

Human Tribes



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Minds In Nature



Since I was a child, I have been fascinated by other cultures. Whether it was ancient Greeks or Egyptians, stone age cultures or other original and native cultures that still exist, for example in Africa, Australia and America. And all over the world we can extract similar social structures. They may differ in appearance, names and level of power. But still we can find a blueprint of human society and organisation.

This blueprint I describe is based on several literature studies and my own search for a clear view on the human tribe. Of course each culture has its own specifics based on the period in history and interaction with other cultures. Some cultures have more roles than I describe, others might have less or in a different order of organisation.

Round or Triangular

I speak of a blueprint of society, in fact there are two. There is the round, circular form, the basic form of human culture. The other one is triangular, like a pyramid. We see this way of organization since the beginning of agriculture and the first settlements and villages that have a larger population than before. And this triangular model has suppressed the circle and is everywhere around us, in our large society on the level of a country, even on a world scale. We see it in companies, religions and even in school systems.



Triangular hierarchy

This Triangular way of organisation shows the leader on top. We see this structure since the beginning of agriculture when societies became too large to know each other and to make decisions with all people. It is a huge advantage to have a constant and secure food supply for all. But it requires to stay on a single spot. It gives the opportunity to make things, such as large temples, nomadic people would never realise. In Egypt there are many remains showing this. The Pharaoh is the absolute leader, he is god on earth. The priests are the people that have the authority to put the Pharaoh in his position and are themselves protected by his position. The development of religion in this perspective is logical with the changing of human society but I will not discuss that in this article. Further down the pyramid we see the writers, tax inners, scholars, architects, and the majority would be the farming families. Lowest in hierarchy there are the slaves. They do not have any rights, nor play part in the rituals or cultural aspects.

However within those pyramids, round tribes arise in every layer and we relate to each other in our most basic structures. Therefore I consider the circle the most basic blueprint. It has the most harmony and contains equality, yet with different roles and responsibilities.

Circular society

Homo Sapiens Sapiens is a social animal, like elephants, dogs, rats and of course our cousins the great apes. Within social animals you see differentiation of roles, tasks and of power. Social animals have leaders, so have we. In fact we need leaders. If you have been in situations when it is unclear who has what authority you might know it takes a long time to make a decision. It creates irritation and a decision made by all is not naturally a better one.

Within a circular society we directly see different patterns and structures than in the triangular organisation. A leader has it's place within the circle. A circle is based on equality and interdependency. Which does not mean everyone has the same responsibilities or power. But within this circle there is room for all the voices.

President, Pope, Farao, CEO

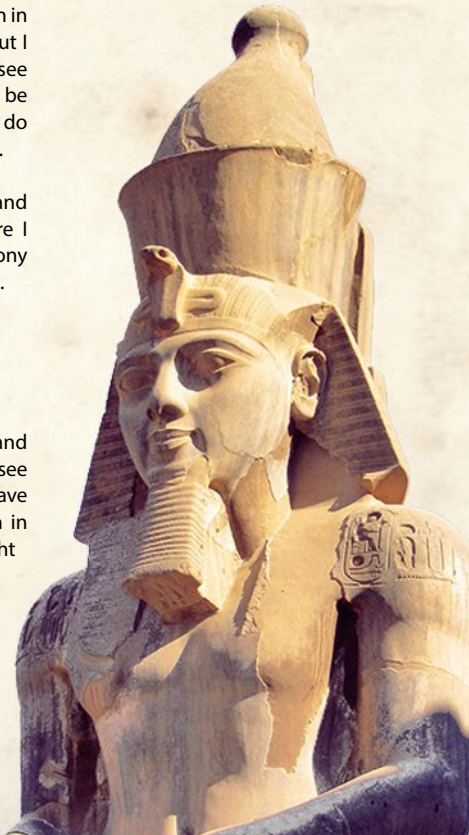
Trusted supporters of the leader,
ministers, government, priests

Judges and law system

Scholars, teachers,

General working class
Vast majority, farmers

Non - accepted people,
slaves, outcasts, prisinors



The Centre

A tribe is a circular structure and has a centre, where in the pyramid you could say everything and everyone is focussed on the top and the person on top. In a circle the centre is the open space. It is the heart of the tribe, the fireplace. It is the place to be. It's where the food is shared, stories are told and festivities are celebrated.

The centre contains everything that binds the tribe together. Stories of gods, spirits and ancestors. Stories of how this tribe came to be. About heroes and the world they live in. It is the living heart of the tribe. Strong tribes have strong stories. Or if you prefer modern terms a 'why' as Simon Sinek describes in his golden circle. It is a focus point. It's of vital importance to stay tuned into this world. Together a tribe carries its vision on the world.

If you believe the world is created by a god and this god has told the people what you can or cannot do, it will define the ways of a tribe. Take for instance headhunter tribes. If you believe that you will only get a name for your new born kid by taking someone's life force (killing) you get nasty habits.

Shared stories shape the world of a tribe. It provides the law and helps all to maintain the tribe as it is.

In modern tribes it is no different. In clothing and appearance you can express, "hey I am part of this or that kind of tribe". You can make statements by what you eat or don't eat, forms of greeting others and so many more things.

It's interesting what stories and common habits define you? What are the tribes you belong to? I consider myself part of the Dutch bushcraft tribe. When being with fellow bushcrafters I will wear green trousers and a green jumper. I will leave my dresses at home!



Blueprint



In the blueprint I will draw on a following page I have extracted 8 different roles or positions. They are related to each other in various ways. In this and following articles I will discuss the different positions as I see them. A basic overview of both the triangular and circular society will give you a helping hand in recognizing these structures within your own tribes. For we humans are still the same species as we were thousands of years ago and therefore we tend to organize ourselves in tribes. Even when the larger structure is triangular.

If you look closely you can see tribes within tribes. To make it more complex you are probably part of 10 up to 50 different tribes. In a stone age society you were born in a tribe and you would stay there for the rest of your life. In some situations a tribe could consist of different clans and there could be an exchange of people from one clan to the other mostly because of marriage but that would be it.

The natural tribe tends to have up to 150 people in it. 150 is a critical number. It is called Dunbar's number. You would know who is who, what their relations are, what they are good at etc. Above this number tribes became too large to supply food for all and maintain close relationships. It was best to split into two new tribes. And this is still true. When a group becomes too large effectivity and personal interaction will decrease.

Nowadays you are part of different tribes. You can step in and out. Some you outgrow or are just part of your life in a specific period, for instance a primary school. You don't leave that tribe by death but by transition to another tribe. Examples of modern tribes you probably take part in today:

- Family of birth
- Family of partner
- Sport you do
- Job and colleagues
- Place of birth
- City you live in
- Schools you attend
- Church, religion or the atheist tribe
- Internet tribes

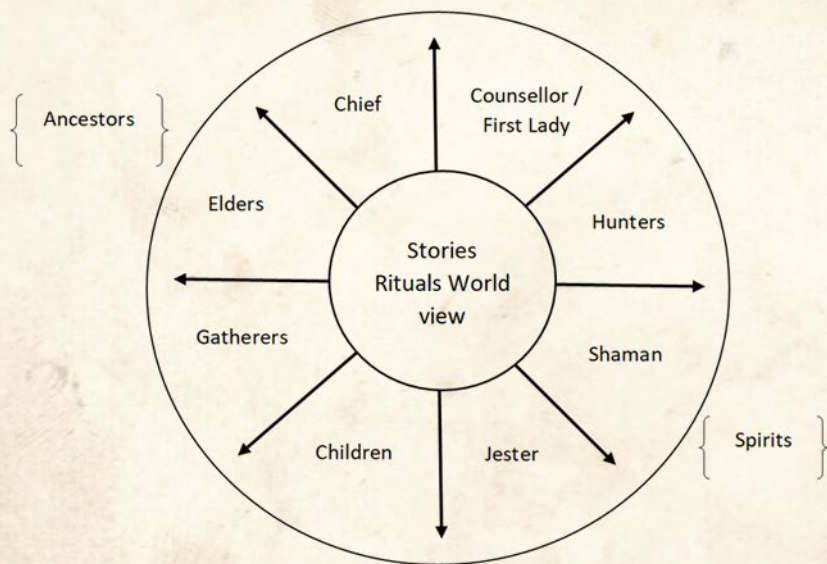
The Eight Roles

*The position of male and female in human history is sometimes point of dispute. Male Dominance, suppression of females worldwide and uprising feminism has put gender equality on the map. Male and female roles in society vary in different cultures. Before Christianity women were often highly respected and had many ways of influence. However in a position of a chief you would merely find a man, with women in exception.

Chief *	Listener, leader of all, decision making, More often a he than a she. He is responsible for the wellbeing of all.
Jester	Jokes, fun and entertainment. Can disagree with a chief without loss of position or being accused of treason.
Elders	The people who have knowledge of the past. They have reached 'old age' and therefore are respected by the tribe. They can advise the chief based on history. They might be former hunters, former gatherers and now assist in ways they can.
Shaman	Spiritual leader. He or She can travel to the worlds of spirits. They can bring advise from the spirit world, heal people and lead important festivities and rituals. Keeper of stories
Children	Children are part of a tribe, they need to be educated in the ways of the tribe. They are not yet initiated. They would probably help with basic ways of living such as gathering, building shelters.
Counsellor/ First Lady	A chief often has someone who stands directly besides him. This could be his wife, or any other prominent person.
Hunters	Mostly men who go off and hunt and fish. They are therefore some periods long away from the rest of the tribe.
Gatherers	In many cases women who take care of the houses and provide for food that can be found, gathered and preserved.



Jester



In the model above you see all the different roles and perspectives as I have put them together. As you can see there are spirits and ancestors as well. They don't have their own spot in this model but are very important to the totality of the tribe.

In the circle every role has an opposite. This creates four important aspects within the tribe. Those four themes are: 'Power', 'Keepers of traditions', 'Daily living' and 'Initiation'. The opposite of the Chief is the Jester. They are both related to the theme of power. The Chief has his responsibility to make decisions based on wisdom and the benefit of all. The Jester is the fool, he can be stupid, make faults or be thwart. He can contradict a leader with a joke and without being punished. The elders and the shaman are opposites like the chief and the Jester. They are both keepers of traditions, yet from different perspectives. Elders have lived through their lives. They can share their lessons based on experience. The shaman is the keeper of balance between the normal world and the spiritual world.

Hunters and gatherers are responsible for the security of daily living. Gatherers are active in the direct living area of the tribe. Hunters go out for longer periods maybe for weeks or longer. They have an outward focus but bring valuable and nutritious food. The children are opposite to the First Lady or the counsellor. Children learn the ways of the tribe. The direct persons besides the Chief are highly respected persons. A Chief or king is mostly

unapproachable. And to think to become a king, well that is unlikely for most people. It is however possible to reach for these high ranked positions. Most children have idols, popstars or people they look up to. Initiation and development is the shared factor.

To the sides of every position there are two other roles who are strongly connected to each other. Gatherers would in most cases be the women and mothers. Of course they are related to the children. They would probably spend a lot of time in and around their homes. Elderly people are not the fastest hunters. Their knowledge is respected and needed, the elders would probably be home like the gatherers. Children need to learn the ways of the community. Until they receive their full initiation they are more free to play and make mistakes. So both the elders and the children are therefore placed beside the gatherers.

In this model everyone is connected to all. The most important element of a tribe is in the centre. Everything is related to the stories, rituals and world view. What to eat or not to eat. Whom to marry, what trees, stars or places to worship or avoid. The centre keeps everyone together. A tribe is a strong web of relations where all people find a place. You can grow into new positions, being initiated by 'rites de passage'. And we all hope to grow old and become a wise elder!

In the next couple of articles I will further discuss the different roles and their relationships to each other. I will also relate these blueprint roles and themes to modern tribes and our daily living and habits. Together they will form a small book about human tribes.

Books and literature

The Corporate Tribe – Jitske Kramer / Danielle Braun

Hunting and Gathering in the Corporate Tribe – Keith Wilcock

Dunbar's number:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunbar%27s_number

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