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A comment on constructing the early state, by J.G. Oosten and P. van de Velde (BKI 150-II)

In: Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 151 (1995), no: 1, Leiden, 100-100

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DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

H.J.M. CLAESSEN

A Comment on 'Constructing the Early State', by J.G. Oosten and P. van de Velde (*BKI* 150-II)

In *BKI* 150-II, J. Oosten and P. van de Velde devote a long article to the development of the Early State Research Programme. Having been involved with this Programme for so many years, I am most appreciative of their efforts in describing, combining and analysing the – sometimes rather intractable – details of developments and publications which, seen from a charitable distance, give the impression of constituting a scholarly programme. I am also grateful to the present editors of *BKI* for publishing this article to mark my departure as editor of this journal (a task which it has only been possible for me to fulfil for so many years thanks to the invaluable work of my associate editor, Maria van Yperen).

All this appreciation notwithstanding, I would point out here that the article contains one statement which is in need of correction. Where Oosten and Van de Velde assert, in the discussion of evolution as 'structural change', that 'according to Claessen himself, he borrowed the concept from Van Parijs 1981', this is definitely not true. In fact, I came across this concept in Fred Voget's book, *A History of Ethnology* (1975), which I reviewed in 1981 (*Reviews in Anthropology* 8:453-65). From Van Parijs, whose book I reviewed several years later (in *Reviews in Anthropology* 10:21-5), I borrowed the idea of 'local optimization', according to which people usually select solutions for their problems from among known alternatives rather than from an entire range of theoretically possible alternatives.