CHAPTER 1

Chiefdoms from the Beginning Until Now

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ARCHAIC POLITICS

Politics as a realm of relations concerning the distribution of power (Smelser 1988) seems to have appeared around the age of the Upper Paleolithic Revolution. Actually, certain elements of "quasi-political" relationships were already found among non-human primates—for example, see Dol'nik (2007) on complex and dynamic hierarchical relationships among the baboons (see also Butovskaya, Korotayev, and Kazankov 2000). Among nomadic hunter-gatherers, power systems remained minimally differentiated and weakly integrated; the level of their differentiation and integration more or less correlated with their demographic indicators. Power was mostly based on age and gender stratification, as well as on the leader's personal qualities, authority, and ability to secure for his community a more or less acceptable life. This was also frequently observed among early agriculturalists, especially among semi-nomadic ones (see, e.g., Lévi-Strauss 1955).

However, even among ethnographically described nomadic hunter-gatherers, important differences in the complexity of their sociopolitical organization were observed. While the majority of ethnographically described non-specialized nomadic hunter-gatherers were acephalous and egalitarian, some of them—for example, most Australian aboriginal communities—were non-egalitarian (e.g., Artemova 1987, 1989, 1991, 1993; Artemova and Korotayev 2003; Chudinova 1981; Woodburn 1980, 1982). They demonstrated a sufficiently different type of sociopolitical organization and a much more structured political leadership concentrated in the hands of hierarchically organized elder males, with a pronounced inequality between males and females, as well as between older and younger males.

Among specialized ("higher") hunter-gatherers and fishermen of Siberia, the Far East, Kamchatka, Alaska, the Aleut Isles, and the American Northwest and Southwest, one could find rather highly structured forms of hierarchical sociopolitical organization that were sometimes even more pronounced than among many early agriculturalists (see, e.g., Averkieva 1978; Shnirel'man 1986, 1989, 1993; Townsend 1985). However, such an evolution was to a certain extent a dead end since it could only have occurred in especially favorable environments and was unable to diffuse to cultures existing in other environments.

The Agrarian Revolution (or, to be more precise, its first phase connected with the transition to primitive agriculture and animal husbandry; see Grinin 2006, 2007a, 2007b; Grinin and Korotayev 2009) initiated a period of profound sociodemographic changes. It is important to note that the increase in population and population density (as well as settlement or community sizes) tended to lead to an increase in the significance of political (i.e., power) relations—including military interaction—both within and between societies. Thus even at this macroevolutionary level it appears possible to speak about protopolitogenesis.

However, in order that such societies (exemplified in the ethnographic record by most traditional sociopolitical systems of New Guinea) could evolve toward more complex organizational forms, they had to develop an institution of chief or its (sometimes democratic) analogues. Hence the formation of the first polities reaching the level of complexity of chiefdoms and their analogues was one of the most important macroevolutionary shifts.

The forms of sociopolitical organization at this level of complexity could be rather diverse: more or less centralized chiefdoms; self-governed civil or civil-temple communities; decentralized, chiefless complex tribes; and various other acephalous, medium-complexity sociopolitical systems (see, e.g., Berezkin 1995, 1997). We tend to speak about politogenesis proper starting from this level of political complexity.

In this book a few chapters analyze macroevolutionary processes that took place during the very prolonged Late Archaic and Early Civilization periods. During these periods one could observe the formation of more or less institutionalized political subsystems, starting from the level of complexity of chiefdoms and their analogues. Several chapters analyze the formation of archaic states and their analogues with further institutionalization of the political subsystem. This epoch is denoted by us as the epoch of the initial (or primary) politogenesis. We describe it as "initial" because politogenesis did not stop with state formation, but continued further with the evolution from the early state to the developed one, and even from the developed state to the mature one (see Grinin 2008; Grinin and Korotayev 2006).

THE NOTION OF CHIEFDOM

The processes of growing societal complexity, emergence of new forms of social and political inequality, and formation of pre-state or complex stateless polities are among the most intriguing subjects of anthropology and social philosophy. 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 (see more details below). It was also subjected to vigorous debates within which the participants denied both the methodological significance and the very notion of the chiefdom. As seen in the dispute over chiefdoms between Timothy Pauketat (2007, 2010) and Robert Carneiro (2010a, 2010b), these debates are becoming even more vigorous in connection with the rapid accumulation of information on ancient societies. There is also much discrepancy in the definition of "chiefdom" since 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.

The articles in this volume pose important questions regarding the place of chiefdoms in political anthropology. First, we must ask if the very notion of the chiefdom has become outdated. Can the chiefdom be regarded as an evolutionary stage? Do archaeological data adequately correspond to it? Does it make sense to provide definitions to the chiefdom, and is not the value of all typologies rather limited? Has the introduction of this notion been beneficial to archaeology? Or has it only obscured the situation? (Compare the above-mentioned discussion; see also the discussion about the emergence of chiefdoms and states in connection with the theory of Robert Carneiro, with the participation of

leading political anthropologists, in the September 2012 issue of *Social Evolution & History*).

We believe the current discussion indicates that the notion of the chiefdom remains rather useful (cp. Bondarenko, Grinin, and Korotayev 2011; Grinin 2003, 2004, 2009, 2012; Grinin and Korotayev 2009, 2012a). Of course the theory of the chiefdom is in need of further refinement and the rapid accumulation of knowledge on ancient societies demands a revision of some stereotypes and rejection of certain rigid theoretical constructions (see also Grinin and Korotayev 2012b; Korotayev and Grinin 2013).

Thus there is a rather urgent need for further development and amendment of evolutionary theory as it 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 volume consider different aspects of the problem of chiefdoms in contemporary anthropology, and demonstrate various difficulties associated with the use of the notion of the chiefdom when it is applied to many concrete archaeological and ethnohistorical cases. Interestingly, the contributors do not find it productive or justified to simply reject the evolutionary approach and those theoretical constructions associated with it, including the notion of the chiefdom as it is sometimes proposed (see, e.g., Pauketat 2007, 2010).

WHAT'S AHEAD IN THIS BOOK?

This volume consists of an introductory Part I, a concluding Part V (in which we also explain the idea of the volume's title), and nine main chapters (divided into three parts) 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 and "chieftaincies" of the contemporary world (see the contributions by Earle and Skalník, as well as that by Skalník, Chabal, and Feinman; see also the concluding chapter).

Part I: "Introduction"

Following this chapter, Robert Carneiro describes the emergence of the notion of the chiefdom within a much wider context of the history of evolutionism in cultural anthropology. He demonstrates how the resurgence of evolutionism in American cultural anthropology contributed to the formation of theory of the chiefdom, and how the development of

this theory helped the development of social evolutionism. Carneiro further demonstrates the extremely widespread occurrence of chiefdoms and describes the military basis of chiefdoms and social ranking and social mobility within them.

Carneiro also identifies the evolutionary role of the chiefdom in crossing the threshold of village autonomy. In his discussion of chiefdom formation, he pays special attention to warfare, as well as to the exact mechanisms through which warfare influenced the formation of chiefdoms. Carneiro concludes his chapter with a discussion of the evolution of chiefdoms and their occasional transformation into states.

Part II: "Chiefdoms and Political Evolution"

Part II contains four articles. Leonid Grinin and Andrey Korotayev pay special attention to the point that the general process of the growth of sociocultural complexity was multidimensional and multilinear. This is why the evolutionary phase of medium-complex societies (where chiefdoms are most often observed) was represented by numerous types of societies; thus the authors suggest considering chiefdoms against the background of other types of polities with comparable complexity. In particular, they 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 analogue forms of chiefdoms can be divided into several types: monosettlement analogues (with the majority of population concentrated in a single central settlement), horizontally integrated polysettlement analogues, and corporate analogues. The notion of chiefdom analogues that is put forward allows advances in theoretical analyses of cultural-political variation among the medium-complex societies, in which chiefdoms are bound to occupy one of the main positions.

In his article Henri Claessen studies the dimensions of the term "chief" that have never been fully agreed upon. He discusses the following aspects and the ramifications of their different definitions: an ascribed or 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. Claessen concludes that the concepts of chief and chiefdom should be disconnected. Many chieftains existed that have been seen to administer single-tier societies, and many Big Men have been found in societies exhibiting two social tiers.

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 polities of the ninth and tenth centuries A.D. and that they could serve as examples of transient political 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.

In his paper Nikolay Kradin describes the social hierarchy of several ancient Mongolian polities from the third and second centuries B.C. to the third century A.D. in terms of heterarchy, hierarchy, and chiefdom organization. Although these polities were characterized by similar ecological environments and a common cultural space and frontier with the Chinese civilization in the south and the nomadic Xiongnu empire in the west, still they differed in level of social complexity. The author discusses how and why this happened and introduces the term "super-chiefdom."

Part III: "Chiefdoms and States"

Part III deals more with the transformations of chiefdoms into states. In his chapter D. Blair Gibson 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 nineteenth and twentieth 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.

Leonid Grinin devotes his article primarily to the analysis of the most developed chiefdoms—the Hawaiian ones. (Because of the uniquely high level of complexity of the Hawaiian chiefdoms, they are also analyzed in another article in the volume.) 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—that is, a society of the same level of development with early states but lacking some state characteristics. The author proceeds from the fact that the entire Hawaiian political and social organization was based on the strict rules and ideology of kinship, and the ruling groups represented endogamous castes and quasi-castes. In the paper a thorough comparison is made between the Hawaiian

chiefdoms and the Hawaiian state. The latter emerged as a result of the transformation of the Hawaiian chiefdoms through the war of unification (with the use of European firearms) during the reign of Kamehameha I in the early nineteenth century, and was accompanied by this king's profound reforms and significant modernization.

Part IV: "From Past to Present"

Part IV deals primarily with the manifestations of chiefdomlike structures ("chieftaincies") in the present-day world. The article by Timothy Earle serves as a sort of bridge between the past and the present. In the paper one may see two main issues. The first one connects with the classical political anthropological study. Earle reviews the concepts of chiefs, chiefdoms, and chiefly confederacies and illustrates how Polynesian chiefdoms operated prior to state formation. The history of Kamehameha, the first king of the Hawaiian Islands, illustrates how a chieftain fashioned a state superstructure. Most important, Earle 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 classifying societies toward clarifying processes of power. This idea allows the author to segue into the second issue of the article. Emphasizing processes, the chief and chieftaincy can be seen as continuing to operate as substate actors in formalized bureaucratic states. Earle concludes that although chiefs in modern states exist within a state-structure environment, they rely on highly personalized and informal relationships that allow for the most flexibility in political movement and adjustment to opportunities that range from the illegal to the legal.

Petr Skalník looks at the situation in modern Ghana when simultaneously existing acephalous tribesmen, a chiefdom, and the state became involved in a conflict that eventually resulted in a local war. The roots of the conflict were not purely ethnic, although differences in language and culture were obvious. The colonial and post-colonial state created a situation in which chiefdoms and tribes were allowed to live in the same territory but in a hierarchical arrangement. Once the economy and political order experienced 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.

Finally, Patrick Chabal, Gary M. Feinman, and Petr Skalník note that at the very beginning of the twenty-first century, the sovereignty and near supremacy of the state are being challenged. Barely half a century ago,

some scholars envisaged an inevitable or direct historical path to more consolidated and larger polities: a world government, possibly a planetary state, at the very least a concert of nation-states (Carneiro 1978; Hart 1948). Now this appears to have been a flight of fancy. Even in the face of a revolution in telecommunications and a powerful process of economic globalization, it has become evident that there has been no linear progression in political development or centralization. Political philosophers may find the prospect of an unstoppable march toward homogeneous polities either desirable or immoral. Social scientists simply register the forces that go against it and, indeed, that may well pose dangers to the nation-state as it evolved during the last two centuries.

Chiefdom-like political formations today often compete with the cumbersome, overbureaucratized state for the allegiance of its members. Due to the informality of its social relations, the face-to-face character of its public sphere, a more consensual decision-making process, and the very nature of chiefly leadership—which is based on authority rather than coercive power—chiefdoms frequently appear to suit people better in their quest for proximate forms of governance. Hierarchy in chiefdoms is more transparent; hereditary or election principles of recruitment to offices are simple and acceptable. However, some chiefdoms may become self-contained isolationist units of social interaction that view the world around them as hostile.

Some time ago the emergence of the notion of chiefdoms gave a strong impetus to political anthropological research, stimulating a number of studies that have been able to detect certain trends in the apparent chaos of political entities with intermediate levels of complexity. However, like other concepts (describing the earliest forms of political organization) presented in this volume, this concept can explain a great deal—not only in the past. The fact is that the political structure of the major regions (and, all the more, that of the world as a whole) is never uniform; it is never represented by a single class of political entities. Thus ancient empires (including the Roman or Byzantine empires), along with fairly advanced forms of governance at the center, could have had very archaic forms of control on the outskirts that combined features of various pre-state formations, including chiefdoms. Many modern states of Asia and Africa include a variety of sociopolitical structures that preserve (even in some cases in an exaggerated way) chieftaincies and tribal entities, which could be one of the factors of the emergence of so-called fragile and failed states (e.g., Grinin 2013; Hagesteijn 2008).

To understand these modern (but, on the other hand, archaic) structures, the theories of chiefdoms, early states, and their analogues—as well as other political anthropological theories—turn out to be indispensable. Apart from the formal and recognized (although very different

in terms of their strength and development) political structures in dozens of countries, one may find numerous informal structures that somewhere compete, but somewhere cooperate with the formal authorities. Another level where these theories may be relevant are terrorist organizations, in which many relationships resemble relations found in chiefdoms and some other non-state structures.

As Feinman, Skalnik, and Chabal note, "For this reason scholarly debates regarding past and present chiefdoms serve as a useful basis from which to address the diversity of radical movements, balkanized polities, warlord groups, and emergent non-state bodies that are active in the world today. It ought to help us test the current assumption that such groupings are aberrant, inherently unstable, or unlikely to endure beyond the lifetime of their present leaders. Is it not possible that, as in the past, chiefdoms might last over time, even in the contemporary age?"

Finally, at present organized crime structures exist in almost all countries of the world. Theories of the chiefdom may be able to clarify a few basics of their organization as well (see Derluguian and Earle 2010).

This is why we should not focus only on the academic aspects of the problem of pre-state and non-state polities; it makes sense to show how such chiefdom-like structures preserve and develop features of ancient polities within them (the contributions to this volume contain many relevant examples; we refer the reader to them). See also the concluding chapter, in which we offer our explanation of chiefdom-like structures and their features in the modern world—including the latest ones, such as ISIS. All this explains the concept and the title of this volume.

Thus, in the modern world, next to states one can find numerous alternative social and political organizations that—to a greater or lesser extent—have some features that are similar to certain ancient polities. How and why is this possible? We hope that the contributions to this volume shed some light on this question. However, it requires and deserves further study.

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