

Here are a few definitions of 'tribe' being used as the basis of discussion in the present chapter:

A tribe is a collection of families bearing a common name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and is not usually endogamous, though originally it might have been so.

—Imperial Gazetteer of India

A tribe is a group of people in a primitive or barbarous state of development acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding themselves as having a common ancestor.

—Oxford Dictionary

In its simplest form the tribe is a group of bands occupying a contiguous territory or territories and having a feeling of unity deriving from numerous similarities in culture, frequent contacts, and a certain communality of interest.

—Ralph Linton

A tribe is an independent political division of a population with a common culture.

—Lucy Mair

A tribe is a group united by a common name in which the members take pride by a common

language, by a common territory, and by a feeling that all who do not share this name are outsiders, 'enemies' in fact.

—G.W.B. Huntingford

A tribe is a social group with territorial affiliation, endogamous, with no specialisation of functions, ruled by tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect, recognising social distance with other tribes or castes, without any social obloquy attaching to them, as it does in the caste structure, following tribal traditions, beliefs and customs, illiberal of naturalisation of ideas from alien sources, above all conscious of homogeneity of ethnic and territorial integration.

—D.N. Majumdar

Ideally, tribal societies are small in scale, are restricted in the spatial and temporal range of their social, legal, and political relations, and possess a morality, a religion, and a world view of corresponding dimensions. Characteristically too, tribal languages are unwritten, and hence, the extent of communication both in time and space inevitably narrow. At the same time, tribal societies exhibit a remarkable economy of design and have a compactness and self sufficiency lacking in modern society.

—I.M. Lewis