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Feasting with "Kings" in an Ancient Democracy:
On the Slavic Society of the Early Middle Ages (Sixth to Seventh Century A.D.)

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One of the most persistent stereotypes about the early medieval history of Eastern Europe holds that the Slavs, at the time of their migration, were a "polyarchic tribal society with no elevated notion of sovereignty." No Theodoric arose among the Slavs to gather their scattered communities into a state and attempt a symbiosis with the Greco-Roman civilization of Byzantium.¹ My intention in this paper is to take a fresh look at the early Slavic society in the light of written evidence. I will then focus on the applicability of the modern concept of chiefdom to Slavic society and compare Slavic leaders with "classical" examples of big-men and great-men, on the basis of a theory of symbolic power. By emphasizing the mechanism of the accumulation of power in the hands of the Slavic "kings," I will consider the archaeological evidence and how feasting may have promoted the growth of social inequality. I shall raise the question of whether current historiographical models are appropriate for understanding early medieval societies.

The notion of the politically "primitive" Slavs of the early Middle Ages derives from Procopius' frequently-cited description of the Sclavenes and the Antes in the mid-500s:

For these nations, the Sclavenoi and Antae, are not ruled by one man, but they have lived from of old under a democracy (*en demokratia ek palaiou bioteousi*), and consequently everything which involves their welfare, whether for good or for ill, is referred to the people (*es koinon agetai*). (*Wars* VII 14.22)

Some have argued that "democracy" is derisively applied here to what, in Procopius' eyes, might have been the opposite of Byzantine monarchy.² Others called Procopius an unqualified witness, who could not distinguish between acephalous societies and "primitive democracies."³ Some others, particularly among Soviet historians, believed Procopius to have described what is now known

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by the Marxist concept of "military democracy."⁴ This concept, first introduced in 1877 by Lewis Morgan, was often used for describing the transitional stage from kin-based societies to state societies. According to Morgan, military democracy only existed if there was an elected and removable chief, a council of the elders, and a popular assembly.⁵ Frederick Engels later gave the concept an economic and social meaning. To Engels, "military democracy" concerned war and organization for war, since those were now "regular functions of the life of the peoples who began to regard the acquisition of wealth as one of the main purposes in life."⁶

One of the key arguments for interpreting early Slavic society as a military democracy is the chief's retinue of warriors.⁷ According to a sixth-century source, the Avars attacked in 578 a Sclavene leader named Daurentius and "the chiefs of his people" (*hosoi en telei tou ethnous*) (Menander the Guardsman, fr. 21). Some argue that this particular passage points to a tribal aristocracy, whose authority was presumably based on wealth differentials.⁸ That Daurentius was a warrior leader is beyond any doubt, but no evidence exists of the council of the elders, one of the institutions both Morgan and Engels viewed as a necessary condition for the existence of a military democracy. Nor can Menander the Guardsman's evidence be used to postulate the existence of a political hierarchy, in which the power of the military leader was checked by that of the "chiefs of his people." When Procopius refers to "the people" or to public affairs, there is no indication of chiefs (*Wars* 14.21-22). Where chiefs appear, there is no indication of their separation from the agrarian substrate.

In Engels's terms, military democracy was a form of social organization typically associated with the dissolution of communal ownership and with the emergence of private ownership and exploitation, based on tribute and clientship.⁹ Chiefs set themselves apart from the agrarian substrate and ruled through a retinue of warriors. The warrior chief or king controlled and exploited the farming communities through tribute and taxation.¹⁰ Marxist theorists, however, tend to use a restricted definition of economic interest, one that does not acknowledge that the notion of "economic

calculations" should be extended to all the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation.¹¹ The current literature depicts chiefdoms as institutions which depended on the interlocking of three major components of power: control over economy, military force, and ideology.¹² It is precisely economic control that is absent from any description of early Slavic society. There are, however, clear cases of accumulation of "symbolic capital."¹³ This is particularly true in the episode of a Slavene chief narrated by Michael the Syrian (X 21). During their raid into Greece, in the early 580s, the Slavenes carried off on carts the holy vessels and the great *ciboria* from devastated churches. In Corinth, however, one of their leaders took the great *ciborium* and using it as a tent, made it his dwelling. The Slavene chief clearly seems to have grasped the symbolic potential of the otherwise useless stone *ciborium*, shaped as it was like a canopy over a throne.¹⁴ This further suggests that, at least in this case, simple accumulation of "material capital" cannot account by itself for the

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process of power concentration.

An alternative to the "military democracy" model is the "segmentary society."¹⁵ When historians speak of the "segmentary society" of the Slavs, they usually refer to the late sixth- or early seventh-century military treatise known as *Strategikon*, whose author claimed that Slavenes were unable to fight a battle standing in close order or present themselves on open and level ground (XI 4.9 and 19).¹⁶ This lack of strategy, he argued, was a direct consequence of their rudimentary political organization:

Owing to their lack of government (*anarcha*) and their ill feeling toward one another (*misallela onta*) they are not acquainted with an order of battle (*oude taxin ginokousin*). (XI 4.12)¹⁷

"Lack of government," it has been argued,¹⁸ refers to a segmentary lineage system. The underlying idea of such a system is that the functions of maintaining cohesion, social control, and some degree of "law and order," which normally depend on specialized agencies with sanctions at their disposal, can be performed with tolerable efficiency, simply by the "balancing" and "opposition" of constituent groups. Evans-Pritchard described this as an "ordered anarchy."¹⁹ What is usually referred to as "segmentary society," however, is one that is in some sense structured in terms of descent, in terms of *lineage*.²⁰ Lineages are social entities, which emerge only in a social situation characterized by competition between groups.²¹ Marshall Sahlins has argued that a segmentary lineage system was a predatory organization characteristic of societies in migration, for, as a social means of intrusion and competition in an already-occupied ecological niche, it developed specifically within a tribal society struggling with other tribes.²² Just as the African Tiv of more recent times,²³ Slavenes reacted violently against any attempts to impose upon them rulers from the outside. The author of the *Strategikon* knew that Slavenes and Antes were "both independent, absolutely refusing to be enslaved or governed, least of all in their own land" (XI 4.1). He reports that while Slavenes may in fact unite to attack or repel an enemy at one time, at another they will fragment into feuding factions, quarreling over land or personal injuries. Once the defensive objectives which had impelled confederation were accomplished, the confederation dissolves again into its several segments, and the leaders who had emerged now return to social oblivion or retain only local influence.

Can we apply the model of a segmentary lineage system to the Slavene case? In other words, was the early Slavic society structured in terms of descent? Inspired by Pierre Clastres's model of the "Society against the State," some historians would infer a segmentary system from the presumed absence of social mechanisms contributing to the consolidation of royal authority.²⁴ Lineage theory and segmentation are not, however, the same thing. Although we do not know what mechanisms were responsible for the descent structure of the early Slavic society, we may be in a better position to identify elements of social segmentation.

It has been observed that a segmentary structure of society involves a segmentary structure of space, the minimal unit of which represents the "primary

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tribal segment," as the smallest multifamily group that collectively exploits an area of tribal resources and forms a residential entity.²⁵ How large was a segment? The author of the *Strategikon* knew that for an invasion into Slavene

territory to be successful, a fairly large force had to be dispatched against each settlement. He recommends the use of one or two *banda*, i.e. 400 to 800 men, for storming a Slavene village (XI 4.43).²⁶ This may indicate that the population of the village was slightly inferior in size to the attacking Roman force, assuming that estimations of the *Strategikon* are based only on the military potential of the enemy, that is, on the number of warriors, not on the total number of inhabitants.

Archaeological evidence supports this inference of small-sized segments. Sixth- to seventh-century settlements excavated north of the Danube river, in present-day Romania, Moldova, and south-west Ukraine, include only a small number of features per occupation phase, ranging from ten to fifteen.²⁷ The most common type of residential structure in all these settlements is the sunken-floored building of almost square plan with an oven or hearth placed in one of the corners. Since the average area of a sunken-floored hut is 20 square meters, it could hardly have sheltered more than 5 persons, the size of a nuclear family. However, since lineage is an "emic" category,²⁸ there is no way settlement features *per se* could tell us anything about social relations between the families who lived in them.

It also remains unclear to what extent Byzantine sources provide reliable empirical facts about actual behavior. It is logical to believe that the author of the *Strategikon* had a better (perhaps first-hand) knowledge about Slavenes than did Procopius. But when he claims that Slavenes were always at odds with each other, he is repeating a well worn *topos*, used by many before him, including Procopius.

The model of the "segmentary society" also ignores historical process. It is very unlikely that the Slavene society remained "frozen" in its "primitive," segmentary stage after contact with the Empire. Despite claims to the contrary,²⁹ Byzantine sources make it clear that Slavenes had their own "kings." In fact, by its ideological definition of political action as the result of segments in balanced opposition to one another rather than as the affairs of particular individuals, the theory of segmentary lineage structures would imply the emergence of men entrusted with considerable authority and wielding great political power.³⁰ As long as political leadership remains personal and does not become institutionalized into an office, an ideological assertion of egalitarianism can co-exist with considerable political inequality.³¹ Any attempt to convert symbolic into material capital may have resulted, in the case of the militantly egalitarian Slavene "democracy," in periodic purges of would-be "tyrants," such as those clearly attested by Pseudo-Caesarius. Pseudo-Caesarius, a Monophysite monk writing in the 560s, is the first author to refer to Slavene chiefs, who, according to him, were often killed at feast or on travel by their kinsmen.³² Pseudo-Caesarius used this example to show that the Slavenes were living by their own law without the rule of anyone (*anegemoneutoi*), a remark which dovetails with the evidence of other sources.³³ That the purge of would-be tyrants took place during feasts further

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suggests that chiefs were coordinators of communal ceremonies.

Ever since Elman Service defined them as "redistributional societies with a permanent central agency of coordination," chiefdoms have been viewed as the prevailing form of social organization in early medieval Europe, existing first beyond the Roman frontiers and then persisting into the migration period.³⁴ It is reasonable to ask, therefore, whether all Slavene "kings" of the sixth and seventh century were truly chiefs. The terminology employed by Greek sources is very complex and difficult to interpret. Later sources constantly applied the term *archon* which designated a ruler with full, regionally organized authority.³⁵ *Hegemon* is a term Menander the Guardsman employed frequently in reference to Saracen, Utigur, Alan, Frankish, Turkic, and Slavic leaders. This suggests that those whom he also called *hosoi en telei tou ethnous* were not subordinates or in any way inferior to Daurentius, the Slavene chief attacked by Avars in 578 (see above), but enjoyed a similar status and membership in what seems to have been a tribal confederation. Other sources, such as Theophylact Simocatta, the author of Book II of the *Miracles of St Demetrius* and the author of the *Strategikon* employ the word *rex* borrowed from the late Roman administrative jargon to refer to independent barbarian leaders.³⁶ Such leaders had significant power over their fellow tribesmen, a feature easily recognizable in the case of Musocius, the Slavene *rex* mentioned by Theophylact Simocatta (VI 9.1). It is interesting to note that Menander the Guardsman and the author of Book II of the *Miracles of St Demetrius* referred to *hegemones* and *archontes* in plural, whereas *rex* was a title bestowed upon individuals, who were often known by name (Musocius, Perbundos). This suggests that there were many Slavene leaders at any one time, but not all of them wielded the same kind of power. Pseudo-Caesarius' leaders who were killed at feasts or on travels, arguably by their

fellow tribesmen, were not on a level with "king" Musocius, explicitly said to have had "subjects."

This variety of leadership types may be best described, in anthropological terms, as the coexistence of three different sorts of power. Anthropologists distinguish chiefs, whose powers are largely ascribed and coincide with the privileged control of wealth, from big-men, whose powers are largely achieved and derived from the manipulation of wealth, and great-men, whose powers may be largely ascribed or achieved, but are not based upon the control of wealth.³⁷ The distinction between chiefs and big-men goes back to Marshall Sahlins, who depicted the typical Melanesian leader as a "big-man," because he achieved his position in a context of egalitarian ideology and competition, and his Polynesian counterpart as chief, because he succeeded to a hereditary position in a context of social hierarchy.³⁸

Big men are leaders who organize feasts and festivals, daring warriors and commanders in warfare, orators, or men of authority who arbitrate disputes within the community. Some dominate by their physical strength, particularly in contexts where leading warriors are politically important, some by force of character.³⁹ The concept of big-man has been applied outside of Melanesia when achievement rather than ascribed leadership status is under discussion.

More recently, Maurice Godelier has proposed that the big-men system be-

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gins with great men. "Great men" become prominent through a variety of practices, but the most common type is that of the man who advances alone toward the enemy lines, along with a handful of followers, and who engages in single combat with any warrior prepared to match his skill and strength. A "great man" thus gains prestige, a name for himself, and admiration, but not wealth. In times of war his authority is unquestioned, while in peacetime his function disappears, but his prestige remains.⁴⁰

Ardagastus, as described by Theophylact Simocatta, fits the model of a great man well. He had a remarkable physical size and strength, which helped him escape from being captured by Romans in 593 (VI 7.3). He had a "territory" of his own, which Priscus' troops devastated in that same year (VI 7.5). It is interesting to note that the inhabitants of this *chora* are never referred to as his subjects, only as "Sclavene hordes" or his "followers" (VI 7.1 and 9.6; cf. VI 9.1). Ardagastus may have been a warrior leader, organizing raids into the Roman provinces. Warriors from afar may have come to his "territory" and joined him in his plundering expeditions.⁴¹ No mention is made of a village and, if we are to believe Theophylact Simocatta, Ardagastus was on the point of launching a new raid across the Danube, when Priscus' attack took him by surprise. That Ardagastus was a real threat for the Romans, is indicated by the fact that Priscus directed his first operations beyond the Danube against his *chora*. His power was undoubtedly achieved, with his remarkable physical strength at the basis of this political prominence. He had already begun to build a name for himself, when Priscus' expedition north of the Danube frontier put an end to his career. Though he may have survived the Roman aggression, Ardagastus fell back into social oblivion, for nothing further is reported about him in the otherwise well documented events of the following decade.

Can we bestow the title of great men upon other Sclavene leaders? The case of Peiragastus is much more difficult to decide than that of Ardagastus. Peiragastus is briefly mentioned by Theophylact in relation to Peter's campaign north of the Danube, in 594. Theophylact calls him "the tribal leader of that barbarian horde" (VII 4.13) and then "their brigadier (*touton taxiarchos*)" (VII 5.4). He may have been a simple commander in warfare, not a true chief. Mention is made of forces under his command, but unlike Ardagastus, Peiragastus had no "territory." Immediately after his death in battle, Sclavenes "turned to flight" and Romans were concerned with pursuing them, not with ravaging neighboring villages which may have existed in the area. Peiragastus and his "horde" had come from afar in what might have been an expedition against Peter's troops. It is very unlikely, therefore, that he was anything other than a warrior leader.

The association between Pseudo-Caesarius' leaders and feasting suggests they were big-men. The piling up of debts and the prospect of future gains for all supporters are held to be the critical aspects for understanding how competitive feasting fosters the emergence of wealth-accumulators.⁴² Big-men also play a key role in "making" groups. Their oratorical interventions during meetings, together with private persuasion, transform actions that would otherwise be construed as merely personal into collective ones as well. This seems to have been

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the case of Menander the Guardsman's Daurentius and of Fredegar's Samo, both of whom are described as speaking in

the name of their respective groups, boldly proclaiming their independence and thus "creating" their new identity.⁴³ Unlike Daurentius, Samo's *utilitas* won him both the admiration of the Wends and his election as their "king." The Wendish *rex* proved his skills as commander in war, his prudence and courage always bringing victory to the Wends. Samo forged alliances with several Wendish families, marrying no less than twelve Wendish women, who, according to Fredegar, "bore him twenty-two sons and fifteen daughters" (IV 48). He was involved in long-distance trade and his economic and political influence produced strong alliances, particularly after the debacle of the Frankish army at *castrum Wogatisburc* (IV 68).⁴⁴

More than twenty years earlier, another *rex*, Musocius, had "subjects" whom he could send to reconnoitre or to give assistance to refugees from neighboring territories. Musocius' chiefdom was more limited in territory than Samo's. Theophylact's account of Priscus' campaign of 593 shows clearly that, in order to shatter his chiefdom, Roman troops simply needed to capture Musocius and to devastate his village.

Big-man leadership, with its emphasis on competitive feasting is also visible in the archaeological evidence, particularly in settlement patterns. Ever since Gordon R. Willey introduced the concept, settlement pattern analysis has been viewed as a useful interpretative tool in detecting in archaeological cultures the reflections of various institutions of social interaction and control.⁴⁵ Decisions as to how to organize the use of space within residences and settlements may indeed have been influenced by the group's socioeconomic organization. This influence, however, would be mediated by the kind of activities performed on a site at a given time. This shows up in excavation as an activity area, defined as an archaeologically consistent, spatially clustered, association of artifacts in a precisely dated archaeological horizon.⁴⁶

At Seliste (Moldova), two groups of buildings with sunken foundations were located on either side of a central place.⁴⁷ The eastern group produced all of the needles, most of the amphora sherds, and all of the clay pans found on site. By contrast, all arrow heads, awls, and dress accessories (beads and bow fibula) were found in the western group. Furthermore, three of the five buildings in the east had no heating facility, which suggests they were used not as dwellings, but as workshops. The almost exclusive association of clay pans and amphora sherds with the eastern sector also indicates that certain activities were performed there involving the consumption of special foods.⁴⁸

Though on a comparatively smaller scale, the site at Bucharest-Soldat Ghivan Street shows an organization very similar to that of Seliste.⁴⁹ Settlement features, all of them with clay ovens, were placed around a large area devoid of any structures. A large building on the northern side produced all of the tools and weapons found on site, while a neighboring structure supplied the only fragments of clay pans. No such artifacts turned up on the southern side. The bow fibula and the potsherd with an incised cross found in building 12, and the handmade lamp from neighboring building 15, stand in sharp contrast with the artifact distribu-

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tion to the north. At Dulceanca II (south Romania),⁵⁰ a site with sunken-foundation buildings arranged in a circle around two ovens, sherds of clay pans and amphoras cluster in the south, while tools occur mostly in the northern sector. At Poian (Transylvania, Romania),⁵¹ the distribution of dress-accessories (combs, a bow fibula, and a brooch with bent stem) is distinct from that of tools and querns. A group of three buildings in the southern sector produced most of the items of the first category.

The site at Davideni (Romania)⁵² was divided into two groups of sunken-hut buildings, presumably separated by a creek (Figures 1-2). The larger group to the north includes the biggest structures found on site, but also one of the smallest buildings, which was located in the middle of a central, open area. Though too small to accommodate a family, this structure had two heating facilities, a stone oven and an open hearth, and produced no tools and no dress accessories, only sherds of clay pans. Most other buildings surrounding the central area were equipped with two heating facilities and produced large numbers of clay pans. Most tools found on site, as well as a bow fibula and a double-layered comb were found in this area. There is only one structure with two heating facilities in the smaller group of buildings, to the south. This sector, however, produced three open-air ovens. Judging from the intrasite distribution of artifacts, the central area on the northern side of the settlement may have been a locus of industrial activities, such as smelting and, possibly, production of dress accessories. It was also an area of special activities involving consumption of special foods, since clay pans were more frequently associated with features equipped with

two or three ovens which were located in this region. At Davideni, the distribution of clay

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pans, however, sharply differs from that of faunal remains, which are more evenly distributed. Clay pans (Figure 3) may therefore signal the existence of an area of communal activities involving, among other things, the production and consumption of flat loaves of bread.

This analysis of the intrasite distribution of artifacts on sixth- and seventh-century Romanian sites thus reveals a systematic organization and use of space. The most important characteristics of this organization are the presence of a central, open area, and the polarization of the artifact distribution. The central area may have been an arena for ceremonies involving the processing and consumption of special, cereal-based foods. As the center of intervillage social, political, or economic events, this area may have acquired a special public character as the symbol for the community as a whole. As suggested by the exclusive presence of such markers of social status as bow fibulae, the central area was, however, not only a locus of communal activity, but also an arena of social competition, a "beyond-the-households context" for the display of symbols of leadership.⁵³

The end of the sixth century was a period of increasing competition among Slavene leaders. The author of the *Strategikon* knew that there were many Slavene "kings," "always at odds with each other" (XI 4.30), a useful political detail for any Roman general who may have found himself in a position to make war against any of them. What were the stakes of this competition, we can only guess. The archaeological evidence, however, suggests that shortly before and after 600 A.D. symbols of personal identity came into higher demand. At this time bow fibulae found in Romania (Figure 4), Crimea, and Mazuria display the greatest number of links in their ornamental patterns. Long-distance connec-

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tions signaled by those links, as well as the display of *different* patterns on various groups of bow fibulae point to social competition.⁵⁴ If, as suggested, the intrasite distribution of artifacts on sixth- and seventh-century sites can be associated with competitive feasting, which was a typical feature for big-man leadership, we may be able to visualize some aspects of this competition. War, however, was the overwhelming concern of those whom the author of the *Strategikon* viewed as unable to fight in ordered battle, but who, nevertheless, were extremely skillful at ambushing Roman troops. That Slavic society was geared up for warfare is evident from the significant number of weapons, especially arrow- and spear-heads, which have been found on sixth- to seventh-century sites in Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine. This further suggests that the evidence of destruction by fire occasionally found on those sites is the result of inter-group conflicts. After all, as the author of the *Strategikon* observed, in the Slavic "democracy," "nobody is willing to yield to another" (XI 4.14).

Notes

1. Eugene M. Alexander, "Early Slavic Invasions and Settlements in the Area of the Lower Danube in the Sixth Through the Eighth Centuries," Ph.D. diss. (New York University, 1994), p. 205. Cf. Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (London, 1977), pp. 216 and 285; Walter Pohl, *Die Awaren. Ein Steppenvolk im Mitteleuropa 567-822 n. Chr.* (Munich, 1988), p. 94.
2. Robert Benedicty, "Die auf die frühslawische Gesellschaftsbezügliche byzantinische Terminologie," in *Actes du XII-e Congrès international d'études byzantines (Ochride, 10-16 septembre 1961)*, vol. 2 (Belgrade, 1963), pp. 45-55, esp. pp. 46-47; Lubomír E. Havlík, "Die Byzantiner über die Verfassung der Slawen im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert," in *From Late Antiquity to Early Byzantium. Proceedings of the Byzantinological*

Symposium in the 16th International Eirene Conference, ed. V. Vavrínek (Prague, 1985), pp. 173-78, esp. p. 174; Robert Benedicty, "Prokopios' Berichte über die slavische Vorzeit. Beiträge zur historiographischen Methode Prokopios von Kaisareia," *Jahrbuch der österreichischen byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 11 (1965), 51-78, esp. p. 53.

3. Huw M. A. Evans, *The Early Medieval Archaeology of Croatia A.D. 600-900* (Oxford, 1989), p. 63.

4. M. Iu. Braichevskii, "Ob 'antakh' Pseudomavrikiï," *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* 2 (1953), 21-36, esp. p. 22; Genoveva Cankova-Petkova, "Gesellschaftsordnung und Kriegskunst der slawischen Stämme der Balkanhalbinsel (6.-8. Jh.) nach den byzantinischen Quellen," *Helikon* 2 (1962), 264-70, esp. p. 267; Benedicty, "Prokopios' Berichte," pp. 61-62. See also G. G. Litavrin, "Predstavleniia 'varvarov' o Vizantii i vizantiicakh v VI-X vv.," *Vizantiiskii Vremennik* 46 (1985), 100-8, esp. p. 101; Havlík, "Die Byzantiner," p. 176; cf. Berthold Rubin, *Prokopios von Kaisareia* (Stuttgart/Waldsee, 1954), p. 198.

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5. See Günther Guhr and Friedrich Schlette, "Die militärische Demokratie nach L. H. Morgan," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 30 (1982), nos. 10-11, 909-15, esp. p. 910; Abram I. Peršić, "Das Problem der militärischen Demokratie," in *Familie, Staat und Gesellschaftsformation. Grundprobleme vorkapitalistischer Epochen einhundert Jahren nach Friedrich Engels' Werk, "Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staates"*, ed. J. Herrmann and J. Köhn (Berlin, 1988), pp. 75-81, esp. p. 78.

6. Frederick Engels, *Selected Works in One Volume* (New York, 1968), p. 581; see Günther Guhr, "Das Wesen der militärische Demokratie bei Morgan sowie bei Marx und Engels," *Ethnographisch-archäologische Zeitschrift* 25 (1984), 229-56, esp. pp. 239-40. The concept of "military democracy" was further developed in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, when it was used in reference to the final stage of primitive society, the last step before class society. Cf. S. P. Tolstov, "Voennaia demokratiia i problema 'geneticheskoi revolucii'," in *Problemy istorii dokapitalicheskikh obshchestv* (Moscow, 1935), pp. 203-15; see also Anatolii M. Khazanov, "'Military democracy' and the epoch of class formation," in *Soviet Ethnology and Anthropology Today*, ed. Julian V. Bromley (The Hague/Paris, 1974), pp. 133-46, esp. p. 134. The theory of the military democracy gradually lost its popularity after World War II and during the 1960s, when it was exposed to harsh criticism from both Soviet and Western Marxists. Cf. Joachim Herrmann, "Militärische Demokratie und die Übergangsperiode zur Klassengesellschaft," *Ethnographisch-archäologische Zeitschrift* 23 (1982), 11-31, esp. p. 17; Khazanov, "'Military democracy'," p. 144; Peršić, "Das Problem." The wide variety of political forms and structures described by anthropologists and ethnologists made the rigid scheme derived from Morgan's and Engels's work a totally inadequate concept.

7. Benedicty, "Terminologie," pp. 49-50 and 54-55; Benedicty, "Prokopios' Berichte," p. 66. Cf. Pohl, *Die Awaren*, p. 127. *Contra*: M. B. Sverdlov, "Obshchestvennyi stroi slavian v VI-nachale VII veka," *Sovetskoe slavianovedenie* 3 (1977), 46-59, esp. p. 57.

8. Benedicty, "Prokopios' Berichte," p. 53.

9. Herrmann, "Militärische Demokratie," p. 20; cf. Herrmann., "Militärische Demokratie und Allodismus in Mitteleuropa zwischen Antike und Feudalgesellschaft," *Ethnographisch-archäologische Zeitschrift* 28 (1987), 257-67, esp. pp. 263-64.

10. Kristian Kristiansen, "Chieftdoms, states, and systems of social evolution," in *Chieftdoms: Power, Economy, and Ideology*, ed. Timothy Earle (Cambridge/New York/Port Chester, 1991), pp. 16-43, esp. pp. 19-20; Christine Ward Gailey and Thomas C. Patterson, "State formation and uneven development," in *State and Society. The Emergence and Development of Social Hierarchy and Political Centralization*, ed. J. Gledhill, B. Bender, and M. Trolle Larsen (London/Boston/Sydney, 1988), pp. 74-85, esp. p. 81.

11. Pierre Bourdieu, "Structures, habitus, power. Basis for a theory of symbolic power," in *Culture/Power/History. A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*, ed. N. B. Dirks, G. Eley, and S. B. Ortner (Princeton, 1994), pp. 155-99, esp. pp. 173 and 194.

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12. Timothy K. Earle, "The evolution of chieftdoms," *Current Anthropology* 30 (1989), no. 1, 84-88, esp. p. 86.

13. The phrase is that of Pierre Bourdieu, "Structures."

14. Ivanka Nikolajevic "L'arte bizantina: ricettività e creatività locale," in *Gli Slavi occidentali e meridionali nell'alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 1983), pp. 801-29, esp. p. 803. In the 570s, the throne of the Byzantine emperor was often associated with the throne of Christ. Justin II's coins emphasize this quasi-religious theme of the enthroned emperor, already glorified by Flavius Cresconius Corippus in his poem written on the occasion of the emperor's rise to power. See Averil Cameron, "Images of authority: elites and icons in late sixth century Byzantium," in *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition. University of Birmingham Thirteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies 1979*, ed. M. Mullett and R. Scott (Birmingham, 1981), pp. 205-34, esp. p. 221.

15 The term was first coined by the French sociologist Émile Durkheim [*De la division du travail social* (Paris, 1893), p. 150]. For more recent literature and for an interesting application of this concept to an historical case, see Giorgio Ausenda, "The segmentary lineage in contemporary anthropology and among the Langobards," in *After Empire. Toward an Ethnology of Europe's Barbarians*, ed. G. Ausenda (San Marino, 1995), pp. 15-50. For the "segmentary society" of the Slavs, see Maria Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, "Les Slaves dans l'Empire byzantin," in *The 17th International Byzantine Congress. Major Papers. Dumbarton Oaks/Georgetown University, Washington D.C., August 1986* (New Rochelle, 1986), pp. 345-67, esp. p. 354; Pohl, *Die Awaren*, p. 126.

16. See also Procopius, *Wars* VII 22.3 and 5; VII 38.7; VII 40.7; *Buildings* IV 7.12-13 and 17; Theophylact Simocatta VII 4.13-VII 5.1; VII 5.8.

17. Cf. Bohumila Zasterová, *Les Avars et les Slaves dans la Tactique de Maurice* (Prague, 1971), pp. 51-52; V. V. Kuchma, "Slaviane kak veroiatnyi protivnik Vizantiiskoi imperii po dannym dvukh voennykh traktatov," in *Khoziaistvo i obshchestvo na Balkanakh v srednie veka*, ed. M. M. Freidenberg (Kalinin, 1978), pp. 4-15, esp. p. 8.

18. Pohl, *Die Awaren*, p. 126.

19. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: a Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford, 1940), p. 181; M. Fortes and E. Evans-Pritchard, *African Political Systems* (London, 1940), p. 296. See also Christian Sigrist, *Regulierte Anarchie*.

Untersuchungen zum Fehlen und zur Entstehung politischer Herrschaft in segmentären Gesellschaften Afrikas (Olten/Freiburg im Breisgau, 1967).

20. Henry Munson, Jr., "On the irrelevance of the segmentary lineage model in the Moroccan Rif," *American Anthropologist* 91 (1989), 386-400, esp. p. 387; cf. E. Evans-Pritchard, "The character of the Nuer," in *Primitive Heritage: an Anthropological Anthology*, ed. M. Mead and N. Calas (New York, 1953), pp. 18-34, esp. p. 26; Sigrist, *Regulierte Anarchie*, p. 27.

21. Charles Lindholm, "Models of segmentary political action: the examples of

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Swat and Dir, NWFP, Pakistan," in *Anthropology in Pakistan: Recent Socio-Cultural and Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. S. Pastner and L. Flam (Karachi, 1985), pp. 21-39, esp. p. 21; Ausenda, "The segmentary lineage," p. 19.

22. Marshall D. Sahlins, "The segmentary lineage: an organization of predatory expansion," *American Anthropologist* 63 (1961), 322-45, esp. pp. 323 and 337. See Ladislav Holy, "The segmentary lineage structure and its existential status," *The Queen's University Papers in Social Anthropology* 4 (1979), 1-22, esp. p. 2.

23. Paul Bohannan, "Extra-processual events in Tiv political institutions," *American Anthropologist* 60 (1958), 1-12, esp. p. 11; Sigrist, *Regulierte Anarchie*, pp. 198-200 and 217-18.

24. Pohl, *Die Awaren*, p. 126, based on *Strategikon* XI 4.1. Cf. Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State. The Leader as Servant and the Humane Use of Power Among the Indians of the Americas* (New York, 1977).

25. Georges Balandier, *Political Anthropology* (New York, 1970), p. 53; Sahlins, "The segmentary lineage," p. 325; Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley, and Sherry B. Ortner, "Introduction," in *Culture/Power/History. A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*, ed. N. B. Dirks, G. Eley, and S. B. Ortner (Princeton, 1994), pp. 3-45, esp. p. 13. Bulgarian historians have argued that the Slavs who settled in the Balkans were divided into numerous families, bound not so much by their common descent, as by their life together. See Petar S. Koledarov, "Settlement structure of the Bulgarian Slavs in their transition from a clan to a territorial community," *Byzantinobulgarica* 3 (1969), 125-32, esp. pp. 125 and 127-28; Cankova-Petkova, "Gesellschaftsordnung," p. 266. Cf. Halina Evert-Kapessowa, "Quelques remarques sur la colonisation slave," in *Actes du XII-e Congrès international d'études byzantines (Ochride, 10-16 septembre 1961)*, vol. 2 (Belgrade, 1963), pp. 78-81, esp. p. 81; Evans, *Early Medieval Archaeology*, p. 273.

26. A *bandum* (also known as *tagma* or *numerus*) was the basic tactical unit of the Byzantine army, as reorganized by Emperor Maurice. The size of this mounted unit varied from 200 to 400 men. See Charles C. Petersen, "The *Strategikon*. A Forgotten Classic," *Military Review* 72 (1992), no. 8, 70-79, esp. p. 71.

27. Ivana Pleinerová, "O kharaktere ranneslavianskikh poselenii prazhskogo i korchaskogo tipov," *Sovetskaia Arkheologiya* 2 (1980), 51-55, esp. p. 51; B. A. Timoshchuk, "Social'naia tipologiya selishch VI-X vv.," in *Arkheologicheskie issledovaniia srednevekovykh pamiatnikov v Dnestrovsko-Prutskom mezhdurech'e*, ed. P. P. Byrnia et al. (Kishinev, 1985), 3-24, esp. p. 12. Settlements in south Romania tend to have larger numbers (twenty to thirty) of sunken buildings per occupation phase. See Suzana Dolinescu-Ferche, "La culture 'Ipotesti-Cîndesti-Ciurel' (V-e-VII-e siècles). La situation en Valachie," *Dacia* 28 (1984), 117-84, esp. p. 124.

28. "Emic" in anthropology refers to an "internal," subjective categorization, to which the anthropologist may not have access by "objective" means. "Emic" categories are often referred to by "native" names, and anthropologists, instead of describing the group on the basis of their "objective" (also called

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"etic") criteria, strive to comprehend "native" classifications. See Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (New York, 1968).

29. Pohl, *Die Awaren*, pp. 126-27.

30. Rena Lederman, "Big men, large and small? Towards a comparative perspective," *Ethnology* 29 (1990), 3-15, esp. p. 10.

31. Holy, "The segmentary lineage," p. 19.

32. Rudolf Riedinger, *Pseudo-Kaisarios. Überlieferungsgeschichte und Verfasserfrage* (Munich, 1969), p. 302; for the English translation, see Jakov Bacic "The Emergence of Sklabenoi (Slavs), Their Arrival on the Balkan Peninsula, and the Role of the Avars in These Events: Revised Concepts in a New Perspective," Ph.D. diss. (Columbia University, 1983), p. 152.

33. E.g., Procopius, *Wars* VII 14.22; *Strategikon* XI 4.30.

34. Elman Service, *Primitive Social Organization* (New York, 1971), p. 134; Richard Hodges, *Dark Age Economics: the Origins of Towns and Trade A.D. 600-1000* (New York, 1982), p. 187; John Haldon, *The State and the Tributary Mode of Production* (London/New York, 1993), p. 213.

35. Jadran Ferluga, "Archon. Ein Beitrag zur Untersuchung der südslawischen Herrschertitel im 9. u. 10. Jh. in lichte der byzantinischen Quellen," in *Tradition als historische Kraft*, ed. N. Kamp and J. Wollasch (Berlin/New York, 1982), pp. 254-66. The word for *archon* employed by the early tenth-century Old Church Slavonic translation of pseudo-Caesarius' *Eratopokriseis* is *knyaz* (prince). See Benedicty, "Terminologie," p. 54; cf. Ivan Duichev, "La versione paleoslava dei Dialoghi dello Pseudo-Cesario," *Studi bizantini e neoellenici* 9 (1957), pp. 89-100.

36. Taking into consideration that the term is used independently by more than one source, L. M. Whitby's argument that Theophylact had apparently misused a Latin term applied to barbarian chiefs, is untenable. See L. M. Whitby, "Theophylact's knowledge of languages," *Byzantion* 52 (1982), 425-28, esp. p. 428; cf. Barry Baldwin, "Theophylact's knowledge of Latin," *Byzantion* 47 (1977), 357-60, esp. pp. 357-58; O. V. Ivanova, "Slaviane i Fessalonika vo vtoroi polovine VII v. po dannym 'Chudes Sv. Dimitriia' (Postanovka voprosa)," *Slavianskie drevnosti. Etimologiya. Material'naia kul'tura drevnei Rusi. Sbornik nauchnykh trudov*, ed. V. D. Koroliuk (Kiev, 1980), pp. 81-107, esp. pp. 88 and 101.

37. Harvey Whitehouse, "Leaders and logics, persons and polities," *History and Anthropology* 6 (1992), no. 1, 103-24, esp. p. 118.

38. Marshall Sahlins, "Poor man, rich man, big-man, chief: political types in Melanesia and Polynesia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5 (1963), 283-303; cf. Michael Allen, "Elders, chiefs, and Big Men: authority legitimation and political evolution in Melanesia," *American Ethnologist* 11 (1984), no. 1, 20-41, esp. p. 20.

39. Paula Brown, "Big man, past and present: model, person, hero, legend," *Ethnology* 29 (1990), 97-115, esp. p. 97; cf. Lederman, "Big men," p.

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40. Maurice Godelier, *The Making of Great Men. Male Domination and Power Among the New Guinea Baruya* (Cambridge/Paris, 1986), pp. 105 and 109-

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41. See Zasterová, *Les Avars*, pp. 78-79; cf. Alexander Avenarius, "Avary i slaviane. 'Derzhava Samo'," in *Rannefeodal'nye gosudarstva i narodnosti (iuzhnye i zapadnye slaviane VI-XII vv.)*, ed. G. G. Litavrin (Moscow, 1991), pp. 26-37, esp. p. 29.

42. Brian Hayden and Rob Gargett, "Big man, big heart? A Mesoamerican view of the emergence of complex society," *Ancient Mesoamerica* 1 (1990), 3-20, esp. pp. 14 and 16.

43. Menander the Guardsman, fr. 21; Fredegar IV 68. Cf. Lubomír E. Havlík, "Slovanská 'barbarská království' 6. století na území Rumunska," *Slovánsky prehled* 3 (1974), 177-88, esp. p. 183; Wolfgang Fritze, *Untersuchungen zur frühslawischen und frühfränkischen Geschichte bis ins 7. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main/Berlin/Bern, 1994), pp. 281 and 428 n. 1736.

44. Alexander Avenarius, "'Gosudarstvo Samo': problemy arkhologii i istorii," in *Etnosocial'naia i politicheskaia struktura rannefeodal'nykh slavianskikh gosudarstv i narodnosti*, ed. G. G. Litavrin (Moscow, 1987), pp. 66-74, esp. p. 73.

45. Gordon R. Willey, *Prehistoric Settlement Patterns in the Virú Valley, Peru* (Washington, 1953); Willey, "Settlement pattern studies and evidences for intensive agriculture in the Maya Lowlands," in *Archaeological Thought in America*, ed. C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky (Cambridge/New York, 1989), pp. 167-82. Cf. Bruce G. Trigger, "Settlement patterns in archaeology," in *Introductory Readings in Archaeology*, ed. B. M. Fagan (Boston, 1970), pp. 237-62, esp. p. 239. Since the late 1930s, a similar concept has guided Soviet archaeologists. See B. A. Timoshchuk, "Ob issledovanii vostochnoslavianskikh poselenii VI-IX vv.," in *Problemy izucheniia drevnikh poselenii v arkhologii*