

States

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States in the history of anthropology

Western political theory, as the precursor to anthropological understandings, expressed divergence regarding law, democracy, human rights, equality, and difference with reference to hypothetically original conditions either as blissful liberty or as cruel and harsh. These theories were formulated in the context of slavery and colonial conquests, but the axiomatic notions of freedom and human rights do not appear to have ever pertained to enslaved, trafficked, or colonized peoples. To the extent that dispossession was assumed in the theorizing, this suggests an explicit or implicit naturalization of racism and colonial-era inequalities.

The common view of states implies government, regulation or social control, taxation or other extraction, stratification, and a monopoly on the use of force or violence. Any definition of states implies not just a description of the thing itself but also a perspective on history, social dynamics, and human diversity. The term “states” is simultaneously analytical, descriptive, and diagnostic. Euro-American academic engagements with states have, since the nineteenth century, revolved around questions of purpose and inclusion: political communities that make and manage diversity (what Durkheim called organic solidarity) are either a basic feature of human sociality ever since the Pleistocene (and possibly before then) or they are a more recent achievement that pertains to some human groups and not others. Each option invites forms of anthropological practice that are incompatible with the implications of the other possibility.

The terminology implies relations, causality, and, often, moral valuations. There is frequent slippage between analytical/descriptive terms and vernacular meanings. The terminological problem with states is akin to what has been noted for notions of nature and culture: not only may the terms imply separate or opposite meanings but their use may also be based on incompatible epistemologies and politics. The most common implication of states, regarding their relations to the people they govern or their others, such as purported nonstate peoples, is that they are variously an achievement (used to measure the success and failure of particular peoples), a blessing (bringing people out of alleged prestate lack), or a curse (particularly that states, unlike other political forms, are uniquely exploitative, oppressive, or corrupting). A fourth perspective is more neutral in terms of moral valuations, instead tending to question the assumed divide between states and nonstate peoples.

In *Ancient Society* (1877), Lewis H. Morgan laid out ethnical periods as a stepladder of progress from “lower savagery” to civilization. His linear evolutionary model offered stages with which to understand human history and the relative advancement

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of individual peoples, by modes of livelihood and the growth stages of ideas about government, family, religion, and property. Morgan defined all Indians of the American continent at the stages of savagery and barbarism. While Spanish chroniclers had viewed Aztec rule as a monarchy comparable to those found in Europe, Morgan denied the resemblance. His understanding refracted one perspective on the racial inequalities of his own society, nationally as much as globally. Directly or indirectly inspired by Morgan, US archaeologists have persisted in defining Native Americans as nonstate peoples.

Edward Burnett Tylor also assumed stages of human social and cultural evolution. For Tylor, early humans and those on the stages of savagery and barbarism would confuse concepts and the things they referred to, and the progress toward civilization was one of increased knowledge and clarity. Tylor's books affirm, strategically at the beginning and end, the belief in progress that was common among his intended readers (Westerners self-conscious about their educational distinction), but the bulk of his text is much more open to the possible equivalence of human types and to the lack of any regular progress in the evolution of human arts, institutions, and social life. While not directly concerned with states, Henry Maine's comparative study of law contended that traditional social organization in India—then a British possession—was patriarchal and that the natives were stuck in oppressive regimes unless they were brought into the modernizing and liberal fold of colonial rule. Modernization, in his frame, was a two-step scheme from status to contract.

What scholars write about states has various implications for how their readers come to an understanding of the world and situate themselves at home via descriptions of peoples of other times and places. One example is Russian proto-ethnographic engagements with the historical situation of the peasantry in different parts of the country. Motivated by a blow to the Russian national self-image after unsuccessful wars, scholars of various persuasions tried to account for the lack of progress in the countryside and for the impact of the state on peasant communities. This was done from rival perspectives by statisticians who assumed that the state was a positive force of social reform and by socialists who saw the state as an oppressive force.

When academic anthropology took professional shape in Europe and the United States, its founders asserted their claims to prominence by refusing the value of the evolutionary speculation of the likes of Morgan, Johann Jakob Bachofen, Maine, Tylor, and James G. Frazer. The shift was also from ethnology to ethnography, which meant a move away from questions of historical reconstruction. But the ethnography was primarily in the tribal zone, among peoples previously marked as primitive. Certain peoples and cultures held considerable interest for British, American, French, German, and other anthropologists, though the hotspots (the places or peoples considered most telling of earlier stages) moved considerably between the 1880s and 1960s between the Australian outback, the Andaman Islands, New Guinea, the Amazon region, the American Northwest and Southwest, and certain parts of Asia and Africa.

The divide between state and nonstate peoples was an important underlying assumption of the ethnographic impulse. Anthropologists went primarily to marginal areas of their home nation's possessions in colonies or to Indian reservations. To a large

degree, the ethnographic focus imported a definition of the research subject—an ethnic group—such that the larger political context was rendered irrelevant and the academic gaze was on the cultural and social dynamics internal to ethnic labels. From that perspective, engagements with colonial or national politics were often predetermined as corrosive of the ethnic realities that anthropologists sought and which established the credentials of scholars as experts in a particular people.

The colonial and national dispossession of certain peoples became an opportunity for the professionalization of anthropology and anthropologists. In the 1930s Reo Fortune achieved infamy in Australia with his critique of the negative impact of colonial rule among Melanesians. But in his 1939 work on the Yao of Guangdong, southern China, he declared the highland ethnic-minority natives both ignorant and superstitious and suggested that anthropology could be very useful for the purpose of China's national integration. The contrast has, in part, to do with the researcher's position within a larger field. In Melanesia professional anthropologists often identified themselves in opposition to colonial administrators, traders, missionaries, beachcombers, and more. But in China Fortune had to work on Chinese terms and his knowledge of peoples, places, and histories was derived from his various Chinese interlocutors. He did not stay long enough to learn any local language, and the onset of World War II brought an end to his short career in China.

Common anthropological notions of the shift from nonstate conditions to states assume that societies were once organized through kinship and that kinship was replaced by territoriality and status differences. One example from British anthropology in the late 1930s is *African Political Systems* (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940), which postulates two kinds of societies: group A societies have centralized authority, administrative machinery, and judicial institutions, and in them differences of wealth, privilege, and status correspond to the distribution of power and authority; group B societies are those without centralized authority, administrative machinery, and judicial institutions, where kinship (notably segmentary lineage systems) regulates political relations.

Edmund Leach (1954) argued against the common expectation that ethnic groups were stable units. He depicted the Kachin peoples of Burma as diverse in language and culture. Politically, they shifted between egalitarian and hierarchic organization and occasionally became Shan—taking on the identity and stratified politics of their lowland, state-based, and Buddhist neighbors. The research was conducted fifty years after British colonial rule had erased numerous Shan kingdoms and reshaped Burmese society in line with expectations of ethnic divides. Leach's book challenged the tribal and functionalist premise of British anthropology, but it also implied that, compared to the lively political contestations among Kachin peoples, there was nothing novel or interesting to say about peoples living in states.

Another angle on social instability is associated with Max Gluckman, in particular that in statelike situations of inequality there are rituals of rebellion where the social order is momentarily turned upside down. But there was a more profound challenge to the state/nonstate binary in A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's (1940) preface to *African Political Systems*, in which he claimed that the state does not exist in the phenomenological world but is an analytical fiction. Radcliffe-Brown's basic claim was aimed against

the notion that the state, independent of the individuals who make up society, has sovereignty and a will and can issue commands. He asserted that there is no power of the state but only the power of individuals who have different roles—as kings, prime ministers, magistrates, policemen, party bosses, or voters. This part of his case is curious, considering his emphasis (in other writings) on the social implications of roles such as those of mother's brother to sister's son and in his studies of joking relationships. The other dimension to Radcliffe-Brown's critique actively challenged the logic of much then current anthropological practice: the division between state and nonstate peoples and the assumed historical or evolutionary trajectory of social change. His argument was that any society is an organization that has some forms of social control and regulation. He explicitly criticized Morgan and Maine regarding the assumed shift from kinship to territory in the organization of society and the expectation that some societies were primitive. Any human society has some territorial structure, one that frames political, social, and economic organization. Political organization concerns the maintenance of social order and sometimes coercion, which emerges as law internally and as war externally, with "regulated vengeance" situated ambiguously between these two.

E. Adamson Hoebel also denied the state/nonstate binary, suggesting that if political organization is universal then so is the state. Similarly, A. M. Hocart (1936) suggested that all societies have ways of taking care of the things that governments are concerned with, that the machinery of government is latent in any social order. Hocart struck out further against academic utilitarianism, insisting that for the archaeological, historical, and ethnographic record, temples were just as utilitarian as irrigation canals in the societies where they were found. Western theory was, however, generally based on the assumption that one was worldly and the other religious and otherworldly.

Robert Lowie (1927) argued squarely against the assumed state/nonstate divide. He maintained that there was considerable continuity in political organization in human societies past and present and that there was in no sense a historical or evolutionary shift from kinship to territory as an organizational frame. All peoples have notions of territory, and locality is and has been a contemporaneous alternative to kinship as a mode of organizing social divisions and relationships. Even apparently anarchic societies contain possibilities for coercive force, but in the long run societies are held together by emotional bonds of belonging.

Lowie did not find stratification to be an essential feature of states and suggested that notions akin to sovereignty could be found even in so-called simple societies. Many ethnographic works simply asserted a binary of kinship and territorial organization and dismissed or ignored the common presence of associations that were not about kinship or territory. For Lowie, Western society was no more complex, advanced, or sophisticated than any other: war, violence, and coercive power could happen anywhere. This deflation of claims to Euro-American superiority or exceptionalism did not assume any particular romance about life among Euro-America's others. Instead, Lowie asserted a basic human equivalence—the features scholars associate with states are found in all societies to some degree—that struck analytically, descriptively, comparatively, and theoretically against any primitivism.

Sociality and evolution

There is some equivalence to Lowie's claims in the much older works of Aristotle, particularly in his claim in *Politics* that sociality is basic to human nature and that all humans form political communities (*polis*, states). Aristotle assumed that states were an ordinary, everyday, and urgent matter of negotiation and wellbeing across difference for mutual benefit. The tension of difference was central to Aristotle's assessment of sustainable communities; homogeneous communities were bound to fail for the lack of a motivation to engage and trade across difference. Aristotle's assessment of various democratic, aristocratic, and tyrannical polities showed them all to be vulnerable to conflict and collapse for internal as much as external reasons. To make his case, Aristotle had assembled about 150 case studies of political communities around the Mediterranean region; he showed considerable instability over time regarding the composition of states—any one of them might shift in organization among democratic, aristocratic, and tyrannical modes.

Another alternative to the common perspective on states comes from Johan Huizinga's (1950) study of play and culture. Huizinga suggested that the state was a subset of play, that it has never been simply a utilitarian institution. As subsets of play, culture and the state may each rest on some fundamental irrationality that can motivate various destructive behaviors. Huizinga defined play as voluntary activity that establishes its own boundaries of time and space and brings with it a particular combination of roles, relations, and rewards that operate as long as the play lasts. Play establishes order and demands conformity; it leads to the formation of a community that may surround itself with secrecy and separate itself from other communities. While it has the appearance of free and voluntary activity, play can take over the lives of the players and can turn destructive whenever the antithetical element turns from playful contest to antagonistic competition. Huizinga did not suggest that the Roman empire or any other state was a game for the shared and equal benefit of all but that it was playlike in its irrationality; the imperial quest for glory and the display of grandeur demanded the compliance and resources of the participants, and its achievements and destruction cannot be understood on utilitarian or rational grounds.

Cultural anthropology has long resisted evolutionary speculation and historical reconstruction, but some recent work by scholars of language and cognition suggests new lines of inquiry regarding sociality and evolution. Human cognition is based in and tuned to intersubjectivity, sharing, collaboration, and the ability to trade perspectives, identities, and/or roles. Some work in this field situates the transition well before the advent of modern humans. Language appears later, as a localization and elaboration on communication done already through pointing and pantomime. The division of labor by gender and age can be viewed as the invention and harnessing of diversity for collaborative ends, and there is every indication that people experimented with plants in terms of forward planning ("delayed results") long before the recognized advent of agriculture. Engagements with the domestication of plants are not simply about food but—judging from ethnographic material about shifting cultivators—also set in motion exchanges among humans, spirits, and fields (soil, plants, rain, sunlight) where households emerged as particular containers for exchange (marriage, ritual,

knowledge) that were then framed by communities (villages) as containers of another level.

States, from this angle, would be any social entity based on different kinds of settlements, where difference is foundational to exchanges that shape a social network. There is some archaeological indication that the emergence of cities took thousands of years subsequent to the formation of agricultural villages, and that no general theory can account for cities, states, or civilizations in different places. Chiefdoms cannot be distinguished from states in the archaeological record and they may never have existed; the term “complex society” now covers for this lack of clear evolutionary steps or divides. The effort to explain cities and states is misplaced to the extent that it assumes that the persistence of hunting and gathering and of small-scale farming do not equally require explanation. There appears to have been a general shift to various kinds of growth and increased complexity after the Pleistocene, and in no sense were these changes taking place only in areas of ostensible complexity such as cities. Rather, the changes were general and pervasive—biological, social, conceptual, ritual, and economic. Recent revisionist archaeology in Mesopotamia undermines any expectation of early states having been despotic and shows that expectations of chiefdoms as precursor to states are unfounded. Social evolution is not the linear and progressive trajectory that was once assumed; instead social organization and differentiation need to be understood in place and over time (Yoffe 2005).

Much archaeology and prehistory has taken ethnic groups and ethnolinguistic families for granted as units of evolution and social life, often further anchored to stages of tool technology. For the archaeological landscape of Southeast Asia, for instance, this has generally assumed the equivalence of racial migrations, and one elaboration is the notion that farming spread in relation to specific language families—with the attendant measure of the uneven accomplishments of different races. But there is no bioarchaeological or other evidence of racial migration waves. Recent research in archaeology and linguistics suggests instead that diversity was a starting point and that people made up difference (in language, specialization in crafts and food sources) in order to have the means for exchange. That is, difference was a way to connect rather than to divide peoples. In the deep-historical (rather than prehistoric) time of 15,000–5,000 years ago, when plant domestication and other elements were entangled with the shaping of livelihood, society, group identity, language, and more, there were signs of the division of labor, expertise, and identity for the purpose of exchanges that created and sustained political diversity and collaboration across the lines of household, community, and group.

This aligns with the suggestions made by Lowie, Radcliffe-Brown, Hocart, Hoebel, and Aristotle to refuse the arbitrary but ethnocentric use of the term “states.” But that perspective could not be recognized while cultural anthropology was singularly concerned with ethnography in the present (or with ethnic groups as the units of history, society, and politics) and when anthropologists refused engagements with historical reconstruction or evolutionary questions. Anthropologist, historian, and linguist Julio Caro Baroja (1963) suggested that cities and the countryside are coeval and that they must be studied in terms of their relations. He drew out an important precursor to anthropological theorizing by showing how (over two millennia) alternative

characterizations of the country and the city rested on moral geographies aligning space, time, and social types. Such models—cities as modern and the countryside as traditional or ancient—overdraw the binary contrast to privilege the position of one over another faction of the urban population, such as the titled elites over the *nouveau riche*. Further, such formulations systemically ignore the divergence of city populations—the assumed contrast between city and country has disguised the extent to which diversity, conflict, and negotiation have been a regular and lasting feature both in urban areas and in the relations between urban and rural areas.

In such writing, cities are of the present or of modernity while the countryside is in or of the past; cities are variously a civilizing or a corrupting or corrosive force and rural areas stand as the bastion of tradition or backwardness. One example of this view is in the works of historian Fernand Braudel, whereby state rule (religious integration, jurisdiction, and social control) and economic transformations flow from the cities to the hinterlands but stop at a certain altitude in the mountains—mountaineers ignore or resist such flows and are instead the bastions of liberty and peasant republics. Alignments of space, time, and social typologies have been common in anthropology, such as in the categorization of hunter-gatherers, tribal peoples, and peasants, where states stand as an outside force of incorporation and stratification.

Even in the absence of a focus on states, much twentieth-century social and cultural anthropology was shaped by state expectations: the primitives, tribal or ethnic groups, and now indigenous peoples have implicitly or explicitly been defined as pre-, non-, or antistate. Here, states imply something akin to or interchangeable with modernity; at least it is as common to see anthropology's others defined as pre-, non-, or antimodern. In US comparative anthropology in the 1960s and 1970s, the state was presented as the culmination of an evolutionary trajectory that consisted of the stages band-tribe-chiefdom-state. This is somewhat ironic considering the self-image of US cultural anthropology as having rejected evolutionary thinking ever since Boas.

The notion of states is descriptive and diagnostic; it imports a definition of historical and social divides that establishes distinctions (state and nonstate peoples, states versus society or the people) that often rest on moral binaries. While one may draw out national differences in US, French, English, and other anthropological perspectives on states past and present, each of these national traditions has expressed debate that generally is premised on alternative understandings of the key concept. What anthropologists and related scholars tell their audiences about states and social life relates to how people may wish to engage with their own worlds and with self-other distinctions at home.

Such diversity is clear, for instance, in the different understandings of the state by US scholars Morton Fried (1967) and Elman Service (1975). Fried suggested that the human journey started in egalitarianism and kinship relations. The trajectory toward state formation was about the growth and entrenchment of inequality; the state was simply an organization for the defense of stratification. Elman Service shared the starting point in kinship relations and relative equality but offered a very different journey and conclusions. To him, evolution and the state were accomplishments that only some were destined to enjoy, and the alleged journey involved a long period of theocracy during chieftoms. Both works can be viewed as alternative readings of the implications of

the evolutionism of Lewis H. Morgan, where each path is an expression of a common human journey from the past to the present.

There is similar divergence in German-language scholarship between the works of Robert Heine-Geldern (1956) and Karl Wittfogel (1957). Heine-Geldern rendered Southeast Asian states as emanating from capital cities as cosmic centers. He saw rulers' regalia as infused with divine powers—a notion that occasionally invited the abuse of power—but his basic point was that cosmology was foundational to the workings of society and that rapid modernization after World War II would be culturally and socially destructive. Wittfogel, in contrast, deduced that despotism was based on the control and management of waterworks for irrigation that was typical of Asian societies. To him, it was imperative to undermine the material basis for despotic rule and other totalitarianism, which would happen only if industry and commerce were independent of government and its bureaucracy.

This issue cannot be settled empirically; some more recent work by anthropologists and related scholars of Southeast Asia suggests how states were cosmic centers of political theater that were ruled by royalty and directed by priests, “and the peasants [provided] the supporting cast, stage crew, and audience” (Geertz 1980, 3). This state form was supposedly undone by the iron cage of modernity brought by Dutch colonial rule and further undone by the formation of the modern Indonesian nation-state. One anthropological critique is that the premodern state's command is more assumed than actual. While the boundaries of Balinese kingdoms kept shifting because of wars and dynastic politics, irrigation worked along independent lines through water temples and their time keeping and rituals. There was a contrasting logic to farming and to rule; state rule or kingship never successfully controlled irrigation, and society was shaped by various forces that often were at odds.

Another perspective on Southeast Asian states in history appears in recent work by James C. Scott (2009), which suggests that states were an agent of subjugation and taxation, much as Wittfogel declares, and that the only alternative lay in escape into the forested highlands. In this scheme, the avenues of freedom were eventually precluded as the machinery of modern states reached more fully to the territorial borders. The assumed demise of the premodern Asian state is thus made to seem lamentable for educated modern Western readers, but the theater state and the despotic state offer very different grounds for the nostalgia or lament—the loss of enchanted politics within the state or the loss of a limitation to the state's reach; in each case modernity is the source of the lamentable loss. Both models are forms of dramatic representation for the benefit of readers, and each may contribute to the formation of virtual communities based on shared understandings of modern selves via far-off (in time and space) places, peoples, and dynamics and based in part on the disbelief in or disagreement with the alternative model.

Modern states

Among US anthropologists there was a general inclination toward collaboration with government agendas during World War II but not much thereafter. The postcolonial era

brought skepticism toward governments and their legacies; it emerged, for instance, in critical examinations of anthropologists' entanglements with colonial agendas. Various calls were made, among American, British, French, and other anthropologists, to shift analytical attention toward the workings of rule and toward acknowledgment of the role of colonialism, slavery, and capitalism in shaping the societies that had been regarded as pristine examples of nonmodern (noncolonial, noncapitalist, etc.) ways. States came to the descriptive and analytical foreground as the vehicles of transformation, subjugation, and violent confrontations.

In French anthropology that was associated with Claude Lévi-Strauss, studies of Amazonian Indians had generally taken an apolitical interest in pristine peoples, but Pierre Clastres then asserted that certain Indian peoples were not expressions of precolonial ways but were instead contemporary manifestations of multistranded efforts to avoid the trappings of inequality. Their societies had mechanisms that not only resisted entanglements with states but also guarded against the emergence of internal social differentiation such as that manifest in chiefs. To the extent that this ethnological revision was a sign of the times, it can be situated in the late 1960s period after French police burst onto university campuses in Paris to suppress anticolonial, antiwar, and other student activism. Amazonian Indians emerged as a means to comprehend politics, identity, and the state at a historically specific moment both at home and away.

There is a US equivalent in Clifford Geertz's (1972) study of cockfights in Bali. This model for the interpretation of cultures—since such activities distilled the experience of being Balinese—rests on an iconic contrast between the state and the people/village or between politics and culture. As the local villagers were getting started on their activity, the police raided the event and sought to arrest and fine the perpetrators. The resonance of this raid as a manifestation of the state lies squarely in the definition associated with Max Weber, that the monopoly on the use of force is diagnostic of states. But in Geertz's article, the raid also served to create bonds of fellowship between the anthropologists and the villagers through their shared distance from and opposition to the state as an oppressive force. Military and police suppression of student activism on US campuses had shattered any notions of academic immunity from police brutality and social conflict. Finding people in faraway places with whom to identify (through writing and reading) in opposition to the brutal state became immediately compelling at the same time as the identification of states with brutal oppression was instantly recognizable.

Another state/antistate binary emerged with the so-called "Thailand controversy," which centered on allegations that at the time of the Vietnam War US anthropologists had aided and abetted US-supported counterinsurgency in Thailand. These allegations live on, forty years later, most recently in a contrast between the choices made by two US anthropologists at the time: one, in Thailand, gave up a research grant and refused to cooperate with the CIA (implicitly suggesting that everyone else did), and the other in Vietnam who was a long-term consultant to US interests (Price 2011). The case suggests that anthropologists make a choice in their work—to side with or to oppose the (oppressive) state. The case regarding researchers in Thailand has been debated, as it is based on insinuation and fear of contamination and not on any clear evidence of

wrongdoing, but it appears to thrive on the wish for particular kinds of identification against the inherently harmful state.

The US sense of a moral binary—that states are oppressive or bad and that anthropologists should refuse to collaborate with them—may draw on specifically US experiences and on the societal isolation of much US academic work. In contrast, German anthropologist Maren Tomforde (2011), who has done research on the German military, maintains that the effort to dissociate anthropologist from government and military is not a constructive move. She writes from the perspective of having inherited the legacy of German and Austrian anthropology which during World War II was wielded in support of the agendas of the Nazi regime. There is little or nothing to be gained by claiming the moral high ground of dissociation from the state and military; instead, it is important to have inside knowledge and a position from which to critique practices that are destructive or damaging to society at home or away. But many of Tomforde's German anthropological colleagues want there to be an absolute divide between anthropology and the military. Israeli anthropologist Eyal Ben-Ari (2011) suggests that ethnographic work enabled by militaries in various parts of the world has offered devastating critical analyses of internal military dynamics and their social consequences, rather than simply manifesting the co-optation of anthropology by the forces of oppression.

There is no agreement on the modern state within anthropology, but most of the recent productivity in this field has come from crossings with political science, history, and philosophy in engagements with colonial states, postcolonial states, and nation-states. Political scientist Benedict Anderson (1983) reached a wide audience with the argument that the modern nation-state is uniquely imagined as limited and sovereign and as a community of horizontal comradeship—in ways that premodern states were not. Anderson's interdisciplinary reach has stimulated much work on the role of print and other media, vernacular languages, and cultural dimensions to nationalism. His emphasis on the imagination offers an alternative to the more common expectation of invention and ideological manipulation, but it is also notable for drawing on anthropologists who viewed culture as shared and as an element of integration rather than as diverse, unstable, and contested.

One common alternative to Anderson's view is to identify and unmask the workings of the state—its mechanisms of stratification, exploitation, and ideological manipulation. This focus is particularly pronounced in studies of museums, ritual, and a range of other social dynamics that supposedly mute any potential contestation through imagery that serves the interest of a ruling group. Such work contributes to the image of states as vehicles of hegemony, inequality, and obfuscation and rests on expectations of clear binary divides between state and society or state and the people as embodying opposite agendas.

Perhaps the clearest proponent of this view is political scientist James C. Scott (1998), who shows how the ideologies of modern states institute mechanisms of simplification that make people, nature, and communities more easily legible for rule, extraction, and the suppression of diversity and dissent. In a series of influential books, Scott has laid out historical trajectories and comparative vistas wherein state rule, sometimes joined with capitalist transformations, has negatively affected society or the people. Some of his cases are specifically concerned with peasants, others with society more generally;

in a recent book he brackets the state by examining the ways in which certain peoples resisted incorporation through social, agricultural, linguistic, and religious means. Scott's works share a focus on the state as an agent of domination, but they vary in the framing and perspective—from cities, forest land, peasant villages, literature, and the nonstate margins. His focus on domination explores various alternatives—resistance, rebellion, noncompliance, and evasion, all of which evoke the impossibility of political negotiation for any mutual benefit. Such knowledge appears to invite readers' identification with "the people" and against "the state," to the extent that the works offer credible scenarios wherein readers come to a sense of themselves in the world of history.

French philosopher Michel Foucault wrote against any conviction that states were a clear and bounded object of social or political life and instead shifted attention to the kinds of discourses, discursive regimes, epistemes, and practices that shaped social life. Where there is power there is resistance, he suggested, and he called attention to the elements of disciplinary regimes that shaped social life at historically specific moments. In his analytical frame, states and power do not have distinct locations but instead emerge out of relational configurations that point several ways at once. Foucault's work, much as that of Pierre Clastres, was a reaction to particular trends in French academic life as much as to the political turmoil of the 1960s, but there is considerable indication that English translations of his work express what his English-language audience expects regarding power, discipline, and states. His emphasis on governmentality appears to have been aimed against French colleagues' (primarily Marxist) convictions regarding the location and character of power and state rule, but it has become a gloss for mechanisms of inequality, ideological manipulation, and certain tendencies that supposedly inhere in states as well as in so-called nongovernmental organizations.

The works of Foucault have inspired various studies of how social institutions and dynamics bring about and normalize particular agendas of subjection and subject formation. Ideas of biopower and biopolitics in particular have oriented certain elaborations of Foucault's work regarding the disciplining of bodies and the state's more general role in managing the productive forces of society. One extension and alternative has come from Giorgio Agamben's (1998) focus on how the logic of sovereign power rests on legal notions of exception and exclusion—that certain people may be killed but not sacrificed. Agamben calls attention to a distinction that he marks as that between the People and the people, and, considering the Holocaust during World War II, he suggests that the Jews are a prime example of the people that were excluded by a modern state in a particularly extreme and deadly fashion. Independent of Agamben's work and more ethnographically based, Bruce Kapferer (1988) explored the political logics of the Sri Lankan and Australian states, one based on notions of Buddhist hierarchy and the other on liberal egalitarianism, to show that each has contained particular dynamics of exclusion that are sometimes expressed in very violent ways but also in such a way that mainstream society may not sense any cause for alarm.

There are innumerable cases of state forces being wielded to violent ends, against internal as much as external groups, but the implications are a matter of debate—whether such episodes express the character of states in particular or whether they are events that may take place in any society. Any attempt to sort out the issue

comes down to analytical and theoretical distinctions, whether or not states and statelike forms are common to all human societies or whether society and state are distinct phenomena. A related issue concerns the dynamics of marginalization, which much scholarship presents as emblematic of the position of ethnic minority and lower-class populations within modern states. It is debatable whether marginalization is an inherent attribute of state formation or of modernity, but numerous studies suggest such conclusion. Perhaps the strongest challenge to such analytical expectations is a recent study of a Native American group, the Florida Seminoles, and their engagements with state power, sovereignty, and capital. A recent study of the Seminoles' successful gaming venture counters numerous analytical expectations regarding modernity, capital, corporatization, and traditional identity. Notably, the study suggests that matters of sovereignty, at least for the Seminoles, are not about autonomy and separatism but about interdependence, whereby they convert the benefits of casinos and a corporation into social and cultural wellbeing (Cattelino 2008).

States are a matter of legislation, control, regulation, and the use of force, but it is a philosophical question whether this demarcates the state as a bounded social entity and force or if it situates particular social elements within always larger fields that may equally play up other dimensions of life. Modern nation-states, as well as premodern states, share with play the demarcation of a field within which certain roles, relations, and rewards become possible and sometimes compelling. The distinction between the state and the people or the state and society has implications analogous to that of gender difference—it may imply binaries of inherent inequalities or it may be a field of difference and negotiation that must be known in particular settings and with a sense of possible equivalences. Demarcating and defining states comes down to how anthropologists draw the boundaries of humanity—these are matters of inclusion and exclusion that have a range of implication that cannot be settled empirically.

Much anthropological work is anchored to binary models where states appear through contrast with society and often at its margins. It is rarer to see analytical and descriptive engagements with states that tease out collaboration and conflicts of interest between states, industry, and a diversity of communities (or states, regions, and communities), where each level or scale is diverse and differentiated and where the binary contrast that frames states as objects of knowledge may lose analytical salience. Analytical triangulations (instead of binaries) may show alternative manifestations of what states are or mean. There are productive accounts of how people construct their identities as citizens through particular notions or images of the state (Sharma and Gupta 2006) and of how state regimes are enacted through the imagination of peoples and the monitoring of borders (Poole and Das 2004). But insufficient attention has been paid to how anthropologists construct their own or their readers' identities through notions of states—as imagined, as neoliberal, as challenged by globalization, or as expressions of sovereignty, biopower, or modernity.

SEE ALSO: Activism; Biopower; Censorship; Chiefs and Chiefdoms; Citizenship; Civil Society; Colonialism and the Museum; Crime; Cultural Politics; Cultural Survival; Desai, Akshay Ramanlal (1915–94); Detention; Disaster Relief and Management;

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (1902–73); Foucault, Michel (1926–84); Geertz, Clifford (1926–2006); Global Governance; Gluckman, Max (1911–75); Governance; Indigeneity in Anthropology; Informal Sector; Legal Pluralism; Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1908–2009); Militarized Anthropology, Controversy and Resistance to; Mode of Production; Nationalism; Neoliberalism; Nongovernmental Organizations; Political Anthropology; Politics of Recognition; Power, Anthropological Approaches to; Privatization; Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. (1881–1955); Redistribution; Representation, Politics of; Roads; Secularization and Secularism; Sovereignty; States: Formation; States: Police Powers; Transnational and Multinational Corporations; Urbanism; Vigilantism

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