, and retain things that might escape" (Bredemier 1978:453). If all relationships are predicated on exchange, then it is reasonable to assume that secret societies offer socially valued knowledge, and other items, as a means of obtaining something of equal or greater value. In a social world, one in which competition for resources, wealth, power, and prestige exist, retaining the socioeconomic relations formed through knowledge, or dispensing it, may be able to either help or hinder an individual or group adapt to their social and economic environment. Exchange theory may be useful in the study of power relationships, especially as it relates to transegalitarian cultures and prehistoric secret societies. In an advanced society, public affairs tend to become less and less secret, while private affairs tend to become more and more so. In simpler societies, this situation is reversed. People live in such proximity that they are familiar with what we would deem the intimate details of other people's private lives, while a communities political affairs must be kept secret if they are to retain power and vitality (MacKenzie 1967:22).

Although exchange theory does not make clear under what specific conditions people decide upon a particular option, ideas of unequal exchange, and its potential for social

conflict becomes paramount when dealing with prehistoric secret societies. The idea of conflict as it pertains to knowledge restriction is the focus of conflict theory.

Conflict theory is based on the assumption that interrelations between social conflict and secrecy take place within all levels of socio-political interaction. Within political communities, such as tribes, chiefdoms, or states, people organize into groups or associations to pursue special interests. The pursuit of these special interests puts them in potential conflict with each other or with the ruling body (Tefft 1980:51). There is conflict of interest between individuals and groups in transegalitarian and more complex societies over prestige, power, wealth, control of resources, or political goals. These conflicts of interest initiate processes of social interaction, which include information control. Secret societies use the restriction of knowledge relationships and surplus economic resources to provide a means whereby a small group may assert its individuality and acquire prestige without being an overly disruptive force within the community (Wedgewood 1930:51). This is due, in part, to the fact that the knowledge professed by a prehistoric secret society is deeper, but not necessarily radically different from, the knowledge found in the community as a whole. Potential conflict between the community and the secret society can thus be minimized, as division of knowledge is perceived as a legitimate aspect of the division of labor (MacKenzie 1967:25). Even though secret societies in prehistoric cultures are highly autonomous systems, they are not completely self-sufficient, but depend on the larger society for resources. Consequently, secret societies use the ideological concepts accepted by the majority of the population to legitimize its efforts. The congruence of social norms aid in establishing the secret societies authoritative structure so that, once in place, it becomes self-perpetuating. Moreover, once a secret society is established within a community, it may begin to deviate from general social norms to suit elite interests. In other words, secrecy is a mechanism that once established is able to maintain itself and develop self-serving ideologies (Daraul 1961:10).

Other prominent theories relating to secrecy, such as Symbolic Interactionism and Functional Theory, briefly evaluate and summarily explain secrecy within social systems and may contribute to a general understanding of secret societies. Symbolic Interactionism describes the processes that enable individuals to fit their actions together

through complex symbolic interaction. Symbolic Interactionists consider social orders to be negotiated orders although they recognize that coercion, persuasion, and manipulation also play a part. Such negotiations allow the parties involved to accomplish their objectives by enabling the social actors to evolve appropriate norms when they need to deal with each other. Normative rules emerge as each person takes the role of others and through this process, individuals learn to predict each other's behavior. This negotiation process includes secrecy, but elaboration on the role secrecy plays in the social order, as an institutionalized group, is not developed (Strauss 1978). Functionalist theory argues that observed cultural forms or patterns of behavior, must fit the social system. Human social systems consist of differentiated units that are interdependent. Such units may be individuals or various groups or categories of people. Thus, societies and cultures are viewed as social systems made up of units that constitute the system's subsets (Moore 1978). Unlike the symbolic interactionist and exchange theorists, functionalist theory assumes that decision-making options are under considerable restraint, including the ideals, values, and social structural requirements of the system but does not indicate the circumstances under which secrecy is affected by such cultural constraints. Metron's (1968) reworking of the functionalist theory may be more useful for analyzing the secrecy process as his framework distinguishes between latent and manifest functions of secrecy. Manifest functions are the overt or stated purposes of individuals or groups, while latent functions are unintended consequences of the social structural arrangements or system of certain overt actions. Metron's Functional model enables one to specify certain circumstances under which secrecy occurs as a manifest function or as a consequence of some latent function.

Although these theories are based on ethno-historic cases, they provide useful insights into the potential parameters of secret societies. In general, when attempting to identify prehistoric secret societies, we must assume that secret groups are formed initially by individuals who share similar values and attitudes with each other. Furthermore, it may also be assumed that subsequent members are willing, or required, to share, through certain rituals and oaths, the same value system as the leaders (Gennep 1960:11). Hierarchical organization and centralized control of recruitment provide the social control necessary to insure ideological compliance, as higher-ranking members control lower

grades through knowledge restriction. Exchange of wealth for knowledge, advancement in rank, and socio-ritual associations create unequal power relationships giving certain individuals a more significant role within a secret society and probably within community politics as well. This is a deliberate strategy enabling a few entrepreneurial elite an arena in which to engage in hegemonic activities and manipulate power away from public view and to form important economic and sociopolitical factions.

PREHISTORIC SECRET SOCIETIES

Simmel's 1950 treatise, *Exchange Theory*, and *Conflict Theory* are, to the best of my knowledge, the most compelling anthropological and sociological theories relevant to the study of prehistoric secret societies. However, none of these theories entails a definition of secret societies that can be used reliably across space and through time to investigate both the origin and the development of this phenomenon. Moreover, none of these theories alone are adequately developed with regard to transegalitarian social structures to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of secret societies within such environments.

To interpret the archaeological record, in this instance to recognize the existence of a secret society from material remains, an archaeologist requires a body of theory to guide inferences. These arguments relate static archaeological aspects to the dynamics of a once living system, generating a store of analogies from which to develop a model appropriate to, and testable against, the data received. Therefore, the first step is the generation of a theoretically and empirically useful definition of secret societies that can be pragmatically tested and demonstrated to have theoretical relevance.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

I have defined a secret society as an association where membership itself, or membership into upper ranks, is exclusive, and in virtue of membership or rank, affiliates possess knowledge and social relationships which non-members, or lower rank members, do not possess. Recruitment, or admission into the upper echelon of the society, is limited, voluntary, and requires a substantial payment of wealth. The underlying goal of the secret society is assumed to be centralized control of political, military, economic, or occupational spheres. The purpose of the society's existence is viewed as hegemonic, serving to effect beneficial change for a select minority of the total population. Its

primary function is the promotion of the leaders' self-interest within the larger community through a network of relationships, which directly or indirectly link the participants in related secret activities.

A key aspect of this formulation is hegemony, by which I refer to the ability of a dominant group in society to maintain its power and position not through direct physical coercion, but by obtaining the consent of the people to accept the structures on which its dominance depends. Organized by aggrandizing individuals within the community, secret societies in traditional populations provide an arena in which an individual may authoritatively elevate their status above that of the majority of the population through economic control of surplus resources to validate or obtain high ranks of supernatural authority (Feinman, et.al. 2000). Hayden (2001), for example, applies a political ecology approach to the emergence of secret societies that views them as strategies of political manipulation by aggrandizers. He explains how centralized control of surplus resources, in general, may be utilized as a hegemonic mechanism for increasing, maintaining, restricting, and enforcing elite power, authority, and prestige. Briefly, he argues that individuals or groups employ a number of complex economic and social strategies as a means of promoting self-interest by transforming surplus resources into prominence and affluence. Hayden contended that secret societies constitute an elite institutional form in which membership, or at least membership into higher ranks, is restricted to a particular socioeconomic status congruent with the emerging socioeconomic differentiation and inequalities of the community. Hayden points to cultures on Canada's Northwest Coast and sites in the Southwestern United States as evidence that these secret associations occur within transegalitarian social structures (1995; 2003).

The development of social structures favorable for the emergence of secret hegemonic organizations first appears in the Upper Paleolithic. It is argued by some archaeologists that the emergence of inequality began early in the Upper Paleolithic (ca. 30,000 B.P.) with the appearance of complex hunter-gatherers, and that this nascent tendency became especially remarkable and pervasive after ca. 15,000 B.P. (Hayden 2001; 2003). During this period, population densities increase, settlement patterns become more sedentary, prestige items become more common, surpluses are generated,

rich burials occur, and political, social, and economic structures increase in complexity. This environment potentially sets the stage for the rise of self-interested individuals or groups to generate and reinforce their influence within their community. Aggrandizers may have established secret societies to gain a political and economic advantage by excluding as many subgroups of people as possible from those domains and activities that could erode their authority, prestige, and power within the community. The extent to which such groups of individuals were permitted to pursue their own self-interests, at some expense to the rest of the community, is directly related to conditions of economic surplus (Hayden 2001). Centralized control of surplus resources gives rise to centralized control of organizational processes, such as recruitment and promotion, thus encouraging hierarchical structures. It forms the basis of a political economy (Earle 1997). In turn, a hierarchy contributes to the centralized control of resources as affluent members may restrict access to information perceived by the community as essential (Erickson 1981:199).

In order for a secret society to function as an elite institution, it must have definite and restrictive criteria by which it selects some people for membership, or higher ranks, and excludes others (MacKenzie 1967:16). As the aim of a prehistoric secret society in the theoretical model that I have adopted is the acquisition of economic hegemony, a primary feature within the egalitarian structure is progressively exorbitant entrance fees prior to advancement to successive levels. This criterion ensures that only the already rich and powerful members of the community are admitted, forming a clique of incipient or actual elite who can cooperate to further their own interests. The payment of wealth for membership into the secret society or its higher ranks has been noted by many scholars (Allen 1967; Erickson 1981; Hayden 1995; 2001; Mackenzie 1967; Simmel 1950), the earliest being Loeb (1929:256), who repeatedly wrote that an entrance fee is a distinctive signature in all secret societies.

Finally, as the members of a secret organization pursue their hegemonic goals, they must engage in behaviors that cannot always be completely disguised or buried in the stream of mundane activities, nor is it beneficial for them to do so (Erickson 1981:200). It is important to realize that if the members of a secret association are to enjoy a sense of power and privilege, the acquisition of which is one of the reasons for becoming a

member, they must demonstrate their secrecy publicly. They must parade and dance through the village in a public spectacle of masks to make themselves felt as an extraordinary force (Wedgewood 1930:144). What matters, is not so much the particular thing that is kept secret, but the fact that some kind of secret exists, and that it pertains to the prestige and privileges of a sub-group within the larger community. Often these activities are promoted as being supernaturally beneficial to the community (e.g. Hopi Kachina Dances). Thus, secrets act as separating or distancing mechanisms between the leading and subordinate groups, and this detached elite status must be demonstrated to those being separated (MacKenzie 1967:22).

TYPOLGY OF ASSOCIATIONS

Not all societies that perform public spectacles, claim possession of secret knowledge, or restrict access to rites are secret societies given the operational definition used here. Transegalitarian secret societies are an extreme expression at one end of a continuum that runs the gamut from fully open to essentially clandestine organizations (Warren and Laslett 1980:26). For analytical purposes, there are four main types of associations, with the last being the only type meeting the operational criteria of my definition of a secret society.

- 1. Open Associations:** Briefly, at one end of the continuum are open associations. These are groups whose purpose is open and membership is inclusive and voluntary. Relatively speaking, anyone may belong and the society has no secrets from its members or from outsiders. A modern example would be a charity organization. Its purpose is openly broadcast, anyone may become a member, and such things as age, gender, or status only minimally restrict participation, and only as a secondary consideration.
- 2. Limited Associations:** Moving along the scale, one next encounters limited associations. These groups select members based on the purpose they serve in accordance with particular rules or objectives and are relatively unconcerned if outsiders are aware of their goals. Knowledge of its objectives and functions are familiar to all members of the community, but some aspects, such as administrative

procedures, may be private. An example of such an association would be a hunting party. The existence and purpose of the hunting party is known within the community, and its results are public knowledge. However, only those who possess adequate skill in hunting are selected, and certain aspects, such as hunting magic, may remain private (Warren and Laslett 1980:29). These two organizational types contrast markedly with private and secret associations.

3. **Private Associations:** Private associations are public organizations where membership is restricted, often by age, gender, or both. Not all details of the organizations' activities are publicized and some activities, such as membership ceremonies, may be kept secret from all but those undergoing initiation. An example of a private association would be a men's age grade society or totemic clan society in which all male members of the community are required to join at the onset of puberty if they wish to be considered adult members of the community. The existence and general purpose of these private associations is known to at least every adult member in the population, and they are frequently responsible for tribal education and social enculturation (Drucker 1939).
4. **Secret Associations:** Secret associations, on the other hand, are organized around the principles of exclusivity of knowledge for hegemonic purposes. Membership is voluntary, admittance, at least into higher ranks, is restricted, usually by socio-economic status and wealth payments, and many activities are screened from public scrutiny (Warren and Laslett 1980:31).

There are a number of fundamental differences between private and secret societies. In private societies membership is, for all intent and purpose, obligatory. In men's tribal societies, for example, all male children within the community are expected to join. In so doing, they are recognized as fully capable adult members of the larger group with all the associated rights and privileges. If, upon reaching the designated age, a boy is not initiated, he may be socially ostracized, unable to marry or have sexual relations, and prohibited from participating in decisions regarding the group. Initial membership into some secret societies may conform to that of a private association and function as such, creating a 'grey zone' in this typology. However, it is the advancement to higher ranks

that ultimately differentiates private associations from secret societies. In most secret societies, membership into anything beyond the entry level is voluntary and failure to enter, even at the lowest level, does not jeopardize an individual's adult status in the community. Not all male members of a community will advance within a secret society, nor do they all have the expectation of advancing beyond initial membership. As such, not all male members within a secret society will possess the same level of knowledge or privilege. Internal ranking provides privileges beyond what is generally required to be considered a legitimate member of the community. Where private associations in transegalitarian cultures serve as socializing mechanisms, secret societies serve a hegemonic purpose, one in which prestige and status is unequally gained through advancement in rank based on wealth and control of surplus resources (Wedgwood 1930:135).

CASE STUDIES

Testing the soundness of the operational definition that I have developed on the basis of theoretical arguments and on initial survey of the literature describing secret societies, involves comparing components of the definition to the theoretically expected conditions that should obtain in cultures where secret societies occur as well as in cultures where they do not occur. To this end, six traditional cultures where secret societies were extremely well developed are examined: 1) the Vanuatu, horticulturalists living in the Melanesian archipelago; 2) the Hopi, employing flood farming techniques for maize production in Arizona; 3) the Kwakiutl, a Canadian Northwest Coastal chiefdom of hunter-gatherer-fishers; 4) the Nuu-chah-nulth, residents of Vancouver Islands west coast, in British Columbia, Canada, also hunter-gatherer-fishers, who additionally practice whaling; 5) the Ibo, pastoralist and horticulturalists of the Nigeria delta in Africa; and 6) the Mende, in Sierra Leone, who are subsistence rice farmers, practicing slash-and-burn agriculture. Two extreme egalitarian case studies are also examined to determine if secret societies occur in them. These are the Aboriginal peoples of Australia's Western Desert and the Mbuti people of Central Africa, both of whom epitomize a simple hunter-gatherer lifestyle.

I postulate that secret societies can emerge and be maintained, if, and only if, certain conditions obtain with a community, namely inequality, elitism, and hierarchical power constructs. By comparing my arguments against these ethnographic case studies, some indication can be obtained to either refute or confirm this model. The first order of business will be to demonstrate the level of inequality, rank, and centralized control of surplus resources found within in each culture. Following that, each component of my operational definition will be examined to determine if and how it manifests within each culture. The components of the operational definition are grouped under the headings of Exclusivity of Knowledge and Relationships, Membership and Wealth, Hegemony, and Self-Interest.

Although the constraints of this study only permitted the examination of eight case studies, the results nevertheless do provide an initial assessment of the goodness of fit and utility of the proposed definition and concept of secret societies. Clearly, generalizing from these results and utility of the concepts for prehistoric studies will be contingent upon further confirmation of the patterns and relationships documented here.

CONCLUSION

Although historic records and popular writings are replete with information about secret societies, both real and imagined, it is, in effect, an unexplored topic in the field of prehistoric archaeology. On the basis of theoretical arguments, secret societies, as defined here, should begin to develop within transegalitarian societies, existing as anomalous entities on the fringe of a society's normative ethos. A comprehensive understanding of the conditions that favor the emergence of secret societies, how and why they operate within a bounded population, and how one can recognize them in the archaeological record should provide a means of more accurately interpreting, not only individual sites, but the evolution of hegemony in a broader context. By exploring secret associations among transegalitarian hunter-gatherers and horticulturalists, important aspects of social inequality and the development of power can be better understood. As such, determining secrecy's role within a culture and distinguishing its archaeological signature is far more than just a matter of antiquarian curiosity.

The explicit purpose of developing a model regarding prehistoric secret societies is to aid in the interpretation of the archaeological record. The following analysis demonstrates that historic secret societies differ in a number of ways from private associations, and that these differences are such that they may be identifiable within a material assemblage. Ideally, after considering how secret societies operate within these cultures, recurrent patterns should become evident that allow for predictions as to how their existence might be reflected in the archaeological record. Wason's 1994 publication generated a list of explicit material criteria for recognizing social inequality in the archaeological record. These include mortuary indicators, prestige items and their restricted distribution, hoards, iconography, regional settlement patterns, house size and quality, restricted spaces, special structures and monuments, and the isolation of such structures and spaces.

The following chapters systematically investigate how secret societies operate within each of the eight cultures, by comparing their social, economic, and political structures against the operational definition and underlying theories put forth. Chapter II investigates the level of inequality and hierarchical control present in each culture, where Chapters III through VI compare each individual component of the operational definition against the ethnographic case studies to determine whether or not they obtain in each culture. Chapter VII presents a summary and analysis of the study and the final chapter, Chapter VIII discusses how secret societies may be identified in the archaeological record.

CHAPTER 2 – INEQUALITY & CENTRALIZED CONTROL

*“So far is it from being true that men are naturally equal,
that no two people can be half an hour together,
but one shall acquire an evident superiority over the other.”
~ Samuel Johnson ~*

The premise underlying the operational definition I have generated argues that a secret society may emerge as a formalized subgroup only from within cultures having sufficiently complex political and economic structures. The level of complexity necessary to establish conditions favorable for the emergence of secret societies seem to first develop in transegalitarian structures. I suggest that the probability of prehistoric secret societies manifesting within egalitarian cultures is low since leveling mechanisms within egalitarian societies are stronger, or more strictly enforced, than in transegalitarian cultures (Clark and Blake 1999:51). In other words, hierarchically inequitable social structures, upon which secret societies depend, are not present in egalitarian communities and only begin to develop in transegalitarian structures. It is only when social, economic, and political complexity develops that exclusivity of knowledge and exclusive relationships can be used to manipulate and exploit aspects of the community to the benefit of certain individuals, or minority factions, over that of the general population.

Although secret societies are highly autonomous systems, they are not completely self-sufficient. They depend on the larger community for resources. Moreover, secret societies must capitalize on certain preexisting institutions in the larger community, such as emerging political complexity and an ideological shift away from social equality, to establish their power (Gennep 1960:9). Only in a culture that ideologically, or pragmatically, accepts differential status and privilege between members, may an institution based on conspicuous socio-economic inequality develop. Therefore, in order to test my operational definition, analogous cultures, those possessing a sufficient level of social inequality and hierarchical power constructs, will be studied.

To determine the level of complexity in each of the eight ethnographic case studies, the presence, or absence, of a number of key indicators will be investigated including: 1) the production of surplus resources, 2) the degree of centralized control, 3) the extent of rank or class distinctions, and 4) differences in mortuary practices. To begin, the six

transegalitarian cultures, all possessing provisionally identified secret societies, are investigated to determine their level of social, economic, and political complexity. Following that, to confirm that the presence or absence of inequality and hierarchical power constructs do correlate with conditions favorable for the emergence of secret societies, the same investigation is performed on the two egalitarian cultures that have no secret societies.

TRANSEGALITARIAN & CHIEFDOM SOCIETIES

VANUATU

The Vanuatu culture clearly displays established social and economic inequality, political hierarchies, and centralized control of surplus resources. Social inequality in the Vanuatu community is immediately evident in the spatial discrepancies within and between residential compounds and village settlement patterns. The majority of Vanuatu dwelling compounds are relatively similar in size, are arbitrarily positioned within the same tightly bounded jungle clearing, and typically consists of two dwelling huts, a cookhouse, pig shelter, and a small storage hut, all enclosed by a wooden fence to keep out the pigs (Speiser 1996:92-93). A minority of Vanuatu dwelling compounds, however, do not fit this standard template. A small percentage of residential units are spatially isolated, located approximately 100 meters outside the general village limits, in individual jungle clearings. These remote compounds are significantly larger than those found within the village, contain multiple dwelling huts, several cookhouses, numerous pig shelters, more than one large storage hut, and more durable fencing, often made of stone. The buildings themselves are more elaborately constructed than those found in the village and possess aesthetic details, such as carved stone support posts, which are lacking in village construction. Moreover, a cemetery is often associated with one or more of these larger remote compounds. It is reasonable to assume that these residential differences indicate differential wealth and prestige for a minority of the Vanuatu population. Based on overall settlement patterns, it may be suspected that these wealthier members of the community are granted privileged access to certain clandestine institutions present in the culture and that access to these institutions are severely curtailed for the majority of the village population. In relation to the surrounding

structures, the affluent dwellings are situated closer to the Suque lodge and dancing ground than they are to the village. The Suque is the name given to the secret society operating within Vanuatu communities. The Suque lodge and dancing ground is an anomalous structure in the community. It is unique in design and layout, isolated from all residential dwellings, possessing lavishly carved emblems, non-utilitarian architecture, exotic materials, and displays of skeletal remains, both animal and human. Primary access to this area is from the affluent compounds, via large well-cleared paths, with a single, smaller path leading to it from the village (Speiser 1996:99-100).

Stockpiling of seasonal agricultural resources is rare in Vanuatu culture and long-term storage of harvested resources is unnecessary as the climate allows for the availability of food supplies throughout the year. Subsistence efforts are focused on raising pigs, which are the Vanuatu's primary source of prestige and storable wealth (Speiser 1996:302-5). Pigs are vital to the socio-economic structure of Vanuatu culture to such a degree that markets, competitive exchange, complex systems of credit, and expansive socio-economic networks all revolve around pigs. These pig-related networks and economic arenas are centrally controlled by the highest members of the Suque. Entry into the Suque society and advancement through its ranks is dependent upon the sacrifice and exchange of pigs as payment for insignias, rank, and knowledge (Allen 1981:24). In an Eastern Santo village, it was reported that over 300 pigs were slaughtered during a feast for the promotion of a man into one of the higher Suque grades; a remarkable number given that there were less than 400 people, children included, in attendance (Speiser 1996:368).

No formal class structure exists independent of the Suque society. Membership in the Suque, with its hierarchically ranked structure based on the degree of supernatural knowledge one is able to purchase, dictates the social standing of all male members in the village (Speiser 1996:306). Thus, the Suque operates as the primary means of establishing and maintaining unequal patterns of social relations through debt and obligation between the privileged and their supporters (Allen 1981:66). Acceptance of status differentiation is loosely founded upon an ideology of reciprocity and exchange, in that each individual rank-taking ceremony is embedded in a wider and contingent network of financial transactions. This exchange network generates dynamic

relationships within a highly competitive domain where politically ambitious men may legitimately engage in hegemonic pursuits. Although any male in the village is, theoretically, entitled to advance through these supernumerary ranks, in practice, advancement is restricted to members of the dominant families, as these groups are usually the wealthiest in pigs (Allen 1981:40).

The more affluent families also appear to maintain and advance their prestige through polygamous marriages. Polygyny, the culturally expressed ideal, is a function of wealth, and as a result, its practice is limited to only the richer members of the community. As Suque rank parallels the degree of wealth a man has, most women are owned by men of high Suque rank. As women represent status and prestige in Vanuatu culture, elite men purchase wives for their sons while they are still in their youth, whenever possible from a family of equal social standing, thereby limiting the number of women available for marriage to less wealthy men (Speiser 1996:261).

Finally, social inequality in Vanuatu culture is evident in their mortuary ceremonies, which vary considerably depending on the Suque rank of the deceased. Women, who have no standing within the Suque and subsequently possess no wealth, are buried in their hut without ceremony or possessions (Speiser 1996:278). Low ranking Suque members, those who achieved minimal prestige, status, and wealth during their life, are also buried in their hut, and interred with little, if any, grave goods. Suque members who managed to achieve some level of recognition prior to death are placed on biers erected in their hut, dressed in ceremonial gear, badges of rank, and luxury goods appropriate to their individual degree of wealth. Once the Suque members and others in the village have paid their respects, the deceased is then buried in his hut. When the wealthiest members of the community die, typically those who held the highest ranking within the Suque society, they are placed on a bier in their hut until a small house is erected in a dense part of the jungle. Once constructed, the deceased is dressed in all his insignias of office and rank and carried to the isolated structure by his peers. There he is placed on a platform and left until his body has been naturally defleshed. Eventually, his skull is removed and placed on display in the Suque lodge and the remaining bones are buried in the cemetery adjacent to either an affluent compound or the Suque lodge. A circular ring

of standing stones upon which pig mandibles are hung marks the grave (Speiser 1996:272).

Settlement patterns, variation in dwelling compounds, ritual structures, socioeconomic differences, and centralized control demonstrate a significant level of social, political, and economic structures. Clearly, Vanuatu culture represents a complex transegalitarian society with substantial surplus resources and socioeconomic inequality sufficient for the establishment of conditions favorable for the emergence of secret societies.

HOPÍ

There are substantial archaeological indications that socioeconomic inequalities and hierarchies have been part of Hopí tradition for many centuries. Brandt (1994:12-16) makes a compelling argument for the existence of social inequality, elitism, and status hierarchies in prehistoric Puebloan sites. Brandt argues that in Hopí culture, elite members held relatively permanent leadership positions, and that the prestige and privilege associated with their role as clan authorities enabled them to oversee the distribution of surplus resources and other luxury goods. A diverse range of architectural features have been identified in Hopí culture supporting this form of social inequality including residential pit structures, small and large storage facilities, specialized storage facilities, pit structures used for both secular and ritual activity, and at least one very large subterranean structure interpreted as a special purpose ceremonial or communal building. Prehistoric surplus accumulation and the unequal access and control over such surplus resources has been further suggested through the analysis of storage facilities, specifically difference in storage capacity between large and small sites within and between villages (Lightfoot 1984:96).

In Hopí villages, the largest houses tend to be associated with greater than expected volumes of storage space, agricultural resources, and trade goods. These large houses also tend to be situated near communal or religious buildings. This pattern suggests that aspiring leaders from elite families were implementing strategies of surplus accumulation, centralized control, and redistribution at the local community level (Feinman et al. 2000:457). Regional inequality is also suggested, in that the large sites

were functionally and architecturally distinct from the outlying satellite villages. These focal settlements contained restricted ceremonial spaces and significantly greater volumes of storage facilities than found at the smaller settlements nearby. This strongly suggests that social and economic roles and activities at these sites were distinct. Moreover, large settlements with substantial storage capacity surrounded by smaller satellite villages and farms are indicative of a two-tiered economic hierarchy for purposes of resource control and distribution at a regional level (Brandt 1994:29).

Within a Hopi village, the correlation between substantial storage facilities and house size is only one indication of unequal social ranking. Differences in status and prestige within Hopi culture is architecturally ascertainable through marked differences in the quality of building materials used, labor investment, unique floor plans, and distinctive architectural styles. Puebloan archaeologists (Brandt 1977; 1980; Dozier 1970; Eggan 1973; Feinman et al 2000) interpret these differences as evidence that the primary units of social and economic reproduction were inequitably centered in the largest residences. These architectural patterns are seen as indications of established social hierarchies where specific individuals and their associated households were differentially involved in political decision-making. They argue that political leadership was concentrated among the heads of the largest households, or family groups, who implemented strategies of surplus accumulation to finance self-aggrandizing practices essential for claiming and maintaining status and notoriety within the community and local region (Feinman et al. 2000:461).

Socio-political inequality and decision-making hierarchies are also visible in Hopi burials patterns. Generally speaking, if socioeconomic rank exists within a culture there is an expectation that burials which have been accorded preferential treatment will occur primarily in large, centrally located sites and only rarely in smaller, lower order settlements. As such, burials provide a meaningful way of evaluating political organizational change (Lightfoot 1984:91). Preferential mortuary treatment occurred as early as AD 700 in Hopi culture with a small number of individuals receiving distinctive treatment and the majority of the population receiving little or no special attention. Identification of affluent burials in Hopi culture is frequently ascertained through the quantity of ceramic vessels, shells, and turquoise objects interred. These goods are either

costly to produce or, as is the case with turquoise and marine shell, located hundreds of miles away and therefore considered a prestige item. When burial populations are compared for large and small Hopi sites, most of the individuals interred with large quantities of luxury items are associated with large and medium sized settlements (Lightfoot 1984:93).

As in the archaeological record, there are strong ethnographic indications of Hopi social and economic inequalities and hierarchies. Hopi ethnographic culture makes a strong social distinction between *Pavansinom*, those who have supernumerary power, and *Sukavungsinom*, those who have little or no supernumerary power. Based on an individual's level of supernatural authority, Hopi regard their society as ranked, composing two classes of people: rulers and commoners (Brandt 1994:14). Ownership and control of supernatural power is the primary index of status in Hopi society. Hopi ideology places great value on an individual's ability to transform material property, specifically land, into power through supernatural skills. Exclusive ownership of a specific ceremony by a clan, and the clan leader's ability to accurately perform the religious ritual, is the key demarcation of group identity (Whiteley 1998:92). The clan leaders controlled esoteric knowledge and ceremonial rites, including sacred objects, songs, chants, and the ritual calendar. Ownership of these culturally valued commodities dictated the amount of prestige and level of political office the highest-ranking member of a clan could attain (Feinman et al. 2000:70).

This socially entrenched inequality is further evident in the fact that not all clans owned land or religious ceremonies. In fact, some clans entirely lacked ceremonial property, land, or political offices. Of the thirty clans listed by Eggan (1973), only eleven are recorded as owners of ceremonies and land, with three out of the eleven holding the majority of both. Consequently, a minority of Hopi society controlled the majority of the community's wealth and allowed them to inequitably distribute the more important ceremonial responsibilities amongst themselves. Politically entrenched inequalities also stemmed from the ownership of land, as Hopi councils, composed of the heads of the landowning clans, were in charge of selecting the next Hopi village chief (Dozier 1970:188). As clan land was controlled by the heads of leading families, or lineage segment, who also controlled the particular ceremonies which mythologically granted

them use of that land, the Hopi system was set up so as to support and perpetuate social, political, and economic inequality for a small faction of the population (Whiteley 1998:65).

Unequal distribution of resource storage facilities, differential house size and architectural design, centralized control, burial patterns, and ownership of land all indicate that the Hopi possessed sufficient levels of social, political, and economic complexity necessary for the emergence of conditions favorable to secret societies.

KWAKIUTL

Kwakiutl culture is not based on an egalitarian ethos. The Kwakiutl epitomize a socially stratified culture. Each individual has his or her place in the calibrated social structure based on a highly developed concept of property rights and the ownership of economic and ceremonial resources, of which the highest-ranking member of a lineage owned all of the groups' property (Wolf 1999:127).

A 'chief', an individual endowed with managerial authority, heads each clan or lineage. As chief, he has the ability to overrule the segmentary interests of his group, yet is not able to marshal his subjects with a fully-fledged apparatus of coercion that can directly compel obedience (Wolf 1999:96). Lacking such political centralization, the Kwakiutl elite nevertheless engaged in social, economic, and religious activities within a common political arena. Each player in this arena required a history and set of legitimating myths that were usually derived from a culturally constructed connection with supernatural forces. Based on these connections, chiefs were in a position to endow their political functions with a unique cosmological aura, stressing the transmission of hereditary powers through the secret societies, and validating their ownership through displays of wealth (Cove and MacDonald 1987:38).

The casual designation of class or caste system so often encountered in this social pattern of ranked statuses with elite, commoners, and slaves is an over-simplification, except as it regards the division of Kwakiutl society into freemen and slaves. There were no social classes among Kwakiutl freemen, in the strict definition of the term, but rather, there existed an unbroken series of graduated statuses or ranks. As a result, inequality was so prevalent that no two people within the society were of exactly the same rank.

Each individual had his own particular status in a graduated series from lowest to highest, and each person's status had its own specific attributes that were not like those of anyone else. Slaves contributed little to the traditional social system except to give prestige to their owners, and like canoes, animal skins, or blankets, they were elements of the social configuration, but had no active part to play in group life. Their principal significance was to serve as tools for powerful individuals to impress on the community their higher status (Drucker 1939:22).

Social inequality was so deeply entrenched that rights were transmitted according to local rules of inheritance, which resulted in the concentration of economic wealth in the hands of a single lineage (Drucker 1939:59). Thus, the bulk of the economic tracts of a local group were under the custodianship of a single individual, who acquired the privilege through a descending line of eldest sons. As manager of the group's economic resources, the head of each lineage controlled the fishing grounds, fish weirs, hunting territories, shellfish beds, and berry patches as a beneficiary of the ancestral spirits. By virtue of supernatural stewardship, these men were elevated to prominence and granted the privilege to direct economic exploitation as they deemed fit (Wolf 1999:90).

The economic and ceremonial wealth of the entire group was concentrated in the hands of the head of each unit, which enabled the perpetuation of centralized control of all resources by an elite few. Not only did these chiefs have certain rights to surplus production, but members of their group were obligated to provide them with something akin to a tithe (Drucker 1939:64). Centralized control allowed for the channeling or redistribution of accumulated surplus toward further validation of the elites' prestige. Prestige was maintained by the frequency and extravagance of formal displays of wealth, usually in the form of potlatches, feasts, and secret society dances. The elite depended on support from sub-divisions within their tribe to acquire the necessary resources. An aggrandizing individual's dependents willingly assisted him in his accumulation of goods, as they had a vested interest in his success. A chief's public performances reflected on all members of his social group, to the degree that if he lost status or prestige by failing to put on a sufficiently lavish display, the entire group suffered socially, politically, and economically (Rohner and Rohner 1970:92). This reciprocal social dynamic supported and perpetuated institutionalized hierarchy, ranked inequality, and

hegemonic structures in Kwakiutl society. As a socially and politically stratified culture, with economic and ceremonial resource ownership and centralized control of surplus resources, the conditions favorable for the emergence of secret societies are firmly established within Kwakiutl culture.

NUU-CHAH-NULTH

The Nuu-chah-nulth, though living in close proximity to the Kwakiutl, is a distinct linguistic group. However, like the Kwakiutl, Nuu-chah-nulth social organization was notable for the existence of great differences in status based on a combination of birth and wealth. Each member was individually ranked along a continuum, from the lowliest individual to the head of the most prominent lineage (Sturtevant 1990:4). In Nuu-chah-nulth culture, two great social classes existed: freemen and slaves. Members of each group enjoyed certain rights, or were subjected to certain restrictions, depending on the group to which they belonged (Drucker 1951:55). Solidarity and cohesion of this rank stratified system was accomplished through social relationships in that even the lowest ranked member of the community was related, albeit distantly, to the highest member of the tribe (Drucker 1939:58). The role a man played ultimately depended on his birth. It restricted his choice of occupation and mates, defined his ceremonial role, and governed the honors he might gain among his fellows, not only on formal occasions, but also in the common places of everyday life. The primary social aspect that set an individual apart from and above or below another was his name. Names were hereditary property, although this inheritance could easily be lost should a chief fail to demonstrate his right to its possession through formal displays of wealth. Each name, ranked from high to low, carried with it a particular social evaluation and a specific status (Drucker 1939:59).

Economically, each Nuu-chah-nulth settlement had a small number of elite status members who formed the core of every village. Each family, as determined by inheritance, possessed both economic and ceremonial property, which established privileges different from those of any other group (Forde 1934:87). As the highest-ranking member of the group, a lineage chief exclusively owned all clan property, including territorial, subsistence, and ceremonial rights to ritual knowledge. The Nuu-chah-nulth carried the concept of ownership to such an extreme that not only were rivers

and fishing places nearby considered individual property, but the sea for miles off-shore, distant mountains, names, songs, and dances were privately owned (Drucker 1951:220). A chief's privilege as owner consisted of the right to the season's first yield, such as the first catch of salmon or first picking of berries in those areas he presided over. When each resource came into season, he called upon his group to aid him in building fish weirs or picking berries, and then used this first harvest to hold a feast that served to further secure his elite status. As rank was regulated and maintained based on unequal economic and ceremonial wealth, it was of the utmost importance to maintain control over all such resources (Drucker 1939:47).

A number of lower ranked individuals and slaves were dependent on each elite family. Although the wealthy married among themselves, the lower ranked freemen did not form a sharply separate caste or class, but were often cadet branches of lineages that, through failure to inherit fishing and hunting grounds or social and ceremonial privileges, were dependent upon their wealthy and distinguished relatives (Forde 1934:88). Although a chief was in a position of power, there was no formal council or political institution giving him authority; his right to be steward over the economic and ceremonial property of his group was validated through his possession and display of considerable wealth (Sturtevant 1990:4). Each chief used his centralized control of wealth to enable him to maintain his claim to a wide variety of social and ceremonial privileges. There were three primary ways in which a Nuu-chah-nulth chief could demonstrate his right to hereditary authority and gain prestige: feasts, potlatches, and membership into a secret society. All three served as vehicles for conveying hereditary rights through ostentatious displays (Forde 1934:387). The concept of hereditary class distinction was so central in Nuu-chah-nulth society that the chiefs took on the aura of nobility. The chief's oldest son would usually succeed him when he died with the descendents of the chief's younger sons forming something of a middle class. These younger sons were above the common masses, frequently addressed as chief and owned various lesser prerogatives, yet were no longer considered truly elite in status, merely wealthier than most freemen (Drucker 1951:245).

Marked differences in socially ascribed status, ownership of economic, political, and ceremonial property, surplus resources, and centralized control of wealth all indicate a substantial level of inequality and complexity within Nuu-chah-nulth society.

Ibo

Status, rank, prestige, and power, integrated through the transfer of ceremonial titles, privileges, and ritual distribution of wealth, is the most important commodities an Ibo man can possess (Wolf 1999:82). The primary title-making institution in Ibo culture was the Ekkpo society. A significant increase in social status was secured with entry into the upper ranks of this powerful hegemonic entity that claimed exclusive access to the supernatural. Once initiated into the upper ranks, a man held many privileges, including the right to political office, both within his community and throughout the surrounding regions (Leonard 1968:176). The Ekkpo society was the primary mechanism in the maintenance of inequality and hierarchical power. It controlled almost all of the social, economic, and political processes within the community, most significantly the markets where goods were bought and sold. Members wielded such power that it was virtually impossible for non-members to engage in economic transaction of any kind. The Ekkpo markets now deal primarily in guns and ammunition, but historically it was the exclusive source of slaves; one of the primary sources of storable wealth. The Ekkpo society held such a dominant position within Ibo culture, that if any man wished to increase his lot in life he had to do so from within the organization. As the Ekkpo society controlled who had access to the mechanisms of generating wealth, elite ranking in the society was the means whereby a small group of men controlled community and regional resources (Talbot 1912:37-39).

The ranked inequality generated by the Ekkpo society can be seen in Ibo village settlement patterns, marriages, and mortuary rituals. Ibo villages were divided into quarters and these quarters into extended families (Arinze 1970:7). Each quarter had a sub-chief, often accompanied by a high priest of the Ekkpo society. These political offices had control over their specific quarter, but were ranked below the village chief who had ultimate secular authority over the entire village (Talbot 1923:215). Polygyny was a symbol of high social status in Ibo culture, and all men who possessed the

necessary resources, endeavored toward this ideal (Arinze 1970:3). The great majority of Ibo marriages, however, were monogamous, "reflecting the force of economic circumstances" (Uchendu 1965:29). Mortuary rituals also reflected economic circumstances and relations to status. Regardless of how poverty-stricken a family may have been all relations would amass all available wealth to make as impressive a show as possible when the head of the family died. Religiously this was done to ensure that the deceased received a welcome reception in the spirit realm. Politically, it was done to demonstrate a family's prestige and status within the community. Status differences within Ibo society are also visible in the burials themselves. With the exception of Ibo elite, interment of the deceased usually took place within a day of the individual's passing. The body was wrapped in a mat and buried in the village cemetery (Leonard 1968:156). For the majority of Ibo people, the killing of one or more goats, rams, fowl, or dogs was a sufficient farewell. For the funeral of an affluent member of Ibo culture, however, the ceremony was greatly elaborated (Arinze 1970:88). The body of an elite member of the community was wrapped in a mat, buried in a coffin, and interred inside his house. Moreover, human sacrifices were an indispensable feature of elite burial ceremonies, with the number correlating to the rank and wealth of the deceased (Leonard 1968:160). These human sacrifices were of slaves but an older custom did exist where the best-loved wife of the deceased was also killed and buried with him. The human sacrifices were placed at the bottom of the grave and the coffin laid on top. Following the burial itself, many cows and goats were killed, palm wine supplied, and a feast given that lasted up to a month (Talbot 1923:142). So prominent was the acquisition of status and prestige in Ibo culture that elite members of the community served each other to secure their continued superiority. It was customary, for example, when two chiefs or heads of houses who had been on very intimate terms of friendship, for the survivor to contribute a significant share of wealth towards the expenses incurred over his deceased friend's funeral. When he in turn was buried, the family of the first deceased man invariably contributed a similar amount (Leonard 1968:156).

The emphasis Ibo culture places on the acquisition of social and political status through title-making societies, the centralized control of surplus resources, and differential funerary customs based on rank demonstrate that the Ibo were a complex

transegalitarian culture with the necessary social, political, and economic structures to establish conditions favorable for the emergence of secret societies.

MENDE

Social complexity, inequality, and hierarchical control are most notably reflected in spatial patterns within Mende towns, land ownership, and the centralized control of resources. Each Mende town and its dependent villages may be regarded as a single, albeit stratified, political unit, headed by a chief who functioned as the secular ruler of his chiefdom (Leach 1974:51). Mende chiefdoms varied in size, from two or three central villages of no more than one hundred huts, to several central ones with smaller satellite communities and attached farms. Each central village had its family head or elder who performed most political functions. If the village was large enough, it was divided into lineage-based quarters, where elders from each quarter formed a council governed by a principal leader (Fulton 1972:1221).

Land owning lineages dominated the secular and sacred world (Murphy 1980:202). Political authority was divided between public and ritual offices. Divisions of status and political authority were primarily based on the accumulation of wealth: slaves, cows, clients, wives, and land (Little 1967:175). Slaves constituted the principle form of wealth, serving as currency in a large variety of transactions and were bartered and exchanged for goods. Slaves provided the basis of the socio-economic system, as they were the primary source of labor in felling trees, clearing forests in preparation for rice crops, and the cultivation and harvesting of this resource (Little 1967:29).

The level of an individual's personal status was closely tied to land ownership and a socio-political relationship termed 'wealth in people' or 'patron-clientage,' a system whereby wealth and security rested on the control of others (Little 1967:83). In general, the more land an individual possessed, the larger the number of tenants, subordinates, and dependents he could maintain and, as a result, the more political and economic support he was able to command. Land was so important that, broadly speaking, Mende society had two classes of people in relation to the two forms of land tenure. The first class comprised those who owned the land and their immediate descendants. The second class comprised all those who were tenants or clients of each leading family, most of whom

were related. Slaves neither formed a separate class, as they were considered a commodity, nor were they initiated into the society at puberty, as were all other Ibo members (Little 1967:184).

Centralized control of resources was dominated by the Poro, a rank-stratified secret society, claiming exclusive access to the supernatural. All male members were initiated into the lowest level, but access to the upper ranks was based on payments of considerable wealth. The Poro society dominated economic and religious resources (Murphy 1980:194). Furthermore, the Poro elite regulated trading practices, fixed commodity prices, and controlled the markets where trade activities took place. Thus, the Poro dominated the mechanisms through which elitism was achieved, maintained, and increased (Little 1967:183). As power and prestige in Mende society are based on wealth, and wealth was controlled by the Poro, no person could hope to occupy any position of authority in the chiefdom without being a high-ranking Poro member (Little 1967:185). The correlation between wealth, status, prestige, and the Poro was so strong that those of highest rank within the secret society were inevitably the wealthiest individuals, holding the highest political status and social prestige (Little 1967:244). Thus, Mende society represents a complex transegalitarian culture with established rank-stratified socioeconomic structures and political hierarchies.

SUMMARY

Pronounced degrees of inequality, elitism, and hierarchical power constructs are present in all six transegalitarian and chiefdom case studies examined. The Vanuatu, Ibo, and Mende possess achieved status, while the Hopi, Kwakiutl, and Nuu-chah-nulth acquired their status through birthrights and achievement. In each culture, wealth is centralized and controlled by a minority of the population through an institutionalized mechanism, which legitimates itself by exploiting traditional cultural beliefs.

The status differences found in each culture express themselves in a number of similar ways. Residential compounds vary in size and complexity, polygyny is based on wealth and only attained by a minority of the population, and mortuary practices vary from utilitarian burials to lavish interments complete with exotic materials, feasting and sacrifices. The idea of individual ownership is highly developed in each of these case

studies, reaching its peak within Nuu-chah-nulth society. Each culture manifests some level of secular political structure in which clans or lineages were governed by high-ranking members from within the group. Demarcated social classes existed to varying degree in all of the cultures examined, with the Kwakiutl, Nuu-chah-nulth, Ibo, and Mende possessing slaves.

The key premise of my model is that secret societies may potentially emerge and be maintained within a community, if, and only if, the community displays a certain level of social complexity. It is the transformations from strictly enforced egalitarian mores to socially accepted ideas of unequal accumulation of rank and prestige that enable aggrandizing individuals to pursue their own interest, at least within the confines of the society in question. As such, the degree to which a secret society may potentially develop within a community is proportional to the level of social inequality and control in the same society (Owens and Hayden 1996). All six transegalitarian and chiefdom case studies display a level of social, economic, and political complexity which should be sufficient for the development of such a hegemonic society.

All six case studies have pronounced development of inequality, rank, surplus resources, centralized control and hierarchical structures, and all have strong organizations that ethnographers have identified as secret societies. In the following chapters, each component of the operational definition will be compared to each culture's provisionally identified secret society to determine the goodness of fit. First, the social and economic characteristics in the two egalitarian case studies must be determined. This determination serves to evaluate the underlying premises through negation, as I argue that the conditions necessary for the emergence of secret societies (inequality and hierarchical power constructs) are non-existent or little developed in such simple social structures. If the following two egalitarian case studies lack these socio-political features, then the specific components of the operational definition investigated in Chapters III through VII, should also be absent.

EGALITARIAN SOCIETIES

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES

Prior to European contact, the Australian Aboriginals subsisted solely on hunting and collecting. The harsh condition of the Western Desert guaranteed an almost constant search for food and was an unremitting concern that shaped all aspects of their lives (Berndt and Berndt 1979:10). Social divisions of labor existed in which women were responsible for obtaining the bulk of the food supplies in the form of vegetables, small creatures, fruits, roots, seeds, and wild honey, while men hunted a number of animals, including kangaroos, emus, and euros, as well as foraging when on these trips (Roheim 1974:46). The total population of Western Australia at the beginning of European settlement is estimated at 59,000 natives, indicating an extremely low population density of 1 person per 42 square kilometers. Given the carrying capacity, the Aboriginal environment and subsistence form is not conducive to the accumulation of surplus resources and these tribes did not practice food storage (Berndt and Berndt 1979:7).

Each aboriginal descent group was attached to a specific area of land, responsible for the total aggregate of land resources, which also correlates to a particular segment of their mytho-religious sequence, or Dreamtime. This connection to the Dreamtime, by all interacting groups, legitimized and sanctioned each descent group's right to share in the total natural resources of all related regions. As everyday life consisted of the quest for food, this mystical tie provided a great advantage, as it expanded the area in which groups could acquire subsistence resources beyond the descent groups' specific areas. Additionally, it served to reinforce investment toward maintaining regional resources as everyone, whether directly or indirectly, had ownership of an area (Berndt and Berndt 1979:10 -11).

There is no formal class structure within Western Desert Aboriginal society, nor are there formal ranks, ideas of marked inequality, or elitism. Although age does correspond, to a certain degree, to status, it is not exclusive, as age is venerated in both sexes and everyone who reaches old age will enjoy the same privileges and respect. Obedience to elders was a means of showing respect and did not entail dominant or subservient behavior (Roheim 1974:55).

The mortuary rites practiced by the Western Desert people reflected the relative equality of all individuals regardless of age or gender. The disposal of a corpse varied slightly with each tribe, but all members within a community were interred in the same manner without pomp or ceremony. The deceased's body was simply placed in a tree, on a constructed platform, or buried in the ground. In many cases, the bones would later be recovered for reburial in a delayed mortuary rite, but there was no display of wealth associated with the corpse (Berndt and Berndt 1979:51).

Thus, the aboriginals of Australia's Western Desert represent an egalitarian culture with minimal social, economic, and political inequality, no accumulation of surplus resources, and minimal hierarchical controls.

MBUTI

The Mbuti live in small groups, consisting of several nuclear families, continuously moving from camp to camp (Turnbull 1961:19). The group dynamic is such that it is large enough to provide mutual support in subsistence activities and small enough for its members to live an effective nomadic existence in a given area. There are no formal territorial boundaries between Mbuti bands. Each tends to spend its entire existence in a particular section of the forest, marked by natural boundaries. Warfare and group violence is virtually unheard of. If one band comes upon another, they simply increase their distance thereby avoiding conflict (Duffy 1984:153).

On special occasions, usually the initiation of children into adult society, larger numbers of Mbuti come together, with such a camp comprising fifty to sixty huts. Once the religious ceremonies are finished the groups disperse (Dupre 1975:89). They also form very small camps for the gathering of special resources, such as during termite season, when each family builds its hut close to a termite burrow. Mbuti huts are small beehive shaped dwellings approximately six feet in diameter and four or five feet in height (Duffy 1984:61). There is no structure to the layout of the huts in a camp. Their location is constructed purely at the whim of the individual (Turnbull 1961:68).

Subsistence is dependent on the area's available resources. There exists division of labor by gender, where, generally speaking, women gather fruits, vegetables, and other small foodstuffs while men hunt. When an animal is killed, it is brought back to camp

and divided among the families by the eldest member of the group. No individual or family is granted an amount notably larger than any other. On the rare occasions where a surplus of meat is available, the Mbuti use it to barter with the farming villages for such things as bananas, cassava, and peanuts, which are equitably divided among the group. They are known to occasionally dry meat, as a means of preserving it for trade with their agricultural neighbors; however, this is done infrequently, as the Mbuti do not store food for their own use (Duffy 1984:9).

The Mbuti manifest no elite structures, no rank, and no formal status within or between groups. Although gender-division of labor exists, women are not discriminated against and there is relatively little social specialization according to sex. Women assist in the hunting of animals and men will gather food if they happen upon such resources. Though women are the primary care givers, both men and women share childcare. Moreover, a woman is free to take part in any discussion, regardless of its content (Turnbull 1961:154). Finally, equality among the Mbuti is evident in their funerary practices. The death of a member of the group does not involve a mortuary ceremony, no prayers are said, and no incantations made over the grave. Immediately upon the death of an individual, regardless of age or gender, the body is buried in a shallow grave inside their hut, which is then burnt down. Mourning ends as soon as the burial and burning of the hut is complete. In death, as in life, the Mbuti are the epitome of egalitarianism (Duffy 1984:139). Thus, all aspects of Mbuti life epitomize a simple egalitarian structure lacking the complex socioeconomic conditions favorable for the emergence of secret societies.

SUMMARY

One of the primary means employed by emerging secret societies to secure large proportions of wealth is the institutionalization of centralized control over surplus resources. A group of aggrandizing individuals may leverage resources by channeling them to other prosperous elites, thus establishing a hegemonic mechanism for gaining, increasing, restricting, and enforcing authority and prestige. Centralized control of surplus resources necessarily generates ranked organizational structures that regulate the distribution or redistribution of resources. This strategic channeling gives higher-ranking

members within a community a network in which to exploit community resources. Competition over resources for securing wealth, power, and prestige lead to social disparity between group members (Hayden 1995). Restriction of knowledge within a culture acts as an advantageous separating or distancing mechanism as well as a device to legitimize authority. This serves to not only widen but validate the gap between leading and subordinate factions. As a secret society operates from within an existing social structure it repeatedly uses concepts and beliefs shared by the majority of the population to justify its efforts so that once it has established a hegemonic structure within the community it maintains itself (Daraul 1961:10). Hierarchy and centralization correlate to such a degree that once in motion they tend to reinforce each other, creating a self-perpetuating mechanism. Socially sanctioned secrecy may eventually become accepted within a culture because it is based on generally accepted ideologies and is often justified through appeals to principles already existing in the moral order, most commonly through mytho-religious mores (La Fontaine 1985:17). The development of culturally accepted secrecy, therefore, manifests itself indirectly through consent and authoritatively through the socially recognized right to command. Secret societies developing within transegalitarian and chiefdom cultures combine the use of coercive and authoritative power as a means of generating processes to establish control once egalitarian structures weaken or disappear, to a degree where exploitive strategies are socially acceptable (Clark and Blake 1999:61).

Both the Aboriginals of Australia's Western Desert and the Mbuti of Central Africa represent the archetypical egalitarian society. Both groups' orientation depends on cooperation and is intolerant of antisocial behavior and private power (Dupre 1975:186). As simple hunter-gatherers they accumulate no surplus resources, storage is essentially nonexistent, and ideas of ownership are poorly developed. There is no centralized control, no marked inequality, and no firm ranking within or between groups. Tribal society was essentially democratic, although age carried certain authority and was venerated in either sex. Food is equally distributed, dwellings show little or no differentiations, and mortuary rituals are modest and utilitarian. Moreover, these two egalitarian case studies show little economic or political complexity. Therefore, based on

the underlying premise of my model, I argue that a secret society should not develop within either of these two organizational forms.

The following chapters explore each component of my operational definition in relation to these two egalitarian cultures to determine if any organization or association within the group meets the requirements to refute my assumptions.

CHAPTER 3 – EXCLUSIVITY OF KNOWLEDGE AND RELATIONSHIPS

“What matters, then, is not so much the particular thing that is kept secret as the fact that some kind of secret is created, and that it pertains to the prestige and privileges of a group within the larger society.”

~ Mendelson, E. ~

The first premise of my operational definition argues that a secret society must maintain exclusivity of knowledge either for membership itself, or for the upper ranks of membership. Moreover, by virtue of membership into a secret society affiliates possess knowledge that non-members do not possess.

Secret societies, as hegemonic organizations, use exclusivity of socially valuable knowledge to create, maintain, and advance individual and collective self-interest (Hayden 1987; 2003). Selective concealment and disclosure of information plays an important role in the socio-cultural dynamics present in all relationships. At all levels of social organization, secrecy can enable individuals and groups a way of manipulating and controlling their environment by denying outsiders vital information (Tefft 1980:15). However, a secret society is a specific aggrandizing strategy whose function is the generation and maintenance of control over culturally valuable knowledge as a means of concentrating political and economic power in the hands of a few (Hayden 2001; Owens and Hayden 1997).

Status based on privileged knowledge is a familiar topic in social analysis. It is here that one may begin to understand how social inequality and centralized control within a community is exploited and reinforced by secret societies to achieve prestige and power for their members. The knowledge hierarchies within secret societies reflect and intensify not only the preexisting social divisions within the community, but widen the divisions between members and non-members, based on rights and claims to privileged knowledge. Secrecy, in general, functions as a boundary mechanism separating members of different social categories or groups. The actual knowledge being restricted by the secret society is often insignificant when weighed against the rights and privileges generated by the simple fact that it is clandestine (Murphy 1980:193).

Exclusivity of knowledge, and the relationships such restrictions generate, provides a mechanism whereby political and economic control may be exercised over people

outside one's immediate family. Knowledge as a commodity has an associated value that, as dictated by the law of supply and demand, is proportional to the degree of exclusivity, and can thus be exploited to increase status, prestige, and power (Tefft 1980:35). To manage exclusivity, secret societies employ centralized control of recruitment to generate a dynamic whereby new members enter into the society at the lowest level and move upward through the ranks only with the consent of their superiors. Through this hierarchically ranked structure, the most elite members of a secret society hold dominance over all lesser ranked members by virtue of their possession of knowledge, wealth, social support and relationships with other high-ranking members of secret societies. When a deliberate strategy of centralized control is established, those individuals in the uppermost tier of the secret society can become an almost independent authoritarian sub-structure. The inner circle of elite members continually consolidate and expand their power with the initiation of each new member, and each initiate must acquiesce to their rules and orders if he hopes to advance through the society's ranks. Thus, the secret society's inner circle is granted extraordinary status and prestige as they control all internal relationships (Tefft 1980:50-51). This potential for controlling a subordinate group through the ranking system of a secret society is discussed by Simmel as "the special challenge of completely controlling a large, potentially and ideally subordinate group of human beings, by developing a scheme of positions with their rank interrelations" (Simmel [1908] 1950:357-358).

Understanding the dynamic between exclusivity of knowledge and knowledge relationships in each of the case studies will help establish the degree of correlation between this component of the operational definition and the overall model. The provisionally identified secret societies in each of the six transegalitarian and chiefdom case studies will be investigated in depth to determine if, and at what level, exclusivity of knowledge is present. Following this, associations occurring in the two egalitarian case studies will be examined to determine if exclusivity of culturally valuable knowledge and relationships are present or absent.

TRANSEGALITARIAN & CHIEFDOM SOCIETIES

VANUATU

The Suque society consists of a series of strictly defined ranked grades through which a member can progress. At the lowest, or entry level, the Suque society functions as a private association, whose purpose is the initiation of children into the community as adults. At this level, all male members of the Vanuatu are expected to join if they want to be considered fully-fledged members of the community. As a result, the knowledge that is transferred at this level is only that which is necessary for the education and enculturation into adult status. This knowledge is not exclusive as all adult males within the community possess the same information. The knowledge possessed by the Suque society becomes exclusive only upon advancement into successive grades beyond that of initial membership. Each grade above entry-level membership is marked off from one another by its exclusive right to certain insignias, titles, and ritual privileges based on differential access to supernatural knowledge (Allen 1981:24). Thus, the Suque society becomes secret only after initial membership is passed. In other words, restricted knowledge is only imparted to Suque members who have passed through the primary grade, increasing with every successive grade taken, and even then, the deepest mysteries are limited to those at the highest rank (Speiser 1996:337).

Each successive level gained within the Suque provides a man with a unique knowledge base and access to exclusive socio-political relationships available only to those at his level or above. Men who attain the highest ranks are believed to possess the ultimate knowledge necessary to gain complete control over supernatural powers, which may then be used to manipulate and exploit all aspects of their environment. This elaborate hierarchy based on restricted knowledge, exclusive relationships, and mystical power legitimizes the Suque elites' control over lower order members, ensuring that the secrets upon which its dominance is founded are meted out to only those who the elite members deem fit to have them (Allen 1981:26).

The highest-level members of the Suque hold a position of considerable prestige and power because the religious knowledge, which only they possess, ideologically validates these individuals with the overall direction and responsibility of the ceremonies necessary

for maintaining the health and well-being of the entire community. The inner circle of elite Suque members decides if there are sufficient resources for a ceremony to proceed, announces the dates of communal rituals, and controls the sub-rites that initiate members into successive grades. Such privileges directly control the rank a member has, and indirectly controls the members' relationship to resources and socio-political activities within the village. It is exclusive access to culturally valued knowledge that strengthens the elite members' authority. In other words, the ideological foundation upon which the highest-ranking positions rests is exclusive access to esoteric knowledge beyond that held by the general population (Allen 1981:66), and it is the socially perceived value of this exclusive knowledge that validates the elites' power within the community. Ultimately, claims to supernatural and social power are maintained by economic factors. Thus, the Vanuatu maintains exclusivity of knowledge through clearly defined ranked grades within the Suque society. The relationships that restricted membership into the higher grades generates, provides a mechanism whereby elite members of the Vanuatu community can exercise a greater degree of control over the general populace.

HOPÍ

The Hopi have a graded series of associations called Orders (ranked Third, Second, and First) that are ostensibly religious in nature. Within the Second and First Order associations, there exist a number of ranked sub-groups. As outlined in Chapter II, the Hopi regarded their society as ranked, comprising two classes of people based on the degree of religious power an individual possessed. This Hopi concept of *Pavansinom* is contingent upon ideas of extraordinary power that are derived from various sorts of esoteric knowledge, each carrying a different social value (Brandt 1977:20). As power in Hopi society presumably stems from supernatural knowledge, the key demarcation of status is the ownership of socially valued supernumerary rituals. The knowledge necessary to properly perform the esoteric rituals is cloaked in secrecy and known to only a small portion of the population. In sacred terms, the highest-ranking people in the village are the chief-priests of the religious ceremonies. Inheritance of these ritual offices and all associated knowledge is kept strictly within a descent group segment rather than being accessible to all members of a clan. Moreover, only the head of each descent

group, usually the highest-ranking male, are educated into the rituals deepest mysteries (Whiteley 1998:69).

Over the course of an individuals' life, progressive initiations and experiences in ritual sodalities gradually opened higher levels of knowledge. All Hopi are initiated into one of the Third Order societies based on gender, which served to initiate the individual into adulthood. Membership into Second Order societies were restricted to adult Hopi males, but once initiated, knowledge was not exclusive, nor was their internal ranking. In contrast, membership into First Order societies was restricted to the elite members of land owning lineages, and within each society knowledge was hierarchically restricted (Whiteley 1998:88). The most influential source of sacred power in Hopi society was the knowledge required to perform the many life-sustaining rituals. These rituals were found only in First Order societies, and were themselves ranked based on the level of supernatural power commanded by each rite. The idea of exclusivity of knowledge was strictly enjoined on all members, where breaches in secrecy were met with severe social and supernatural sanctions (Brandt 1980:122-123).

Thus, the exclusivity of supernatural knowledge became increasingly restricted as a man moved through the ritual hierarchies present in each First Order society, such that only a few leading members of selected Hopi clans gained membership into the highest rank of the highest First Order society. Unequal access to ritual knowledge within a clan, and the fact that some clans had no access, demonstrates that ritual knowledge was neither freely disseminated throughout the society, nor part of a clan's joint estate. In Hopi society, socially valued knowledge was restricted by rank, wealth, and resources and the exclusivity of knowledge served to demarcate status distinction and authority. Thus, secret ritual knowledge both configures the structuring of hierarchies and provides the idiom of political action (Whiteley 1998:93-94).

KWAKIUTL

The Kwakiutl people have many societies, termed Winter Ceremony or Dance Societies, that are shrouded in mystery, including the infamous *Ha'mats'a*, or cannibal, society. The right to membership in any of these societies is inherited and each society within the series of Winter Ceremonies is ranked, carrying specific social status. In

Kwakiutl culture, all freemen exist somewhere along a ranked continuum that dictates privilege and prestige. There is no formal class system of nobility set off from a class of commoners much less a three or four fold class system as each individual maintains a relatively singular status. There are individuals of high status and low status but they are not restricted to a certain sub-group within the community. The only institution that results in a cleavage within the freeborn social unit is the dance societies (Drucker 1939:56). Kwakiutl elite maintain their status through wealth-based rank. Rank is determined through the inheritance of socially validated names and privileges, which include the right to sing certain songs, use designs and masks, perform dances, and be privy to esoteric ritual knowledge (Sturtevant 1990:4). It is through this complex social structure that exclusivity of knowledge is maintained. Lower status individuals are excluded outright, and only a minority of high status members is permitted knowledge of the great mysteries found in the Winter Ceremony societies (Rohner and Rohner 1970:79).

Exclusivity of ritual knowledge is paramount in Kwakiutl society. The groups identified as dancing societies perform all major religious ceremonies. Members of these different societies are composed of persons who have, by hereditary right, been initiated. Each dance society is ranked, as is each dance within a given society, all based on the degree of perceived spiritual power (Sturtevant 1990:84). Membership, as an inherited privilege based on lineage, restricted knowledge both within and between these dance societies, so that only the heads of elite descent groups were permitted membership, as they alone owned the knowledge of the secret dance ceremonies. However, with membership in the dance society a condition for attaining power within Kwakiutl society, ownership of dances can be purchased under certain politico-economic circumstances (Boas 1970:267).

The organization to which all secret societies belonged was the Seal society. The most elite members of Kwakiutl society were initiated to this highest echelon and were few in number. It was here that knowledge of the deepest mysteries resided. The Seal society was subdivided into two groups: *Laxsa* and *Wixsa*. *Laxsa*, the group possessing the most exclusive knowledge set based on its familiarity of Baxbakualanuxsiwae's power (a Kwakiutl man-eating deity) included the Ha'mats'a and Dog Eating societies.

Wixsa, which consisted of the Fool Dancers, possessed some, but not all *Laxsa* knowledge, as they only had access to a portion of the Man Eating deity's secrets. None of these three groups, however, knew the ultimate mysteries; that knowledge was exclusive to the handful of men occupying the Seal's inner circle (Boas 1970:315-318).

Thus, status and power in Kwakiutl society is based, in large part, on ownership of privileged knowledge of the supernatural. Moreover, restricting access to knowledge of the dance societies, Kwakiutl elite generate and maintain control over culturally valued information as a means of concentrating their political and economic power.

NUU-CHAH-NULTH

Two societies stand out in Nuu-chah-nulth culture, the Whaling society of the Yuquot confederacy and the Wolf society, present throughout the population. With the Nuu-chah-nulth's all-encompassing focus on hereditary status, the restriction of secret knowledge is even more guarded than that of their Kwakiutl neighbors. As the Nuu-chah-nulth concept of ownership is all-encompassing and ascribed, so too was the exclusivity of ritual and ceremonial knowledge, such that only the chiefs or heads of the wealthiest lineages had potential access to it (Drucker 1951:247).

With the Yuquot Whaling society, only the highest member of the chiefly lineage in each band had the ritual knowledge necessary to magically entice whales to die and float ashore. As such, the secret knowledge necessary to command supernatural assistance was available to only a few members within the entire society (Jonaitis 1999:5). This knowledge could not be bought or acquired through any means; it was a birthright of chiefs. Furthermore, the specific rituals and the location of the ceremonial site where they were performed were closely guarded secrets known only to the few elite kin who assisted in their performance. Visiting secret shrines, used for ritual whaling magic by those with the privilege to do so, was absolutely forbidden to anyone except certain chiefs (Jonaitis 2000:28).

The Wolf Society performed the most important ceremonial events in Nuu-chah-nulth culture. All male members of the community are expected to join the Wolf society as a requirement for adult status. However, only this initial, or lowest, level is open to all males in the community as membership into higher grades is restricted by hereditary and

wealth. The rituals were built around a system of rank, where tribal elite sponsored the performances based on hereditary right, as they owned all important ritual acts. These same chiefs also held the highest rank in the lineages of the tribe. Esoteric knowledge was, therefore, exclusively restricted to the upper classes (Drucker 1951:430). Though some society performances were public, with general participation of all members, the major activities of the Wolf society were so clandestine that non-members had no notion of what went on. Informant descriptions of the way the ceremony was given began logically enough with a secret meeting of the chiefs, called by the individual who intended to give the festival. No one outside this small handful of men have knowledge of, or access to, the specific events that go on between these men. In relation to both the Whaling and Wolf society, there is a good deal of mysterious activity, with all references made in veiled terms so that none but a few elite can understand (Drucker 1951:391).

Thus, through the hierarchically ranked structure of the Wolf Society, the elite members of Nuu-chah-nulth society hold dominance over lesser ranked initiates by virtue of their possession of exclusive knowledge and knowledge relationships.

IBO

The Ekkpo society professes an array of esoteric knowledge upon which its power and dominance within the society rests. Seven grades exist within the society through which an aspirant must pass before he can be trained in the deeper mysteries. It is through wealth that exclusivity of knowledge is maintained within the Ekkpo society. Access to the upper most Ekkpo grades requires the payment of such an enormous amount of wealth that only a few members within the community can purchase access to anything but the lesser mysteries. So important was exclusivity of elite esoteric knowledge to the Ekkpo members that, if it was found necessary to expel an individual who had reached the highest grade, death followed as a matter of course as the risk of the society's secrets being revealed was intolerable (Talbot 1912:41).

The *Mariba*, the highest Ekkpo ceremony, to which only a handful of men in the community were privy, was where the last of the successive mysteries were unveiled. During the *Mariba* ceremony, the most sacred images are carried into a clearing deep in the bush. Sentries are posted to keep all intruders from coming near the spot. Severe

traditionally sanctioned and socially accepted laws dictated and enforced by the Ekkpo strengthened the exclusivity of secret knowledge. An informant is recorded as recounting a tale that on one occasion, two girls happened to have missed the *Mariba* patrol and trespassed unwittingly within the sacred precinct during a ceremony. They were caught by the sentries, brought before the Ekkpo leaders conducting the *Mariba*, condemned to death and hanged immediately (Talbot 1912:43-44). The veracity of this event is secondary to the message it conveys, which demonstrates the intensity with which exclusivity of knowledge was maintained.

The higher the rank an Ekkpo member attained the more restricted the knowledge gained. Members of the highest Ekkpo rank claim exclusive access to knowledge which enables them to wield extraordinary levels of power over shadow forms of the deceased and other non-human spirits. In addition to such supernatural knowledge, each grade has its particular dances, songs, and images, whose significances are known only to those who either belonged to, or have passed through, that grade. Finally, prominent members of the Ekkpo's highest grades have exclusive knowledge of *Nsibidi*, a primitive secret writing that included the meaning of secret signs and the secret powers of animals (Talbot 1912:39-44).

Thus, the elite members of the Ekkpo society maintain strict exclusivity of knowledge to powerful supernatural mysteries through hierarchical ranking and centralized control of recruitment.

MENDE

The Poro society has numerous grades, with Loeb (1929:264) reporting up to 99 levels. Each grade is strictly demarcated, with its own exclusive knowledge set that was never revealed to those of lower rank or non-members. Maintaining exclusivity of knowledge is so important to the Poro society that if a member revealed Poro secrets he is ostracized, tribally excommunicated, or killed depending on the level of knowledge exposed (Murphy 1980:199).

Like the Suque society of the Vanuatu, the Poro society performs a dual function. At the lowest level of membership, the Poro functions as a private male association. Only after rank is achieved beyond the entrance grade, does the Poro meet the exclusivity

requirement outlined in my operational definition. All Mende males are obligated to be initiated into the lowest Poro grade and all are given the same knowledge set, consisting of tradition, history, social norms, and general enculturation. At this level, the Poro does not constitute a secret society, but a private association that serves to initiate boys into the adult community (Harris and Sawyer 1968:103). The great majority of junior initiates never advance beyond initial admittance. Individuals at this basic level hold no rights within the society itself, beyond general adult membership, and possess no exclusive secret knowledge (Little 1965:358). A junior member will only be allowed access to restricted information if he is willing and able to pay for the privilege (Bellman 1984:48). As there is marked inequality of wealth within Mende culture, the majority of members lack the necessary economic resources to gain access to the higher grades and the associated knowledge. The degree of exclusivity of secret knowledge increases with rank, as does the wealth payment; as a result, the Poro members who have access to the most sacred knowledge, those initiated into the highest grade, consist solely of the wealthiest members of the community (Little 1965:355).

Poro members of the upper ranks are considered representatives of the Great Spirit of the tribe by the community (Harris and Sawyer 1968:2), possessing knowledge about the deity that enables them to not only communicate with it, but to marshal its power. The elite Poro members also profess knowledge of medicines (magic) of great strength, which may be used to supernaturally guarantee their success (Bellman 1984:47), and for various purposes affecting the well-being of the wider community. Thus, it is knowledge of the Great Spirit and medicines that is kept exclusively within the upper most ranks of the Poro society and it is this restricted access to the supernatural that gives the Poro elite their authority (Little 1967:40).

SUMMARY

The exclusive ownership of knowledge, if it is to serve the political and economic interests of the elite, must be restricted to only a minority of the community. The first premise in my operational definition states that a secret society must maintain knowledge exclusivity within its ranks and that this exclusive knowledge must not be transmitted to non-members. Each of the secret societies examined in the six transegalitarian and

chiefdom case studies mirror and intensify the unequal rank existing within the larger social structure. The general knowledge and ideology professed by each potential secret society is of the same kind found in the general community, but different in degree. The restricted knowledge in each case study is maintained both externally and internally. Esoteric knowledge is externally restricted in all of the secret societies, as only specific members within the community were allowed access to the secret knowledge. This exclusivity of knowledge was legitimized through rules of inheritance in the Wolf Society of the Nuu-chah-nulth, the Hopi First Order societies and the Winter Ceremonials of the Kwakiutl. Members were entitled to secret knowledge by virtue of their birth, which also involved socioeconomic achievement and control of the most important economic resources in the community. As these were always the most elite members of the community, access to information was restricted to only a few individuals within each community. External exclusivity of knowledge is maintained in the secret societies discussed in the Vanuatu, Ibo, and Mende cultures by wealth. These cultures have marked socio-political inequality, and knowledge is restricted to the few community members of a specific socio-economic class.

The level or degree of esoteric knowledge granted individuals in the secret societies within each of the transegalitarian and chiefdom case studies is additionally restricted through an internally ranked system, where each rank has access to a specific knowledge set to which lower order members do not. In those societies where exclusivity of knowledge was directly related to hereditary privilege, no two inheritances were exactly the same, as members within a given society had exclusive hereditary rights to specific lesser or greater levels of knowledge. Although hereditary, wealth was needed to maintain possession of knowledge and could be lost due to economic hardship. Therefore, knowledge, as a commodity, could be sold. In those societies where exclusivity of knowledge was maintained primarily through wealth, greater exclusive knowledge was bought and paid for.

Exclusivity by rank is practiced in each secret society in each case study, to varying degrees, with the exception of the Nuu-chah-nulth Whalers Society. The culturally profound knowledge necessary to entice a whale to sacrifice itself is exclusive to, and different for, the chief of each Yuquot tribe. The Whalers ritual and shrine is not truly a

society; it is a series of individual secrets. The Whaling ritual chiefs neither form a cohesive institution nor do they perform the Whaling rituals collectively, therefore, there is no membership. The tribal chief, in isolation, is the only person in the community possessing the knowledge necessary to entice the whales on shore, and as a chief cannot keep a secret from himself, there is no exclusivity of knowledge, as no formal society exists. In other word, the whaling ritual and shrine is secret, but it is not a society. As the first premise argues that exclusivity of knowledge is maintained by a cohesive society based on membership, the Whalers societies falls short of meeting the requirements for the first component of the operational definition.

All other secret societies within the six transegalitarian case studies do fulfill the requirements of the first component of the operational definition. In each of the potentially secret societies membership itself, or membership into the upper ranks, is exclusive, and by virtue of membership, affiliates possess knowledge that non-members do not possess.

EGALITARIAN SOCIETIES

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES

Land is viewed as sacred in Aboriginal culture because it represents the complex principle of the Dreaming through which it is possible for men to perform land renewing and land sustaining rituals that ensure the continuation of all life. The Dreaming encompasses the Aboriginals' particular view of life, their place within it, and their relationship to nature and mythic beings. Furthermore, the Dreamtime is part of the preordained pattern of life that incorporates humans within the timeless sacred world making it possible for the culture to fulfill its needs (Berndt and Berndt 1979:9).

Every member of the community is part of the Dreaming and is believed to possess the psychic powers necessary to connect to the sacred world. The degree of magic one possesses in relation to the Dreamtime varies and there exists in the society medicine men who possess a significant degree of power enabling them to be specialists in the practice of magic (Elkin 1945:10). These medicine men have been trained in the special body of esoteric magic and psychic lore of the Dreaming. This is not an exclusive institution as any member of the society may aspire toward it, nor is this body of esoteric knowledge

strictly withheld from members of the community. Moreover, medicine men do not constitute a formally organized society as they operate individually; they possess neither cohesive economic or political power nor do they form a separate institution with restricted knowledge based on membership. They do elicit respect from the community as they have a more developed knowledge of the secret life than that of most adults, however this knowledge is not exclusive, and the role of medicine man is informal (Elkin 1945:65-66).

MBUTI

The Mbuti practice no sorcery or witchcraft (Turnbull 1961:228) but have prayers, sacrifices and festivals based on the mythology and magic interwoven throughout their life and culture (Dupre 1975:159). The most important ritual activity in Mbuti culture is the *Molimo*, which is a ceremony to awaken the living and benevolent forest to the Mbuti's presence so that it will provide for its children. The *Molimo* ceremony is the domain of the Mbuti men, and is both a festival and a form of male initiation, the only one that exists in this culture (Duffy 1984:54). This *Molimo* ceremony serves to initiate young boys into adulthood by awakening the forest to the initiate and is considered complete once a boy has subsequently killed a large animal (Turnbull 1961:197). The ceremony centers around the sounding of a trumpet, after which the ceremony is named, used to awaken the forest. This was not considered a ritual or sacred object in itself, as what was important was the noise it produced as it represented the voice of the forest god. The loosely structured ceremony is almost devoid of formality. After the evening meal, the women and children would shut themselves in their huts, as the sight of the trumpet would theoretically bring death (Turnbull 1961:82). In practice, women and children watched the procession of men and boys from a distance, although old women had no restrictions on observing the event (Dupre 1975:190).

The female equivalent to the *Molimo* is the *Elima*, which is concerned with initiating a young girl into womanhood and takes place on the occasion of a girl's first menstruation. This coming of age ceremony is more marked for girls than it is for boys as greater significance is placed on the first appearance of menstrual blood. Both the

Elima and *Molimo* are private associations with neither internal rank nor exclusivity of knowledge, except perhaps by age (Duffy 1984:54).

SUMMARY

Very little in Aboriginal and Mbuti life is restricted, and any aspects that are limited are based on age or gender, with no knowledge set exclusive within these divisions. Every Aboriginal knows about the Dreaming and Mbuti women witness the initiation of their sons and brothers. Furthermore, the societies that exist within these two egalitarian case studies have no knowledge restriction. Every member of a specific gender will eventually possess the same knowledge, most frequently upon initiation. Within these egalitarian groups, exclusivity is not practiced, rank is informal with authority or influence based on an individual's personality, and upon initiation, one is granted full access to the knowledge, rituals, and ceremonies therein. Therefore, I argue that neither group meets the requirements of the first component of the operational definition.

CHAPTER 4 – MEMBERSHIP & WEALTH

*"Wealth is a power usurped by the few
to compel the many to labor for their benefit."
~ Percy Shelley ~*

The means by which prehistoric secret societies maintain exclusivity of knowledge and exclusive relationships is by controlling membership or advancement. Secret societies, in order to function as elite hegemonic institutions, must have definite and restrictive criteria to select certain people while excluding others. As a prehistoric secret society's purpose is to effect beneficial political and economic change for a few aggrandizing individuals, recruitment is limited through capital. By requiring payment for access to knowledge, membership is effectively restricted to those of a particular socio-economic status (Hayden 2001). In other words, secret societies limit membership by requiring that a wealth payment be paid prior to each advance in rank, the cost of which increases with each successive grade attained within the society's hierarchy.

Secret societies have elaborate hierarchical structures with multiple systems of rank through which a member must progress from novice to veteran and at each level the initiate must pay for the privileged knowledge acquired. As knowledge increases in value, based on exclusivity, so too does the fee. Loeb (1926; 1929) repeatedly writes that payment of wealth in exchange for knowledge is a significant marker of secret societies and that fees progressively increase with each successive level gained. Simmel ([1908] 1950:349-51) also describes the dynamic as common to all secret societies whereby new members enter into the society at the lowest level with only a token, if any, wealth payment and move upward only when their superiors consent. By dictating that recruitment and promotion between levels requires wealth payments, centralized control is maintained within the secret society by members of greatest rank and authority. The fees are paid to those in the highest grade securing an ongoing source of wealth for those few individuals situated in the uppermost tier. This aids in the maintenance and expansion of the society's economic and political structure (Erickson 1981:16).

Control over recruitment by a centralized few is culturally accepted as it is a reflection of the inequality and centralized control already established in other areas of

the social and economic structure (MacKenzie 1967:197). Furthermore, as ideas of ownership and differential status are established norms, the relationship between exchange of wealth and rank is a socially acceptable practice. Chapter III demonstrated that, with the exception of the Nuu-chah-nulth Whalers society, all provisionally identified secret societies within each of the six case studies maintain exclusivity of knowledge through hierarchically distinct ranks. These same societies will now be examined to determine if advancement through the ranks is voluntary and limited by wealth. The two egalitarian case studies will be similarly examined to determine if membership into the association is voluntary and limited by wealth.

TRANSEGALITARIAN & CHIEFDOM SOCIETIES

VANUATU

The Suque is a men-only publicly ranked society consisting of a hierarchically ordered series of named status grades each containing exclusive knowledge and relationships (Allen 1981:35). Initial membership into the Suque, that is, membership into the first level of the hierarchy, functions as an initiation into the larger adult community. Membership at this level is a requirement if one wishes to participate fully as an adult member of the community, including the ability to marry (Allen 1967:93), and as such operates as a private association. Admittance into the Suque at this level is for the purpose of social cohesion within the larger community, it is obligatory, and the entrance fee is a token amount that every Vanuatu male has the economic means of paying without hardship (Speiser 1996:337).

The Suque meets the criteria of a secret society expressed in the second component of the operational definition only when a member advances beyond the initial rank toward the upper echelon. It is at these higher levels that membership becomes voluntary; admittance into successive levels is not a requirement for full participation in the larger community. Although any initiated member is entitled to pursue a higher supernumerary rank within the Suque, in practice only men belonging to the dominant families of the community succeed, as access to each successive rank is contingent upon ones ability to supply the requisite wealth for the completion of the ceremony acquired through support of powerful families. Selection for promotion in the Suque is done by elite members and

depends primarily on wealth, with the cost of rank significantly increasing with each successive grade attained. To progress through the ranks of the Suque, an aspiring member must supply the necessary resources for the performance of the ritual, in the form of tusked pigs, and provide the Suque elite with an additional fee in exchange for admittance into the grade, insignias, ritual services, and specific supernatural knowledge (Allen 1981:24). A consequence of increasingly more substantial membership fees is that fewer and fewer men attain the higher ranks within the Suque society, and those at the top are the wealthiest members of the society (Speiser 1996:358).

HOPi

In Hopi society there exist a number of ritual societies, each of which falls into a specific ranked Order. Each ritual Order differs not so much in kind but in the degree of socially perceived value gained from the knowledge acquired upon entry. Between the ages of six and ten, all Hopi children, both male and female, are initiated into one of the Third Order, or lowest ranked, societies. These Third Order societies are not voluntary; they are a prerequisite for full participation in Hopi society and thus constitute private associations. Within Third Order societies there is no internal ranking, no exclusivity of knowledge, and no entrance fee. Participation in Second Order societies is a further social requirement for all males wishing to become functioning members of the Hopi community. Once a boy reaches the age of between sixteen and twenty he is eligible for initiation into one of the manhood societies that represent Second Order associations. Once initiated he is granted rights and privileges endowed to all adult male members of the community, most notably the right to marry. Second Order societies do not fulfill the second requirement of the operational definition for secret societies. They are obligatory and no payment for admittance is required. Second Order societies are therefore private associations that provide the required acculturation for active membership in Hopi life. First Order societies, however, do meet the criteria for identification as a secret society indicated by the operational definition. Membership into one of the three societies that make up the First Order society is voluntary and limited by one's socio-economic status. Membership provides privileges beyond general member's of the community. The esoteric knowledge of First Order Societies is exclusive to initiated members. Although

no formal entrance fee is paid upon admittance into one of the three societies or upon advancement through the ranks, membership and advancement is implicitly dependent on and limited by clan wealth (Whitley 1998:57-61).

Not all Hopi clans possess land, nor do all clans own ceremonies or equivalent duties in the social system upon which the assignment of clan lands was mythologically predicated. Thus, Hopi clans have differing amounts of prestige and power based on ceremonial property, land, and political office (Whiteley 1998:62). Ownership of material and politico-religious property determines wealth within Hopi culture resulting in marked differences in economic standing within the community. The relationship between First Order societies and wealth is suggested in that ownership of ceremonies and offices received upon admittance to First Order societies is restricted to only the economically prominent clans and then only with the most wealthy individuals within each (Whiteley 1998:70). Power is fundamentally equated with elite access to specialized secret knowledge that enables the bearer to induce significant transformations in the world. Ritual knowledge is the strategic resource and the structure of ritual leadership is the structure of political leadership (Whiteley 1998:103). As access to clan land is dependent on participation in the ceremonial system and such participation is not possible without possession of ritual knowledge, the elite maintain a monopoly on the community's wealth, both material and esoteric. As a result, wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few who use their network of personal connections in secret societies to enhance and expand their individual power and authority. This network strategy broadly corresponds to descriptions of accumulators, aggrandizers, and entrepreneurial elite (Feinman et al 2000:453).

By controlling and manipulating access to ritual knowledge, elite members of each clan is able to control access to land and the essential economic resources that flow from them. Leaders, through their role as clan authorities, oversee storehouses of food or other goods that are redistributed at feasts and direct the labor efforts of each of its members (Feinman et al 2000:455). Evidence for such self-perpetuating control is derived from the spatial patterns of large resource storage features that are associated with the great kivas, which are directly associated with the First Order societies (Brandt 1980:123).

Although no overt wealth payment is required for admittance into a Hopi First Order society, wealth does serve to legitimate an individual's suitability for admittance. From a Hopi perspective, wealth lies not directly in material conditions, but in a man's ability to transform material conditions through supernatural skill. Therefore, the amount of material wealth an individual possesses is an indication of his esoteric power and the degree to which he has a 'right' to esoteric knowledge (Whiteley 1998:93).

KWAKIUTL

All social positions on the Northwest Coast are determined by two linked factors: heredity and wealth (Drucker 1939:61). Everywhere elite inheritance corresponds to status and prestige that must be maintained through exploitation of productive resources, investments, and public displays (Sturtevant 1990:4). Prestige is defined by the frequency and extravagance of potlatches, with the most eminent person (as defined by his rights and privileges) being the chief (Rohner and Rohner 1970:81). Wealth was obtained from both economic resources and perceived spiritual power; the greater a man's access to supernumerary power the greater the number of supporters he could attract and therefore the larger the amount of wealth he could marshal or control. Although some powers were acquired in potlatches, the Kwakiutl stressed the transmission of authority through the dance societies (Core and MacDonald 1987:38). Membership into the dance societies was voluntary and, broadly speaking, limited to those male members of the community who possessed a hereditary right to the secret ceremonies. Those who had high positions in elite lineages had the proper claims and, more importantly, the wealth to sponsor the potlatches necessary to validate membership. Although there are no formal membership fees, public feasts served as the means of transferring wealth to elite members of the dance society. In other words, membership into these secret dance societies is limited by wealth, as only persons who have access to considerable amounts of disposable resources are able to sponsor the requisite feasting demonstrations for acquiring the society's privileges (Garfield and Wingerl 1980:45-46).

Thus, wealth and public displays of such wealth (feasts and potlatches) were necessary to acquire and maintain exclusive knowledge in the dance societies, which effectively restricted membership to elite members of Kwakiutl society.

NUU-CHAH-NULTH

Nothing is more clear in Nuu-chah-nulth society than the intimate relationship between inheritance of resources, status, and wealth. Rankings were ideally fixed through inheritance, though rights and privileges could be purchased from relations in economic hardship. Rankings were maintained by inherited resources and the deployment of economic wealth. The link between wealth and rights was inseparable; hereditary rights were considered a form of wealth and material wealth was necessary for their formal acquisition or validation. One of the most prestigious privileges inherited in Nuu-chah-nulth culture was the possession of esoteric knowledge (Drucker 1939:64).

A few elite families formed the core of every village. Such families possess property, including rights to fishing, hunting, and collecting grounds that are the foundation of its wealth. Such property was usually inherited, but could also be acquired by war, purchase, or marriage. This enable them to maintain claims to a variety of social and ceremonial privileges, such as rights to initiate and perform a particular part in a ceremonial and to wear particular masks and crests and vice versa (Forde 1943:77).

The Yuquot Whaler's society is limited to the individual occupying the highest position within the tribe, the Chief, whose position is ascribed at birth and maintained through status and prestige, both of which are dependent on wealth. Only the highest member of the chiefly lineage within a tribe have the knowledge necessary to entice whales, through ritual magic, to sacrifice themselves for the good of the community. There was no group membership into this ritual whaling magic; it is the sole duty of the chief as protector and provider of his tribe. One may, therefore, argue that this position is obligatory, as a chief's refusal to perform the Whaling Ritual results in his removal and the installation of a new chief (John Jewitt 1993:157). Wealth has a significant role in maintaining a chiefs position, however as access to supernatural knowledge is limited to a single individual, not a group, there is no entrance fee. Furthermore, as the Whaler's society is a series of tribal chiefs carrying out their duty in isolation, I argue that it does not constitute a secret society as outlined in the operational definition.

By contrast, membership into the Wolf Society represents initiation into an internally ranked group. Membership is voluntary and although no fee was paid directly to the higher-ranking members it was indirectly based on wealth. Initiation into the

lowest rank of the Wolf Society served to legitimate the membership of potential elite heirs into the chiefly class (Wolf 1999:100). At this entry level, the Wolf society fails to meet the requirements necessary for its inclusion as a secret society, functioning as a private association. As with the Kwakiutl dance societies, however, entry into the higher levels of the Wolf society clearly meet the criteria set by the second component of the operational definition as membership becomes limited first to those who had inherited the right and then further restricted to those who could demonstrate the privilege of membership through wealth. As the community's acceptance of a social privilege depended on the giving of a large feast at which inherited rights were adopted and wealth was given to highest ranking guests, privileges could readily lapse if an individual lacked access to sufficient wealth to provide the required celebration (Forde 1934:182). Thus, membership into the Wolf society required substantial amounts of wealth and is strictly limited through inheritance, restricting membership to only a few members of the total elite population (Sproat 1987:88).

Ibo

Membership into the Ekkpo society is voluntary and clearly dependent on an individual's possession of wealth. Initiates in the Ekkpo society pay a membership fee upon admittance, and for each subsequent rank. Received payments are divided among the members in the highest positions based on seniority (Uchendu 1965:82). The initiate must pass through seven grades before he is even eligible for membership into the deeper teachings, paying a fee prior to advancement to each new grade. All totaled, the fees amount to "a fortune by Ibo standards" (Talbot 1912:40). Wealth is the sole passport into this society, thus limiting membership to a small socio-economic class within the community. A great rise in social status is secured by entry into the Ekkpo; however, initiation is not a requirement for legitimate membership into the Ibo community (Arinze 1970:5).

The first Ekkpo grade is neither important nor expensive to enter, however, membership fees increase successively with each higher grade. Entrance fees into the lower ranks of the Ekkpo cost approximately 100 manillas, a substantial sum for the majority of Ibo men, and must be paid in full to the Ekkpo leader and officials before

membership is allowed to begin (Talbot 1912:41). Entrance fees increase dramatically as a man passes from the lower grades into the upper echelon. Payment for membership into the higher grades is five to fifteen times greater than the amount required for the lower grades. Consequently, payments are made in installments over a period of time, and again, membership is only achieved once payment is made in full (Arinze 1970:6). Membership into the highest, or final grade, represents the most expensive increase. Very few men succeed in reaching the highest rank and then only enter later in life. Additionally, those who belong to the four highest grades may join the most elite and exclusive of all Ekkpo ceremonies, the *Mariba*, the cost of which is astronomical by Ibo standards (Talbot 1912:41-42). It is the exorbitant payments necessary for ascension through the ranks of the Ekkpo hierarchy that serve as the mechanism for restricting membership. Evidence for wealth as the only limiting factor in Ekkpo society is demonstrated by the practice of elite Ekkpo members paying the successive entrance fees for their sons before they have reached manhood. All Ibo males may enter the Ekkpo when young if their fathers are wealthy enough to pay the necessary fees, however exclusive knowledge is not granted to them until middle age has been reached (Talbot 1912:40).

Thus, Ibo culture limits membership into the Ekkpo society by requiring members to pay a substantial wealth payment prior to advancing in rank, the cost of which increases with each successive grade attained within the society's hierarchy.

MENDE

Perhaps the most important period in the life of an ordinary Mende male occurs at puberty when he is initiated into the Poro society and introduced to the Great Poro spirit (Little 1967:117). Initiation of boys into the Poro society is compulsory for adult membership into the community. Marriage, for example, is impossible without it, and non-initiates, irrespective of biological age, were treated like children and banned from holding any position of importance (Little 1965:356). As explained, the most basic function of the Poro society is to equip every Mende man for the part he is to play in community life. It provides a course of training that does not carry the initiate beyond the most junior stage in Poro society affairs (Little 1967:244). The majority of Mende

males never advance beyond the entry-level grade and those men who rise within the Poro ranks do so voluntarily and at great personal expense (Little 1965:358). When a Poro member passes from one level to another he is given the knowledge necessary to perform the rituals and ceremonies exclusive to that rank (Bellman 1984:48). Each advancement in rank involves a substantial initiation fee, which is paid to the Poro officials and distributed among the senior Poro members. Elite positions are few as most advancement requires initiation fees that, for most members of the Mende community, are impossible to make. Thus, wealth is what limits membership into the highest Poro ranks (Fulton 1972:1223) and only a very wealthy man, usually of advanced years, could hope to be initiated into its highest degrees (Little 1965:358).

SUMMARY

To qualify as a secret society, membership recruitment, or admission into the upper echelon of the association, must be limited, voluntary, and require a substantial wealth payment. With the exception of the Nuu-chah-nulth Whaling ritual, it is evident that each provisionally identified secret society within the six transegalitarian and chiefdom cultures examined meets this second component of the operational definition of a secret society. With the Vanuatu, Mende, and Ibo cultures, membership is limited solely by wealth, while in the Hopi, Kwakiutl, and Nuu-chah-nulth culture membership is limited directly by birth and indirectly by wealth. Entrance into the lowest grades of the societies may be obligatory, however, in all case studies investigated, progression within the hierarchical structures beyond initial membership is voluntary, limited, and requires enormous financial investment beyond the socio-economic means of most community members.

EGALITARIAN SOCIETIES

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES

The life of a Western Desert Aboriginal man is reserved for those who have successfully passed through the various degree of initiation. There are several of these, each of which is marked by its own ritual, name, and esoteric knowledge (Elkin 1945:3). Adult males do not see or learn everything at one time; there is much to know to preserve

the sacred Aboriginal heritage, complex rites, chants, sacred sites, myths, and sanctions of behavior on which the group's success is believed to depend. This is embodied by the concept of Dreamtime, which is both a time and a state of life (Elkin 1945:4). Admittance into these initiated ranks is not voluntary; they are viewed as a social obligation for the preservation of life. They are not limited, except by gender, and no payment is required to progress to the next degree. The function and aim of these Dreamtime rituals is to impress upon the initiate all the sanctity and authority of tribal traditions through a realization of the presence and power of the cult heroes and spirits tied to the Dreaming. The Dreamtime serves to create and maintain unity through shared action setting up social continuity and cohesion, which ensures social well being. It may have a latent hegemonic function, but as control of nature is minimal and a harmonious coexistence is practiced, knowledge of the Dreamtime is not restricted by economic wealth (Elkin 1945:5).

MBUTI

The only recognized associations and ceremonies in Mbuti culture are the *Molimo* and *Elima*, male and female puberty rights respectively. Both ceremonies serve to initiate the young into adulthood. These rites-of-passage are not voluntary; every Mbuti child is initiated into the appropriate gender association at the onset of puberty. The *Molimo* and *Elima* are symbolic representations of one's new status as a fully functioning member of the community. There is no membership fee, no internal ranking, no exclusivity of knowledge, except that based on gender, and initiation is not limited within the Mbuti community (Turnbull 1961:196-7).

SUMMARY

The second component of the operational definition requires that recruitment, or admission into the upper echelon of a secret society is limited, voluntary, and requires a substantial payment of wealth. In both Australian and Mbuti culture all associations are limited by gender and age but within these groups there is no membership restriction. Initiation into each association is considered obligatory if one wants to be considered a legitimate member of the community. Finally, initiation in these cases carries no

entrance fee. I argue, therefore, that no association within these two egalitarian cultures conforms to the second component of the operational definition.

CHAPTER 5 – HEGEMONY

“Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together.”

~ Hannah Arendt ~

The third component of my operational definition states that the primary goal of prehistoric secret societies is social and economic centralized control of resources for hegemonic purposes to effect beneficial change for a select minority of the total population. In other words, I argue that a traditional secret society is an institution that functions as a deliberate mechanism whereby entrepreneurial elite individuals within a community legitimately obtain power and authority over a population's labor, decisions, and surplus resources. Georg Simmel's identification of secret societies as exceptionally rational, deliberate, and planned constructions manufactured by a central power ([1908]1950:349) adds support to this assumption.

Restriction of socially valued knowledge is a common and effective hegemonic mechanism through which a discrete group gains sufficient legitimation necessary to advance their political and economic agendas (Tefft 1980:15). Institutionally established secrets gain political and economic advantage only when a majority of the population is excluded and when enterprising aggrandizers reinforce their influence within their community by dominating access to knowledge through hierarchical ranks within secret societies or other organizations (Tefft 1980:119). The correlation between rank and political power has been examined thoroughly by Allen (1972; 1981) and Rodman (1973). They argue that rank-taking itself is not an intrinsically political action, as rank on its own, does not confer any political power. Rather, rank may be used advantageously by individuals seeking power and authority. The relationship between rank and secrecy is such that a group of aggrandizing individuals may begin to manipulate their social environment by professing exclusive access to vital esoteric knowledge and by limiting its dispersal through supernumerary hierarchies. The larger community in which the secret society operates must be induced to accept the division of

such knowledge, in part, as a legitimate aspect of the division of labor (MacKenzie 1967:25).

Secret societies, once established, maintain their power and position within a community, not through force, but by obtaining acceptance of the structures upon which its dominance depends. In secret societies, the knowledge upon which its dominance depends involves traditional supernatural beliefs. The secret society appeals to preexisting principles in the moral order, primarily those related to religious mores, traditions, and numinous beliefs (La Fontaine 1985:17). The exclusive knowledge held by the secret society may be, therefore, deeper but not radically different from the esoteric knowledge possessed by all members of the community (MacKenzie 1967:25). Economic relationships and political structures may be used to manipulate exclusive control over the exchange and regulation of culturally valued information within a population for the benefit of the upper echelon of the secret society (Tefft 1980:119). Entrepreneurial elite members within a secret society are able to exploit (through hierarchical control of fees and required ritual paraphernalia, owned dances, and feasts) a community's surplus resources to solidify their prestige and increase their status. Secret societies are, in this regard, strategies of political manipulation by aggrandizers who use exclusivity of culturally valued knowledge to channel political and economic power into the hands of a few (Hayden 2001).

Secrecy is an inherent part of any political process enabling aggrandizing individuals to simultaneously carry out their strategies for acquiring power while maintaining the legitimacy of their political rule (Tefft 1980:51). Prehistoric secret societies, by working from within the existing social organization, establish a hegemonic structure that once in place serves to maintain itself (Daraul 1961:10). Emerging from within complex non-egalitarian hunter-gatherer and horticultural groups, secret societies are thus conventional in nature, relying on acceptance by the majority of the population for continuance and control. Secrecy promotes passive acceptance by the general populace since the secret society publicly declares its goals as promotion of the well being of the community while internal power structures and contributions of wealth remain largely obscured or hidden. Social acceptance is necessary at this level, as blatant authoritarian social structures are not yet developed. As such, prehistoric secret societies must support, or at least be in

close accord with, the dominant values of the community by providing some perceived benefit to the existing social and political order and the values on which that order is based (Tefft 1980:119). Prehistoric secret societies frequently gain authority by maneuvering elite society members into political offices or other positions of prestige and power, thus creating a network or series of relationships that are capable of reinforcing the secular legitimacy of the secret society's status within the community. This, in turn, enables a prehistoric secret society to continue to expand and consolidate its hegemonic goals within the culture. Such superficially conformist secret orders provide a process through which elite members can centrally control access to the most important adult ranks, status, economic resources, and political power with minimal conflict by using their dominant position within the secular structure to defend their privileged sacred position (Tefft 1980:51-52).

Finally, to pursue their goals members of a secret society must engage in behaviors that cannot always be disguised or buried in the stream of mundane activities, nor would it benefit them to do so (Erickson 1981:200). Secrecy functions as a separating or distancing mechanism between the leading and subordinate groups and as such differential status must be demonstrated to those being separated (MacKenzie 1967:22). It is important to realize that if members of a secret society were to enjoy a desired sense of power and privilege, the acquisition of which is the primary reason for becoming a member, they must demonstrate their secrecy publicly in such a way as to make themselves felt as an extraordinary force (Wedgewood 1930:144).

The following chapter explores the ways in which the potential secret societies in each of the six transegalitarian and chiefdom case studies operate from within the community, including: 1) how they maintain their legitimation, 2) the level of economic control they possess, 3) the degree of political dominance, and 4) how each publicly demonstrates its supremacy. This same examination will be carried out on the associations existing within the two egalitarian case studies to determine the presence or absence of hegemonic aspects.

TRANSEGALITARIAN & CHIEFDOM SOCIETIES

VANUATU

Vanuatu culture is so dominated by the Suque society that it almost completely replaces other forms of social organization. Furthermore, the Suque operates as a political organization that is otherwise lacking within the community; it governs the public and private lives of the villagers and dictates a man's status and prestige. The Suque dominates the political scene to such a degree that any male of consequence finds it imperative to compete within this graded society if he hopes to gain significant prestige, wealth, and power (Allen 1981:19).

A man's Suque rank is known to all within the community. This communal recognition and shared affiliation activates and affirms relations between individuals within the social structure, coordinates various groups within the broader society, and elevates individuals in the competition for leadership (Blumer 1960:12). The entire community considers the highest Suque grades to be positions of considerable supernatural power and authority. As in most of eastern Asia, the interconnectedness between traditional spiritual beliefs and hegemony is evident in the inseparable relationship between Suque rank and the concept of *mana*. Vanuatu culture assumes that the duration of the souls continued existence after death depends on the Suque grade of the deceased. This is a result of *mana*, or spiritual power. The higher a man's Suque rank the more *mana* he possesses, and therefore, the greater vitality his soul possesses. Therefore, a man gathers round himself as much *mana* as his financial means allow (Speiser 1996:281; 326-27). As the Suque claims exclusive knowledge to spiritual power, and this knowledge is based on preexisting social norms within the community to which the Suque conforms, the society's control over social, political, and economic structures is accepted.

The highest-ranking Suque member, or president, is customarily the village "chief" or head-man, who holds both the highest secular and sacred office. The chief is responsible for the overall direction of the religious ceremonies upon which the success of everyone in the community depends. He instructs all subordinate Suque members, decides if there are sufficient pigs for the public ceremonies, and, more importantly, announces the dates

of the grade advancement rites that receive the mass sacrifices. Such privileges constitute a high degree of control by the most elite member of the Suque over rank, resources, and the level of status and prestige held by each member of the community (Allen 1981:66).

In rank taking, a man converts prestige into political influence by confirming and formalizing the degree and kind of authority he has already achieved in a typical 'bigman' context. The political advantage to a rank-taker is principally one of legitimation and affirmation of his ability to call upon the resources of the community and entry into decision-making circles of increasing importance (Allen 1981:73). Pig exchange is the primary element of all social relations within Vanuatu culture and Suque leaders are able to manipulate these exchanges to their advantage by virtue of their exclusive knowledge (Speiser 1996:75). Economic and political advancement is accomplished through a highly developed system of credit, which the Suque society controls. A man borrows the necessary resources for achieving greater rank from a high-ranking Suque member who acts as his sponsor. This is a formal financial transaction where interest on the loan is 100 percent and repayment is usually one year from the date of the loan. If remittance is late, interest on the loan is doubled (Speiser 1996:77).

In his own rank takings, an elite member of the Suque taps the wider networks underlying the graded society to acquire pigs and strengthen the social relations dependent on their exchange to his own support (Allen 1981:41). Achievement of status differentiation is founded upon the ideology of reciprocal exchange, in that each individual rank taking ceremony is embedded in a wide and continual network of financial transactions in pigs. Deacon (1934) noted this thread of continuity which links particular grade taking, explaining that each "is bound up with others that have gone before and others which will take place later, almost every male member of the community being indebted or in expectation of receiving pigs from every other member" (Deacon 1934:350-351). In other words, integral to the marshalling of resources for aggrandizement are relations of debt, obligation, and dependence that an elite member establishes through his support of others in their rank taking ventures. By entering the network of exchange in these supporting roles, an aggrandizer is able to lay a substantive foundation for his own support (Allen 1981:41).

Entrepreneurial elite may make substantial political capital out of the rank-taking of others, gaining prestige and reaffirming legitimacy through generosity while maintaining considerable control over a candidate's material and social resources by acting as his sponsor. Through the rank taking of fellow society members, elite Suque members consolidate their position through the generosity shown in supplying pigs. While this generosity is, in itself, an index of prestige, it also has significant political and economic advantage. It is a means of controlling rank-taking within the group and of capitalizing on the social relations within the clan as it calls for reciprocity at some later date. Furthermore, as the Suque is the central competitive arena for male prestige, it offers a high level of legitimation to individuals' aggrandizing activities. The Suque society not only provides a process for using another's rank-taking to consolidate one's own power but, by participating in all aspects of rank-taking, elite members gain prestige. Aspiring aggrandizers work from within the Suque society to lay a foundation for personal authority and influence by developing relationships of obligation and control over the most valued material and social resources of the community. As such, the most elite members are those who not only possess high rank status themselves but also appropriate the status of other men by controlling the means of rank acquisition, relations of exchange, and sponsorship (Allen 1981:74-75).

The Suque society, which is potentially open to all men and where prestige is competed for in a number of cultural areas, provides a specific domain in which influence gained through industry, generosity, and entrepreneurship is publicly expressed and confirmed (Allen 1981:39). Although rank is based solely on the grade achieved within the Suque, elite members must constantly legitimize and reaffirm their worthiness, thus making the social structure a highly competitive domain. An individual seeking prestige and status through wealth relies not only on himself but also on the support of others for attainment of his political ambitions. Public displays, in the form of sacrifices and feasts, serve to flaunt the aggrandizing individuals' power and the power of the Suque society. These dramatic occasions not only announce and legitimize a man's political career but demonstrate the level of supernatural power at his command (Allen 1981:28). The Suque operates as a mechanism to create and maintain patterns of social relations of debt and obligation between elite members and their supporters. This social structure situates

political and economic control, in the form of accumulation of wealth based on pigs, in the hands of a few high-ranking members by underpinning the central role of leaders in defining the boundaries and membership of each local group (Allen 1981:59).

Thus, the Suque represents an institution that functions as a mechanism for aggrandizing individuals to gain control over a population's social, economic, and political resources. The Suque society maintains its legitimation through exclusive knowledge of supernatural powers traditionally accepted within Vanuatu culture. Such supernumerary access enables the control of economic and political advancement by the Suque through a highly developed system of debt, obligation, and dependence on a network of elite relationships. Finally, public displays, ceremonies, feasts, and sacrifices demonstrate and reinforce the Suque's power and authoritative privilege.

HOPÍ

The notion of the Hopi clan as an economically egalitarian corporate unit possessed of a joint estate in property and jointly conducting important economic activities may be a culturally professed ideal but in practice, it is not the case (Lightfoot 1984:88). In Saitta's (1997:10) model, communal labor mobilizations provide a kin-based mechanism through which labor is amassed and surpluses produced in excess of immediate household subsistence needs. Saitta further argues that this communalism is a useful theoretical perspective to account for evident variations and complexity in Puebloan organizations. Saitta's model is supported through an analysis of Hopi surplus accumulation in the form of storage facilities, where significant differences existed in storage capacities within and between large and small sites (Lightfoot 1984:96). This economic surplus, though communal in nature, could be manipulated by entrepreneurial elite to gain a political advantage.

Analysis of prehistoric site size and the spatial distribution of settlements, goods, storage, and specialized architectural features in Pueblo villages show that socio-political organization in the region existed and substantially increased through time (Whiteley 1998:67). The development of simple decision-making hierarchies appears to have occurred in some areas as early as AD 700, in the form of political systems typically characterized by rank-size distributions consisting of clusters of small sites located

around large central settlements. These larger settlements were associated non-randomly with great kivas, the most noticeable signature of religious dominance within the culture. This ranked socio-political structure provided conditions favorable for the acquisition of unequal status to emerge and be maintained. Economically based political units were characterized in Hopi culture by rank-size distributions composed of primary and secondary centers and smaller sites. The primary centers were associated with great kivas, large plaza spaces, and a great diversity of exotic status goods, while secondary centers contained a limited number of specialized architectural features and fewer luxury goods. Small sites were associated with neither great kivas nor enclosed plaza spaces, and few, if any, status goods (Lightfoot 1984:87-88). This demarcation in status is believed to be due to extensive regional exchange, where the large sites functioned as regional trade centers under the control of an ordered group. If so, this structure strongly suggests the existence of an aggrandizing groups' accumulation of wealth and power legitimized through the exclusive possession of esoteric knowledge. Ethnographically, the great kivas were associated with the most prestigious ceremonies and ownership of specific First Order knowledge is the currency of power in Hopi culture (Whiteley 1998:93).

Offices and duties within the Hopi community are the inherited property of particular clans, with ownership of ceremonies and positions of power the custody of the most prominent individuals within a clan (Forde 1934:242). The fact that specific clans, or specific lineages within a clan, entirely lack ceremonial property, land, or political offices demonstrates that power is not a jointly owned commodity. Moreover, even those clans who possess ritual knowledge never operate as a corporate unit in the most important ceremonial activities; it is specific individuals within particular lineages that exclusively maintain the esoteric knowledge necessary for the correct performance of ceremonies. Given the restricted and unequal ownership of culturally valued commodities and rights, it is reasonable to assume that Hopi clans, lineages, and individuals have markedly different amounts of prestige and status that translated into differential socio-political power (Whiteley 1998:70). By controlling and manipulating access to ritual knowledge and the ownership of important ceremonies, self-interested individuals are able to control access to clan lands and essential economic resources (Feinman et al. 2000:455). Plots,

secondary crops, orchards, and gardens are all individually owned and tended. Other significant economic activities, such as animal husbandry, cattle herding, owning horses and burrows are neither in the charge of the clan, nor even a lineage segment, but individually owned, usually by the head of a religiously prominent lineage. These elite individuals controlled the resources generated by dependents and clients, providing for their needs but ultimately providing for themselves (Whiteley 1998:66-67).

Hopi society deployed a politico-religious system for the purpose of social control, hierarchical status, and political decision-making. This power construct directly concerned relationships of control within and between the different social groups. Moreover, it was ultimately attributable to the control of the material production of strategic resources. This has significant implications for hegemonic structures; Hopi concepts of power begin with supernatural command that qualitatively alters the conception of politics. Hopi ritual is concerned with control of the cosmos which is animate, transformative, and approachable through specific symbolic observances. As such, ritual action itself implicates politics in that rituals are designed to alter the material conditions of humanity, beneficially or adversely (Whiteley 1998:84).

Coercion and consent are central problems in any consideration of political power and such concepts have almost invariably presupposed a control through means of physical violence by the power holders. Numerous practices exist, however, that elicit political dominance that do not rest upon such harsh corporal control. In the Hopi case, the internal use of brute force is rare. Rather, in the Hopi system, coercive force is transfigured into such actions as mystical ceremonies, economic pressure, kinship obligations and feasts. First Order societies serve to keep this valued knowledge exclusively in the hands of an elite group of ritual specialists. Through secrecy, knowledge takes on the character of property. From a Hopi ideological perspective, the most valued resource lies not in material conditions per se, but in the ability to transform these through supernatural skills (Whiteley 1998:96). It is via control of religious ceremonies or ritual office that the heads of the apical clan segments are considered *Pavansinom*. Elite status is sanctioned by the power that accrues to them through access to the specific ritual knowledge required to perform the ceremony effectively. Nonmembers of lineage segments and clans that own no ceremonies, important offices,

or highly valued ritual knowledge lack control over significant supernatural power and are thus seen as commoners. The structure of Hopi ritual knowledge is such that it facilitates the establishment and maintenance of hegemonic institutions that may be exploited by aggrandizing individuals. Hopi authority rests in the conduct of cyclical ceremonies where each individual, usually the eldest male, within the core lineage segment of a clan individually owns a portion of the total ritual. Each section of the ceremony must be combined with that of others to perform the ritual in full. Thus, an exclusive group of individuals work together as a cohesive whole to provide the ritual knowledge needed to produce and maintain the hegemonic structure (Whiteley 1998:87).

Elite members of Hopi society, by virtue of their command of supernatural forces, formed hierarchal decision-making organizations that centralized control and redistribution of surplus resources. The elite maintained their legitimation through possession of traditional esoteric knowledge exclusive to First Order societies. As knowledge was the currency of power in Hopi life, elite members of the First Order societies held political dominance over the larger community, demonstrating their legitimation through dramatic public rituals and ceremonies held in the great kiva's or plazas. Therefore, by controlling and manipulating ritual knowledge, the elite members of the First Order societies produced and maintained a hegemonic structure endorsed by the larger community.

KWAKIUTL

The Kwakiutl use of spiritual ideology as an exploitive mechanism to generate power and authority for elite individuals includes a variety of ritual activities, naming ceremonies, ancestral dances, and dramas. These public demonstrations, collectively called Winter Ceremonials, were used to validate an elite individual's right to the status and prestige transferred through membership in the dance societies (Sturtevant 1990:279). Winter dances had a prevailing religious element heightening the tone of the whole proceeding, but it must be remembered that supernatural spirits appeared only to youths who had appropriate hereditary claims and, more importantly, only to those whose sponsors had sufficient property to give the impressive displays required at the time of initiation (Codere 1966:6). The central event of the Winter Ceremonial was the entry of

young men, 16 to 20 years of age, usually the heirs of chiefs and chiefs-to-be, into a dance society. Since this initiatory sequence was conferred only to high-ranking participants, it may be interpreted as a process of sacralizing the heirs and aspirants to membership in the chiefly class (Wolf 1999:100).

During the Winter Ceremonies, the profane period is suspended and the clan organization is replaced by a sacred institution based on the dance societies. During this time "the whole tribe is divided into two groups: the uninitiated, the secular who do not take any active part in the ceremonies, and the initiated" (Boas 1966:174) who perform the sacred rituals, the latter recruited entirely from the wealthiest lineages of the tribe. As with the Hopi, the Kwakiutls intimate connection to the tribal spirits legitimates their power and justifies their unequal access to, and control over, surplus resources. Through publicly demonstrated rituals, awe and respect of their exclusive possession of esoteric knowledge is generated enabling them to maneuver the community into accepting the exploitive system that supports their elite power and authority (Ruyle 1973:617).

In Kwakiutl ideology, chiefs derive their power and authority from a culturally constructed connection with supernatural forces, which gives their political functions a unique cosmological aura allowing them to promote obedience in a socially acceptable manner (Wolf 1999:69). A clan chief, for example, could rally his people through organized physically violent encounters to defend threatened resources. He could coordinate this action because an attack on fishing grounds or shellfish beds was as much an assault on the link connecting the social group with its founding supernatural ancestors, as it is an act of interference with its economic or political rights (Wolf 1999:90). To ensure the continuation of hegemonic processes with as little resistance as possible, rules of inheritance based on preexisting supernatural beliefs within the culture were emphasized. The right to control the economic surplus of the group was seen as hereditary, itself legitimized through displays of wealth, and therefore the accumulation of subsistence capital was socially accepted as being in the hands of the direct descendants of a single line (Drucker 1939:59). To publicly institutionalize this process, the Kwakiutl stressed the transmission of hereditary power and privilege through the dance societies (Cove and MacDonald 1987:38). Access to Kwakiutl dance societies was the culturally sanctioned exclusive hereditary right of the elite. This mechanism secured

their dominance in Kwakiutl society as the chiefs controlled the economic resources as recipient of the ancestral spirits (Wolf 1999:90).

Boas (1966:172) identified the winter ceremonials as essentially religious in character because of the Kwakiutl belief in the presence during the winter of the spirits who owned the dances; however, he found that because the ceremonies were "so intimately associated with non-religious activities, such as feasts and potlatches, it was hard to assess their religious values." Whenever features of Kwakiutl society or political relations are examined, the degree that socio-politics of rank, hierarchical descent, and hereditary succession were intertwined with transfers of ceremonial titles and privileges is evident (Wolf 1999:82). Although lacking political centralization, the Kwakiutl elite nevertheless largely played out their social, political, economic, and religious life within a common, public arena and everywhere the elite maintain their political status through displays of wealth (Sturtevant 1990:4).

Thus, the Kwakiutl dance societies function as a deliberate hegemonic mechanism. Entrepreneurial elite individuals legitimate their power and authority over the population's labor and surplus resources by controlling exclusive access to supernatural knowledge. Members of the secret societies publicly demonstrate their supernumerary supremacy through feasts and potlatches, dances and dramas. By generating awe and respect within the larger community, the elite members are granted the authority needed to influence social, economic, and political aspects of the culture.

NUU-CHAH-NULTH

Nuu-chah-nulth affluence revolves around the ownership of economic wealth in the form of territorial holdings and ceremonial wealth in the form of honorable names, titles, ritual privileges, and secret knowledge. Status and elite privileges are derived from economic resources and ceremonial property such as songs, dances, and medicines and a solid mechanism needed to be in place to maintain ownership. There were three major ceremonial forms in Nuu-chah-nulth culture whose significance was more social than religious: feasts, potlatches, and the dance societies (Drucker 1951:87). Of the dance societies, the most prominent was the Wolf Society and the Whaling rituals, both of

which were exclusive to only the most elite members of the community who were, through inherited privilege, the proper ritual specialists (Jonaitis 2000:30).

The Mowachaht Whaling rituals were performed to acquire a variety of economically important subsistence products and often the same shrine and its rituals served to bring heavy runs of salmon or herring as well as to invoke whales to drift ashore. The tribal chief, who owned the territory where the commodities were obtained, was expected to see to it that the supply did not fail by carrying out his ritual obligations meticulously. The chief set up figures of supernatural beings and animals made of bundles of brush and with them human and animal skeletons and corpses. The human remains were usually said to represent the chief's ancestors who had been given the ritual knowledge by the spirits as the dead had the power to attract, or compel, game (Drucker 1951:171). Roquefeuil (1823:102-3) recounts that once the religious ceremony was conducted and a whale either killed or found on shore, the chief presides over the meat distribution, formally dividing it among his dependents. The chief then hosts a grand celebration in the forest behind the village. This festival continues until dawn, at which time the chief addresses the spirits in the presence of his people (Jonaitis 1999:24). The Whaling ritual, though possessing centralized aspects of political and economic control by the chief is not a hegemonic secret society as defined here. My operational definition argues that secret societies use hegemony for the purpose of generating beneficial change for a select minority of the total population. This implies the existence of a cohesive sub-group, or formal society, within the larger population and authoritative control by a group of elite, not merely a single powerful individual.

Each year, at different places throughout the Nuu-chah-nulth tribal region, the *Ts'ayiq* society, composing the most elite members of the Wolf Society from each of the Nuu-chah-nulth tribes, secretly hold its annual meeting and publicly perform the Wolf Dance. As many as seventy members from various tribes along the Vancouver Island shore and across the strait on the American side attend these meetings. This meeting is not a tribal affair but composed of the most elite members of the Wolf Society, those belonging to the *Ts'ayiq*. All non-members, constituting the vast majority of the men initiated into the Wolf Society, were excluded from attending this meeting, which is held in an elite member's house depending upon the location. Most members of the Nuu-chah-nulth

community are completely ignorant of what transpires, as the proceedings inside the house were conducted inaudibly. The meeting lasts for up to five days, with members periodically emerging from the house to ritually bathe and paint themselves (Sproat 1987:182).

Publicly, the Wolf Dance is the most important ceremony of the Nuu-chah-nulth people and the importance of its open displays appears to be social and political as well as religious. Although it is suppose to be a period in which supernatural powers were close at hand the attitude of the Nuu-chah-nulth seems "to have been about as little imbued with religious awe or fervor as a carnival crowd" (Drucker 1951:391). As it is the chiefs who sponsor the affair, the Wolf dance served as a means of validating their hereditary prerogatives and those of their heirs. This legitimacy was derived from the respect and admiration of the people of high and low degree for one who commanded the resources to stage the ceremonial (Sproat 1987:388). The Wolf Society dances are the same among all Nuu-chah-nulth tribes and may be characterized as a dramatic performance in which the entire community is permitted to watch. Novices, the children of elite members, are kidnapped by supernatural wolves then rescued by their relatives and ceremonially purified. During the novices' captivity, each is believed to be taken to their ancestral home and there instructed in the origin of his hereditary rights, which include songs, masked dances, and displays of privilege. In this way, the ceremony served as a vehicle for conveying hereditary rights. Basically, the ritual was built around the system of rank. Chiefs sponsored the performance of the Wolf Dance based on a hereditary right to do so. Similarly, these same elite, those that held the highest rank in the lineage and tribe, owned nearly all important ritual acts (Drucker 1951:386).

Nuu-chah-nulth prestige is inherited. Ideologically, the inheritance of elite status was linked to their intimate relationship with the ancestral spirits of their people, over and above that of the general population. The Wolf society's exclusivity of profound religious knowledge enables members control over supernatural powers. It is the ability to manipulate mystical energy by elite members that provides the ideological foundation for their hegemony. Although membership into the Wolf society is gained through birthright, copious amounts of wealth are necessary to demonstrate entitlement and to maintain the privilege. To ensure that the elite members of the society had the means

necessary for the lavish displays they interweave their access to the spirits with the traditions of the culture so as to justify their exploitation of resources that eventually gained them social control and political hegemony. To some degree, the Nuu-chah-nulth elite, through the religious traditions of the culture and other ideological elements that they undoubtedly added, gained the consent of the people to accept for their own good and the good of the tribe the selfish structures on which their dominance depended (Drucker 1951).

Despite resource wealth and the relatively dense population, no secular governmental political organization developed in this area. The settlement group, or village, was the largest traditional unit where the few elite members of chiefly families formed the core. The head of each family possesses property, both economic and ceremonial, that was the foundation of its affluence, enabling aggrandizing individuals the means to maintain their claim to a variety of privileges, including the rights to initiate and perform a particular and prominent part in a ceremonial, to wear a particular mask, and display crests, all symbols of status and prestige (Forde 1934:87).

Like the Kwakiutl, the Nuu-chah-nulth elite use public dances, lavish feasts, and dramatic performance to demonstrate supremacy. The elite members of the Wolf society legitimate their power and authority over the population's labor and surplus resources through its intimate relationship to supernatural powers. Traditional ideology is the foundation for the Wolf society's hegemonic function. By combining the traditions of the culture and an exclusive system of rank, the elite members of the Wolf society are able to exploit wealth to gain and maintain social influence, economic control, and political hegemony.

IBO

The degree of hegemonic power the Ekkpo society has over the community in which it operates may be gauged from the immense power it flaunt in almost every aspect of Ibo life. Under native rule it usurps practically all functions of government, made trade virtually impossible for non-members, and exercised a deep influence on the religious and esoteric ideas of the region (Talbot 1912:39). The Ekkpo had extreme social, economic, and political control over the community, was so entrenched that none could

stand against it, or act without fear of reprisal. The almost totalitarian power wielded over the Ibo population by the Ekkpo society may best be seen in the rites performed during festivals and in the punishments it is able to mete out when an offense was committed.

One of the greatest Ibo festivals is held at harvest time. Eight days before the first new season's crop can be eaten, in every town where the Ekkpo society holds sway, a functionary warns people that the religious fetishes will be brought forth. Another messenger is sent out carrying a carved stick around the village as a sign that the primary feast of the year is about to be held. The next day, effigies are carried in procession from the Ekkpo dwelling to the public square where they are setup. Each evening for a week, offerings of fowl and goats are made to the effigies of the Ekkpo deities who are believed to feed upon the essence of the sacrifices. During the harvest festival itself, before a man might pass through the square where the fetishes are set up, he had to pay an annual tribute of 125 manillas to the Ekkpo. For 200 manillas, though a non-member, he might enter the Ekkpo dwelling hut where he may eat and drink with the elite members of the society (Talbot 1923:189). At the end of the festival, the Ekkpo figures are taken back to the society's compound and while upon the road, prior to colonization, human sacrifices were made. The method of providing such sacrifices is for all the Ekkpo Images, men dressed in masks and robes, to chase any passer-by, striking with their machetes, until the individual fell dead. The head was struck off, wrapped with leaves, then placed between the hands of the principal Image who bore it proudly in front of the 'Great Mother Goddess' image. So great was Ekkpo power that they performed these sacrifices with impunity (Talbot 1923:188).

A rod and whip are the symbols of Ekkpo power denoting that under native law the society had the right to flog to death any non-member who had seriously transgressed against its rule. This is not merely a threat but is practiced to this day. Should any one, for example, transgress against the social or economic rules set by the Ekkpo society, the Image of the *First born of Judgment* is dispatched (Talbot 1923:189). This Image marches to the house of the guilty party accompanied by all the Ekkpo members whereupon the lower ranked members of the society demolish the dwelling and the

property of the guilty man. Some assert that it is from this ceremony that the cult takes its name, as Ekkpo translates into 'The Destroyers' (Talbot 1923:190).

Yet another example of the power exercised by the Ekkpo society is demonstrated in the following account:

"One early June morning a woman appeared before me, bearing a bundle bound round with mats. Tears were pouring down her cheeks as she knelt to unfold her burden, the contents of which were gruesome enough; for they consisted of charred sticks and new burnt human bones. According to her account, the deceased was her brother and had been a member of Ekkpo. Some few days before, he quarreled with a man of higher rank in the society" (Talbot 1923:183).

The economic structure of Ibo society is based on horticulture and pastoralism. As such, land and the necessary labor to maximize its output is paramount. Land is held communally, belonging to extended families within each village quarter but controlled by the head of each group, usually the eldest male member. This leader then redistributed the resources to his group as he saw fit (Talbot 1923:219). Trade and exchange was the means by which subsistence surplus was transformed into wealth. This usually took place at the *calabars*, or markets. The power the Ekkpo society had over all Ibo economic mechanisms is demonstrated in the market structure. The Ekkpo held the monopoly on the markets in which transactions of any significance occurred; they established the market, fixed the prices, and dictated who could conduct business there. They were able to maintain their control by periodically displaying the religiously sanctioned power they wielded (Talbot 1912:37). When a chief, always a high-ranking member of the Ekkpo society, wished to open a new market near his town to increase the community's access to wealth, he enlisted the help of the senior Ekkpo members in the form of public displays and demonstrations of power. A message was sent to summon the people of the neighborhood to assemble on a certain day in the space that had been cleared for the purpose. A small feast was held for those attending in which goats, yams, and plantains were cooked and served with palm wine. A fetish belonging to the Ekkpo was set up on a stout stake in the middle of the clearing. After all the guests had feasted, a female slave was led forward and tightly bound by the throat and ankles to the fetish post. Stationed nearby with a sharp machete was the Ekkpo executioner. Upon the command of the head Priest of the society, the executioner dispatched the slave. This

sacrifice to the Ekkpo deity, practiced until early in the last century, was believed to secure the prosperity of the new market. This display of power, as well as instilling fear and awe, serves to spiritually legitimized the new venture by awarding supernatural blessings on all those who do business at the market (Talbot 1923:185-6).

The Ekkpo not only constitute the religious leaders but are encompassed in the political council of each village and as such dictated cultural laws and societal norms. The Ekkpo deliberated on offenses of all kinds and mediated land claim disputes. In the case of murder, the Ekkpo council decided a man's fate, and if found guilty, he was either ordered to hang or was beheaded by the Ekkpo executioner (Talbot 1923:216). Economically, palm nuts were the primary source of wealth for the Ibo, bringing the greatest return on investment. Economic control of this resource by the Ekkpo was so formidable that only members of the Ekkpo society were permitted to harvest these resources where yield was based on rank. If a nonmember attempted to harvest palm nuts he was disciplined by the Ekkpo society in the region, usually by being put to death. Even now, this law is still in effect, with the exception that a substantial fine is exacted from the guilty party rather than his life. Since the wealth of the district depends on its production of palm oil, some idea as to the power of the secret society may be gained from this fact (Talbot 1923:190).

Thus, the Ekkpo society uses traditional supernatural beliefs to spiritually legitimize its authority over Ibo culture. Elite Ekkpo members control the economic markets, fix prices, and dictate who can participate in trade. Politically, the Ekkpo inner circle dictates secular law, judges disputes, and dispenses punishment when its rules are broken. Finally, to demonstrate its power publicly, Ekkpo rites and ceremonies, sacred feasts, and secular festivals were frequent and always included blood sacrifices, all of which serves to enforce their extraordinary presences.

MENDE

The Poro society serves a number of functions within Mende culture. In a social context, it provides cultural training as a private association, which, though symbolic as well as practical, does not carry the initiate beyond a junior stage in society affairs (Little 1967:244). In a hegemonic sense, the Poro society was the most powerful society in

Mende culture, so much so that its laws governed the whole community (Newland 1916:356). The Poro reigned supreme in the government of a chiefdom. Its council, which convened in secret, dictated judicial decisions affecting both its internal affairs and its relations with other chiefdoms. The chief was a member of this elite council and was usually a high-ranking member of the Poro, but regardless of the chief's status in the society, the Poro council's authority could override him in all matters. The village chief may have been the center of civil life; however, the real power lay in the hands of the Poro inner circle, whose authority was such that it could even depose a chief (Little 1996:63).

Routine politics were left to the secular leaders, yet in all political decisions the sacred Poro council always held veto power by virtue of its role as arbitrator within the society and between the society and the spirits (Fulton 1972:1230). In an advisory role, Poro elders acted as counsel to secular leaders. With their support there was much a chief could do; without Poro support the chief was likely to find himself removed from office. The Poro inner council had the power to excommunicate any member of the community, including the chief. As a policing mechanism, the Poro society, acted as enforcers of cultural norms. By placing the society's sign in a person's compound, for example, the Poro signified that the man had incurred the Poro society's displeasure and was a warning that he must not move outside his compound until the ban was removed (Little 1965:356). Moreover, it was Poro agents, not agents of the chief, which executed those who deviate seriously from social, secular, and sacred norms (Fulton 1972:1228).

All control of Poro society business was vested in the highest-ranking members. There was no permanently existing Poro in the sense of a continuous and uninterrupted round of society activities. Members were called together at indefinite times for the attainment of specific objectives and when these objectives had been gained the Poro broke up. The Poro was called together and organized locally through lodges. These lodges were independent of each other but operated along similar lines and carried out rituals and practices that were similar throughout Mende country, thereby forming a cohesive system. Poro membership went beyond the local lodge, for example, if a man had been initiated in one area he would be admitted into a society gathering anywhere else in the region and, according to his particular status, participate fully in the events

taking place, thus creating an enormous political and economic network (Little 1967:244). To insure a man's status was valid, the Poro elite were taught the meaning of various signs and symbols and the use of certain passwords, phrases, and vocal inflections exclusive to each grade; most allusions to society business are so cloaked in proverbial language as to be incomprehensible to an outsider or lower ranking member (Little 1965:357).

The exclusive ownership of knowledge by the Poro and the use of this knowledge as property served as the most pervasive political and economic strategy employed by the elite members of the community. It supported the aggrandizer's political and economic control and the institutionalization of such secrecy by the wealthy elite of the ruling lineages served to control the lower ranked members of the community. This control also extended beyond the village, as large stretches of territory were under the authority of the Poro, superseding the authority of local men (Little 1965:353). The Poro secret society was the principal means by which the country was governed. Political control was vested in the hands of relatively few individuals through this interlocking organization that crosscut kinship lines to include the heads of the wealthiest lineages (Little 1966:70). Not only was the Poro in control of such subsistence resource activities as rice harvesting, they also determined ritual behavior and laws affecting social attitudes as they sanctioned nearly every sphere of common life. The elite members of the Poro were responsible for adjudicating major disputes including acts of violence, land disputes, and warfare. It had its own tribunal that took precedence over all other authorities. Consequently, the Poro constituted a law unto itself, where the society's ritual powers were sufficient, irrespective of physical force, to put an end to any action it did not want to occur (Little 1965; 1967). As the Poro represented the spirit of the tribe, it became the center of authority of the tribe, and evolved a uniform system of government backed by existing customs that rose above the local administration of secular authority (Murphy 1980:199).

The Poro society, as the sacred political structure, maintained law and order through supernatural authority that included the periodic use of force. Sanctions on behavior, in general, were derived from the Poro society and took the form of traditional usages and practices learned largely under their tutelage as a private association that initiated all

Mende males into the adult community at puberty (Bellman 1984:40). The Poro represented the powerful mystical spirits of the tribe, thereby establishing itself as the central authority in the community. Thus, the Poro was the primary hegemonic mechanism within Mende society, creating, maintaining, and increasing the power and prestige of its elite members (Bellman 1984:62).

Thus, the Poro society is a deliberate institution that functions as a mechanism whereby elite aggrandizers acquire power over the community. As a sacred political structure, the Poro maintains socio-economic control through supernatural authority that included the periodic use of force. Elite Poro members form a judicial council, create laws, and mete out punishments when their laws are transgressed. Such hegemonic control by the Poro elite was regional, operating through a political and economic network that demonstrated its supremacy through lavish public displays, secular ceremonies, sacred rites, and dramatic feasts.

SUMMARY

Many people throughout time have understood secrecy in the framework of political and economic interests (Barth 1975:219). Congruently, I argue that a traditional secret society is an institution that functions as a deliberate mechanism whereby entrepreneurial elite individuals within a community legitimately obtain power and authority over a population's labor, decisions, and surplus resources. Such a hegemonic institution operates within a community by using traditional ideology to legitimize its efforts, controlling economic surpluses, generating and maintaining political dominance, and demonstrating its authority publicly. These aspects are present the potential secret society's in each case study examined.

Overall, secret societies legitimate their institutions power and position by constructing it around preexisting principles and spiritual beliefs. Each potential secret society examined professes a deeper knowledge of the culture's primary deities and greater control over supernatural energy. Moreover, each society maintains exclusivity to this numinous power through centralized control of membership and rank. The potential for controlling a subordinate group through the ranking system of a secret society is discussed extensively by Simmel when he addresses "the special challenge of completely

controlling a large, potentially and ideally subordinate group of human beings by developing a scheme of positions with their rank interrelations" ([1908]1950:357-358).

Hierarchy is an important indicator of hegemony and a means through which a group of aggrandizing elite can control a population's surplus resource. By using exclusivity of culturally valued knowledge and relationships, aggrandizers can channel economic power into the hands of a select few. The Vanuatu have a sophisticated network of pig transactions based on debt and obligation, the Hopi, Ibo, and Mende have centralized control of trade, and the Kwakiutl and Nuu-chah-nulth demonstrate economic control through an elaborate system of redistribution. All potential secret societies are hierarchically based on competitive exchange of surplus resources conducted in conformity with traditional ideology. Elite members in each society generate capital by sponsoring or supporting new initiates and use the grade taking of others to increase their power. These relationships of debt, obligation, and repayment of wealth are present in each potential secret society examined. By virtue of the resource exchange networks generated by these relationships, a secret society establishes control over the competitive domain through which men acquire hegemonic control (Allen 1981:66).

As previously stated, through the control of surplus resources, secret societies function to promote the self-interest of a small group of aggrandizing individuals within the larger community through a network of social, economic, and political relationships that directly or indirectly link the participants. Each potentially secret society examined demonstrates the dominant political dimension that secrecy and supernatural knowledge plays within the culture and how it is used to justify a few aggrandizing individuals control over the larger population. The Suque society generate and maintain political dominance in Vanuatu culture because any male member who hopes to achieve prestige, wealth, and power must complete within its domain. In Hopi culture, the currency of power is the sacred knowledge possessed by First Order societies, without which political office and authoritative influence was unobtainable. The Kwakiutl and Nuu-chah-nulth dance societies achieve political hegemony through a ranked system of hereditary rights, sanctioned by the supernatural and maintained through displays of wealth. Finally, the potential secret societies within Mende and Ibo cultures operate within a widespread regional political network that dictates spiritual mores, social norms, and secular laws.

Each of the potential secret societies in the non-egalitarian case studies examined maintain authority by maneuvering elite members into political offices or other positions of prestige and power, thus creating a network or series of relationships that are capable of reinforcing the secular legitimacy of the secret society's status within the community.

To justify their hegemony, the potential secret societies demonstrate their power to the larger community through public displays. Each culture's potential secret society overtly demonstrates its possession of something formidable. The Suque slaughter pigs, the First Order, Seal, and Wolf societies use dramas and dancing, and the Ekkpo and Poro use blood sacrifices to instill fear and awe. Public displays of this kind establish the secret society as an extraordinary force and strengthen its hegemonic position within the community. Politically, what matters is not so much the particular knowledge being kept secret, but the fact that some kind of secret exists that places the members above the general population in terms of power, prestige, and privilege (Mackenzie 1967:22).

EGALITARIAN SOCIETIES

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES

As an egalitarian culture, the Australian Aborigines exhibit minimal, if any, forms of economic control or political dominance. That is not to say they possess no economic or political differentiation but it is not at a level sufficient to support hegemonic endeavors. When a large animal is taken, for example, it was a festive occasion. Given the central significance of the quest for food and the underlying anxiety such uncertainty brings, the distribution of the meat approaches a socio-economic affair. Based on fixed rules of distribution, all members of the community were given a relatively equal share, however the best and fattiest parts of the animal were given to the old men out of respect. This formality becomes relaxed when the game is smaller and of poorer quality, to the point where it became a private, non-social matter (Roheim 1974:26). Tribal society was democratic; young and old met on the basis of mutual friendship and good will, however the older men do have a certain authority due to their position as 'universal father' (Roheim 1974:53).

There does exist the position of 'owner or custodian' of a given place, which was inherited through the male line. The custodian acted as a sort of chairman, arranging

ceremonies and convening tribal meetings. He was responsible for soliciting help from other groups in times of conflict. This was not a position of hegemonic power as there were no territorial rights connected with the place names in the title. Moreover, the custodian did not own land and had little coercive power over the people living in the area. The criteria for being a custodian was broad, encompassing anyone whose myths related to a particular area, anyone born in that place, or whose parents, uncles, or grandfathers had been born there. As such, it was often the case that many individuals were the custodian of any given place and every grown man was the custodian of at least one place (Roheim 1974:57). In general, the degree to which a chief held any form of authority was a function of his personality rather than his title. A charismatic individual, for example, showing strength and courage, and possessing a dominant personality was referred to as a 'big,' while other men, more passive in nature are seen as a 'little' (Roheim 1974:59).

As Australian Aboriginal culture produces no surplus economic resources and maintains a strong egalitarian ethos, there is little opportunity for the emergence of entrepreneurial elite to gain power and authority over the community.

MBUTI

As with the Australian Aborigines, the people of Africa's Ituri forest are an egalitarian culture with no hegemonic mechanisms. There is the idea of the office of the eldest, set by tradition and sanctioned by Mbuti mythology. This is held by a male member of the group only as long as the group acquiesces. It is neither a formal position, nor is it literally the oldest member of the group but depends largely on the person's ability to elicit cooperation and maintain social equilibrium vital for their survival (Dupre 1975:157).

There is no form of chieftainship, no chiefs, and no formal councils in Mbuti society. Social cohesion is a cooperative affair and they have no developed tribal or political system. The vastness of the forest, combined with a relative scarcity of food in any one location, does not make social organizations larger than a totemic clan advantageous. The community reflects the most optimal economic unit in a situation where surplus resources do not exist (Dupre 1975:153). Finally, the Mbuti have no formal mechanism

for maintaining law and order. There was a general pattern of behavior to which everyone conformed but great latitude was given, and taken, and they were bound by few set rules. If anyone had given offense, for example, it was settled, either within the group, or by one of the parties leaving the band (Turnbull 1961:83).

Like the Aboriginals of Australia's Western Desert, the Mbuti produce no surplus resources and egalitarian leveling mechanisms are firmly established. This serves to discourage or prevent the emergence of aggrandizing individuals seeking power and authority over the larger community.

SUMMARY

Egalitarian structures have insufficient social, economic, and political complexity to support hegemonic structures. Social mobility is prominent in response to the unpredictability in the availability of resources and naturally occurring food resources are underexploited. This situation makes it difficult, if not impossible, for aggrandizing individuals to establish hegemonic status. As surplus resources, or more accurately the centralized control of such resources, are a key component in the emergence and establishment of secret societies one expects, and finds no surplus resources or centralized control in these two egalitarian societies. Therefore, both these egalitarian case studies fail to exhibit organizations fulfilling the requirements of the third component of my operational definition of secret societies.

CHAPTER 6 – SELF INTEREST

“The shortest and best way of making your fortune is to let people clearly see that it is in their interest to promote yours.”
~ La Bruyere ~

The fourth component of my operational definition states that a secret society functions to promote self-interest of secret society members. The construction of an institution that serves a hegemonic purpose is usually an arena where aspiring elite compete for individual affluence and power. The competitive nature of social relationships can make secrecy a vital social resource (Tefft 1980:37). According to my theoretical framework, one of the primary mechanism through which a secret society gains hegemonic status is by legitimately gaining control over some portion of a community's surplus resources. In turn, these surplus resources are used to secure wealth and power for a few individuals, thru the transformation of surplus resources into prominence, feasts, prestigious goods, and debts (Owens and Hayden 1996). Accumulation of wealth is thus manipulated and exploited by entrepreneurial individuals for their own benefit.

A secret group “pursues its own purpose with the same inconsiderateness for all purposes outside itself which, in the case of the individual, is precisely called egoism” (Simmel [1908]1950:367). In other words, the underlying notion of self-interest is inseparable from the idea of hegemony and is essential in understanding secret societies. If knowledge becomes restricted, it can be used as a commodity. Moreover, the degree of exclusivity of such knowledge parallels the relative value, prestige, and status gained through ownership. Exclusivity of knowledge and relationships, restricted membership, and hierarchical structures concentrate political and economic power into the hands of a few. The extent to which groups of aspiring elite are permitted to pursue their own agenda at some expense to the rest of the community is largely determined by pre-existing conditions of economic surplus and social inequality in the larger community (Feinman et al. 2000:4). The provisionally identified secret societies within each of the six non-egalitarian case studies will be examined to determine if they meet the final criterion of secret societies, followed by a similar examination of the two egalitarian case studies to determine if the promotion of self-interest is present or absent.

TRANSEGALITARIAN & CHIEFDOM SOCIETIES

VANUATU

In general, Vanuatu men seeking power and authority use rank-taking in the Suque to further their own personal agenda. The quest for increasing status in this formal institution provides a specific domain in which influence previously gained through industry, generosity, and entrepreneurship is publicly expressed and confirmed. The Suque society is the primary competitive domain in which participation, both on one's own account and in its support of others, offers possibilities of enhancing one's power and wealth to the politically ambitious individual that is not otherwise available. These advantages stem from the centrality of the Suque hierarchy's influence in Vanuatu social, economic, and political life; it provides ideological legitimacy for unequal status that an astute man may effectively convert into personal hegemony. Moreover, by achieving membership in the upper echelon of the Suque hierarchy an ambitious individual gains access to, and potential control over, the principle surplus resources and economic relationships of the society, which he may manipulate for his own benefit (Allen 1981:40).

Insofar as pig exchange is a key element of social relations within the society, individuals with many pigs are able to exploit these exchanges to their advantage gaining some measure of control and dominance over these social relations. Aspiring elites tap into the wider exchange network underlying the society and in so doing are able to draw pigs and social relations to their own support. Integral to this marshalling of resources are relations of debt, obligation, and dependence through which an aggrandizing individual establishes his dominance. By entering the networks of exchange through the support of others, a leader is able to acquire a substantial foundation for his own support. Through the institutionalized process of generosity and obligation maintained by the Suque, a man may enhance his status and aspire to greater levels of political dominance. By sponsoring the rank taking of fellow clansmen, an elite Suque member further consolidates his position. This process of social interaction and exchange, built into the hierarchical structure of the Suque, is integral to the organization of the culture as a whole. Through exchange, this graded society divides and differentiates between

individual men, while at the same time bridging divisions between structurally differentiated units of the society drawing together men in general. In all these interactions, the motivation is to secure an increasingly higher rank as a means of self-promotion (Allen 1981:74-76).

Thus, in the Suque society, the manipulation of surplus resources (primarily pigs) is used competitively to establish reciprocal relationships. Through this process, an aggrandizer gains prestige by supporting other rank-takers, for factional loyalty, and creates obligations of social indebtedness that become deployable social resources themselves (Blau 1964:57). Successful Suque elite maintain a balance between generosity and indebtedness in pig transactions that put them in a socially superior position. When high-ranking Suque members maintain this unequal status over an extended period of time, it aids in the institutionalization of social inequality. Therefore, involvement in the upper echelon of the Suque society gives an aspiring elite individual a competitive process in which to pursue prestige and wealth. In turn, the complex web of relationships generated through individual transactions ensures the Suque society's continued existence.

HOPÍ

Political control within Hopi culture is concentrated among the heads of the largest households and family groups who implemented strategies of surplus accumulation to finance self-aggrandizing practices, such as accumulation of land or religious property, essential for claiming and maintaining status and notoriety in the community and larger region. The mechanism that enabled this marked difference in status was predicated on the exclusive knowledge held by members of First Order religious societies (Feinman et al. 2000:461). Ritual knowledge was the primary currency with which power was bought in Hopi society. Members of the society's First Orders aspire to hold principal higher-order offices as a means of obtaining *Pavansinom* status. *Pavansinom* are treated with deference, respect, and fear for their mastery of supernatural forces that are believed to cause changes in the state of all life (Whiteley 1998:93). This deference allows an aggrandizing individual the necessary social legitimation to mobilize communal kin-based labor to amass surplus resources (Saitta 1997:10). Through their role as religious

authorities, ambitious men can oversee the collection and redistribution of resources that are later redistributed at ceremonial and social feasts (Feinman et al. 2000:454). Therefore, they are in control of the use of surplus resources and can favor some recipients and users to further their own interests.

Clan leaders, usually the eldest male, are recognized as ceremonial and secular officers and considered the primary authority in all matters sacred and profane (Dozier 1970:129). It is this power that an aspiring elite member of Hopi society strives for, as the concept of *Pavansinom* is contingent upon conceptions of extraordinary power. As this power is derived from various categories of esoteric knowledge, each carrying high social value, the First Order societies functioned as socially sanctioned hegemonic institutions for self-promotion (Whiteley 1998:88). Aggrandizing individuals sought to advance through the ranks of these societies as higher religious status correlated to greater involvement in political decision-making and increased ability to promote one's own self-interests. The chief and the priests associated with him were able to exert strong pressures on village members to perform communal duties, both secular and ceremonial, because of their perceived power and political and practical repercussions. By gaining access to exclusive ritual knowledge, entrepreneurial elite created a network strategy whereby relatively few individuals ruled the community with authoritarian power based on traditional beliefs. The leaders and priests of Hopi culture were thus able to influence village members to act in a manner that assisted in the continuation of their power and dominance within the culture (Dozier 1970:129). This is clearly motivated by self-interest. Ambitious men exploit economic networks and surplus resources to legitimize their right to membership in First Order societies. Membership, in turn, strengthens the individual's authority over the labor and resources of his clan. Once in place, this process becomes self-perpetuating.

Thus, aggrandizing individuals exploit clan loyalty to promote their own interests. Using corporate strategies and associated centralized forms of leadership preexisting in clan structures, aspiring elite manipulate surplus resources to acquire a level of prestige necessary to justify his admittance into a First Order society. From within this position, the self-interested individual strengthens his position of power; moving beyond his clan

or lineage, as a member of a First Order society, the aggrandizer gains authority over the entire community.

KWAKIUTL

The Kwakiutl stressed the transmission of hereditary powers through the dance societies. Any individual who wished to maintain or advance their elite status necessarily had to gain membership into one of the religious institutions, most notably the *Ha'mats'a*, or Cannibal society (Cove and MacDonald 1987). Membership in the *Ha'mats'a* connected one to the great cannibal spirit, giving the initiate access to its power and secrets (Boas 1970:420). Once a member of the dance society, rules of kinship had little influence on the relationship of these men, as the secret society transcended descent obligations allowing more freedom to exploit resources. Members had an obligation to assist each other in increasing status and prestige, regardless of clan or kinship, and this responsibility usually encompassed assistance in amassing material wealth (Walens 1981:43). Elite members of the community, those who had received inherited names and had validated their right to such names through extravagant demonstrations, were eligible for initiation into the higher grades of the dance societies from which one could then achieve chiefly positions (Sturtevant 1990:308).

In the eyes of the Kwakiutl community, those who belonged to the dance societies possessed power beyond that available to most members of the community, thereby adding to an individual's prestige. This resulted in the solidifying of managerial authority over economic resources that could overrule segmentary interests for personal promotion. Dance societies were thus culturally constructed connections with supernatural forces that endowed an individual's political aspirations with cosmic influence (Wolf 1999:69).

Thus, by operating within the dance societies, an aspiring individual competes for prestige within a publicly recognized cultural system. By gaining status, the self-interested individual gains followers who, in turn, social, economically, and politically support his personal agenda with the belief that they will benefit by doing so.

NUU-CHAH-NULTH

The ceremonial dances performed by the Wolf society were the most important ritual demonstrations in the Nuu-chah-nulth tribe. Membership generated an enormous amount of respect and admiration from the community and was a means of validating the hereditary prerogatives of the individual. What set an individual apart and above others of his community was, in part, his possession of ceremonial wealth in the form of names, titles, and ritual privileges (Drucker 1951:439). Hereditary rites defined the role an individual would take in ceremonies and limited the honors he might gain among his fellows. Though one's rank was usually inherited, it could be purchased. As such, rights and privilege was unstable and easy to lose if one failed to properly demonstrate a necessary level of wealth. An aggrandizing individual ensured the continuation of his inherited rights through his power to command his followers support. As each validation required elaborate feasts and lavish demonstrations, the degree of prestige an elite aggrandizer held directly correlated to the degree he could provide benefits for supporters and to which his followers would sacrifice some of their needs to supply labor and materials to him for the ceremonial feasts (Forde 1934:89). Membership in the Wolf society gave aggrandizing elites helpful influence and power to exploit the industry of their followers as it carried a particularly high social evaluation based on traditional ideology existing within the Nuu-chah-nulth culture (Drucker 1939:62).

Thus, in Nuu-chah-nulth culture aspiring elite operate from within the Wolf society to pursue individual strategies. Like the Kwakiutl, membership in the Wolf society publicly demonstrates a man's status and prestige. This serves to strengthen and increase the number of followers an aggrandizer can rely on for economic assistance. Such deployable resources, in turn, can be exploited by the self-interested individual to gain ever-increasing levels of status, power, and wealth.

IBO

Beyond the notions of prestige and status, there exist two advantages for an ambitious individual to strive for elite membership in the Ekkpo society, both of which involve securing capital. The primary economic transaction in Ibo society is the lending of pigs at a substantial rate of interest. As the Ekkpo society is the final judge and executioner in

all judicial matters, membership offers a facility for the recovery of debt. Ekkpo membership served the self-interest of elite, as they had the largest amount of wealth tied up in lending transactions (Talbot 1912:45). If a man, for example, failed to repay a debt in full, including the interest accrued, the creditor had the right to bring his dispute before the local Ekkpo council in the debtor's town. After the council considered the evidence presented by both the plaintiff and defendant it rendered a verdict. As the plaintiff was, in all likelihood, of higher rank in the Ekkpo than the defendant, the council could be seen as always rendering a judgment in favor of the elite member. The defendant was then ordered to pay full restitution and pay an additional sum to the Ekkpo judges for their judiciary services. Should the debtor be unable to comply with both rulings for payment, the Ekkpo society has the power to seize his goods with impunity. If the debtor's goods were insufficient for full restitution the debtor and his family are reduced to the position of slaves in order to make good his loan (Talbot 1912:46).

The second self-interested advantage in attaining high status within the Ekkpo society is that of continual capital being funneled upward. Each time a new member is initiated into any of the grades below that attained by the elite individual a sum of money is paid to the senior members for services rendered. In other words, each initiate pays a fee for the privilege of membership or advancement in the society. As new members are continuously being admitted into the society and current members are continuously advancing through the ranks, the elite members of the Ekkpo society are guaranteed a continuous flow of wealth. Moreover, additional payments are frequently made for the numerous festivals and services the elite Ekkpo members perform throughout the year and this tribute is distributed to the members of the inner circle. This guaranteed a considerable annual income for the highest-ranking members of the secret society beyond that gained through financial transactions (Talbot 1923:189).

In addition to these two primary advantages, there are dozens more that stem from the immense network of social and political control gained through membership in high-ranking positions of the Ekkpo. Among them is the greater economic control of palm nuts upon which the wealth of the district depends, the privilege of sitting on the judicial council that decides the laws and punishments of the society (Arinze 1970:5), and having the economic circumstances necessary for polygyny (Uchendu 1965:49).

Thus, by virtue of membership in the upper echelon of the Ekkpo society, aggrandizers have socially sanctioned access to exclusive economic and political networks that can be manipulated and exploited to serve an individuals' personal agenda.

MENDE

For an ambitious man, membership in the Poro society is essential. Ownership of knowledge and the use of that knowledge serve to establish political and economic authority (Murphy 1980:195). No member of Mende society could hope to occupy a position of authority within the chiefdom without being a Poro member and receiving Poro support. The Poro decided policy, began wars, negotiated peace, regulated economic and political affairs, and sanctioned secular and judicial functions. The Poro were consulted about every important event in the community and served as the court of final appeals (Little 1965:364). Thus, an aggrandizing member of the community had to maneuver his way through the Poro society if he wished for anything more than a mediocre existence.

The higher a man rises within the ranks of the Poro society the greater his personal status and access to wealth generating processes. Personal status is closely bound up with the ownership of land and patron-client arrangements that enable an aspiring aggrandizer to acquire control over labor (Leach 1974:164). The more land a man controls the larger the number of tenants and dependants upon whose allegiance he could rely, hence the greater the political support he could command in community affairs. Loss of land would mean the loss of his following, loss of wealth, and the lessening of his political influence within Mende society (Little 1967:87).

Thus, men pursuing individual aggrandizing strategies must work from within the structural constraints of the cultural system. Without the publicly recognized status, rights, and responsibilities achieved through rank-taking in the Poro society a man is unlikely to have his personal interests realized.

SUMMARY

The final component of the operational definition argues that the primary function of a secret society is the promotion of self-interest within the larger community through a social network of relationships, which directly or indirectly link the participants in

related secret activities. Each of the cases studies demonstrate that, by virtue of membership in the societies investigated, the affiliate gains increasing political power and economic wealth as he rises through the ranks to high-ranked position. By virtue of the networks of debt and obligation generated by these secret relationships, a competitive domain for political ambition is established (Allen 1972; Rodman 1973). Even the Nuuchah-nulth chiefs who practice the Whaling ritual do so based on self-interest. The summoning of an exclusive resource gifted to his community is an unreciprocated favor that creates obligations of social indebtedness, which becomes a deployable social resource that can be exploited self-servingly.

The political advantage for an aggrandizing individual is principally one creating a cooperating network of other powerful and influential individuals and of legitimation and affirmation of his ability to call upon the resources of the community. Once an individual has reached the higher grades within the societies, his renown extends beyond his immediate community to the surrounding political networks (Allen 1981:73). Therefore, grade taking also involves the ability to manage inter-community relations and there, too, can be manipulated to his own benefit. Insofar as rank-taking, entails borrowing and debt, as an idiom of exchange of wealth, leaders are able to use their membership in the secret society to establish additional dominance within the community. By his own rank taking and his "generosity" in supporting others, an ambitious man uses existing ideology to construct a favorable personal image in the eyes of his followers. On a basic level, a secret society is a structured institution devoted to the immediate self-interest of its individual members. It provides a hierarchy of relatively specified male status positions in the society and is an avenue through which individuals can gain economic and political advantages over others in their quest for personal power and wealth (Allen 1981:75).

EGALITARIAN SOCIETIES

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES

The nature of Aboriginal life influenced the way the Australian people coordinated their forms of action into interest groups. Though conflicts are a factor in any social dynamic, cooperation was maximized, controlled, and channeled for the common good of

the group (Berndt and Berndt 1979:8). This supportive behavior manifested itself in various ways. They relied on cooperation through a wide spectrum of social relations framed in kin terms as the members of each population was dispersed into small groups containing mixed local patrilineal descent (Roheim 1974:255). Those members of a local descent group that combined to exploit the natural resources of the land formed the economic unit. As their subsistence pattern was that of hunter-gatherers, people moved over a variety of territories including those that they did not directly own, in order to share what was available (Berndt and Berndt 1979:9). Trade and exchange was minimal, as each group was independent; they had no currency, resource ownership was nonexistent, and laws were in the form of tribal traditions. Groups of men, women, and children who are related to one another through complex kin systems cooperated for purposes of social living in hunting, food collecting, and everyday domestic affairs. Without this level of cooperation, eking out a livelihood from the harsh Australian environment would be extremely difficult, if not impossible (Berndt and Berndt 1979:10). Thus, egalitarian mechanisms are firmly in place that discourage or prevent self-aggrandizing behavior.

MBUTI

For the Mbuti, subsistence is dependent on the available resources in a given area (Duffy 1984:4). The economic and political structure of Mbuti society is therefore limited by the environment and the material culture in which they reside. As such, the economic and social structure shows a high degree of self-sufficiency (Dupre 1975:154). The Mbuti have no currency, no resource ownership, and as everyone took part in all aspects of life, there is little apparent occupational specialization (Turnbull 1961:9).

Thus, mobility, unpredictability in availability of food resources, and the socio-political mechanisms that operate in the Mbuti culture to maintain egalitarian ideologies all serve to discourage or prevent self-aggrandizing behavior.

SUMMARY

Promotion of self-interest or self-aggrandizement within egalitarian societies is minimal to non-existent. As resource availability is unstable and the accumulation of surplus incongruent with the social structure, mechanisms exist that deter aggrandizing

endeavors (Blake and Clark 1999:57). Furthermore, there exists no extended social network in which entrepreneurial activities may flourish. Competition and rivalry may be inevitable in human societies but there exists numerous equalizing mechanisms in these two case studies that maintain egalitarianism and deter the rise of individual power. The necessary technological and environmental preconditions for the emergence of secret societies, as per my model, do not exist, and as such, no hegemonic institution serving self-interests, secret or otherwise, manifests. As Hayden (1981; 1990) points out, resilient resources, such as fish resistant to over-exploitation, allows for a shift from mobility to sedentism and surplus accumulations which can be exploited by self-interested aggrandizers. As this is not the case with egalitarian societies, there exists no competitive borrowing and no social network in which competitive aggrandizement activities may take place.

CHAPTER 7 – CONCLUSION

*"We dance round in a ring and suppose,
But the secret sits in the middle and knows."
~ Robert Frost ~*

This research is an attempt to understand the conditions that favor the emergence of prehistoric secret societies, how and why they operate within a bounded population, and how one may recognize their existence in the archaeological record. My investigation into secret societies began with the observation that a potentially interesting and distinctive phenomenon occurred within human cultures, one that people frequently refer to as a secret society. Historical information on the subject abounds; however, very little is known regarding secret societies in prehistoric cultures. As model building and model testing is a well established process in areas where little information exists, I began by generating a model, including plausible processes necessary for the emergence and maintenance of prehistoric secret societies. Based on theoretical analysis, I formulated a speculative model of conditions under which secret societies may be expected to emerge and generated an operational definition of prehistoric secret societies that may be used consistently across space and through time. This was a heuristic, exploratory model meant to be a reasonable supposition to be tested against ethnographic data and as such, I utilized an ethnoarchaeological research strategy.

I have defined a prehistoric secret society as an association where membership itself, or membership into upper ranks, is exclusive, and by virtue of membership, affiliates possess knowledge and social relationships that non-members do not possess. Recruitment or admission into the upper echelon of the society is limited, voluntary, and requires a substantial payment of wealth. The underlying goal of the secret society is posited to be centralized control of political, military, economic, or occupational spheres. The purpose of the society's existence is viewed as hegemonic, serving to effect beneficial change for a select minority of the total population. Its primary function is the promotion of leaders' self-interest within the larger community through a network of relationships that directly or indirectly link the participants in related secret activities.

Testing the soundness of my model involved comparing each component of the model to the theoretically expected conditions that should obtain in societies where secret

societies occur as well as in societies where they should not occur. To determine if the occurrence of secret societies corresponds to the conditions postulated by my model, I compared my operational definition against eight ethnographic cases studies. The provisionally identified secret societies in the six non-egalitarian cultures examined were: 1) the Suque society of the Vanuatu; 2) the First Order societies of the Hopi; 3) the Dance societies of the Kwakiutl; 4) the Whalers ritual and Wolf society of the Nuu-chah-nulth; 5) the Ekkpo society of the Ibo; and 6) the Poro society of Mende. The two egalitarian case studies examined were the Aboriginal peoples of Australia's Western Desert and the Mbuti people of Central Africa, both of whom epitomize an egalitarian hunter-gatherer lifestyle. As my model postulates that secret societies should not emerge in such social conditions, these two cases studies were used as a form of control group. The purpose of comparing my arguments against these eight ethnographic case studies was to obtain a limited initial indication to either support, refute, or confirm my theoretical model. The evidence discussed in the previous chapters strongly suggests that my model and operational definition of prehistoric secret societies is robust, useful, realistic, and accurate. As such, it has important potential implications of prehistoric transegalitarian and chiefdom societies.

To begin, I postulated that secret societies can emerge and be maintained, if, and only if, certain conditions obtain with a community, namely inequality and hierarchical power structures. Chapter II demonstrated the level of inequality, rank, and centralized control of surplus resources found within each culture. In each non-egalitarian culture investigated, social inequality was present, surplus resources were generated, and a minority of the population centrally controls the community's surplus wealth. The Vanuatu, Ibo, and Mende possess achieved status, while the Hopi, Kwakiutl, and Nuu-chah-nulth acquired their status through birthrights and validated through achievement. Moreover, the Kwakiutl, Nuu-chah-nulth, Ibo, and Mende possessed slaves. Each transegalitarian culture practiced polygyny based on wealth, had well-developed ideas of ownership, and mortuary rituals and interment differed significantly based on the status of the individual. Overall, each of the six transegalitarian case studies has a level of social, economic, and political complexity sufficient for the development of hegemonic

structures. In other words, each culture displays conditions theoretically favorable for the emergence of a secret society.

As my model postulates that a certain level of complexity is necessary for the emergence of a secret society, I argued that secret societies, as detailed in my operational definition, may emerge only in non-egalitarian social structures. To confirm this argument, the Australian Aboriginal and Mbuti cultures were used. These two egalitarian societies lacked marked inequality and hierarchical power structures. Both the Aboriginals of Australia's Western Desert and the Mbuti of Central Africa represent the archetypical egalitarian society. As hunter-gatherers they accumulate no surplus resources, storage is nonexistent, and ideas of ownership are poorly developed. There is no centralized control and no significant

ranking within or between groups. As social, economic, and political complexities sufficient for hegemonic structures are not present, neither are the postulated conditions favorable for the emergence of secret societies and they should be absent from these cultures if my model is correct.

Once the level of complexity within each case study was determined, each component of the model was examined separately against all eight ethnographic case studies to determine if and how it obtained. The components of my operational definition were grouped under four headings: Exclusivity of Knowledge and Relationships, Membership and Wealth, Hegemony, and Self-Interest.

The first component of my operational definition states that a prehistoric secret society is an association where membership itself, or membership into upper ranks, is

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION COMPONENTS SUMMARY

| | Complexity | Exclusivity | Membership | Hegemony | Self-Interest |
|----------------|------------|-------------|------------|----------|---------------|
| Vanuatu | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Suque | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Hopi | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| First Orders | | | | | |
| Kwakiutl | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Seal | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Nuu-chah-nulth | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ |
| Whalers | | | | | |
| Wolf | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Ekkpo | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Poro | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Aborigines | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ |
| Mbuti | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ |

Table 1: Shows the presence or absence of each operational definition component within the eight case studies.

exclusive, in virtue of membership affiliates possess knowledge and social relationships that non-members do not possess. In his classic analysis of secrecy, George Simmel ([1908]1950:332) compared secret knowledge to property ownership and suggested that when knowledge is exclusive and institutionalized it “acquires an aura of mystery and danger that constitutes a great source of power for those who control access to it.” From this position, secret knowledge, rather than brute force, may be used in traditional cultures as a medium of social value and a catalyst for social differentiation (Whiteley 1998:93).

My operational definition implies that the primary approach used by transegalitarian secret societies to establish and maintain power and affluence is through the centralized control of knowledge restricting it to only a minority of the population through a purposefully constructed hierarchical association. In each non-egalitarian case study examined, the potential secret society investigated professed exclusive knowledge of a deeper level of mytho-religious mysteries present within their respective cultures. Membership, at least into the upper echelon of these societies, was restricted to a minority of the male population. Moreover, once initiated into the society, membership is further restricted by internal ranking where knowledge was acquired in stages as the initiate advanced through the societies grades. All potentially secret societies within each non-egalitarian case study examined meet the requirements for the first component of the operational definition, with the exception of the Whaling ritual of the Nuu-chah-nulth. In this instance, secret knowledge was known only to the chief of the tribe. My operational definition specifies that knowledge is exclusive to members of a society or association, which implies a group of people, not a single individual. As the chief of the tribe operated independently, not as a member of a larger association having exclusive knowledge that non-members did not have, I argue that the Whaling ritual does not meet the requirements of the first component of the operational definition.

The two egalitarian case studies similarly failed to meet the exclusivity of knowledge and relationship component. In the Aboriginal and Mbuti cultures, knowledge was divided based on age and gender; however, it was not restricted as such. Frequently, complete knowledge was granted upon initiation into the group, most notably with gender-based groups. In those cases where complete knowledge was not immediately

forthcoming, often in age-based groups, all members fully expected to gain complete knowledge once they attained a certain age. The reason for lack of exclusivity of knowledge and relationships within these associations is that membership into the non-egalitarian associations was obligatory if the individual was to be considered a legitimate member of the larger community, and therefore constitutes a private association rather than a secret society.

The second component of the operational definition states that recruitment, or admission into the upper echelon, of a secret society is limited, voluntary, and requires a substantial payment of wealth. As already seen, membership into the egalitarian private associations was obligatory. Furthermore, initiation was not limited but divided primarily by gender and age, and initiation carried no entrance fee. Therefore, the egalitarian associations fail to meet the second requirement set out by the operational definition. By contrast, each of the non-egalitarian cultures had societies that were voluntary, limited to a particular socio-economic status, and payment of wealth was required for membership or membership into the upper ranks. With the societies in the Vanuatu, Mende, and Ibo membership limited solely by wealth, while Hopi, Kwakiutl, and Nuu-chah-nulth Wolf society was limited directly by inheritance and indirectly by wealth as criteria for assuming inherited roles and as required payments for feasts and rituals of the secret society. Although the Nuu-chah-nulth chiefs' privileged ownership of the Whaling ritual was maintained by wealth, he was not a member of a larger society and as such, there was no membership fee. Within each of the non-egalitarian case studies examined, admission into the potential secret societies was voluntary and hierarchical. Members entered into the society at the lowest level for a nominal fee, advancing only when they possessed sufficient wealth to pay for a higher grade, or public display, and then only when those in the upper echelon agreed. Each provisionally identified secret society, apart from the Whaling ritual, had a hierarchically ranked institutionalized structure, where the elite members dominated all lower ranking members.

In all cases, this power was legitimized through the possession of exclusive supernatural knowledge, where control over knowledge, membership, and rank translates into hegemonic influence. Profound supernumerary knowledge was viewed as a valuable

commodity. Through the mechanism of secrecy, a society is able to protect the proprietary interest upon which its dominant position depends. The potential of controlling a subordinate group through the ranking system of a secret society is discussed by Simmel in that "There is here the special challenge of completely controlling a large, potentially and ideally subordinate group of human beings, by developing a scheme of positions with their rank interrelations' ([1908]1950:357-358). Secret societies are hierarchical in structure, with an elaborate system of ranks and degrees through which the member progresses from novice to veteran (Mackenzie 1967:16). Hierarchical structures facilitate centralized control of resources, by channeling them to those at the top, which in turn is the basis for the control of recruitment into the secret society. Moreover, centralized control is a prerequisite for hierarchical structures, thus hierarchy and centralization correlate to such a degree that they tend to reinforce each other (Erickson 1981:199). This holds true for each of the potential secret societies in all the non-egalitarian case studies investigated, barring the Whaling ritual. Higher echelon members may sometimes use their knowledge and resources to provide beneficial services to the community when necessary to retain their position; however, their primary goal is not one of benevolence. Rather, it is one of calculating men who withhold more than they reveal and more than they give away and use claims on withheld knowledge to keep lesser society members and non-members subservient (Murphy 1980:204).

The third component of my operational definition states that the underlying goal of a prehistoric secret society is hegemonic control for the purpose of effecting beneficial change for a select minority of the total population. In each of the non-egalitarian cultures, there existed a potentially identified secret society that provided an avenue for entrepreneurial elite to generate power, prestige, and wealth. Power and prestige was generated by the accumulation of wealth through the possession of restricted, culturally valuable knowledge accompanied by upward channels of economic capital to the highest-ranking members, thereby safeguarding dominance and ensuring continuation of the organization. In this manner, the secret societies formed an institutionalized arena where aggrandizing individuals aggregated to pursue hegemonic control over the larger population and siphoned off surpluses through demands on lower ranking members. The

evidence presented in the previous chapters supports the idea that in transegalitarian and chiefdom structures a secret society's fundamental purpose is hegemonic; moreover, it is an institution purposefully fabricated by a few aggrandizing member to establish and maintain power and authority over some of the economic and political structures of the larger community. This control of resources is transformed into the currency with which prestige within these secret societies is bought. In other words, competition over surplus resources was used as a leveraging mechanism compelling the larger community to accept the secret societies acquisition of wealth and status through channeling it a few elite members of the community. The process of unequal distribution required a sophisticated organizational process that controlled resource distribution. This institutional form existed in each of the cultures that exhibited secret societies. In fact, it was the secret society itself that legitimated and maintained the most hegemonic structure in communities through access to clandestine knowledge. It is access to esoteric information that partly separates elite from commoner. In each case, this socially valuable knowledge was of the same general nature but of a significantly deeper level than that found within the larger community. In each culture, these secret societies tried to instilled awe of a supernatural kind, deriving secret society members' power from the possession of supernatural knowledge above and beyond that readily available to the majority of the population. Each potentially identified secret society attempted to use socially sanctioned purposes to establish dominance over most, if not all, aspects of the population in which it operated. Each of the potentially secret societies examined operated in cultures that have established social, political, and economic complexity. Each culture had marked social inequality, ranking, and centralized control of surplus resources. Moreover, each transegalitarian and chiefdom society had publicly recognized politico-economic arenas where status, rights, power, and privileges were competed for.

Hegemonic control was lacking in the two egalitarian case studies examined and social, political, and economic complexity was absent. Both egalitarian cultures possessed no marked inequality, beyond age and gender; they did not produce surplus resources, and had no centralized control. They had no formal political or economic organizations and ideas of ownership were flexible or nonexistent. Consequently, no association within either of these cultures met the requirements of the third component,

and as the underlying notion of self-interest is inseparable from the function of hegemony, neither of the egalitarian case studies investigated meet the requirement of the final component of the operational definition. The primary function of a secret society is the promotion of self-interest for a few elite members within the larger community through a network of relationships, which directly or indirectly link the participants in related secret activities. As simple hunter-gatherers, the two egalitarian cultures produced no surplus resources that could be centrally controlled and no social network in which entrepreneurial or competitive aggrandizing activities could take place.

By contrast, each non-egalitarian case study had a society through which a few individuals could employ exploitive aggrandizing strategies to transform surplus resources into prominence and affluence. With the exception of the Nuu-chah-nulth Whaling ritual, each provisionally identified secret society investigated had an established network of exchange relationships based on exclusivity of supernatural knowledge that formed an arena for politically ambitious individuals to compete for personal power and prestige. Through an individuals' own rank-taking and his generosity in supporting others, aggrandizing individuals used supernumerary membership to generate exclusive relationships and obligations through which the individual was able to impose his own interests on the social relations of the community. The societies within each case study provided a hierarchy of male status positions in the community that provided an avenue through which an individual could gain economic advantage over others in their quest for personal power. Altogether, the Suque society of the Vanuatu, the First Order societies of the Hopi, the Dance societies of the Kwakiutl, the Wolf society of the Nuu-chah-nulth, the Ekkpo society of the Ibo, and the Poro society of Mende meet all the components of my operational definition. The Whalers ritual of the Nuu-chah-nulth does not.

Based on the evidence accrued from my ethnological investigation, I argue that the proposed model and operational definition of prehistoric secret societies has been tentatively confirmed. Although limited in scope, this investigation establishes that the model and operational definition are theoretically and empirically grounded and, as such, have the potential of aiding in the interpretation of archaeological sites. Although the constraints of this study only permitted the examination of eight case studies, the results

nevertheless provide an initial assessment of the goodness of fit and utility of the proposed definition and model of secret societies. Clearly, generalizing from these results and utility of the concepts for prehistoric studies will be contingent upon further confirmation of the patterns and relationships documented here. However, given the strength of my tentative conclusions, we may proceed to a brief investigation of how my model may be pragmatically used in the identification and interpretation of the archaeological record. My model provided evidence suggesting that secret societies differ in a number of ways from private associations and that these differences may be consistently identified archaeologically. In Chapter VIII, I outline the distinctive signatures of secret societies present in the ethnographic record that have the possibility of being observed in a prehistoric material assemblage. In addition to using a general example from the non-egalitarian case studies already investigated, I will touch upon ethnographic case study from a compiled list of ethnologies that add information on material signatures of secret societies and may also be used to verify my model's goodness of fit in the future. Finally I will demonstrate, using the Hopi case study, how my model may be used in archaeological interpretation and briefly present archaeological evidence from south-central Levant as an example of where my model and operational definition of prehistoric secret societies may further be used in the interpretation of prehistoric secret societies.

CHAPTER 8 – ARCHAEOLOGICAL OPERATIONALIZATION

*“When we build, let us think that we build forever.”
~ John Ruskin ~*

Ethnographic analogy is not only an effective means of establishing and assessing theoretical archaeological models, it is also useful in generating archaeological correlates regarding the relationship between known ethnographic behavior and observable material remains (Binford 1983; 2001; Schiffer 1995; 2000). My theoretical model tentatively demonstrates that secret societies potentially develop in prehistoric transegalitarian societies and that this socio-political development is not restricted to a specific geographical region. Furthermore, the case studies utilized demonstrate predictable recurrent material patterns that are potentially discernable in the archaeological record that may assist in the identification of secret societies. These include distinct settlement patterns where unique structures or architectural features are isolated from the general population, unusual floor plans, internally restricted spaces, prestige artifacts, atypical secondary structures, monuments and features (see Table 2).

Until recently, secrecy and secret societies have been a subject regarded as inaccessible to the methods of archaeology. The strongly materialist bias of most archaeological work of the last century has caused many researchers to overlook both large bodies of archaeological data and the impressive volume of ethnographic data on small-scale societies by anthropologists regarding the subject (Whitehouse 1992:21). The following discussion includes a representative sample of available ethnographic and archaeological information illustrating that further theoretical and material investigation into the unusual phenomenon of secret societies is indeed possible.

Of the ethnographic case studies examined, the Vanuatu have a distinct and materially recognizable secret society, including marked settlement patterns, unique buildings, isolation of such structures, and spaces indicative of groups whose place within the community is above that of the general populations social standing. Using the Vanuatu and other case studies as examples, one can identify a number of material patterns that have a high probably of survival in the archaeological record and I show how my model may be used to interpret these patterns. I then use the material remains of

| RECURRENT PATTERNS | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Secret Structure Aspects | Vanuatu | Hopi | Kwakiutl | Nuu-chah-nulth | Ibo | Mende |
| Location | Isolated (100 to 500 meters from village) | Within Village | Isolated; Within Village | Isolated | Isolated (visually from the community) | Isolated (visually from the community) |
| Level | Above Ground | Semi-subterranean; Subterranean | Above Ground | Above Ground | Above Ground | Above Ground |
| Size | 100' long x 28' wide | 66' Diameter x 12' Deep† | unknown | unknown | unknown | unknown |
| Distinctive Floor Plan | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Restricted Spaces | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Prestige Items | Yes (including unique ritual items) | Yes (including unique ritual items) | Yes (including unique ritual items) | Yes (including unique ritual items) | Yes (including unique ritual items) | Yes (including unique ritual items) |
| High Status Burial | Yes (located Suque compound) | Differential Grave Goods | Yes | Yes | Yes (located in Ekkpo compound) | Yes (located in Poro compound) |
| Sacrifices | Animal; Human‡ | Animal | Animal | Animal; Human‡ | Animal; Human‡ | Animal; Human‡ |
| Feasting | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Secondary Structures | Dancing Ground; Statues; Cemetery | Plaza | Dancing Ground | Dancing Ground | unknown | unknown |

Table 2: Summary of recurrent ethnographic patterns in relation to secret society that may survive in the material record.

† Dimensions of Great Kiva at Chaco Canyon (largest known kiva structure).

‡ Pre-colonial

the Hopi, the Levant Pre-Pottery Neolithic B, and prehistoric cave sites in southeast Italy as examples of how the information currently available in the archaeological record may be used in identifying secret societies in prehistoric cultures.

ETHNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL

THE VANUATU

Three general aspects of Vanuatu culture suggest the existence of a secret society: 1) settlement patterns indicate an isolated (Suque) compound approximately 100 to 500 meters from the village, with atypical structures, monuments, and features; 2) the isolated compound structure has a unique internal arrangement, including the existence and placement of fire pits, prestige items, and faunal remains indicative of hierarchy, status, and possible religious ideology; and 3) differences between village residential compounds and isolated residential compounds, including proximity to the Suque area, implies a correlation between status and wealth (i.e. affluent individuals are more closely associated with the Suque compound than the majority of the population). The following discussion outlines the

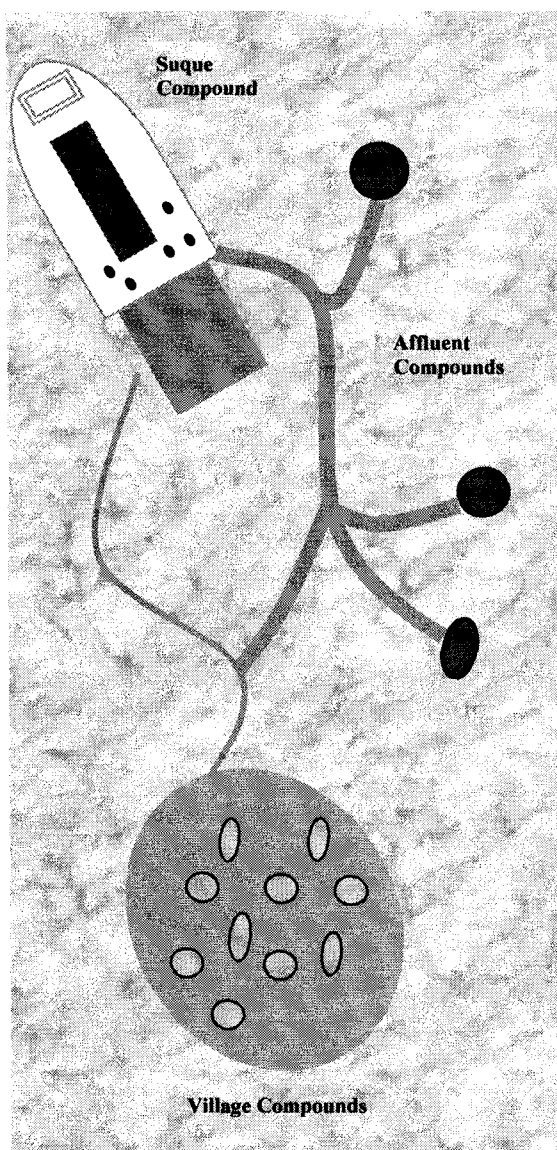


Figure 1.1: Representation of a Vanuatu settlement pattern showing three distinct activity zones.

material assemblage most likely to survive in the archaeological record and illustrates how such an assemblage might be interpreted based on my model and operational definition.

Vanuatu dwelling compounds, commonly found clustered together inside the residential boundaries of the village, are arbitrarily laid out, and irregularly spaced relative to one another. Each individual compound is similar in construction, consisting of a perimeter fence that surrounds a man's hut, the dwelling hut of his wife and offspring (dwelling structures typically vary in size between 3.5 and 4.5 meters), a cookhouse, pig shelter, and storage hut (Speiser 1996:92). The fencing is modest, constructed of wood, as are the dwellings, with no iconography or architectural embellishments. Comparatively, only a small number of dwelling compounds exist outside the village clearing. These are singular, isolated, and identified as affluent. They are similar in form to the village compounds, but considerably larger due, in large part, to the increased number of buildings contained within its limits. The solitary compounds have more substantial fencing, often of stone, and dwelling structures have carved external support posts and other symbolic embellishments. Each affluent compound contains a larger men's hut (typically twice the size of that found in village construction), multiple female huts, a number of cook houses corresponding to the number of female dwellings, multiple pig shelters, and numerous storage huts (Speiser 1996:99-100).

The only other anomalous structure is the Suque compound, located outside the cleared boundary of the village and visually isolated from both the village itself and the affluent compounds. Broad, well kept paths lead to the Suque site from each affluent residential compound, while only a single, modest trail leads from the village to the site (Speiser 1996:97). The primary Suque structure consists of a long rectangular building, approximately 35 meters long by 10 meters wide, with a gabled entrance at both ends. One gabled end faces a large flat clearing marked by a stone wall. The interior of the Suque structure has multiple non-random fire pits for cooking, with each hearth surrounded by a low stone wall. From the front entrance, a path leads through the center of the building to a raised section at the far end of the lodge. This area is elevated approximately 20 cm above the main floor and separated by a low wall of stone. Fireplaces are fewer in number in the raised section of the structure, with more elaborate

REPRESENTATION OF SUQUE CLUBHOUSE

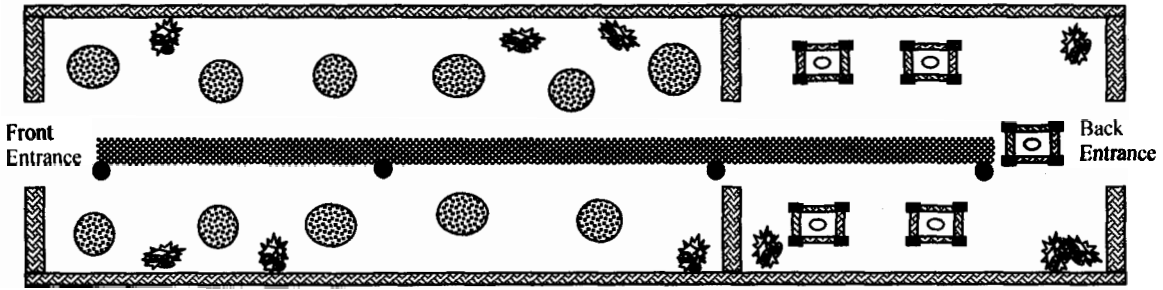
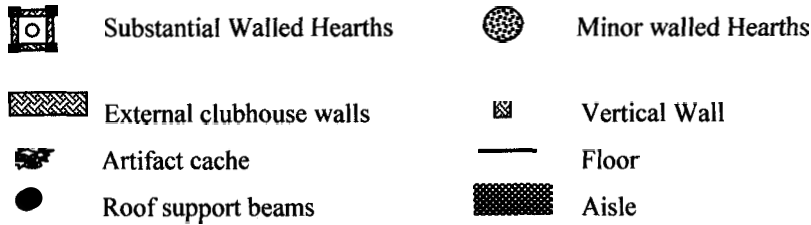


Figure 1.2: Plan view of Suque clubhouse as it may be represented in the archaeological record. *(illustration not to scale)*

SYMBOL KEY



ELEVATION VIEW OF SUQUE CLUBHOUSE



Figure 1.3: Elevation view of Suque clubhouse. One third of the room is elevated approximately 20 cm and partitioned by low stone wall *(illustration not to scale)*.

surrounding walls. Pig mandibles from feasts and human mandibles, along with human skulls, are suspended from the rafters (Speiser 1996:345). Also found within this structure, in small caches along the wall, are shell nose ornaments and necklaces (Speiser 1996:158); bone ear ornaments (Speiser 1996:160); amulets made of wood, bone, stone, or coral (Speiser 1996:310); ritual clubs and knives (Speiser 1996:319); shell trumpets (Speiser 1996:338); skull masks (Speiser 1996:348); and skull statues (Speiser 1996:355), with the caches becoming richer as they progress toward the back entrance.

Outside the structure, posts are rammed into the earth on which pig mandibles from rank-taking feasts are suspended and large freestanding statues, usually carved from stone, randomly decorate the area surrounding the entrance facing the dancing ground. A cemetery is associated with the Suque structure, located behind the building at the back entrance, in which the highest ranked members of the secret society are interred in a standing position (unique when compared to the village cemetery). Each burial is distinguished from one another by a ring of standing stones forming a low wall upon which pig mandibles from funeral feasts are suspended. The cemetery itself is additionally encircled by a stone enclosure (Speiser 1996:334-345).

MATERIAL ANALYSIS

A number of conclusions may be reached based on the distinct spatial patterns and material assemblages represented in the Vanuatu case study:

1. Three settlement areas characterize Vanuatu communities:

As evident from the spatial patterning, there are three separate subdivisions within this society: the village; the isolated compounds; and the Suque compound. The majority of Vanuatu people reside within the village, with only a small percentage of the population dwelling outside this boundary. The third settlement activity zone (Suque compound) does not appear to be residential in use. In general, this tripartite configuration implies definitive social, political, or economic divisions within the community.

2. Common versus Affluent Dwelling Compounds

Two categories of dwelling compounds can be discerned: common (small) and affluent (large). The difference between the village compounds and isolated compounds (dimensions, location, number of internal structures, building size and construction, and amount of resource storage facilities) indicate unequal economic conditions or access to wealth, specifically in the form of wives and pigs, and associated differential socio-political rank, status, and prestige (based on isolation from the village and greater proximity to the Suque compound) between the residents of these two dwelling types.

3. Suque Compound

The Suque compound is isolated, contains unique and unusual features (a double entrance building, multiple stone lined hearths, platforms, dancing ground, statues, cemetery), and atypical artifacts (human skulls, pig mandibles, prestige items). The isolated location indicates restrictive, limited access and implies secrecy. The cemetery and burial pattern indicates male dominant activities and hierarchical status. The dancing ground suggests periodic public performances, rituals, or feasts. Moreover, as this large open space is ringed by a wall barring access from all but the Suque building, events or activities occurring in this space are arguably restricted to only those individuals having privileged access. Furthermore, the internal configuration of the Suque building (multiple non-random fire pits, differential elevation, caches of prestige items) implies an atypical, hierarchically divisible social organization.

4. Differences in Rank, Wealth, Prestige, and Power

The affluent residential compounds are spatially detached from the general population, as is the Suque compound. Moreover, the affluent compounds are in closer proximity to the Suque site than are the residential village dwellings. Additionally, broad paths lead from the affluent compounds to the village and Suque compound, while access from the village to the Suque site is via a small trail. Regardless of the events occurring at the Suque compound, it is reasonable to assume that those of high socio-economic status within Vanuatu society had greater and more frequent access, and that it was only men of social and economic prominence who had exclusive admission to this area. Conversely, the general population was granted access periodically and probably by invitation only.

The Vanuatu settlement patterns, unique constructions, isolation of such constructions, secondary features, and uncommon artifact distributions all have a high degree of probability of recovery in the archaeological record. Although exclusivity of knowledge cannot be directly ascertained from the material remains, exclusivity of some kind is evident. It can be assumed, with some certainty, that individuals with privileged access to the isolated area engaged in some type of secret activity not readily accessible to the larger population. Greater quantities of pigs, wives, and storage facilities present in the affluent compounds make a strong case for centralized control of the community's resources by a few wealthy high-status individuals. Moreover, as the affluent compounds

have greater accessibility to the Suque site than to the village, the events occurring in this architecturally unique area can be assumed to be limited to the wealthiest members of the community and that this membership was voluntary based on wealth.

As these affluent compounds are more closely associated with the Suque site, the community's organizational structure may be interpreted as hierarchical and that status is somehow related to membership in the activities occurring in the Suque compound. Differences in fire pits, the elevation of a small section of the Suque building with a low dividing wall, and non-random variation in prestige items strongly suggest internal ranking of the organization represented. Additionally, the high-status cemetery associated with the Suque building, the unusually interred burials, displays of human skulls and pig mandibles implies ritual and ceremonial events. Finally, taken in its entirety, the purpose of the activities occurring in the Suque compound may be interpreted as hegemonic and aggrandizing as only the wealthiest members of the community had direct access.

Although this interpretation represents *a posteriori* reasoning, proceeding from effects to known causes, it does give a brief demonstration of how material evidence reflects the major aspects of my secret society model. To further substantiate the soundness of my model and to investigate the strength of material correlates of secret societies, a significantly larger ethnographic sample size needs to be investigated. There exist large bodies of ethnographic evidence that can be used as analogous case studies. To demonstrate this, I have compiled a list of some representative cultures, based on a cursory examination of each, that may be used to further establish goodness of fit (see Table 3). From this list, the Dani culture is briefly discussed because of the unusual level of detailed material characteristics available for interpretation.

**TRANSEGALITARIAN CULTURES
WITH POTENTIAL SECRET
SOCIETIES TO DETERMINE
MODELS FITNESS**

| LOCATION | CULTURE |
|----------------------|-------------|
| MELANESIA | |
| Bismarck Archipelago | Dukduk |
| Guam | Uritois |
| Marquesa Islands | Marais |
| <i>New Guinea</i> | <i>Dani</i> |
| Tahiti | Areoi |
| Torres Islands | Mabuiag |
| AFRICA | |
| French Guinea | Simo |
| Lower Congo | Bobo |
| Sierra Leone | Yoruba |
| Upper Congo | Ndembo |
| SOUTH AMERICA | |
| Brazil | Caishana |
| Bolivia | Aymara |
| Paraguay | Fuegia |
| NORTH AMERICA | |
| Alaska | Aleuts |
| British Columbia | Haida |
| British Columbia | Tlinkit |
| British Columbia | Tsimshian |
| California | Pomos |
| Florida | Muskoki |
| Minnesota | Ojibwa |
| New Mexico | Navajo |
| New Mexico | Sia |
| Plains | Omaha |

Table 3: The table lists transegalitarian cultures that have potential secret societies.

number of pigs he has on loan. This network of debt and obligation demonstrates a bigman's ability to contribute to the economic prosperity within the cultural system (Hampton 1999:22).

The ranked positions of political influence gained by manipulating the community's surplus resources are legitimated based on a bigman's religious power, with measurable

THE DANI

Anthropological research of the Dani, residents of the Irian Jaya Highlands of New Guinea, provides an unusually detailed description of their secret society – the Sun Cult – not readily available in other ethnographies. The Dani are horticulturalists, practicing complex ditch and mound gardening, who also engage in animal husbandry. They have a transegalitarian social structure where leaders, all male, are called bigmen and rise to hierarchical positions of influence through a combination of skill in warfare, polygyny, control of land, accumulation of wealth in pigs, and religious rank in the Sun Cult (Hampton 1999:20).

The Dani bigmen achieve status and prestige through the manipulation of preexisting political and social structures. This is accomplished by acquiring and maintaining items of wealth and shamanic powers. On a mundane level, like the Vanuatu, a bigman's status and prestige within the community is not only measured by the number of pigs he owns but by the

levels of religious authority corresponding to secular leadership and political control. There exists a majority of lower community level bigmen responsible for the general administration of the compounds, house clusters, and hamlets.

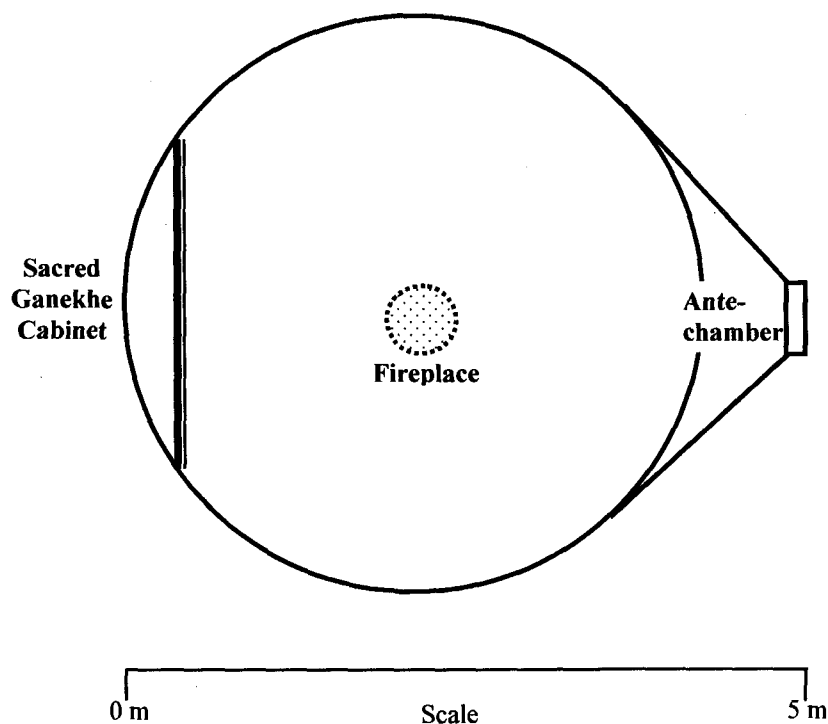


Figure 2.1: Dani Men's House with Antechamber. This men's dwelling hut, located in the village, is also where private association rituals are performed.

Hegemonic authority becomes more exclusive beyond this level, where only a few bigmen hold considerable political, social, and religious influence. The intermediate ranked bigmen head up confederations of hamlets, while the highest-ranking bigmen are leaders of regional alliances as well as overseers of all the bigmen below them in rank (Hampton 1999:23).

Legitimation of power and authority is dependent upon supernatural prowess. Every adult male belongs to a *Ganekhe* group, the entry-level religious ranking within the Sun Cult, with each member owning a sacred stone or packet of objects. The sacred possessions are housed in special cabinets within the men's house or within a specific sacred structure depending on his degree of religious ability. Thus, at the lowest level of membership the society functions as a private association, much like the Poro structure of

the Ibo in Africa. Similarly, as subsequently higher ranks are achieved in the Sun Cult, exclusivity is enforced and the organization becomes a secret society (Hampton 1999:127).

The architectural style and construction of the each “men’s house”, functioning as both a secular meeting place for adult male members of the community and a place where the lowest level *Ganekhe* rituals are conducted, is located within the village and usually architecturally identical with each other. Men’s houses are round, plank board constructions, with grass thatched conical roofs, and a single entrance with a diameter of approximately 4 to 5 m. The opening through the antechamber into the men’s houses are approximately 50 cm wide by about 80 cm high (Hampton 1999:131).

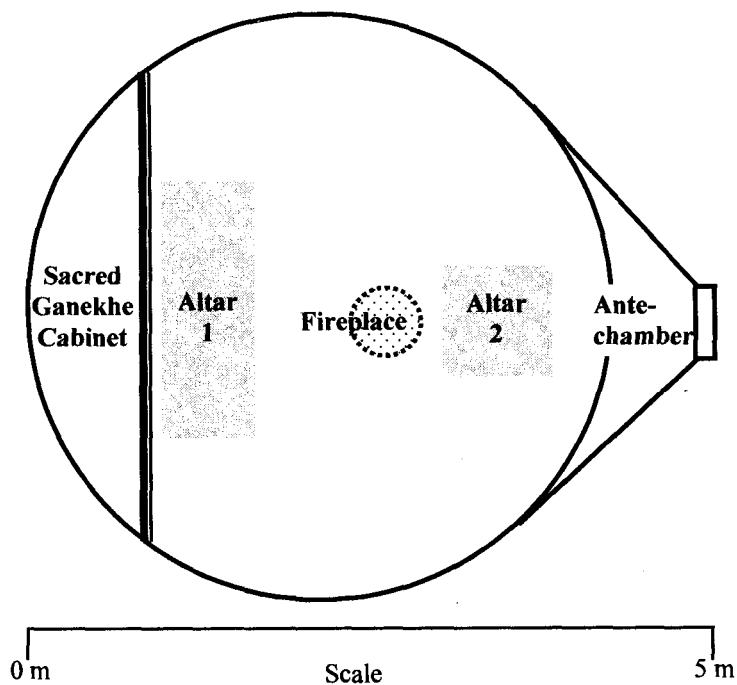


Figure 2.2: Sacred Structure of a Big Man used for secret society rituals. First and Second altars are restricted to the highest ranking members of the Sun Cult.

On the back wall, opposite the entrance, is a raised narrow wooden box constructed as part of the wall where the sacred objects are kept. Hanging below the elevated box are pig mandibles from ritual sacrifices. In the case of the highest-ranking bigmen, three rows of pig mandibles from higher order ritual sacrifices are strung. Leaning against the

cabinet on the floor is from one to four large stones (Hampton 1999:134). Generally, men's houses are used for private association gatherings and are situated within the village, whereas the more affluent bigmen, who belong to the higher levels of the secret society, construct their sacred compounds outside the village, usually far enough away from the community to ensure visual isolation, typically 500 meters or more. In these sacred compounds, the shamanic leaders venerate and manipulate the ancestral spirits, ghosts, and the supernatural power of the sun (Hampton 1999:156).

Bigmen of intermediate or high rank in the Sun Cult, especially those bigmen at the confederation and alliance level, may control more than one sacred *Ganekhe* repository

(place where powerful ritual objects are kept) and construct special, well-hidden, sacred houses or even entire sacred compounds. These sacred dwellings and compounds are subject to severe restrictions to prevent the uninitiated from setting foot on the consecrated ground or viewing the sacred objects (Hampton 1999:129). Reminiscent of the stories told by the Mende regarding the clandestine nature of the Ekkpo secret society, an example of the lengths to which the Dani go to maintain secrecy is illustrated by the tale of missionary Don Richardson, who reported that a young girl was thrown into a river to her death, when caught playing within the confines of the

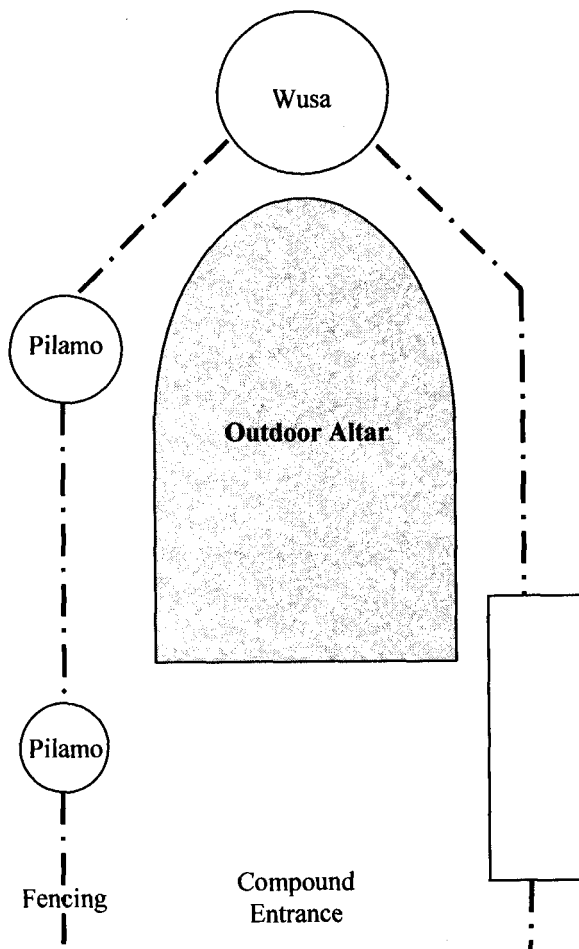


Figure 2.3: Sacred Sun Cult Compound of the Dani.
(*illustration not to scale*)

head bigman's sacred ritual compound (Richardson 1977:35-42).

Although this is only a summary examination, the probability that the Sun Cult is a secret society, as proposed in my model and operational definition, is high. The Dani have a complex social and political system based on unequal access to and control over surplus resources, primarily in the form of wealth in pigs. They display distinct settlement patterns, domestic architecture varies in size and quality of construction, and special structures and compounds exist that are restricted and isolated from the majority of the population. Therefore, they possess the necessary conditions favorable for the emergence and establishment of secret societies.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MATERIAL

Clearly, a large body of ethnographic information is available for further investigation and to confirm and strengthen the patterns and relationships postulated by my model. Likewise, a significant amount of archaeological evidence is also available that may be used to illustrate the potential utility of the concepts explored in this thesis. Detailing specific archaeological excavations is outside the intended scope of this research; however, the following briefly illustrates a representative sample of the types of solid archaeological information that is available.

HOPÍ CASE STUDY

In prehistoric Anasazi communities, ancestral to the Hopi culture, residential units were marked by substantial labor investments in house construction, the presence of unique floor plans and architectural styles (when compared to residential dwellings), and substantial storage space. The primary units of social and economic reproduction were centered in these residences. The political leadership of such villages was probably concentrated among the heads of the largest households and family groups who implemented strategies of surplus accumulation to finance self-aggrandizement practices essential for claiming and maintaining status and notoriety in the community and local region. These villages may be characterized by hierarchical development with specific leaders and households differentially involved in political decision-making (Feinman et al. 2000:439).

Distinguishable signatures of centralized control by an elite group over surplus resources are probably best represented by regional and village settlement patterns; including a two-tiered hierarchical settlement configuration, differential spatial distributions of goods, and specialized architectural features (Lightfoot 1984:87-88; Whiteley 1998:93).

Regionally, large villages are surrounded by small satellite villages and farms, which in turn had smaller clusters of communities and land associated with them. This prehistoric Anasazi pattern is archaeologically indicative of centralized control and redistribution. The larger communities had significantly greater volumes of storage facilities, often in association with the kivas, a greater concentration of wealth objects, and larger, more elaborate structures when compared to the smaller satellite settlements (Leach 1974:247). These aspects make a compelling argument for regional trade and redistribution centers situated in the larger, more central sites (Lightfoot 1984:99). These centers were well equipped to service and integrate surrounding populations politically, economically, and religiously (Feinman et al. 2000:466).

The presence of a small elite group operating primarily in the largest sites is further indicated by the fact that, like the Suque, affluent Anasazi houses tended to be associated with greater than expected volumes of storage space, agricultural remains, and trade goods. The large houses also tended to be situated near communal or religious buildings. The above pattern is interpreted as evidence of aspiring leaders from large families implementing strategies of surplus accumulation, privileged access to supernatural power, subsistence intensification, and increased regional exchange to enhance their influence and prestige in the local community and broader region (Feinman et al. 2000:466).

Indications that an elite hegemonic institution (i.e. First Order Secret Societies) may have played a central role in this economic configuration is suggested by the material record. The large sites were functionally and architecturally distinct from outlying villages with greater than average ceremonial spaces. The larger settlements, or major centers, were associated non-randomly with great kivas, large plaza spaces, and a wide diversity of status goods. By contrast, the smaller sites contained a limited number of specialized architectural features and status goods. Moreover, these satellite communities

did not possess great kivas, enclosed plaza spaces and few, if any, exotic luxury items (Leonard 1968:88). The construction of sacred spaces and ritual facilities at larger settlements suggests that social roles and activities at these sites were distinctive. This archaeological pattern may be interpreted in terms of ritual activities playing a greater, more diversified role at the larger sites, or that these sites were more apt to service and integrate surrounding populations (Feinman et al. 2000:461) in association with public ritual displays.

The kivas, although centrally located within the settlements, were isolated structures. The kivas underground construction (subterranean or semi-subterranean) suggests restricted or exclusive access. Internal spatial restrictions were not suitable for events involving the entire community or large numbers of people. Limited community-wide involvement suggests an element of secrecy. Additionally, the floor plan, unique when compared with the dwelling compounds within the village, prestige items, and unusual artifacts and features suggest separation from daily communal activities. The association of plazas with the kiva suggests periodic large-scale rituals, dramas, feasts, or other performances, perhaps as a means of demonstrating and legitimizing the power possessed by members of the kiva societies.

Through ethnographic data, it is known that religious knowledge in Hopi society is regarded as both powerful and dangerous, in direct proportion to the degree to which it is kept secret and preserved by specialists. As knowledge is valued in inverse relation to the number of people possessing it, and people are valued according to the knowledge they possess, the restrictive nature of the kiva would suggest that only a few individuals shared the highest knowledge associated with the unusual phenomenon occurring at the site. Furthermore, supernatural knowledge is regarded as vital to the health of the society; access to such knowledge provides a route to political power, while exclusion from it would be a critical disadvantage.

With the Hopi, it is reasonable to assume, based on centralized control of surplus resources, social and political complexity, singular or atypical artifacts, features, and spatial patterns of ritual spaces, that secret societies were present and that kivas served as meeting places for secret society members and rituals.

NORTH-CENTRAL LEVANT

Widespread archaeological sites in north-central Levant provide evidence of unique ritualistic phenomenon, including post-mortem skull removal, human sacrifices, and the 'cult of skulls.' These unusual occurrences originated during the 12th – 11th millennia bp in the Late Natufian period. They continued into the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A and B Periods (PPNA, PPNB) of the 9th – 6th millennia bp (Bar-Yosef 1995:197; Byrd and Monahan 1995:327). During the PPNA and PPNB periods, these customs became common practice, as seen in Jericho, Ain Ghazal, and Jerf el-Ahmar (Yakar and Hershkovitz 1988:59).

One of the more unusual finds is a beheaded skeleton at Jerf el-Ahmar. The site of Jerf el-Ahmar consists of a dozen villages piled on top of one another, with continuous occupation dating from 9,600 BC to 8,500 BC. Arnaud (2000:56-59) reports that in 1988, a headless skeleton, lying on its stomach, with its arms out and fingers dug into the ground, was found in a "communal" building, and suggests that it may indicate a ritualistic beheading. Previous deposits at this site have revealed skulls found on a hearth and others in post-holes. A skeleton was also discovered in the foundation of the structure leaving us to ponder what sort of unusual practices occurred (Arnaud 2000:59) at this site.

Study of burials, sacred places, and mortuary ceremonies in PPNB provides a rich source of information for understanding existing social organization and complexity. Recent archaeological research has demonstrated that by the PPNB, exceptional non-residential buildings existed, buildings that may have served as constructions for religious use. A large structure located at Cayonu near Jerf el-Ahmar, for example, contained a concentration of burials and human skulls, constituting more than 400 individuals. The construction in which they were found had a large quadrangular stone slab and it was discovered, by microbiologists, to have traces of blood on its surface, which may indicate its use as a sacrificial stone. A number of such examples exist in the PPNB in central Levant, and these structures may have been places of religious assembly (Cauvin 2000:246).

These constructions in the PPNB introduced for the first time architectural evidence for the possibility of organized secular and religious meetings. Consideration of the

evolution of Near Eastern Neolithic funerary customs, specifically the 'cult of skulls,' illustrates that these phenomenon played a fundamental role in structuring social life (Cauvin 2000:247).

When considering the PPNB 'cult of skulls' their location is particularly significant (Bienert 1991; Kuijt 1995). Excavations have shown that the skulls were not buried, but stored in cells, in fabricated containers, or discovered in situ on the very floor of the buildings. In other words, these may have represented a cult object intended to be visible, continuously or intermittently. The fact that the heads were preserved and kept in condition for viewing by, perhaps, the broader village community was a new phenomena that contrasted the earlier simple funerary piety in which the dead were buried in the earth. This change suggests that in the sedentary communities of the PPNB, religious ritual ceremonies were elaborated and carefully maintained (Cauvin 2000:249).

A number of aspects indicated that these sites might serve as an exceptionally good trial application for my model and operational definition. First, the economic transition of foraging to a more sedentary lifestyle in the Levant caused human adaptation and social organization to change, particularly seen in ritualistic behavior (HersHKovitz et al 1995:779-780; Goren et al 2001:671).

Natufian culture was substantially different than earlier hunter-gatherer groups due to an increase in permanent settlements and the intensive use of wild plants with evidence of Natufian cultural complexity occurring between 12,800 – 10,500 bp (Garrard 1991:240). Second, it is important to note that the origins of animal domestication do not appear to be linked to securing reliable meat sources and may have been used for religious or aggrandizing practices. It has been shown that the first modifications in size of domesticated animals concern only a small number of animals of limited food importance and does not become a vital economic factor until the end of the PPNB period (Cauvin 2000:245). Third, the fact that the first exceptional constructions of the north-central Levant were large religious buildings must hold some significance. Finally, examination of regional homogeneity in the ways in which households and communities physically and symbolically structured mortuary rituals demonstrates a high degree of standardization. This implies a wide network of shared meanings within ritual practices across space and through time (Kuijt 2000:149).

Taken together, these aspects strongly suggest that conditions favorable for the emergence and establishment of hegemonic secret societies existed in the PPNB period in this region. Kuijt (2000:159) believes “that community leaders developed and maintained a series of elaborate social controls, materially expressed through mortuary, ritual, and architectural practices, which emphasized membership and affinity.” In other words, social differentiation existed within and between community households as did widely accepted socio-religious codes that may have served to consolidate hegemonic power, authority, and control of status during this period. Archaeological studies provide a number of specific material patterns that can reveal how community members may have dealt with new social and organizational pressures associated with increased population aggregation in early agricultural communities and the ‘cult of skulls’ may have become the major venue in which individual competitions were expressed.

Finally, the similarities between the probable secret society structures of Jerf el-Ahmar and the Hopi kivas, for which we have ethnoarchaeological evidence of institutionalized secret societies, are noteworthy. Like the kiva, Jerf el-Ahmar possessed a large subterranean structure with a unique floor plan, unusual or atypical artifacts and features, and human sacrifices. The Jerf el-Ahmar structure is such that it limited the number of participants, its underground situation served to isolate it and constrain outside involvement, even though it was situated within the larger community, and the occurrence of blood sacrifices are all indicative of ritual secrecy.

Given the profusion of archaeological evidence, socio-political complexity, and recurring structural patterns corresponding to ethnographically known secret societies, it is reasonable to assume that the ritual buildings at the Jerf el-Ahmar site probably represent a secret society operating within the community.

INVESTIGATING SECRECY

Traditionally, secrecy has been a subject regarded as inaccessible to methods of archaeology. This attitude has led to the neglect of large bodies of archaeological data and lack of consideration for theoretical discussions on the subject of clandestine rites in small-scale societies. Recently there has been a revival of interest in prehistoric esoteric rituals among archaeologists that provides an avenue for the investigation of secrecy and

of secret societies in prehistory. One such example comes from the investigation into Upper Paleolithic and Neolithic caves in the southern Mediterranean as they pertain to religion, ritual, and secrecy. With an emphasis on the underground gallery systems and using models largely derived from anthropology, Whitehouse (1992) has translated these cave sites (and related art and artifacts) into what she has termed a 'secrecy theme' dominant in cults operating in prehistoric Italy (Whitehouse 1992:127).

In brief, Whitehouse contends that the use of certain caves, based on the recovery of human burials, rock art, and artifacts indicates that some type of clandestine ritual practice was undertaken by the prehistoric inhabitants of the region over an extended period of time. Whitehouse presents archaeological evidence demonstrating that the use of these caves, for unusual and exclusive practices, began in southeast Italy during the Upper Paleolithic and continued, uninterrupted, well into the Neolithic and Copper Age (Whitehouse 1992:160). Among the most distinctive features upon which this interpretation was based was the inter-related characteristics of the sites themselves: the cave entrance was isolated and often hidden, the sites were situated underground and difficult to access, and devoid of natural light. Although these are normal characteristics of caves, it is notable that several of the most important prehistoric cult sites in the region were particularly well hidden and inaccessible, situated either high on the mountainside away from habitation sites or along the water where the entrance was accessible only at low tide. Furthermore, not only are the sites themselves difficult to find, but within them the main area of cult activity was usually found in those parts most difficult to get to. An associated feature was the restriction of space in many of these sites; either the cave area as a whole or the particular location used for cult purposes were markedly small (Whitehouse 1992:128). As these sites were clearly not suitable for great public events involving large numbers of people, Whitehouse argues that it is reasonable to assume the activities excluded community-wide or other larger-scale rituals, and that given the isolation and difficult access the events probably involved a select numbers of people, separation from the community, and secrecy (Whitehouse 1992:133).

By examining archaeological evidence of the surrounding habitation sites, Whitehouse presents a compelling argument that these caves were used by small-scale communities, linked via reciprocal exchange networks for the distribution of prestige

goods, suggesting incipient social complexity, centralized control of surplus resources, settlement hierarchy, and status differentiation between individuals (Whitehouse 1992:21-22). The material record also demonstrated an increase in both overall population density and size of individual communities (Whitehouse 1992:173). These archaeologically documented social, political, and economic aspects provide the conditions favorable for the emergence of secret societies (see Chapter I), and they demonstrate a good fit with the theoretical framework established, making it probable that these caves were used for secret society rituals.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, anthropologists and archaeologists have recognized that relations of power and subjection between groups may characterize even small-scale, pre-class societies. Secret societies are central to the hierarchical socio-political development of small-scale communities and play a pivotal role in understanding the mechanisms by which power is established and institutionalized. Secrecy also indicates a particular social attitude toward supernatural knowledge, one that is well documented in some contemporary traditional societies. Secrecy involving claims to supernatural and political forces provides at least one basis for exercising power. In small-scale societies, spiritual knowledge is often regarded as both powerful and dangerous. Its importance tends to vary in direct proportion to the degree to which it is kept secret. In other words, powerful supernatural knowledge is valued in inverse relation to the number of people possessing it and people are valued according to the importance of the knowledge they possess.

The explicit purpose of developing a model and operational definition regarding secret societies is to aid in the interpretation of the archaeological record. My model demonstrates that secret societies differ in a number of ways from private associations and that these differences are such that they may be consistently identifiable within a material assemblage. Additional ethnographic examples may serve to further support my conclusions. By examining archaeological cases where unusual ritual behavior can be documented and where conditions obtained that are favorable for the emergence of secret societies, and where there are material remains of ritual areas similar to ethnographic

secret society locations, it is possible to demonstrate how this model can be used in the identification and interpretation of secret societies in the archaeological record.

Based on a sampling of anthropological and archaeological information, this chapter clearly demonstrates that, notwithstanding the relative scarcity of investigation into the material aspects of secret societies, we have sufficient information at our disposal to begin to identify secret societies in the prehistoric material record and to monitor the importance of these institutions in social and cultural evolution.

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