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The State of the Study of the State in Anthropology

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Richard Blanton and Lane Fargher. 2008. *Collective Action in the Formation of Pre-Modern States*. New York: Springer.

Veena Das and Deborah Poole, eds. 2004. *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.

Christian Krohn-Hansen and Knut G. Nustad, eds. 2005. *State Formation: Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto Press.

Much has been published theorizing the origins of states, but ethnography has lagged behind in developing the conceptual tools to theorize the state, generally preferring to study the margins of states or "stateless" societies, even though they were enmeshed in or colonized by states. In recent decades states seem to have been bypassed by an interest in global and transnational phenomena that presumes states as political organizations to be increasingly irrelevant. This review examines three texts that cut across archaeological and socio-cultural anthropology to analyze contemporary research on states and propose new directions in the study of states.

KEYWORDS ethnography of states, nationalism, origins of states, political anthropology, states

The world changed on September 11, 2001, and anthropology has had no choice but to acknowledge that predictions of the demise of states were premature if not naive. The long lines and intrusive security measures at airports and border checkpoints drove home the fact that states still seek to maintain absolute control over borders. Wars fought in Iraq and Afghanistan

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highlighted that states still wage wars, and the economic crisis at the end of the millennium's first decade underscored the fact that states still control essential economic levers that regulate internal markets and external economic relations. These events remind us that anthropology must develop the conceptual tools to study states and thus counter the lack of focus the discipline has had on the modern state. As Christian Krohn-Hansen and Knut G. Nustad affirm in a recent book on the anthropology of the state, the lack of focus on states "continues to undermine anthropologists' capacity to deal satisfactorily with important forms of power and politics in the contemporary world" (2005:21).

In this review of the anthropology of states, it will be argued that anthropologists must study states from a historical and a cultural perspective as this will permit analysis of the ways in which power is centralized in state structures and maintained in daily practices of citizens. This requires re-examining the theories of the origin of states, to examine individual histories of past states and how they have influenced the development of contemporary states, while acknowledging the continued relevance of states situated at the nexus of power, culture, and community.

Three texts are highlighted in this review including Richard Blanton and Lane Fargher's (2009) *Collective Action in the Formation of Pre-Modern States,* Veena Das and Deborah Poole's (2004) *Anthropology in the Margins of the State,* and Christian Krohn-Hansen and Knut G. Nustad's (2005) *State Formation: Anthropological Perspectives*. These three very disparate works share neither common theory nor methods, yet all seek to understand what a "state" is and grapple with new ways of analyzing states. I critically examine all three, locate their research within a longer anthropological tradition dating back to the first half of the 20th century, and suggest a model for continued research on states.

Though the state as political institution continues to be the central locus of political power, state-level political organization has not received the attention it deserves in ethnography. Earlier work in sociocultural anthropology focused on non-state politics and those works that did critically examine issues such as nationalism and state politics were less readily adopted into the classic anthropological canon. In the latter half of the 20th century, sociocultural anthropology largely leap-frogged considerations of states themselves, and current academic fashion has shifted to transnationalism and globalization.

Nonetheless, the 1950s had heralded a breakthrough in the discipline as the writings of ethnographers and archaeologists cross-fertilized each other, developing new models to explain the rise of states. Leading the charge, V. Gordon Childe's seminal 1950 article, "The Urban Revolution," provided a materialist approach to understanding how states emerged in the archaeological record, while the work of Elman Rogers Service (1962), and the placing of the chiefdom as a form of political structure that stood between tribes and

states in his band-tribe-chiefdom-state paradigm, addressed the gap in Childe's model: the inexplicability of how the small farming communities that existed following the Neolithic agricultural revolution could have effectively transitioned into cities, the cores of nascent states, central to Childe's proposed urban revolution. Marshall Sahlins, in turn, helped to refine the anthropological definition of "state" in the 1950s and 1960s, while Clifford Geertz, in the 1960s and 1970s, developed methods to analyze the nexus of state politics and culture. Such materialist and later symbolic approaches have been largely ignored by postmodern-inspired ethnographers, who have tended to regard states in such an abstract way that the agency and culture that generate and maintain states have been lost.

By incorporating materialist and idealist, archaeological and ethnographic perspectives, a fuller general anthropological model of states as political systems can emerge. Such a model would build upon past insight: it would integrate Childe's (1950) concern for the material and the economic as drivers or inhibitors of political change; it would draw upon Geertz's (1980) study of Balinese statehood and the ways in which state politics are performed as an example of how "thick description" (Geertz 1973) could be applied in the study of states; it would borrow from Foucault (1993) and acknowledge how power is often dissimulated, while not ignoring that power is also found at gunpoint, as older anthropological definitions of the state recognized; and it would seek inspiration in Gramsci's (1972) writings, notes from the prison of an emerging fascist state, to better understand how states can be hegemonic and how oppression can be masked and the oppressed co-opted by state ideology, while recognizing that agency remains possible and ideological machinations can be resisted.

Moreover, even the inculcated can come to reject the hegemony, using Verdery's study of the fall of Communism in Romania as a template for ethnographic methods to study competing groups and how they strive to produce rival images of the nation and consequently the state (1991:4–5). Just as Geertz affirmed that anthropologists do not study villages, but, rather, study "in" villages (1973:22), to better understand how villages are tied into larger structures, I will argue that it is necessary for anthropologists to stop merely studying "in" states, but, rather, to study states if the discipline is going to make headway in fully understanding states past and present and political institutions that remain central to the lives of all people.

EARLY FORAYS IN THE STUDY OF STATES

States remain the metaphorical elephant in the anthropological room of the social science household; they are observed peripherally, mentioned in passing, but the subject rarely broached directly. States are sometimes

half-heartedly acknowledged, but rarely studied anthropologically as discrete objects of study. The first generations of anthropologists studied stateless societies, societies that were in the confines of state-regulated imperial colonies or societies that had been forcibly integrated into nation-states, relegating states to the periphery of anthropological research.

The antipathy of social anthropologists to the state was such that Radcliffe-Brown ([1940]1955:xxiii) specifically counseled anthropologists not to waste their time studying an entity that he considered not to "exist in the phenomenal world: it is a fiction of the philosophers" (Krohn-Hansen and Nustad 2005:5). Radcliffe-Brown sees states as merely another kind of political system: "states are merely territorial groups within a larger political system in which their relations are defined by war or its possibility, treaties and international law" ([1940]1987:xxi). Central to states is the monopoly held over the use of force: "Within the state, the social order, whatever it may be, is maintained by the punishment of those who offend against the laws and by the armed suppression of revolt" ([1940]1987:xiv). The focus for research is not states because the work of anthropologists is better directed studying non-state societies as the published works on states were not applicable to other forms of political organization: "In the study of the simpler societies the anthropologist finds that the concepts and theories of political philosophers or economists are unserviceable or insufficient" ([1940]1987:xiii). The study of "simpler societies," according to Radcliffe-Brown, allowed social anthropologists to strive toward "theories and concepts which will be universally applicable to all human societies" ([1940]1987:xiii). Thus, not studying the state as political system was paradoxically posited as the ideal for elaborating universal models that would presumably help anthropologists better understand states.

Even though the first generations of anthropologists rarely studied their own societies and the states in which they resided, there are nonetheless early works by anthropologists who sought to apply anthropological principles to their own societies. One example worth citing is Franz Boas's 1928 book *Anthropology and Modern Life*. Here Boas seeks to counter the stereotype of anthropology as being a "collection of curious facts, telling about the peculiar appearance of exotic people and describing their strange customs and beliefs," research that is considered as not having "any bearing upon the conduct of life of civilized communities" (1986[1928]:1). In this publication, Boas is concerned with modernity and its impact on traditional cultures, and has a chapter devoted to nationalism. Boas affirms that powerful states are central to strong nationalism: "Without a State conceived as an organization that can enforce and develop national aspirations nationality can never become the basis of a driving force" (1986[1928]:94–95). Boas's work is an interesting example of an early 20th century analysis of the role of states in promoting nationalistic fervor. The leading force, however, in the study of states would not be an ethnographer, but an archaeologist as

it is the work of V. Gordon Childe that would provoke a new examination of state-level organization and its role in history.

THE URBAN REVOLUTION

V. Gordon Childe (1950) published one of anthropology's most influential publications in an unexpected source, *The Town Planning Review*, and though he discusses the Urban Revolution and the origins of cities, Childe is in reality analyzing the origins of states as the history of the city and the state are invariably intertwined. Childe, a Marxist, was seeking the material causes of the Urban Revolution, a term that he coined. One of the characteristic features of the first cities was "settlement units of unprecedented size" (1950:4). Whereas Neolithic farming communities would average between 100 and 400 members, the cities following the Urban Revolution often numbered in the tens of thousands. Though minute by current urban standards, Childe argues this represented not only a quantitative shift, but also a qualitative shift in social structure. Central to the Urban Revolution, Childe postulates, is the settling of specialists in cities: "in Europe at the beginning of the Bronze Age metal seems to have been worked and purveyed by perambulating smiths who seem to have functioned like tinkers and other itinerants of much more recent times" (Childe 1950:7).

Childe puts forward the material and economic changes that enabled the emergence of cities: irrigation along with stock-breeding and fishing produced surpluses that supported resident specialists, and new technologies such as wheeled transport and new forms of water-transport facilitated the transportation of food stuffs, which in turn allowed the growth of cities (Childe 1950:8). Not only did Childe study the material basis of the city, he strived to understand the ways in which the symbolic and the ideological functioned in early cities, notably that of monumental architecture and the importance of writing. Childe ties together the material and the ideological, noting that "attached to the temples, were workshops and magazines, and an important appurtenance of each principal temple was a great granary" (1950:12). Surplus production was in Sumer "effectively concentrated in the hands of a god and stored in his granary" (Childe 1950:12) and Childe provides the means for the emergence of a ruling class that managed surpluses, and he suggests a form of social contract whereby "the ruling classes did confer substantial benefits upon their subjects in the way of planning and organization" (1950:13). Childe's work is an example of the model I am proposing: it sought to study states in terms of the material and the ideological, seeking to understand not only those factors that allowed the emergence of the city and, by extension states, while recognizing the inherent fragility of these new cities and the need to somehow reconcile the ruled to their rule.

Michael E. Smith, in reviewing the impact of Childe's essay, one of the most widely cited archaeological articles, notes that though Childe starts by stating that the city is hard to define, he nonetheless develops ten traits that serve to distinguish the earliest cities from Neolithic villages (2009:10). According to Smith, successive generations of archaeologists and other anthropologists (Adams 1966, 1968; Sanders and Price 1968; Flannery 1994; Maisels 1999; Trigger 2003) used these ten traits as a starting point in their analyses (2009:11).

Childe's influence is still evident, but there has been a move toward investigating "whole landscapes" in order to put ancients' cities in their context (Smith 2009:16) and there has been a shift from the elite to the commoners with many archaeologists excavating the houses and workshops of commoners instead of the temples, palaces, and tombs of the ruling class (Smith 2009:17). Childe was instrumental in initiating the study of states as a process and a central theme was seeking to understand, as Michael Smith phrases it, "the nature of power and the state" (2009:22). Childe's article marked the beginning of a burst of research on the state, but after 1970 "research on ancient and modern cities diverged, with far less interaction among scholars and increasingly fewer cross-citations of different scholarly literatures" (Smith 2009:22).

Given the importance of this period in defining the basic features central to states, I call upon Marshall D. Sahlins's definition of the state:

> More analytically, a state or civilized society is one in which:
>
> 1. there is an official public authority, a set of offices of the society at large conferring governance over the society at large;
> 2. "society at large," the domain of this governing authority, is territorially defined and subdivided;
> 3. the ruling authority monopolizes sovereignty—no other person or assembly can rightly command power (or force) except by sovereign delegation, leave or consent;
> 4. all persons and groups within the territory are *as such*—by virtue of residence in the domain—subject to the sovereign, to its jurisdiction and coercion.
>
> [1968:6]

Following Radcliffe-Brown's precedent, Sahlins notes that a state has a "true" government that is structurally separated from the ruled population and, in conformity with the writings of Childe, affirms that a state is a social system richly textured with specialists, monumental architecture, and a dense and large population divided by class and often ethnicity, and he specifies that "a society so large, heterogeneous, and internally divided cannot stand

without special means of control and integration" (1968:6). Sahlins's definition of the state remains valid.

CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH

In spite of Boas's early pioneering efforts, sociocultural anthropologists have made faint progress of late in the study of the state. The exceptions generally studied states indirectly through the prism of nation and nationalism, with notable works including those of Handler (1988) and Herzfeld (1989). In both cases, states are studied indirectly through the prism of national discourses. Even such exemplary analyses study states from the periphery, whether geographical or social; ethnographers rarely do their research in the halls of power, whether political, judicial, or even corporate, as judges and generals, presidents, and CEOs, are rarely the foci of anthropological research and ethnographic fieldwork is rarely conducted where state political power is articulated and directly wielded.

Michael Taussig (1997) provides a similar, yet radically different approach to the study of the state that could be characterized as fictionalized ethnography as his work, *The Magic of the State,* is part fiction, part documentary. Increasingly, anthropologists prefer largely to leapfrog over states entirely to study post-colonialism and transnationalism. Such topics allow anthropologists to study communities and networks that are seen as local and global, not specifically national, thus allowing anthropologists to continue to either largely ignore the state as a subject of analysis or reify the state as an external, autonomous entity that regulates the communities that anthropologists study in a globalizing world. The challenge remains: how to effectively study the state as a unit of analysis, not as phrased by Donald Kurtz a "receptacle within which to analyze local-level political processes" (2001:169), themselves often portrayed as battered or undercut by the forces of globalization.

Where anthropology fared best was in the analysis of state origins: archaeologists developed models to explain the emergence of state societies in the archaeological record. The ethnography of states and state institutions is still a peripheral topic of study for social and cultural anthropologists, but the study of state formation must be given greater attention in order to fully understand the contemporary social and cultural forces that shape the world. It is necessary to develop the theoretical, methodological, and conceptual tools to study states and to develop models that will not only tie anthropology within the larger social sciences, but also bring together sociocultural anthropology and anthropological archeology in developing a nuanced understanding of the forces that lead to the creation of states. This in turn will help researchers better understand how such forces continue to guide and maintain states in a globalized world.

The Anthropology of the State: A Reader, edited by Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta, best exemplifies the paucity of anthropological research on the state. Here, the section outlining the theoretical genealogies of the study of the state is comprised of works of philosophy and sociology, with no anthropologists figuring in the theorists included. The introduction highlights the challenge faced by the discipline in studying states, having abandoned the study of the larger entity to political scientists and focusing on what anthropologists have traditionally examined: local communities. The editors argue that "the anthropological analyses of state, in the current age of globalization, need to seriously contend with questions of culture and transnationalism" (2006:27), which shifts the focus from the anthropology of the state to that of the anthropology of transnational communities located within state borders. The site of study is not a state, rather, the authors encourage the abandonment of the study of the state, or the "macro-level institutional analyses of 'the state'" in favor of the micro-level local analyses that favor "[t]hinking about how states are culturally constituted, how they are substantiated in people's lives, and about the sociopolitical and everyday consequences of these constructions" (Sharma and Gupta 2006:27). In other words, anthropology seeks to defer the large-scale analysis of states to its sister disciplines, preferring to relegate the macro-level analysis to others. The focus of research remains that of resistance to a state or how individuals are co-opted in the cultural construction that is the state.

Published after the 9/11 attacks on the United States and the 2003 American-led invasion of Iraq, the contemporary ethnographic accounts of the state in *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader* are forced to acknowledge the continued existence of states as they stepped forward to assume military roles in defending boundaries and waging preventive war abroad to defend state interests. As Catherine Lutz writes, "the state was to engage in business as usual, which is to say purchases of expensive weapon systems such as battleships and nuclear weaponry designed for earlier modes of warfare" (2006:302). Lacking an easily identifiable target in the war on terrorism, states waged war on states, with nationalism fueling the drive to war. Rather than obsessing on "how to write less imperial ethnographies," Lutz highlights that the need to write "ethnographies of imperialism" has returned to the fore (2006:303–304).

The crux of the problem is the seeming inability of researchers to answer a fundamental question: What is the state? As the sociologist Philip Abrams remarks: "We have come to take the state for granted as an object of political practice and political analysis while remaining quite spectacularly unclear as to what the state is" ([1988]2006:112). Abrams argues that a goal of sociology is to provide a social account of states that goes beyond their agencies and institutions and is independent of society (Abrams [1988]2006:113). This goal is mirrored by an analysis that follows Marx's assertion that the state must be separated from civil society (Abrams [1988]2006:113). Yet Abrams

charges that neither sociology nor Marxism has succeeded in this task. "It seems necessary to say, then, that the state, conceived of as a substantial entity separate from society has proved a remarkably elusive object of analysis" (Abrams [1988]2006:113). Citing Radcliffe-Brown's suggestion that the state be eliminated from social analysis, Abrams proposes instead a compromise: abandoning the state as a material object of study, a reification, and pursuing the study of the idea of the state which should be "taken seriously" (Abrams [1988]2006:122). Borrowing the Marxist concept of mystification, Abrams explains that the state is "in every sense of the term a triumph over concealment" and the state would thus be comparable to the Wizard of Oz in that the "real official secret, however, is the secret of the non-existence of the state" (Abrams [1988]2006:122). Nonetheless, as previously discussed, the archaeology of states clearly demonstrates their material foundations and the work of Childe and his successors demonstrates that when states do make their appearance in the archaeological record, their existence is evident, and I would argue that the ethnography of states does provide insight on the state political structure whose existence is real enough for the citizens of states.

It is perhaps telling that Abrams's text was chosen in the reader on the anthropology of the state as it conforms to Radcliffe-Brown's vision and the anthropological reticence to study the state as it is outside the purview of ethnography, which focuses on "stateless" societies. Christian Krohn-Hansen and Knut G. Nustad argue that Abrams (1988) is very close to Foucault (1991). "Abrams is thus very close to following Foucault's call for cutting off the King's head in political analyses, but instead he chooses to replace the one King with a number of smaller kings." They continue by affirming that "If we follow Abrams' emphasis on functions and abandon the linking of these functions to a concrete state-system, we find ourselves approaching Foucault's notion of governmentality" (2005:6). Simply put, state power is everywhere and nowhere, existing in practices, processes, and consequent effects (Trouillot 2001). Such writings build upon that of Poulantzas (1968) who posited "atomization" and "individuation" as the effects that the modern state has on society (Krohn-Hansen 2005:7).

This very postmodern approach to the study of states, denying the objective reality of states, is comparable to the anthropological and historical study of the nation as modern construct. A telling example of this is Michael Taussig's writings, as mentioned previously this particular account of the state being part fiction, which affirm that the state, along with God and the economy, are "abstract entities we credit with Being, species of things awesome with life-force of their own, transcendent over mere mortals. Clearly they are fetishes, invented wholes of materialized artifice into whose woeful insufficiency of being we have placed soulstuff" (1997:3). The study of nations and states is hindered by the imprecision of the English language: in some languages, a distinction is made between a nation, a people

understood as sharing a common ancestry, language, and culture, and the political state. The English language, however, allows for the lexical interchanging of state and nation and adds nation-state as a means of addressing the ambiguity of the terms. However, as philosophers have challenged the state's existence as a discrete entity, the very idea of nation has been critiqued and deconstructed in turn. Anthropologists such as Benedict Anderson (1991) coined the term "imagined community" and applied it to nations, and others such as Rogers Brubaker (1996) advanced that the nation should not be studied as objective reality, as this presented as essentialism.

Akin to Jacques Derrida's model of an endless chain of signifiers whereby the signified cannot escape the "play of signifying references that constitute language" (1976:7), the research on both state and nation implies an endless succession of deferred construction. One of the strongest proponents of the modern constructed nation is Eric Hobsbawm who cites a Polish nationalist Colonel Pilsudski in order to affirm that more states had created nations than nations states (1990:44–45). This implies that it is the state that is the driving force behind the inventing of nations, yet if the state itself does not exist as a discrete entity, this implies that one construction, the state, is creating another, the nation, and this assertion echoes the work put forward by Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer (1985) examining the role of state in forming social identities in Great Britain.

The challenge then for both the study of nationhood, states, and all other forms of community is to develop models of understanding the origins and continuing significance of these entities that guide the actions of social actors. For both nations and states, the answer lies in studying their histories from the perspective of the *longue durée,* to borrow Fernand Braudel's term, and to recognize that elites alone are not the sole drivers in the consolidation of either nations or states (Krohn-Hansen and Nustad 2005:8).

As I have examined elsewhere (Bouchard 2001, 2002, 2004), the modernity of the nation, not to be confused with the political state, is built upon shaky historical foundations. As a dissenting anthropologist, Anthony D. Smith (2003) in *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* presents a meticulous study of the interplay of belief-systems and the shaping of *ethnie* (ethnic groups) and nations. Here, *nation* is to be understood as a population sharing or seen as sharing a common ancestry, culture, history, and territory. Nonetheless, it is not simply a question of the religious imposing nationhood. As Smith writes, "even the world religions find that they are often 'ethnicized'—acclimatized, if not assimilated, to the pre-existing norms and cultures of each province and its *ethnie*, which they successfully proselytize" (2003:25). It is in this process of religious and national syncretism that the "sacred foundations" of many nations are established, providing a shared narrative of belonging, and can either legitimize states or be used ideologically for the creation of states through political or military means.

Though contemporary anthropologists do not seek to reify the state, the works collected by Krohn-Hansen and Nustad (2005) highlight the need to study both state and nation. It is necessary to examine each state and each nation as a product of its own history. As Krohn-Hansen and Nustad argue, it is necessary to view "all state-building processes as integrated into global, historical contexts" and to view these "state formations as cultural processes" (2005:7). Once a state has been formed, it assumes an existence that is seen as greater than the sum of its parts and this is done through the merging of the material and the ideological. As Timothy Mitchell (1999:77) explains, a state "arises from techniques that enable mundane material practices to take on the appearance of an abstract material form" (Krohn-Hansen and Nustad 2005:14–15).

This runs parallel to the ideas that have been articulated by authors such as Michael Billig (1995) who summarizes the way in which nation is articulated by individuals through his term "banal nationalism." Rather than looking to grand state rituals, Billig (1995) argues that one must look at the articulation of national identity in the mundane material and daily activities that affirm the state, the nation, and national identity. There is thus a convergence that is evidently needed in the study of both the state (the political entity) and the nation (the social and cultural entity whose members may see it tied to a state or striving to create a state). In both cases, there is a need to begin with a history of the social, symbolic, and political processes that lead to the emergence of both nations and states, processes that may be guided by elites or where elites may themselves be pushed by social forces that they do not control.

A theoretical shift is evident in the anthropology of the state. Foucault's notions of the body politic and bio-power rose to preeminence in the 1990s. The terms *body politic* and *bio-power* saturate the collection *Anthropology in the Margins of the State* (Das and Poole 2004:25–26; Ferme 2004:88–90; Nelson 2004:137–138). Even when they are not explicitly used, Foucault's bodily metaphors—notably of the "capillary effects of state power" (Roitman 2004:193) and the "empirico-transcendental doublet of Man" (Jeganathan 2004:78) —come to the fore. The challenge facing anthropologists seeking to use Foucault in studying the state is that Foucault's concept of power is concerned with "power in the abstract—a matter of structural relationships, institutions, and strategies—rather than with concrete politics and the actual people they involve" (Garland 1986:853). Yet anthropological analysis is most effective when studying power as experienced in daily life, whether at a checkpoint in Sri Lanka (Jeganathan 2004), dealing with an HIV/AIDS epidemic in post-apartheid South Africa (Ashforth 2004), refugees returning to their Guatemalan state (Nelson 2004), or marginalization at the periphery of the state in Peru (Poole 2004).

Central to Foucault's argument is the necessary shift that is proposed as states enter into modernity, a "shift of accent" from territorial states in the

pre-modern to states interested in regulating populations through ordinary and ubiquitous mechanisms, such as the census and other records such as birth, marriage, and death certificates, while delivering services to populations (Ferme 2004:88–89). This is the essence of the biopolitical as modern states come to control populations to the point of producing new forms of human subjectivity (Ferme 2004:89). Foucault defines modernity as starting in the 17th century when power over life evolved in two basic forms with the first being the disciplining and the optimization of the "body as a machine"—which he labeled "*anatomo-politics of the human body*"—and the second being the regulatory controls imposed over entire populations, the "species body," as it sought to supervise the biological processes of the population as a whole—the "*bio-politics of the population*" (1984:261–262). Foucault calls upon a much older trope, that of the body, to represent modern society. However, Foucault's theory pushes the reasoning to argue that you have the creation of the modern body: "the normalized body—a body subjected to scientific, social, and economic surveillance" (Punday 2000:511).

However, as Daniel Punday remarks, at no point did Foucault ever base his conclusions on actual research on living bodies: "All of Foucault's work ultimately discusses books that describe bodies; at no point does it actually observe physical bodies" (2000:514). The body as site is thus a trope, a rhetorical gesture used by Foucault to dramatize social discourses (Punday 2000:514). It could likewise be argued that even those seeking it do not readily observe biopolitics in ethnographic accounts. Mariane Ferme acknowledges that a hybrid model is necessary as

> . . . postcolonial Sierra Leone's political subjects are more at home in the 'control' models of the state espoused by Deleuze and Guattari—who see the state as an apparatus of capture, integrated more as a network than an organism—than in the purely biopolitical ones spawned by partial readings of Foucault. (2004:89)

Even though the author describes Sierra Leone as "first and foremost a state of the imagination," she nonetheless concedes that it "has 'real' effects such as points of legal decision, coercion, rights of life and death, and so on" (Ferme 2004:91–92).

A comparative analysis of the state nonetheless demonstrates that states past and present have had recourse to coercive force to maintain themselves and calling upon the collaboration of the population in forging their social contracts. States, to varying degrees, also rely upon the ideological and the symbolic, notably in the form of religion, popular or state-mandated, to provide the state legitimacy. Both modern and pre-modern states actively sought to control borders and regulate their populations. This is seen in contemporary cases like the rise of Vladimir Putin to power in Russia. Researchers may

never know with certainty what transpired, but it is clear that Putin used his ties within an existing organization (the FSB—the *Federal'naya sluzhba bezopasnosti* or the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation—the successor to the KGB—the *Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti* or Committee of State Security) to put trusted individuals in positions of power. Incarceration, or the threat of possible incarceration, was used to keep potential competitors at bay with the 2003 arrest and 2005 conviction of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, then Russia's richest individual.

Concurrently, the administration of Vladimir Putin was seeking and gaining control over the media. The television channels now watched by the majority of Russian citizens are under effective state control and the state promoted a revival of Russian state-nationalism presenting Russia rising from its knees, needing a strong leader to keep the enemies that surround her at bay. All told, the rise and the power of Putin and the role of the state in contemporary Russia would have been comprehensible to medieval and early modern state builders whether in China, India, or Europe.

Fortunately, recent research in the history of states across the globe reviews the evidence of pre-modern state formation. This includes a thorough inventory of the evidence as analyzed by Richard Blanton and Lane Fargher (2008) in *Collective Action in the Formation of Pre-Modern States*. This latter work seeks to bridge the gap between anthropology and political science, highlighting that theory of collective action does not presume an evolutionary leap from autocracy to democracy, rather, that "state-builders, early or modern democratic, will encounter similar kinds of constraints and opportunities" (Blanton and Fargher 2008:1). These preoccupations are not new, as Childe (1950) was wrestling with such concerns over constraints and opportunities when theorizing on the origins of cities and, by extension, states. A review of the original theories of the origins of the state and an examination of the new evidence provides useful insights that can be applied to the study of states as well as nations. I next review this evidence and compare the insights gained from archaeological and historical accounts of state formation with the work of contemporary ethnographic field researchers grappling with the concept of the state.

ORIGINS OF THE STATE: NEW RESEARCH

Where anthropology has made a significant contribution to theorizing and analyzing states has been in the study of state origins. Guided by archaeology, the discipline has developed models seeking to explain the origins of the state. Though the interest in tracing the origins of social phenomena has subsided in recent decades, Kurtz argues that interest in the origins of the state remain (2001:170), due to the importance of the state in contemporary society. He writes: "This is because the appearance of the state provided

a watershed for political practice that had an impact on world societies unlike any other. The state at its inception was represented by the most powerful centralized government over the most nucleated society invented by humankind'' (Kurtz 2001:170).

The analysis of state societies was certainly facilitated by the tangible, easily recognizable evidence of state-level societies in the archaeological and historical records, including monumental architecture, writing if only to facilitate taxation, armies, and evident control of large populations and territories. The emergence of states is tied to the intensification of production and the emergence of various forms of bureaucracies and increasing hierarchies. Yet the question remains how individuals came to lose the relative freedoms they had, whether in bands, tribes, or chiefdoms, and what pushed them to accept the increasing centralization of power in states.

Theories of state origin fall into four categories, as identified by Kurtz: voluntaristic, coercive, synthetic, and political (2001:170). Voluntaristic theories propose that individuals come together to create a state for the common good, forging, in the words of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a ''social contract'' (Kurtz 2001:170). The earliest proponent of the voluntaristic model of state building was Robert Lowie (1927) who argued that associations of individuals, superseding kinship and local organizations, emerged that brought together people from larger territories (Kurtz 2001:171). Religion and the need for policing larger territories were posited as mechanisms that would cross-cut territories and kinship, pushing for greater social complexity and hierarchy, even prior to the emergence of states. Possible examples of monumental works achieved prior to the emergence of states would include projects such as Stonehenge and other such large prehistoric collective projects (Earle 1991:89). Voluntaristic theories also included the proposition that the need for individuals to collaborate in the building of irrigation canals, an innovation that permitted greater agricultural production, growing economies, and populations, lead to the emergence of states. This theory was based on the writings of the historian Karl Wittfogel (1957) who theorized ''hydraulic states emerge in response to managerial demands of large-scale irrigation works'' (Kuntz 2001:171). In opposition to such voluntaristic theories are the coercive models that see the emergence of states as the result of conquest. For Oppenheimer (1975[1914]) and Ibn Khaldun (1967[1377]) this occurs when a nomadic pastoral population conquers an agricultural population, leading to the emergence of a state (Kurtz 2001:171).

Synthetic theories of state origins included Carneiro's (1970) theory that states emerged in geographically constrained environments that allowed for agriculture but impeded movement. Such locales would include fertile lands surrounded by deserts, mountains, or oceans. Population growth and competition over limited lands would thus lead to the emergence of states. Other synthetic theories included Marxist theories of state origins holding that the emergence of the state coincides with the genesis of classes and the triumph

of private property over communal ownership. In Marxist theories of the origin of states, notably Friedrich Engels's (1972) in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, men establish households that own lands that are then transferred to male heirs. Eventually, some households gain in power and prestige and the "means of production is appropriated by upper-class elites" and once this occurs the coercive forces of the state are established as the "subsequent exploitation of lower classes provides the basis for the Marxist identification of the state as an instrument of coercion in the service of the ruling, exploiting class" (Kurtz 2001:172). Marxist theory would have influenced the writings of Childe and others, with state being associated with class and caste stratification as opposed to kin-based organization.

These early theories of the origin of states are driven by environmental and materialist explanations of social complexity the rise of the state. As Paul Roscoe observed:

> Its unhappy consequence is that political evolutionary theory has become increasingly isolated from theoretical developments in cultural anthropology, as is evidenced by a persisting proclivity to interpret social change in terms of material or demographic conditions and contingencies and adaptive or functional processes. (1993:111)

The state, as Roscoe (1993:111) summarizes, is seen by materialists as emerging through

> circumscribed environments, dispersed resources, resource heterogeneity, resource scarcity, environmental risk, population growth, warfare, and the like, with some sort of 'voluntaristic' or 'conflict' process—or, in the case of systems theory, some combination of the two—acting on these circumstances to produce chiefdoms or state formations. (e.g., Carneiro 1970, 1981; Cohen 1978; Flannery 1972; Fried 1967; Friedman and Rowlands 1978; Rathje and McGuire 1982; Sahlins 1958; Service 1976, 1978)

Roscoe provides a critique of the largely functional explanations of the growth of states and hierarchical societies, the central observation being that human agency in such models is left "dimly sketched at best" and humans are portrayed as merely denatured automatons responding mechanically to the needs of the "system" (1993:112). He proposes a practice theory approach to the study of states, and his contribution to the investigation of states is the recourse to ethnography to develop models explaining the emergence of political centralization. In this case, Roscoe compares two Polynesian islands and uses their published ethnographic and historical records to promote the integration of cultural anthropology and archaeology to develop predictive theories that would explain the growth of centralized

power and eventual states, an approach that he puts forward as holistic (Roscoe 1993). Roscoe's is an early attempt to challenge the neo-evolutionary theories that were the guiding theoretical paradigm explaining the rise of the state. He and others, such as Adams (1981) and Stein (1994a,1994b), highlighted the need for new theory in the study of states and state-level organization, but the theory proposed pushed to the background materialist explanations in the study of states.

Neo-evolutionary theories prevailed in explaining the rise of states, through the driving factors of agricultural intensification, population pressure, and competition for resources, notably high-production, often irrigable, arable lands (Blanton and Fargher 2008:38). Such theories were readily applicable to certain locales (the Nile Valley, Mesopotamia, etc.), but paid little heed to other regions of the world such as sub-Saharan Africa. As Blanton and Fargher note, agricultural production in this region tended to focus on gardens and shifting fields as opposed to cereals, and there was little in the way of canals and irrigation (2008:39). Land was abundant, and agriculture was of lesser intensity than other regions where the growth of states occurred, but states nevertheless emerged there prior to the modern period. However, the factors theorized as driving centralization and African political change "emphasized the importance of the control of people and things, including prestige goods, rather than the control of land and the surplus production from it" (2008:38).

The rise of states in sub-Saharan Africa is easily overlooked as it does not fall into the expectations of neo-evolutionary explanations of the rise of states, but also does not fall into the Eurocentric definitions of the state. As R. McIntosh notes, "many early African states typically lack the remains of substantial public architecture, and thus fail to meet the expectations of Westerners for what an early state should look like" (Blanton and Fargher 2008:39). However, the biases are not limited to Africa and the expectation of primitivism, but also include Western presumptions of Oriental despotism, the rule through autocrats that is opposed to the Western tradition that leads to democracy.

The global comparative case studies collected and analyzed by Blanton and Fargher (2008) highlight the shifting nature of state power across both southern and eastern Asia. The Indian evidence "suggests a long cycling between more egalitarian and more centralized forms of the state in early South Asia in which Vedic Hinduism developed in opposition to the earlier and more egalitarian Indus civilization, while in turn, Buddhism emerged in reaction to Vedic Hinduism" (2008:62). In the early stages of state development in India there is a great deal of variation, with some polities being monarchical, while others are best described as republican (Blanton and Fargher 2008:65). It is in the monarchical system that the *varna* (caste) system emerges, one centered on the notion of ritual purity. A social contract nonetheless emerged which legitimated taxation in return for the

maintenance of moral and social order (2008:65). The elite was also sanctified through "*brahmanic* consecration" and the rules were identified with the deities (Blanton and Fargher 2008:65).

The historical evidence in the rise of the state in China demonstrates that there are periods of greater concentration of power during some phases of state development and that both the material and the ideological must be studied together when seeking to study the state. The material presented also undermines the case for material determinism as the driving force in the history of the state. Blanton and Fargher highlight that agricultural intensification accompanied the emergence of a free peasantry alongside the implementation of new concepts of rulership (2008:78–79).

These new concepts of rule centered on the rise of Confucian theory that was critical of aristocratic privilege, but the acceptance of Confucian principles was neither immediate nor straightforward. As Blanton and Fargher note, Confucian ideals emerged as a critique of the Early Dynastic states, were rejected by the Qin dynasty, and adopted as state orthodoxy by the Han Dynasty (2008:78). Confucian ideals sought to promote an ideal of a model citizen, while providing for checks on the power of the state as it based rules on a moral code and accountability, while undermining the middle level of power, the heads of aristocratic clans and lineages (Blanton and Fargher 2008:79). Of particular importance to contemporary research on the state, is the ways in which Confucian ideals were integrated into the daily lives of individuals: "These social and cultural ideas were then encoded in domestic habitus, including formalized architecture, everyday practices, and ritual" (Blanton and Fargher 2008:79). Yet, the gains made by the peasantry and the centralized state at the expense of the aristocracy were not maintained: in spite of the continued orthodoxy of Confucianism, over later dynasties, with increasing militarization tied to defending the northern border, the manor would rise to prominence with the free peasant being largely reduced to serfdom (Blanton and Fargher 2008:81–82).

As was the case with India, the history of the state in China is not a straight path; rather, there are periods of increasing state power, periods where the state is marginalized by regional powers and periods of greater freedom for the peasantry which are then lost before being partially regained centuries later. Likewise, the ideological forces do not dictate state formation, but once established, orthodoxies shape both politics and social life.

The work of Blanton and Fargher highlights the competing forces of centralization and those egalitarian forces that gave individuals and local communities a say in the politics of emerging and established states. In reviewing the archaeology and history of the origins of states, the authors note that, contrary to what neo-evolutionary theory predicts, the evidence from Mesopotamia and Neolithic Wessex chiefdoms is suggesting that egalitarian societies arose that demonstrated early forms of complex society: "The main failure of neo-evolutionist theorists was their inability to conceive of the

possibility for alternative modes of early governance, including more egalitarian forms where there is no evidence of a ruling elite class" (Blanton and Fargher 2008:89).

Additionally, even when hierarchical forms of governance arise, there is invariably a cycling between centralized and hierarchical states and more egalitarian "citizen-states." Stein, for example, notes that the Ubaid Period in Mesopotamia featured "an egalitarian ethic of shared group membership and ideology" (1994a:43). Likewise, in early European societies there was "a far greater degree of institutional complexity and egalitarianism in early European societies" (Blanton and Fargher 2008:91). This would include as a case in point—Novgorod, a state that showed signs of a form of early democracy (at least for the nobles and merchants) as opposed to the highly centralized political structure that the princes of Muscovy would impose on the empire they would establish. Additionally, even with the rise of the divine kingship in Europe, community assemblies were not fully extinguished across Europe and the issue of sovereignty and the supreme authority given to monarchs was debated (Blanton and Fargher 2008:92). As elsewhere, there were forces pushing for greater centralization of state power and authority, and competing forces that promoted more egalitarian and local governance.

The analysis of Blanton and Fargher highlights the need for a more nuanced review of the history and the archaeology of the state and the necessity to reject linear models of political evolution as well as Eurocentric models of analysis that put into opposition Western Democracy to the autocracy of the Other. As they note: "In many different times and places, and in diverse ways, humans have struggled to build more egalitarian and collective political regimes that provided public goods and channels for commoner voices, and that could make principals, agents and taxpayers more accountable" (2008:298).

The lessons learned in history and archaeology can be applied to the ethnographic analysis of contemporary states. Competing forces within society will either push toward greater centralization of power, or will mitigate growing autocracy of rulers and ruling elites in favor of collective action and greater egalitarianism (Blanton and Fargher 2008:298). Ethnographic fieldwork must thus be situated historically as well as socially and culturally.

ETHNOGRAPHY IN STATES, ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE STATE

Recent events, including terrorist attacks and a global economic crisis, necessitate a rethinking of the alleged decline of the state. In the 1990s, the state was portrayed as increasingly "irrelevant" as "scholars argued that 'deterritorialization', the detachment of social and cultural processes from specific places, was both a condition and an effect of globalization (i.e., Tomlinson 1999)." Foucault (1984:63–65) had "cut off the King's head,"

arguing that power in modern societies was dispersed and decentered, not adequately encapsulated by the concept of "sovereignty" (Alonso 2005:27). This does not necessarily entail the presumption that the state must have a monopoly over sovereignty, but, rather, that the history of its production must be placed into its cultural context while examining how the linking of state and sovereignty is accomplished in different societies (Alonso 2005:44). Or, as Clifton Crais states, the concern of research should be "bringing the state back in without leaving culture out" (2005:56).

The discipline of anthropology is well suited to this call of bringing the state back in while studying the cultural foundations of state formation. This can be achieved through the anthropological gaze that looks at state structures from the grassroots. To paraphrase Geertz (1973:22), anthropology should not solely study the village, ignoring the state, but can study the state from the vantage point of a village. Christian Krohn-Hansen (2005), in a chapter entitled "Negotiated Dictatorship: The Building of the Trujillo State in the Southwestern Dominican Republic," demonstrates how this can be achieved using ethnographic fieldwork. Krohn-Hansen analyzes the building of an authoritarian state in the Dominican Republic under General Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina, a dictator who ruled from 1930 until his assassination in 1961. Krohn-Hansen demonstrates how anthropology can analyze the rise of states by providing a telling historical anthropological account of this period, based on fieldwork and interviews with residents of the state's border with Haiti, and an analysis that does not study political history in isolation from cultural history. Krohn-Hansen rejects the idea that a dictator may wield total power, as "power is far more dispersed and transactional than is generally assumed" (2005:97). Likewise, Krohn-Hansen discards the baggage inherited from Foucault, notably the precept that "modern state formation is necessarily a set of processes that generate dramatically *new* types of subject" (2005:97). This is sometimes true, but not always the case and Krohn-Hansen is rejecting Foucault's absolute division between the pre-modern and the modern state, along with Alonso (2005:27–28).

What surprised Krohn-Hansen was how villagers and peasants remembered Trujillo, a dictator who used terror to maintain power: "They kept in mind how the Trujillo years had brought increased civilization and development through the creation of the nation-state" (2005:103). Trujillo may have been a corrupt dictator, but he also built roads, enforced respect, and brought about agrarian reforms that benefited the country's peasants as they gained access to land. It is thus not surprising that this period is remembered nostalgically as "orderly, efficient, responsive, and even honest" (Turits 1997:20). Trujillo thus enacted reforms that ensured the backing of the peasantry as well as certain elite groups, and the positive popular memories are not solely the consequence of a false consciousness established through the personality cult of the general (Krohn-Hansen 2005:104).

Though Krohn-Hansen's research was in the Dominican Republic, the narratives described could easily have been those recorded in any rural area of the Russian Federation in the late 1990s. Though the history of Soviet state building was marked by the deaths of millions, and many millions more that were imprisoned, the Soviet years were largely remembered as a time of relative peace and prosperity. Villagers I interviewed while conducting ethnographic fieldwork in northern Russia would wistfully remember how they could fly south on state-sponsored vacations to Sochi and other locations; they remembered the infrastructure that was built, the free hospital care, and the coming of electricity. They certainly took pride in the fact that the Soviet Union, their state, was a superpower. They too had been active participants in the building of the state, even though they were quite distant from the seat of true power, both socially and geographically, while in the post-Soviet space of the Russian Federation they were largely relegated to the status of observers, not considering themselves active participants in the building of a state.

The parallels between the Trujillo years of the Dominican Republic and the heyday of the Soviet Union are evident. In the Soviet State, the dictatorship of the proletariat was also "not simply imposed by was articulated in the everyday life of communities across the country" and in the Soviet Union, even during the worst years of the repression in the late 1930s, we could also argue that the "state-system was built not only from the top, but also at the grassroots level" (Krohn-Hansen 2005:117). As in the Dominican Republic, the Soviet state built upon older cultural beliefs, even as it was seeking to stamp out the vestiges of the past. The embalming of Lenin was certainly influenced by Orthodox religious beliefs that saints do not decompose, and the few photos of Stalin distributed to the public were iconic in the true Orthodox use of the term.

The chapters that follow in *State Formation: Anthropological Perspectives* all highlight how the material is woven together with the ritual and the symbolic in the building and affirming of states. In the case of Peru, state building also involved the building of roads linking distant regions of the country to the capital (Harvey 2005). However, mixed into the cement and asphalt were local cultural understandings, and Harvey highlights that roads alone do not lead to modern subjectivity: "As we have seen, road travel in Peru only partially separates the traveler from the environment through which they are passing, and even the most committed local entrepreneur stays deeply in touch with the animate powers of the landscapes through which they move (Harvey 2001, 2003)" (2005:125). Though the state was quite weak—with the Shining Path waging war against the state, trying to demonstrate the latter's inability to protect citizens and the state itself was in material disrepair at the margins, blighted by corruption, and marked by bare schools, a lack of electricity, and working telephones—for the inhabitants of marginal regions such as Ocongate in Peru, the state was tangible

in spite of its relative absence, as people in the region "sustain their sense of the state despite its obvious shortcomings" (Harvey 2005:129).

The state remains an entity produced both locally and externally. As Harvey summarizes, "the state is constituted through multiple agencies, organizations, levels, agendas and centers, and act in the knowledge that state power is both arbitrary and contingent, potentially transformative yet also intrinsically fragile" (2005:139). This research emphasizes that the state must be studied on the ground, as articulated in local practice, not solely in terms of the discourse of the state on the state.

The ethnographies of the state highlight the necessity to avoid the false dichotomization of the state and civil society or of state and community. As Kristi Anne Stølen writes: "state-community relations may be characterized by both resistance and active engagement in inclusion" (2005:157). In her analysis of returned refugees in Guatemala, she describes the process of peace negotiations as one of resistance, notably against military control, and of active engaging as the extension of state institutions and new forms of administration were negotiated (Stølen 2005:157). The refugees did not want to establish communities outside states; they wanted to be equal citizens in their state. "The returnees see themselves as indigenous people who want to be modern citizens of the Guatemalan state, at the same time as they maintain and adapt certain important Maya values and traditions" (Stølen 2005:162). It is only in bringing the state as political entity into anthropological analysis that ethnography can effectively analyze contemporary communities.

In conclusion, anthropology may have reached the stage in our discipline's evolution where we are ready to acknowledge the continued existence and pertinence of states and the need to integrate analysis of states in our ethnographic analyses. Just as the work of the earlier anthropologists in Africa failed to integrate the colonial powers that were regulating the non-state societies under study, contemporary anthropologists risk producing incomplete analyses if they study the global and the local (i.e., the transnational) while overlooking states. To do this, it is necessary to develop models that are based on ethnographic research in real communities. As the review of the literature has shown, it is the on-the-ground research on lived lives in states that provides the richest detail to anthropologists studying states, and has significant potential to develop new theories that will allow the discipline to make its contribution to the study of state-level organization. Likewise, by fusing ethnography and history with archaeology, it will also be possible to go beyond the discussion on the origins of states and the narratives of state and nation, and develop new critical theory that will not only conduct anthropology in the margins of the state, but will push ethnography and anthropology as a whole into the core of states; in a word, providing nuanced anthropological accounts of state formation and operation.

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