

EDITORS' PREFACE

The processes of the growing societal complexity, emergence of new forms of social and political inequality, formation of pre-state or complex stateless polities belong to the most intriguing subjects of Anthropology and Social Philosophy.

Social Evolution & History has consistently published the research articles devoted to these issues. The chiefdom concept plays a special role within the theories that try to account for the transition from simple social systems to systems of greater complexity. Following its emergence in the 1950s this notion became an important heuristic means to advance Anthropology and Archaeology. It was also subjected to vigorous debates within which the participants denied the methodological significance of chiefdoms and the very notion of the chiefdom. These debates are becoming even more vigorous in connection with the rapid accumulation of information on ancient societies (see the dispute over chiefdoms between Timothy Pauketat and Robert Carneiro in 9.1). There is also much discrepancy in the definition of 'chiefdom' as some scholars consider it a standard phase of cultural evolution, a natural transition between the 'Big Man' society and the states of the ancient world.

Thus, there is a rather urgent need for further development and amendment of evolutionary theory as concerns the chiefdom concept. This volume comprises articles devoted to various aspects of the chiefdom concept, including the place and significance of this notion within anthropological theory and modern developments within social theory. Contributions to this special issue consider different aspects of the problem of chiefdoms in contemporary anthropology and demonstrate various difficulties associated with the use of the notion of chiefdom when it is applied to many concrete archaeological and ethnohistorical cases. On the other hand, the contributors as well as editors of *Social Evolution & History* do not find it productive and justified to simply reject the evolutionary approach and those theoretical constructions associated with it, including the notion of chiefdom.

This special issue consists of nine articles that cover a wide range of issues connected with the evolution of simple and complex chiefdoms as well as other polities of intermediate complexity of diverse regions and epochs, including chiefdom-like entities of the contemporary world (see contributions by Earle and Skalnik).

In his article Henri Claessen studies the dimensions of the term 'chief' which have never been fully agreed upon. He discusses the following aspects with their ramifications of different definitions: an ascribed/inherited top position in the local (regional) social structure, a central position in a redistributive economy, sacred capacities (the most important of which were alleged positive effects on human, animal and plant fertility), the erection of

great works in the public sphere, and an inclination to warfare. He reaches the conclusion that the concepts of chief and chiefdom should be disconnected. Many chieftains existed which have been seen to administer single-tier societies, and there have been many big men which have found within societies exhibiting two social tiers.

Timothy Earle reviews the concepts of chiefs, chiefdoms and chiefly confederacies, and illustrates how Polynesian chiefdoms operated prior to state formation. The history of Kamehameha, first King of the Hawaiian Islands, illustrates how a chieftain fashioned a state superstructure. Most importantly, he argues that chiefdoms represent a highly variable form of political organization, in which power is developed differentially by a rudimentary political economy used to finance warrior might and ideological right. The goal should thus shift from classify societies towards clarifying processes of power. Emphasizing processes, the chief and chieftaincy can be seen as continuing to operate as sub-state actors in formalized bureaucratic states.

D. Blair Gibson in his article surveys the political systems of the historic Iroquois league, Early Medieval Ireland, Late Iron Age Britain, Archaic Boiotia, Bronze Age and Iron Age Korea, and 19th – 20th century Western Iran with the objective of determining the essential characteristics of chiefdom confederacies and discusses the question whether the states that arose out of chiefdom confederacies possessed organizational characteristics attributable to their origins in them.

Robert D. Drennan together with Bryan K. Hanks and Christian E. Peterson emphasize that comparative analysis of archaeological evidence most directly relevant to the social organization of the chiefly communities demonstrates considerable variety within the Eurasian steppe. Chalcolithic Tripol'ye central communities grew exceptionally rapidly to very large size, with equally large hinterland populations; their developmental dynamic likely centered strongly on the accumulation of wealth based in the agro-pastoral subsistence economy. Larger communities and regional-scale sociopolitical organization also characterized Bronze Age Sintashta and Iron Age Gorokhovo-Sargat communities. Although these were later in time, they contained fewer inhabitants and showed less indication of different standards of living for different households. Much greater elaboration of burial ritual and fortifications suggests more elite emphasis on prestige competition and warfare in these two latter cases. This contrast between the scale and basis of social hierarchy in Tripol'ye communities, on the one hand, and Sintashta and Gorokhovo-Sargat communities, on the other, does not match the way in which a greater dependence on specialized mobile herding sets Gorokhovo-Sargat subsistence and settlement systems apart from the other two.

Nilkolay Kradin describes in his paper the social hierarchy of several ancient Mongolian polities from the 3rd – 2nd centuries BC to the 3rd century AD in terms of heterarchy, hierarchy, and chiefdom organization. Although these polities were characterized by similar ecological environments, common cultural space, and common frontier with the Chinese civilization in

the south and the nomadic Xiongnu empire in the west, still they differed in social complexity level. The author discusses how and why this happened.

Ludomir Lozny suggests that in the apparent absence of critical internal economic and political stimuli, societies of the Northern Central European Plains showed emergent capacity to organize spontaneously in the context of outside socioeconomic pressure and the multi-agent politics of the 800s–900s CE and that they could serve as examples of transient political dissipative structures. He discusses both, how multi-agent, short-lived, intermediate forms of sociopolitical organization emerge in a non-equilibrium context, and the rise of social complexity as a multilineal mixture of randomness and regularity caused by a combination of spontaneous processes and deterministic patterns. Elements of systems theory and control theory are used to explain dissipative structures in reference to human societal capacity for self-organization.

Peter Skalník looks at the situation in modern Ghana when simultaneously existing ‘acephalous tribesmen’, chiefdom and the state became involved in a conflict which eventually resulted in a local war. The roots of the conflict are not purely ethnic, although differences of language and culture were obvious. The colonial and post-colonial state created situation in which chiefdoms and ‘tribes’ were allowed to live on the same territory but in a hierarchical arrangement. Once the economy and political order happened to experience a protracted crisis, the perceived inequalities and injustices came to the fore and exploded. The author examines in detail the causes and development of the conflict, and weighs consequences for both the concrete case and the theory of political anthropology.

Leonid Grinin has devoted his article primarily to the analysis of the most developed chiefdoms – the Hawaiian ones. He argues that before Cook's arrival there had been no state in Hawaii. The respective polity should be classified as *an early state analogue*, i.e. a society of the same level of development with early states but lacking some state characteristics. In the paper a thorough comparison is made between the Hawaiian chiefdoms and Hawaiian state.

Leonid Grinin and Andrey Korotayev analyze chiefdom analogues, that is, various evolutionary alternatives to the chiefdom: *poleis*, autonomous towns and complex village communities, cast-clan systems, non-hierarchically organized territorial groups and federations of villages, certain types of tribal systems, and so on. All chiefdom analogues' forms can be subdivided in several types: monosettlement analogues (with the majority of population concentrated in a single central settlement); horizontally integrated polysettlement analogues; corporate analogues. The notion of chiefdom analogues which is put forward can allow advancing in theoretical analysis of the cultural-political variation among the medium-complex societies in which chiefdoms are bound to occupy one of the main positions.

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