PART I

Political Structures

UNDER THEIR dual aspect of antagonisms and integration, political phenomena occur within many kinds of human communities—nations, provinces, cities, international societies, associations, trade unions, clans, bands, cliques, and other assorted groups. From our point of view political sociology is the study of power in every human grouping, not just in the nation-state. Each of these groups therefore serves as a structure, a framework for the enactment of conflicts and integration. Political structures are, first of all, the different social groupings. We can study them only in a summary manner, for their detailed analysis belongs to the field of general sociology. But such a cursory examination is indispensable since it enables us to relate political phenomena to all the other aspects of collective living.

There are two possible ways of conducting this study. We could take as a basis the various categories of human communities, with each category representing a certain type of political structure. Or we could base the study on the different elements found in all, or almost all, human communities—geographic, demographic, technological, institutional, cultural, and so on. The difference is simply one of classification. In the first case, we classify the political structures "vertically," with each community defined by a combination of different elements. In the second, we classify them "horizontally," with each element appearing in the various types of communities. The second classification seems preferable for our analysis of political sociology since it allows

us to define more clearly the relations between political phenomena and the various elements of the human communities within which these phenomena occur. We will therefore adopt the second approach.

Thus defined, political structures can be divided into two broad classifications: physical structures and social structures. But the separation between the two is not rigid. The term "physical" is applied here to those factors closest to nature (geography and demography); the term "social" refers to the more artificial, essentially human factors (technology, institutions, cultures, beliefs). There is no sharp line separating them. Men do not perceive physical structures in their original, material forms, but through acquired ideas, beliefs, and social traditions. Indeed, today they are as much a product of social change as of physical evolution. Man's manipulation of the earth, the soil, the things he cultivates, and his means of communication makes geography no less social than physical. And human intervention in the demographic area—through medicine, hygiene, and birth control—is even more significant.

Inversely, many social elements are based on physical substrata. Sometimes the foundation is obvious: the sexual and parental instinct underlies the institution of the family; the forces of nature are the sources of animistic religions. Broadly speaking, almost every social institution corresponds to some physical factor. For example, the purpose of economic institutions is to satisfy material needs; competition between men in this area explains many theologies; finally, the way in which these material needs are satisfied determines numerous cultural elements.