

The loosening of the clan tie and emergence of the individual--
according to Thurgwald.

The main cause of the loosening of the clan tie lies in stratification, i.e., in social distinctions mostly deriving from the meeting of different ethnical groups.

1. Effects of stratification.

(A) On the ruling strata.

- (a) Shepherds roam over large areas and families are dispersed. Migration and war loosen ties, and give prominence to heads of families as leaders and scouts, who may gain special ascendancy over cultivators' clans. These latter become tributary to them or become their clients. Such a 'web of government' thrown by herdsmen over hunters' and cultivators' settlements, is a feature of the Sudan, the southern boundary of the Sahara. Hausa and Fulbe tribes established here their rule, in some cases lasting over a thousand years. The cultivators clans were mostly negroes of northern Central Africa. Though nomadic herdsmen are proud of their lineage, yet they tend towards individual leadership; settled cultivators on the other hand often live a collective existence and are submissive. This explains the loosening of the clan tie within the upper strata and their breaking up in patriarchal families.

A parallel development is noticeable where cultivators are in contact with hunters. Here also economic superiority asserts itself. But there is more intermarriage between cultivator and hunter, than between shepherd and cultivator. Intermarrying hunters settle in the neighborhood of cultivators and become their clients, i.e., satellites, "poor relatives".

- (b) During their wanderings, some shepherd or herdsmen families gain ascendancy over others. Prominent families compete for influence over dependent cultivators, clans or settlements.
- (c) In the course of this rivalry, families have cause to strengthen their ranks from the ranks of other clans, as well as from those of cultivators and prisoners of war. The latter have the advantage of being more dependable, lacking clan support. (This development may later lead to despoty.)
- (d) In the struggle for ascendancy, possession of cattle is the decisive weapon, since it ensures the support of cultivators' clans. Herds of cattle become an index of power. It increases the number of dependent herdsmen, the amount of cereals and leguminous food that can be bartered from the cultivators, and thus the influence to be gained by redistributing food. The cultivator cherishes the possession of cattle economically, and also as a symbol of his connection with the leading clans, from which he derives prestige.

All this fosters family property as distinct from clan property, especially in regard to such objects as are a source of power and prestige.

Plutocracy may develop directly out of the rivalry of noble families, some families losing out, others rising to comparatively great wealth.

The poorer families may seek the protection of the powerful--an element of feudal clientela.

- (a) A variant leads to householding on a modest scale, the patriarchal family having acquired a few prisoners of war and made them into servants or maids. The latter is the germ of the labor organization of the Roman familia as contrasted to the tributary peasant.
- (f) Monopoly of leadership of a noble family may be consolidated through the establishment of a "dynasty". Under a dynasty usually the "most suitable" person inherits chieftainship. He is selected by the former head of the family or the family as a whole. Selection is within the family or clan.

In this way does stratification lead up to a loosening of clan ties within the ruling ethnical group itself.

(B) On the middle strata.

- (a) Cultivators' clans are loosened up through the acquisition of cattle and family possession spreads. Appointees from the ranks of the cultivators rise to be sub-shepherds. Strangers may be set up by the shepherds over the cultivators, as tax-gatherers. Cultivators' clans begin to organize in families, and form into hereditary castes, with wide ramifications.
- (b) Craftsmen's clans may become economically dependent upon the shepherds with whom they are in (unequal) exchange. Members of such craftsmen's clans may be distributed among the settlements of herdsmen. This also leads to hereditary profession, i.e., caste. Under such conditions, clans may break up into families, which then show strong cohesion.

(C) On the lower strata.

- (a) Prisoners of war, fugitives, strangers, banished individuals are attracted to the service of herdsmen. They are used in the household or may be sold as slaves. They are unprotected and need a master, whether head of a familia or official in charge of government works.
- (b) This servant class may expect preferment for services, loyalty, ability. Out of their ranks again, rival families recruit dependents, putting them in charge of white line cultivators.

The three processes together result in an all-round loosening of clan ties, and especially the lower strata becomes ethnically inter-mixed. The middle strata are mixed through infusion of foreigners, strangers, prisoners of war, the rise of cultivators and slaves to office, and the sinking into poverty of herdsmen's nobility. The process is catalysed by intermarriage of a dense population.

II. Religious and political effects of the loosening of clan ties.

(A) In the sphere of cult and religion these consequences follow:

- (a) The loosening of clan ties results in the weakening of religious and ritualistic tradition. Clan cults may survive in secret societies of

an aristocratic type.

- (b) Where craftsmen's castes become submerged, they may produce guilds or fraternities, which also are, to some extent, secret.
 - (c) Where large masses of slaves are affected by detribalisation and the uprooting of ritual and cult, the soil is favourable to the emergence of universalist religions.
- (3) in the political sphere, the rivalry of feudal families often gives rise to despotism. It is called tyranny when the new ruler does not belong to the nobility, but is himself a stranger or a tribeless man. Despotism is based on masses formed out of an ethnically mixed population, the homogeneity of which is the result of recently completed detribalisation.

III. Emergence of the individual.

These social, political and religious effects of detribalisation--itself the result of stratification through contact of ethnical groups--are the preconditions of the emergence of individuals instead of groups as the units of society.

The role of the individual now becomes prominent at all levels and in the most varied ways:

- (a) The despot or tyrant owes his position exclusively to his personality, since he does not rely on kinship or rank;
- (b) Conversely, many members of the aristocracy are declassed, together with their cattle they lose power and influence, sink into debt, bondage, become prisoners of war, are sold as slaves;
- (c) The middle strata of officialdom owes its career to personal advancement, mostly due to special services. Even if not former slaves, they do not rely on kinship for status.
- (d) Intellectual leaders appeal to the population indiscriminately, irrespective of ethnical groupings. The prophet arises who disregards clan and kinship, and turns to "all". He opposes the priesthood as the representatives of narrow cults and speaks for mankind.

The appearance of the individual was often contemporaneous with that of the state. Tribal democracy and its egalitarianism got lost in the process, but came to the surface again in the city constitutions of Greece. This is the ultimate reason for their great importance in the history of Western civilization.