Annual Festivals and Potlatch-like Forms of Redistribution in Early Political Formations of Upper Guinea

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ABSTRACT

The article proposes a reconstruction of potlatch-like forms of redistribution in early political formations of Upper Guinea. Annual festivals (such as Aкanian Odwira and Dahomeyan Anun'gbome) are interpreted as peculiar inversions of gafol (poludye in Russian history) and potlatch-like institution. These multifunctional festivals and gafol were the major mechanisms of alienation and redistribution of the surplus product in the early political formations.

Keywords: *redistribution, potlatch, gafol, early state, chiefdom, Upper Guinea.*

Upper Guinea is a geographical region in West Africa adjacent the Atlantic Ocean and its Gulf of Guinea between the Cape Cabo Rocha, in the west (on the border between Senegal and Guinea-Bissau) and the top of the Biafra Gulf in the east (near the border between Nigeria and Cameroon). The central and eastern parts of Upper Guinea (historically Ivory Coast, Gold Coast, Slave Coast) are inhabited by the peoples who speak languages of the Guinea (Kwa) family of the Niger-Congo macrofamily of languages: Akans (Ashanti, Fanti, Akyem, Akwapim, Wassaw, Agni, Nzima, Akwamu, and others), Ga, Adangme, Ewe (Fon, Aja), Yoruba, Edo (Bini), Ijo, Itsekiri, Ibibio, Igbo, *etc*. In the pre-colonial period (from the sixteenth to the nineteenth

Recommended citation: Popov, V. A. Annual Festivals and Potlatch-like Forms of Redistribution in Early Political Formations of Upper Guinea. *Social Evolution & History*, Vol. 22 No. 2, September 2023, pp. 18–31. DOI: 10.30884/seh/2023.02.02.

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centuries), these peoples created a large number of early political formations (chiefdoms, unions of chiefdoms, megacommunities, parapolises, slave-trading city-states and early state formations), the largest of which were the Akan, such as the Ashanti Confederation, the Fanti Federation, the Denkyira, the Assin, the Adansi, the Akwamu and Akwapim; the Yoruba ones, such as Oyo, Ketu, Igbo, Owu, Idjesha and Ibadan; the Ewe and Fon ones, such as Abomey (Dahomey), Whidah and Allada (Ardra); the Prampram Confederation of Adangme; and also the Great Benin.

This article investigates the phenomenon of annual feasts (or so-called 'state festivals'), widely practiced in almost all the pre-colonial Upper Guinea polities. Their descriptions can be found in the books written by many European travellers and traders who visited the coastal settlements of Upper Guinea in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

During the annually celebrated Odwira (lit. 'cleansing'), the main festivity of the ancestor worship in Kumasi, the capital of the Ashanti Confederation, the paramount ruler (Asantehene) accepted all the tributes and gifts from the communities and distributed military outfit and weapons as well as various European goods. Most rituals during Odwira were associated with cleansing the people of dirt, worshipping the deceased rulers, sanctifying and tasting the first samples of yams.[1] The Kumasi Odwira took place in the Asantehene Mausoleum, which also served as the Treasure House of the Ashanti Confederation. The rituals in the Ashanti chiefdoms were done in burial places of chiefs. Ritual ceremonies during Odwira were accompanied by the sacrifices of sheep and the sprinkling of palm wine on the sarcophagi of rulers; in many Akan polities, people were also sacrificed (for more information see Popov 1990: 161–162).

Anun'gbome is an annual festive occasion reflecting the cult of ancestors of the Dahomey rulers in Abomey; it included numerous rites, processions, mass sacrifices, and demonstrations of military might, feasting, offering and distribution of gifts. At the core of those festivities was the procession of courtiers, warriors, Amazons and representatives of various communities, who marched past the royal platform, expressed their obedience and loyalty to the ruler, supplemented by the payment of tributes. In response, the ruler offered lavish sacrifices to the predecessors of the Dahomey throne, including numerous human sacrifices (between 800 and 900 people), horses, bulls, goats, and cocks. This was followed by the offering of gifts by the ruler to his courtiers and common people. The festivities were timed to resolve complex court cases, meetings of officials, the introduction of new laws, the set-

ting of prices for slaves, the consideration of petitions from subjects, *etc*. (Argyle 1966: 112–116; Kochakova 1986: 226–227).

At a similar festivity in Widah, the ruler lavished gifts on his subjects: each of the highest courtiers, according to his rank, received an Oyo cotton cloth and a string of coral beads; those of lower ranks received a piece of cloth and a few cowry shells. Then the ruler, his wives and the highest courtiers threw various goods and bundles of cowries into the crowd. This throwing of a part of the tribute and gifts received by the ruler into the crowd was the culmination of the feast (Kochakova 1986: 227–228).

The ritual, communicative, legal and even political aspects of those multifunctional festivals, which represent cycles of rites to sanctify the new harvest of yam – the main food crop – to ensure the fertility of the soil and the reproduction of livestock, to commemorate the ruler's ancestors and to confirm his sacred and potestary power,[2] have been fairly well described in the sources. Unfortunately, the social and economic aspects are still unknown and have not been the focus of research until recently, despite the fact that, on the one hand, the tributes, gifts and offerings were collected during such festivities, and on the other, a considerable part of that wealth was immediately redistributed among the nobility and the common people.

Before trying to determine the place and relevance of festivities in question within the system of social and economic relations of the early political formations of Upper Guinea, it is necessary, to make at least a brief excursion into the specific ‘political-economic’ as well as potestarian and political ideas that existed among the aborigines of Upper Guinea in the pre-colonial period, and first of all into wealth and attitudes toward it.

It should be noted that until the middle of the eighteenth century among the peoples of the coastal areas and until the beginning of the nineteenth century among the inhabitants of the majority of the hinterland areas (first of all in the forest zone of the Gold Coast) of the central part of Upper Guinea, wealth was considered as an obligatory attribute of the status of a chief and ruler; and among the Akans, the idea of the chief as a personally wealth man was unknown, and the deposed ruler was practically no different from his ordinary tribesmen; moreover, he could not get even what he owned before he became a chief (Popov 1990: 174–175).

Naturally, all the income of chiefs and rulers was considered public property (or, more often, the property of the ancestors) and became part of the common fund (the treasury) of the ethno-political organism (*cf.*: Khazanov 1975: 184; Kubbel 1988: 128–130), while chiefs and

rulers themselves had no right to be the sole masters of the treasury, especially in their own interests.[3] The treasury could only be used for the needs of the ethno-political organism as a whole.

Since the chief was the embodiment of the entire social organism, his wealth was considered magically indispensable for the prosperity of the entire collective. Therefore, legends about the wealth of the ruler of Denchira, who never wore the same golden regalia twice (Anquandah 1982: 128), or the nickname Sikafo (Rich Man) for the chief of the Domina (Fuller 1921: 2), only emphasize the prosperity of their chiefdoms.

In the traditional Akan society, an individual could only become rich if he held a post in the potestarian system. The main source of wealth was war, and the spear was considered the major symbol of wealth. That is why in Ashanti the ceremony of initiation of rich community members into the abrempon – the highest category of tribal nobility – preceded the rite of thrusting a spear into the ground at the main market in Kumasi. This symbolized the equality of the rich community member with those who had acquired the status of abrempon through their military triumphs (Wilks 1979: 13–15). Among the coastal Akans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, on the third day of a similar ceremony, a candidate for the title of abrempon would demonstrate to the crowd in the central square of the settlement his skill with a sword, javelin and shield (Kea 1982: 103), thereby proving himself worthy of the status of military leader.

The Ashanti people also traditionally associate wealth with excrements, symbolized by the elephant and horse tails. Hence, the gift of a tail was a sign of an official recognition as a sikafo (lit. 'rich people' derived from 'sika' – the gold, and 'fo' – people, or group of people). Those sikafos who were capable to provide war equipment for at least a thousand men were given with the right to carry a whip made from a horse's tail as a symbol of their status (it was held in front of the procession by a specially chosen man). The right to carry an elephant tail whip (mena) was given only to the sikafos who achieved the status of abrempon (Wilks 1979: 13).

The golden elephant tail (sikamena), the highest Ashanti symbol of wealth, was owned only by the asantehene. Sikamena was often used as a gift in cases where it was necessary to emphasize the equality of status with the asantehene. For example, among the presents offered by asantehene Osei Bonsu to the King of Great Britain, George III, after negotiations for friendship and cooperation in 1820, was an elephant's tail made of thin golden wires (Wilks 1979: 19).

Moreover, among all the peoples of Upper Guinea, the object of accumulation and prestige were people, i.e. the number of subjects and dependents (clients, slaves) in the case of a chief, and the number of wives and children in the case of an ordinary community man (Reynolds 1974: 34–35). It was prestigious to have a lot of gold and European goods that were used for the exchange of accumulated gifts, and in reality these were unclaimed treasures that were not used in exchange of goods, as they were only necessary for demonstration and status enhancement, and also for the maintenance of social and political relations (stopping the mutual exchange of gifts might have led to stopping of such relations). In addition, many goods of European origin contributed to the increase in prestige of their owner, as they were regarded as fetishes and magical charms, like the famous spy-glass presented to the Benin ruler Ehengbuda, which served as an additional 'confirmation' of his supernatural qualities (Kochakova 1986: 109).

A fundamental principle of the traditional Akan society was the right to own personal property only during one's lifetime, as it was considered as a whole to be the property of the group, the matrilineal clan. On the death of the owner, all his property automatically became the collective possession of the matrilineal clan and was distributed among the mother's relatives. The Akyems say in this connection that the right of ownership 'dies together with its owner' (Danquah 1928: 206).

As is known, at a certain stage in the development of the human society, with the emergence of a tendency to convert personal property into private property, and when the emergence of private property relations came into conflict with various forms of personal levelling appropriation (which inevitably resulted from the communal ownership of the means of production), there appeared specific rituals imitating collective consumption in the form of festivals and feasts, with public demonstration and distribution of the property, which in scientific literature have been given the term 'potlatch-like' (Averkieva 1974: 104–105; Traide 1986: 219–220; Pershits, Semenov 1987: 152–153, 561).

Potlatch-like forms of redistribution of private wealth had another, no less important function – the confirmation or enhancement of social standing and personal prestige, and this moment of potlatch had been preserved for a much longer period. Generosity, public denial of one's treasures, was an ultimate condition and the most efficient way of distinguishing an individual from the common mass at the stage of potestarian relations, when power was based not on property or coercion, but on status. This status had to be constantly maintained (Averkieva 1974: 105; Pershits, Semenov 1987: 153; Kubbel 1988: 116).

The most important function of the status-based power was to control resources and regulate their use.

The rituals and customs of many of the peoples of Upper Guinea have been recorded in which elements of potlatch institutions could be clearly discerned. An evidently potlatch-like character was borne by a public ceremony when the supreme ruler of Benin showed his wealth, including precious stones and coral beads, during an annual festival to sanctify coral regalia at the end of the rainy season, which ended with bestowing his slaves, women and various utensils to his subjects, as well as granting of court posts to representatives of the traditional nobility. Analogous gift-giving ceremonies were held at the funerals and matrimonial ceremonies of supreme rulers of the Ashanti Confederation and also during general 'state holidays' in Widah and Abomey, and also during the early Ashanti Odwira (Kochakova 1986: 226–227; McLeod 1981: 112; Rattray 1923: 287–293).

One of the compulsory components of the Ashanti ceremony of initiation sikafo into abrempon was a three-day public display of golden items, fetishes and other magic objects, ivory, drums, *etc*. belonging to the candidate (Wilks 1979: 15). At the Fanti, a candidate for abrempon would sit in the centre of the village square adorned with his valuables and holding a horse's tail in hands, while abrempons performed a ritual dance around him (Kea 1982: 102). The highest officials of the Ashanti Confederation were supposed to display their wealth in the same way, in order to demonstrate their right to status (Arhin 1983: 8). Thus, for example, the public demonstration of his treasures by the head of the Ashanti treasury, Opoku Frefre, was described (Wilks 1966: 227).

We should also add that in the seventeenth century each representative of the Fanti nobility held an expensive feast once in a year to mark *avurayeda* (lit. 'the master's day'). After the feast, bull or cow meat, several goats or sheep and plenty of palm wine were distributed among ordinary members of the community (Kea 1982: 103, 168). The author of the description notes that such feasts of dignity were to be held by all Fanti nobles. It can therefore be assumed that one of the basic principles of the potlatch, that is the obligation to give something in return, more generous.

Apparently, the dialectic of the described rituals consists in the fact that the redistribution of accumulated wealth according to the principles of collective consumption actually consolidated social inequality, which already existed in its earliest, rather moderate forms. The idea that the rich are obliged to give and the 'lower classes' were privileged to receive generous gifts was confirmed. It would be impossible to main-

tain authority and power without gifts and other such acts (*cf.*: Grinin 2019: 37–39). Demonstrative generosity was a model of social behavior for a noble person and chief.[4] It is curious that during public ceremonies the Akan chief was addressed as 'Dasebre' or 'Odeefo' meaning 'generous', 'plentiful' (Arhin 1983: 10). 'Dasebre' also stands for 'benefactor', 'donor' (Adu 1949: 18 (*cf.*: 'In the conscience of the people of ancient Kievan Rus, a good prince is first of all a generous prince' [Froyanov 1976: 45]).

Since the property was collective, there was a strict control over private enrichment, one of the basic mechanisms of which was the so-called 'tax' on inheritance (*awunade* among the Akans). In line with traditional view that personal property is only a life time possession, all accumulated gold and real estate became the common property of the chiefdom or the Ashanti Confederation on the death of the owner. The chief or asantehene then had to redistribute that property among the clan members of the deceased (Wilks 1979: 20). The inevitability of awunade stimulated the offering of gifts to children (the Akans were known to have matrilineal inheritance, that is the principal heirs apparent were the children of the sister and other members of the matrilineal clan), and there were also notable attempts to hide the gold: it was buried with the aim that children or other desired heirs may get hold of it (*Ibid.*: 22). In this context, it is clear why many quite wealthy merchants left nothing for their close relatives after their death, given the system of lifetime ownership.

In the traditional world view of the community members of all the peoples of Upper Guinea, the economic superiority of individual community members over the rest was seen as a wrong thing. They could be accused of sorcery, which was the most serious offense against traditional society. In other words, the social organism was capable of destroying any form of accumulation and consumption beyond the framework of the established order. At the same time, an individual who had accumulated wealth and made arrangements for it during his lifetime, according to the potlatch practice, gained public recognition of his achievements and enhanced his status and/or prestige.

It is significant that even in the nineteenth century, the Ashanti rulers deliberately discouraged the development of professional trade among their subjects fearing that the growing wealth of individual traders may negatively affect the social and political development of the Ashanti Confederation, even though the earnings of those traders would still belong to their matrilineal clan and partly, by virtue of awunade, to asantehene themselves (Kea 1982: 265). The wealth of the Yoruba rulers was redistributed after their death among courtiers and lower-

ranking chiefs during the burial ceremony in accordance with similar traditions of inheritance of royal movable property considered as public property, described above (Fadipe 1970: 143).

Traditional exclusive rights to the appropriation of gold and ivory contributed to the concentration of considerable wealth in the form of treasures in the hands of rulers, and consequently, to the strengthening of their power and prestige. According to the Akan traditions, only chiefs had the right to control the mineral wealth of the territory under their control, and for this reason, all minerals, primarily gold, belonged to them or, rather, to the stool (throne). On this basis, the Ashanti chiefs received two-thirds of the gold nuggets discovered in their chiefdoms, the rulers of Denkyira, Assin and Adansi received from one-third to one-half of the nuggets and gold sand; besides that, one or more days were allotted on pits when whatever was dug out went to the local ruler. The chiefs also had the right to a share of the meat and skins of some wild animals killed in their territory, and elephant hunters were obliged to give them a tusk and the tail (Rattray 1927: 11).

Slaves were also considered to be the property of the chief, because before the European transatlantic slave trade, only captives could be turned into slaves, while the prerogative to declare war and redistribute captives belonged only to rulers (if they were leaders in war). Accordingly, only chiefs received income from trading in commodities for which they had a monopoly (gold, ivory, slaves, cola nuts, *etc*.) (Kochakova 1970; 1986: 262; Popov 1990: 177, 218).

Apart from the 'tax' on inheritance and the monopolies (or privileges) on the possession of the most important objects of exchange, the main sources of income (*i.e*., forms of alienation of surplus product) of the rulers of Upper Guinea, and, consequently, of the wealth of their political organizations were the following (Kochakova 1986: 262; Popov 1990: 175–177, 218):

l. Regular, usually annual tribute from subordinate towns and dependent territories, including European forts and settlements. Occasionally, the tribute was fixed, but in most cases it was not. These usually took the form of gold, cowries, slaves and the most typical crafts (often the craftsmen themselves) or food. For example, in the early nineteenth century, Dagomba and Gonja paid to Asantehene 500 slaves, 200 bulls, 400 pieces of cotton clothing and 200 pieces of silk clothing.

2. Military capture and contribution after annual raids (in the dry season), especially during the slave trade period. For example, in 1816 the Asantehene bought 436 slaves from Akwapim and 100 ounces of gold from Akyem.

3. Trade and market taxes (like Benin's taxes on commodities carried through the city gates), as well as tolls for clearing and securing roads (the customary payment in the Ashanti Confederation in the nineteenth century was 1 domafa, equivalent to one twentieth ounce of gold), for the passage through the chiefdom's territory, for river crossings, *etc*.

4. Patronage and court rewards (property confiscated from criminals, gifts from those spared from the death penalty and those found innocent) and fines (for breaking oaths, squatting on land, refusing to demonstrate inferiority through certain gestures, *etc*.).

5. Traditional fees and occasional demands in cases of fire or natural disaster, for the funeral of the chief, for war, for organizing festivals and receiving guests, for increasing the number of gold ornaments on the regalia of the chiefdom, for appointment to a position in the ruler's court, and others.

6. Exploitation of slave labor in servile settlements on granted lands and in mines, as well as in salt-making, stone construction, canoeing, and carrying goods in trade caravans.

7. The alienation of a certain share of the surplus product produced by artisans and agricultural communities. Thus, in Ashanti, the surplus produced by the community members was considered the common property of a large family and was distributed according to the principle of equal security. Part of it (usually a basket of grain or other product from each member of the community, strangers gave a third or half of the harvest in kind) was transferred to the community fund, which was administered by the council of elders and the head of the community. One third of the community fund was used for the needs of the community itself and the headman's household, and the remaining two thirds went to the ruler as guardian of the ancestral land (Lewin 1978: 27). In addition, community members were required to give the chief a third of the produce from uncultivated lands (wild fruits, root crops) each year.

The most important of the sources of income listed should be recognized as income from mediation in trade transactions (especially the slave trade), as well as tributes and gifts from landowning communities – in fact the same tributes (as well as various fees from artisans, hunters, fishermen and gold miners and other patronage rewards and gifts). The economic essence of the tribute is not clear yet. It seems that it was not always a form of exploitation, and therefore its economic importance should not be overestimated. In many cases it was not so much a tribute as something between a tribute and a contribution, which can probably be described as a payoff. The tribute often had a purely symbolic character that is it denoted relations of socio-political dependence,

but not exploitation or direct subordination (*cf.*: Claessen and van de Velde 1991: 14–19). Thus, small Ewe chiefdoms sent only two slaves as a tribute to Kumasi in the nineteenth century (Wilks 1975: 68).

All revenues went into the treasury of the political formation, which was in reality a redistribution fund, and the head of the political entity was the central figure in the mechanism of redistribution of the common product.[5] Although the ruler was considered as the supreme redistributor, his actions were under the strict control of the council of elders (in the case of the Akan) or the council of clan nobility (in the case of the Yoruba), while the concrete mechanism of redistribution was regulated in such a way that it almost did not depend on the will of the chief. The efficiency of this mechanism can be illustrated by the fact that during the pre-colonial epoch there were almost no cases of Ashanti chiefs being dethroned for misappropriation of throne funds, although this particular reason (along with the chief's neglect of his duty to increase the public wealth) was considered the most serious for displacement (Arhin 1983: 9; Busia 1951: 82).

How were tributes and other offerings collected? Apparently, such a universal method for the early stage of social development as gafol (poludye)[6] did not exist in Upper Guinea, *i.e.* the rulers did not roam their estates with their squads with the aim of extracting the surplus product, and for this reason their capitals were not moved, which, by the way, was recognized also by Yuri M. Kobishchanov, the author of a comprehensive interpretation of the gafol phenomenon: 'The Kwa (ethnic communities of Upper Guinea speaking the Kwa languages, a family of Niger-Congo language macrofamily. – *V.P.*) had apparently not formed complexes of the poludye type' (Kobishchanov 2009: 463). It is true, however, that in parallel Yuri Kobishchanov suggested that the rites of the chief coronation with making the round of the capital may be considered as an imitation of gafol (Kobishchanov 1987: 148). In principle similar moments are present in the rituals of the Ashanti Odwira, some official festivals in Abomey and the Yoruba city-states (Oyo, Ketu and others), but it is difficult to give a single answer whether these are vestiges of the gafol as a method of collecting tribute.[7]

In any case, the gafol (or walking for gafol) was not observed in the political formations of West Africa throughout the pre-colonial period (with the exception of some data contained in the Yoruba oral chronicles of the sixteenth century about Oyo and the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries about Ojiga, which need to be cross-checked [Kobishchanov 2009: 462]). At the same time, a certain analogue of gafol or, rather, its inversion, existed in the region in question: the annual festivals described at the beginning of this article, one of which

(Anun'gbone) has a very specific component in its name, 'walking...' The Europeans had sufficient reason to call such festivals Customs, *i.e.* 'duties', or 'tolls' (for details see Kochakova 1986: 225–226; Argyle 1966: 102–117).

The annual festivals were the major event in the economic cycle of the Upper Guinean political formations because they provided a means for the alienation and distribution of the surplus product (*cf.*: Polanyi 1966: 33; Kochakova 1986: 232–233). As Natalya B. Kochakova rightly noted, 'it was the means of alienation and partial redistribution of the public wealth in conditions when the constraining coercive organs and the commodity economy had not been developed' (Kochakova 1986: 233).

During the annual festivals the rulers also redistributed some of the imported goods, the purchase of which was a royal monopoly in all political formations of Upper Guinea. This redistribution in the form of gifts and awards was, for example, one of the sources of the acquisition of horses by the nobility of Oyo and Dahomey, which were prestigious possessions and a kind of attribute and symbol of power. It is interesting to note that in Dahomey during the annual festival, nobles were ordered to give their horses to the ruler. After some time, the ruler returned the horses to their owners for a known fee, and this obligation repeated from year to year, demonstrating the dependence of the nobility on the ruler (Argyle 1966: 116).

Therefore, annual festivals were the most important economic mechanism of the early and pre-state formations of pre-colonial Upper Guinea, where the main economic goals, mainly redistribution, were achieved through potlatch-like forms. Such festivals, which were essentially a reversal of the gafol, became the main opportunity both for the accumulation of wealth by the rulers and the nobility, and for the distribution of surplus products, which were perceived as a public good, in significant amounts without the help of the market, since most or even almost all (through their representatives) of the population of the political formations participated in the festivals.

In addition to the open demonstration of treasures and rarities of the rulers, numerous sacrifices and the lavish distribution of gifts, the redistribution of political offices and titles was intended to demonstrate to subjects, dependent peoples and neighboring political formations the strength and power of the ruler and, consequently, the country under his control.

The interpretation of the annual festivals of the Anun'gbome and Odwira type proposed here as an inversion of the gafol is quite justified if we take into account that during the Old Russian gafol there were

similar festivals with the distribution of received handicrafts and foodstuffs. That is, the gafol had a redistributive as well as economic, political, administrative, judicial, communicative, symbolic and religious-ideological function (*cf*.: Kobishchanov 2009: 598).

In other words, gafol and multifunctional annual festivals under consideration are analogous mechanisms (forms) of alienation and redistribution of the surplus product in early political formations.

NOTES

[1] The latter element is absent in the Odwira of the Akyem, Fanti, Wassaw and Ahanta, where a special yam festival is celebrated.

[2] During the festivals, low-ranking chiefs ('vassals') took a kind of oath of loyalty. Breaking an oath was regarded as an insult to the ancestors. Refusal (or evasion) to participate in a festival and to give gifts giving meant rebellion against the ruler.

[3] *Cf*.: among the South African Bantu 'a chief has nothing of his own, everything he owns belongs to the tribe' (Shapera 1956: 102).

[4] In the Ogusan epic literature it is said: 'Without spoiling his property, a man cannot make himself famous (through generosity)' (Khazanov 1975: 184).

[5] *Cf*.: 'The entire surplus product alienated in favour of the chiefs is considered as a kind of public fund, the expenditure of which should be made in the interests of the whole collective' (Khazanov 1975: 184).

[6] Gafol is understood here as a regular (usually annual) detour of the ruler through his possessions (subordinate population) to collect tribute (Rybakov 1993: 277–278), rather than an expansive interpretation of this phenomenon in the works of Yuri M. Kobishchanov (1987, 2009).

[7] It should be noted that in Kievan Rus' poludye and tribute were different: poludye was collected by a prince from the inhabitants of his land, from the free population ('people') as a voluntary payment for the performance of socially useful functions; tribute was taken as a payment from the defeated people (usually foreigners) under the threat of even greater devastation (Froyanov 1974: 116–117).

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