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Clifford Geertz

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SIDNEY W. MINTZ LECTURE FOR 2003

What Is a State If It Is Not a Sovereign?

Reflections on Politics in Complicated Places[1]

by Clifford Geertz

The emergence of the new states of Asia and Africa after the decolonization revolutions of the 1950s and 1960s has resulted in a renewed concern with the problems of government in multiethnic, multireligious, and multilinguistic countries. I discuss the issues thus produced, including the viability of states that are not underpinned by a compact and sovereign nation, and the role anthropology can play in clarifying such issues.

Clifford Geertz is Professor Emeritus of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton (Princeton, NJ 08540, U.S.A. [geertz@ias.edu]). Born in 1926, he was educated at Antioch College (A.B., 1950) and at Harvard University (Ph.D., 1956). He taught at Harvard, the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Chicago before joining the Institute in 1970 and has done fieldwork in Java, Bali, the Celebes, Sumatra, and Morocco. Among his publications are *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), *Local Knowledge* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), *Works and Lives* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), *After the Fact* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), and *Available Light* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). The present paper was submitted 24 xi 03 and accepted 24 ii 04.

What Sidney Mintz and I have in common, besides a certain gift for hanging around and a useful lack of gravity, is the experience of a deep-going disciplinary transformation, a professional change of mind, which, to have a name for it, I will call "anthropology's journey into history." Way back in the Boasian Paleolithic, the fact-gathering, trait-hunting horizon in which we both were formed and which, however transfigured and covered over, marks us still, and irrevocably, anthropology was largely tribe-and-island-focused, concerned with out-of-the-way peoples in out-of-the-way places or with the silent relics of deep time. Here and there, there was some concern with the modern and the developed—Hortense Powdermaker did Hollywood, Lloyd Warner Newburyport—but mainly to demonstrate that what served for the remote parochial served as well for the near-to-hand. It was only after World War II, when the relations between Euro-America and what came to be called the Third World changed, and changed dramatically, that deep-going revisions in what we thought we ought to be doing and how we thought we ought to be doing it began to appear.

Sidney encountered this reconstruction of aim, method, and self-definition at Columbia via Julian Steward, I at Harvard via Clyde Kluckhohn, both of them Americanists, both of them dissatisfied with ethnographic particularism, both of them given to large endeavors. The People of Puerto Rico Project and the Modjokuto Project, the one organized in the late forties, (Steward et al. 1956), the other in the early fifties (Geertz 1960), were, if not the first, certainly among the first team studies of differentiated societies enclosed in multiplex civilizations—semiliterate, semi-citied, semi-industrial, with peasants and plantations, clerics and curers, capitals and provinces, classes and masses, complicated places.

Well, as always: in for a penny, in for a pound. What started out as a mere adjustment of established procedures to novel problems—a more self-conscious ethnography for more self-conscious societies—turned out to project us and the profession generally into the midst of some of the profounder convulsions of the second half of the twentieth century. Decolonization, nation building, the cold war, *tiers-mondisme*, globalization, the new world disorder—anthropologists found themselves no longer lurking, isolated and barely noticed, along the farther edges of world history. They were caught up and set adrift in its central currents, with, as a matter of fact, rather little to guide them beyond a commitment to seeing things up-close and personally—locally and in fine detail.

How well we have managed there, floundering about in the swirl of things, is not for me to say. Incidental participants in great transformations—which is what I think this has been and what Sidney and I have been—are, like Pierre at Borodino, not necessarily the best observers of what overall is happening, why it is happening, and what it portends. But we are, as he was, at least useful as witnesses to the *in medias res* experience of it all, and, for my own part (I will stop ventriloquizing

1. This paper was delivered as the tenth annual Sidney W. Mintz Lecture in Anthropology on November 12, 2003, at Johns Hopkins University.

Sidney from here on in), I can only say that it has been, this happenstance journey into contemporary history, more than a little discomposing. Right after the war, when those team projects to Java and the Caribbean were launched, when "area studies"—South and Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Near and Middle East—appeared and comparativism boomed, and when the "new (or 'developing,' or 'emerging') nations" became a recognized field of study, we thought ourselves engaged with a massive forward surge—Third World nationalism, decolonization, democratization, economic takeoff, modernization, the large, impatient dreams of Bandung. But, all too quickly, things turned sour and disappointing: ethnic upheavals, failed states, kleptocracy, stagnation, sacrificial terror, and madding crowds; Amin and Mobuto, Marcos and Suharto, Khomeini and Saddam; Ruanda-Burundi, the mosque at Ayodhya, the killing fields of (my *terrain*) eastern Java. The confidence and the optimism, to say nothing of the moral certainty, with which we moved into those complicated places—in my case, mainly Indonesia and Morocco—now seem more than a bit premature (for a review of this period see Geertz 2002).

What seems rather clearer now, at least to me, than it did then is that social change will not be hurried and it will not be tamed, and that so far as state formation (my focus here) is concerned, whatever has already happened in supposedly better-organized places is less prologue than chapters in a different sort of story not to be reenacted. Whatever directions what is called (in my view, miscalled) "nation building" may take in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, or Latin America, a mere retracing without the wanderings, the divisions, the breakdowns, and the bloodshed of earlier cases—England, France, or Germany, Russia, the United States, or Japan—is not in the cards, nor is the end in compact and comprehensive political identities, hypostatized peoples. History not only does not repeat itself, it does not purge itself, normalize itself, or straighten its course either. The three centuries of struggle and upheaval that it took for Europe to get from the late medieval checkerboard of Westphalia to the marching nationalities of World War II will almost certainly be more than matched both for surprise and originality and for frustration by the course of things in—what should we call them now? the emerging forces? the postcolonials? the awkward adolescents? the developing world?—in the decades and tens of decades ahead. Neither the process nor its stages will be more than faintly, at times parodically reminiscent (think of "The United Arab Republic," "Guided Democracy," "The Central African Empire," or "The Burmese Road to Socialism").

At the very least, this suggests that serious rethinking is called for on the part of those of us—not only anthropologists but political scientists, historians, economists, sociologists, psychologists, journalists—self-appointed or professionally charged with determining what in fact is going on in these complicated places, where it is that things seem to be tending, and how, in the event, it may all come out. In particular, it suggests that the assemblage of large ideas, casually inherited from Western philosophy and political theory, upon which we have tended to rely for initial positioning and analytical guidance is due for reexamination and reconsideration, critique, and overhaul.

I tried to launch, for myself anyway, such a reexamination in a series of lectures I gave, nearly a decade ago now, at the Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen in Vienna, now published as "The World in Pieces" in my *Available Light* (2000). There, after noting the dissolution of world-encompassing, world-dividing political blocs following the fall of the Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the end of the cold war in late eighties and early nineties, I tried (p. 221) to take a new look at some of

> the great integrative, totalizing concepts we have so long been accustomed to using in organizing our ideas about world politics, and particularly about similarity and difference among peoples, societies, states, and cultures: concepts like [all these terms in the heaviest of shudder quotes] "tradition," "identity," "religion," "ideology," "values," "nation," indeed even "culture," "society," "state," or "people" themselves. . . . Some general notions, new or reconditioned, must be constructed if we are to penetrate the dazzle of the new heterogeneity and say something useful about its forms and future.

Of these large, directive ideas I attended there mainly to two: that of "[a] nation," considered as, to quote the *OED*, "an extensive aggregate of persons, so closely associated with each other by common descent, language, or history, as to form a distinct race or people, usually organized as a separate political state and occupying a definite territory," and that of "[a] culture," considered as a bounded, coherent, more or less continuous structure of common sentiments and understandings—a form of life, a way, as we might say now, of being in the world. In an essay called "What Is a Country If It Is Not a Nation?" and in another called "What Is a Culture If It Is Not a Consensus?" I tried to show how poorly almost all of the "new states" and a fair number of the old as well, including our own, fit such characterizations, how increasingly difficult it is these days to find culturally solidary entities functioning as organized and autonomous (the techno-word is "sovereign") political communities: Norway, maybe, but there are Pakistanis there now; Samoa, I suppose, if you occlude the Euronesians. What I didn't do, though I originally intended to, was to go on to examine that other master category of the modern understanding so closely linked to these as to be virtually interfused with them—namely, "[the] state."

"The state," particularly the postcolonial state—Kinshasa, Abuja, Rabat, New Delhi, Islamabad, Yangon, Jakarta, Manila (some of them seem, indeed, hardly to reach beyond their sprawling capitals, and their names have a habit of changing)—has recently, of course, been the subject of a great deal of rather uncertain discussion as the enormous variety of its forms and expressions, the multiplicity of the regimes it houses, and the politics it

supports have become apparent. There is talk of "failed states," "rogue states," "super-states," "quasi-states," "contest states," and "micro-states," of "tribes with flags," "imagined communities," and "regimes of unreality." China is a civilization trying to be a state, Saudi Arabia is a family business disguised as a state, Israel is a faith inscribed in a state—and who knows what Moldova is? But by far the bulk of the discussion, confused and anxious and inconclusive, has been directed toward the future of the predominant political form of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century West, "the nation-state." Is it going away? Changing form? Restrengthening? Indispensable? Due for a comeback? What can it mean in countries with dozens of languages, religions, races, localities, ethnicities, custom communities? Subcontinents like India? Archipelagos like Indonesia? "Mere geographical expressions" (as one of its first premiers once called it) like Nigeria?

The standard characterization of a "state" as (in Max Weber's formulation) a vested authority possessing a monopoly of legitimate violence in a territory and that of a "nation" as (in Ernest Renan's) the spiritual fusion of a collection of particulate *ethnē* into a *grande solidarité*, a common and transcending *conscience morale*, seem increasingly difficult of application to such tangled conglomerations as these, where not only is legitimacy dispersed and contested but an enormous catalogue of hybridized and shape-shifting parochialist groups—ethnic, religious, linguistic, racial, regional, ideo-primordial—rub up against one another in almost continuous friction and "the narcissism of small differences" (to use again Freud's overused phrase) seems the major driving force of political struggle. Compacted sovereignty, centered and inclusive, is hard to locate and rather looks like remaining so.

In slightly more than 40 years, Nigeria, which is said to have 400–500 "minorities" (and no true "majority"), a number of them running across its geographically indistinct, made-in-Britain borders, has gone from being a competitive confederation of three ethnically and religiously marked regional substates to being an invertebrate republic of first 12, then 19, then 30, and now 36 federal states via a secessionist civil war, an oscillation between parliamentary, military, and presidential regimes, the removal of its capital from its largest city in the southeast of the country to a jerry-built federal district constructed in the dead and backwoods middle, the establishment of nine official languages (including English), and the institution of Islamic law in about a third of the country, a country which is headed, at the moment, by a born-again Christian.

India started out in 1947, after the vast communal convulsion that was Partition, with a secularist central government under the cosmopolitan and intensely Anglicized Fabian socialist Jawaharlal Nehru and a countrywide Congress Party of local bosses trying to hold the vital center against a vast catalogue of regional, religious, linguistic, and caste-based provincialisms in the 25 states, 6 union territories, and 476 districts of what someone, perhaps it was J. K. Galbraith, has called "the world's greatest functioning anarchy." Since then, it has advanced—if that is the word—via the assassination of Indira Gandhi by Sikh militants after her intrusion into the Golden Temple, that of Rajiv Gandhi by Tamil ones after his intervention in the Sri Lankan communal war, and the long, lumbering collapse of the Congress into jobbery and faction (now, perhaps, beginning to be reversed) to the rise of a contrived and synthetic but locally accented political Hinduism, the resurgence of vernacular, ethnocratic regionalism, and the intensification of purist and populist—Bombay-to-Mumbai—anticosmopolitanism.

And Indonesia, my field of operations for about a half-century, has experienced, during its period of independence (also about a half-century), Sukarno's diffuse and declamatory nationalism, built for the most part out of a Jacobin reading of Javanese history, a regional civil war structured along cold war lines, a vast popular bloodletting along religio-political lines, General Suharto's militarized and even more Javanist version of Sukarno's determined integralism, and then, as parliamentary politics returned, the final, bloody failure of the attempt to annex Eastern Timor and a wave of regional, religious, and ethnic clashes throughout the so-called Outer Islands—Islamism in Aceh, sectarian killing in Kalimantan, the Celebes, and Ambon, and racially based separatist agitation in Western New Guinea. "Un plébiscite de tous les jours"—to quote Renan's famous outburst again—in which "tous [les] disonances de détaille disparaisse dans l'ensemble" seems quite out of reach.

That historians, political scientists, philosophers, and sociologists focused on the modern West should experience difficulty in imagining a workable and comprehensive, let alone an effective, state that is not the expression of a proper nation—sovereign, single, and self-aware—is perhaps not entirely surprising, given that, for at least the past hundred years, since the dissolution of the old empires into their component peoples, that is the sort of thing they have had, for the most part, to deal with—France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Greece, Sweden, Ireland, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Turkey, Egypt. But it is distinctly surprising that anthropologists, who have mostly involved themselves with less sorted-out polities in less shaped-up places, should be similarly bewitched. With our ingrained obsession with detail and difference, with the-raw-and-the-cooked and matter-out-of-place, one might expect that we would seek to discover in the irregularities and divisions that we find on the ground the variousness of the forms that really existent statehood can and does nowadays take. But most of the work we have carried out since beginning our journey into history—normatively driven work on "development," "modernization," or "nation building" (all these things, again, in shudder quotes), on "hegemony" "modular nationalism," "*Herrschaft*," "*capital étatique*," "dependency," or "postcoloniality"—has been directed toward searching through the scramble and commotion that the new states present for the faint, premonitory signs of a movement toward (or a falling away from) a more recognizable and regular, standardized shape: the homoge-

neous color on the disjunctive map, the well-formed self in the well-pictured self-rule.

For this to change (and, as we shall see, it is finally beginning a bit to do so), there must be, it seems to me, a shift away from looking at the state first and foremost as a leviathan machine, a set-apart sphere of command and decision, to looking at it against the background of the sort of society in which it is embedded—the confusion that surrounds it, the confusion it confronts, the confusion it causes, the confusion it responds to. Less Hobbes, more Machiavelli; less the imposition of sovereign monopoly, more the cultivation of the higher expediency; less the exercise of abstract will, more the pursuit of visible advantage.

To make all this a bit less cryptic and rhetorically expressed, let me turn briefly to the two cases that, as I have mentioned, I know at first hand and out of whose oblique and partial comparability, the general samenesses connecting their specific differences, I have made, over the years, a small but rewarding ethnographical living: the Republic of Indonesia and the Kingdom of Morocco. The one is a massive (212 million people now, 78 million when first I got there), splayed out (6,000 inhabited islands scattered across 5 million square kilometers of open sea), and tangled conglomeration: 15 significant ethnic groups, hundreds of small ones; 300, 400, or 500 languages, some of them unrecorded; Muslims, Catholics, Protestants, Hindus, "animists"; a Chinese commercial minority, a Papuan racial one, indigenized Arabs, in-migrant Indians. The other, a bit more than a tenth the size (30 million people, up from 12 million upon my arrival; 400,000 square kilometers), is a compact, readily traversed, unusually uncompartmentalized place—wall-to-wall Muslim, now that the Jews are gone; essentially Arabophone, now that the Berbers are bilingual; domestically ordered into indefinite, shifting, and catch-as-catch-can local alliances. Set in quite different sorts of regional neighborhoods (broken and particulate Southeast Asia, fluid and continuous North Africa), precipitate from different sorts of colonial experience (Dutch, mercantile, and long; French, technocratic, and short) and faced with different sorts of interior threats (peripheral secession and central delegitimization), they differ also, not surprisingly, in their political styles—the way statehood is conceived, authority is deployed, and dissension is counteracted.

To begin with Indonesia, let me give an outline account—sweeping, simplistic, and openly tendentious—of how things there have come to their present pass: one in which the continuing existence of the country as a political unit, an imperative government in an encompassing state, has increasingly come into serious question. The first five decades of self-rule (the new state was instituted at the end of 1949) have seen one after another impassioned and determined ideological thrust—Nationalist, Communist, Praetorian, Islamist—attempting to fasten a unique and definite identity upon the country, each of which has failed, none of which (except perhaps, in its original form, the Communist) has gone away, and all of which have brought on an even stronger sense of difference and disunion. Whatever the effort to construct a proper, spiritually pulled-together nation-state may have come to elsewhere, here it has been, to this point anyway, an elusive, spasmodic, disruptive project.

The Indonesian independence movement essentially got going, in general imitation of Mazzinian models, in the twenties and thirties of the last century. Under the theatrical leadership of Sukarno, a speaking subaltern if there ever was one (though he had studied engineering for a while in the Indies, he was a conspirator, agitator, and all-purpose subversive virtually from birth), it was a radically unitistic movement in a radically pluralistic situation—a characterization (or a fact) that applies, as I say, to the whole course of the republic's political history. During the nineteen-fifties and early sixties, this attempt to provide a conceptual foundation for an integral nationhood (which involved an odd and eclectic, hodgepodge combination of Indo-Javanese symbolism, European civism, and a Maoist sort of peasant populism) increasingly faltered under the combined pressures of factional conflict, the induced hostilities of the cold war, and the uneven impact of economic change across the different regions of the archipelago.

In 1958, after the first general election demonstrated how incorrigibly divided the country really was (Nationalists, Islamists, and Communists split the vote more or less evenly), open rebellion, driven by vague ideas of devolution and federalism, broke out in Sumatra and Sulawesi. Sukarno put it down with the assistance of the army (or part of it: it was itself divided) and suspended parliamentary government in favor of a Javanese form of *Gleichschaltung* that he called, with his characteristic inventiveness, "NASAKOM" (Nationalism, Religion, Communism). By 1965 Java, the most populous and most developed of the islands (60% of the country's population, 40% of its gross domestic product, 7% of its area) was so intensely beset by culturally inflected partisan conflict that, after a palace-guard coup misfired in Jakarta, it was caught up in an enormous hand-to-hand bloodbath. Hundreds of thousands (some say a million) died, mostly in a three-month series of convulsive one-night massacres; thousands more were exiled or incarcerated, and a compact and authoritarian government, General Suharto's so-called New Order, took power in Jakarta. But, though Suharto turned away from Sukarno's hapless populism toward disciplinary rigorism and big-push development, he continued and even intensified the sort of synthetic and symbolic, culturally eclectic coordination Sukarno had put in place. And when he, in turn, finally fell after 35 years of impassive, astringent rule, ethnic, regional, and religious violence—some of it now explicitly separatist in nature, a lot of it anti-Javanese, and much of it murderous—flared up again over a large part of the country.

The example of this renewed disaccordance that is best known to the world at large is, of course, the brutal liberation of East Timor. The Timor case was more a matter of a failed annexation than a proper separation. (It was a former mini-colony of the Portuguese that the Indonesian army, more or less on its own, had invaded after

the fall of Salazar, held under martial law for a quarter of a century, and then lost control of in the confusion and disarray following Suharto's sudden departure.) But it nonetheless raised the general question of the substantial foundations of the Indonesian state, of its reach, its prerogatives, and its cultural complexion, all over again. At both ends of the archipelago—in Aceh in northern Sumatra, a center of Islamist discontent since colonial times and a reluctant adherent to the Java-centric republic in the first place, and in West New Guinea, called Irian, a Melanesian outlier whose political incorporation into the republic was indefinite, late, arbitrary, and contested—explicitly separatist rebellions broke out and were countered and punished by the military but only half-contained.

In between, in Kalimantan, Sulawesi, the Moluccas, and the Lesser Sundas, a sequence of local explosions, rather like the 1965 massacres in their terrible brevity, erupted, smoldered, and then erupted again, fueled by the return of competitive, who gets what, when, where, and how politics. And, with Yugoslavia dissolving in the daily press and Sri Lanka seemingly coming apart at the seams, the excited headlines began to appear at home and abroad: "PARADISE LOST IN ERUPTION OF HATRED," "THE BALKANIZATION OF INDONESIA MAY BE FAR FROM HYPOTHESIS," "INDONESIA'S YEAR OF LIVING CHAOTICALLY," "AMBON [where a Muslim-Christian pocket war broke out] MAY BE FATAL FOR INDONESIA," "IS INDONESIA BREAKING DOWN?"[2] Even its newly elected president, a modernist Muslim with a Javanese accent, predicted that the country would fall apart if he was deposed.

He was, and it didn't. (Sukarno's daughter, as impassive a figure as he was flamboyant but just as impervious and just as Javanese, succeeded him and is preparing to run for a second term.) But just how and why it didn't and hasn't—why even in the face of this sort of dispersed, low-intensity civil war it lumbers compositely on, an elephant, as the Indonesians themselves say, with beriberi—is very far from clear and only, now that the nation-state illusion is finally coming into question, just starting to be researched. Perhaps its very complexity, the intricate crosscutting of its discrepant components, makes it difficult to find clear lines of difference along which to separate its parts, the natural joints at which to dismember it. Perhaps the practiced capacity of local groups to work out and make work practical arrangements, good enough and fair enough, holds things, more or less and for the moment, together. The military attentions of Jakarta, ruthless and unpredictable, the diffuse and fading afterglow of the anticolonial struggle and the revolution, and the mere inertia of the established familiar as well as the imaginative deal making of a grasping elite all doubtless play a part. What is clear is that, whatever it is that keeps things together and going, to date anyway, it is not "un plébicite de tous les jours."

2. Headlines respectively from the Sydney *Morning Herald*, March 23, 1999; *Agence France Presse*, February 28, 1999; the *Toronto Star*, March 14, 1999; the *Singapore Straits Times*, March 13, 1999; and the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 18, 1999.

In Morocco—to turn to it now, again in a schematic and peremptory, implicitly comparative manner—neither the dispersion of nationhood nor the collision of subsocieties is the problem. The country is centered enough (all too centered, some would say), and what cultural cleavages there are are, relatively speaking (relatively speaking, especially to Indonesia), marginal, dormant, diffuse, or fading. The problem is that the place is defined neither by its edges, which as a matter of fact are both faint and porous and at points contested, nor by its cultural specificity, which hardly sets it off from the other new-state countries around it (Mauritania, Algeria, and the rest of the Arab West Maghreb), nor yet again by a massive and integralist, Morocco-for-the-Moroccans, nationalist movement, which never really developed here beyond its embryonic stages. It is defined by the presence at its center and apex of a peculiar, and peculiarly ambiguous, institution, at once archaic, traditional, perseverant, and thoroughly remodeled: the Alawite monarchy.

The peculiarity of the monarchy ("Alawi" is the name of the dynasty that inhabits it) is not just that it exists but that, through the grand upheavals and transformations—modernization, political mobilization, decolonization, collective self-assertion, administrative rationalization, popular government—that have marked the so-called Third World Revolution in Asia, Africa, and, in a rather different way, Latin America, it persists. There are monarchies elsewhere in the Third World, if we can still call it that. (Someone has recently suggested "the two-thirds world.") But they are either the products of late-colonial manipulations, as in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf, or ceremonial hangovers of a reclusive past like Thailand, Bhutan, and Tonga. The Moroccan monarchy, however, is neither a pretense nor a relic. It is both formally sovereign and practically powerful, the first (at least most of the time) among unequals in a complex and ever-shifting field of personalized, situational, *sotto voce* power. Just about every book that has been written on the political life of *al-mamlakah al-maghrebia* (as the country, updated from a Protectorate, now officially calls itself)—*The Commander of the Faithful* (Waterbury 1970), *Le Fellah Marocain: Defenseur du Trône* (Leveau 1976), *Master and Disciple* (Hammoudi 1997), *Sacred Performances* (Combs-Schilling 1989)—has focused on this singular office and the hardly less singular personalities who have, since the coming of independence in 1956, filled it. And they have all asked essentially the same question: What is it that sustains it and its occupants in a world of elections, parliaments, ideologies, corporations, newspapers, and political parties? What is a Medici prince doing in a century like this?

The Moroccan monarchy, in one form or another, is, of course, a very old institution. Tribalistic versions of it run back to well before the great Berber dynasties invaded Andalusia in the eleventh century, and the Alawites, as such, appeared out of the dried rivers and oases

of the pre-Sahara, claiming direct descent from the Prophet, in the middle of the seventeenth century—contemporaries of the Sun King, to whose daughter one of them proposed, unsuccessfully, to marry his son. But in another, much more pertinent sense it is a very young, brand-new one, emerging suddenly and surprisingly, more or less accidentally, at the center of an ad hoc, thrown-together government in the final, confusing days of the crumbling Protectorate. Unlike the nationalist movement that arose in the Dutch East Indies after two-and-a-half centuries of stock-company rule, nationalism in colonial Morocco (a regime that lasted, it should be remembered, only about three or four decades, and some of that as an everyone-comes-to-Rick's Vichy false front) was less a popular upsurge than a cloud of local *notables*—Sufi sheikhs, religious scholars, bazaaris, judges, soldiers, trade unionists, schoolteachers, mountain lords, desert anchorites, and tribal chieftains—desperately maneuvering for place in an abruptly volatilized, thoroughly disarranged political situation. Here there was no Sukarno inventing the masses, exciting them, and then driving them forward. The man who tried hardest to become one, the reform Islamist Allal al-Fassi, lacked both the luck and the brazenness, to say nothing of the appeal, to propel himself to power, and his main rivals, the secular intellectuals, were much too *rive gauche* to get their act together or to render it plausible to the fellah in the street.

As unrest rose and things grew perilous, the French panicked and exiled the royal family to Corsica and Madagascar *pour encourager les autres*. Then, when, in the shadow of the Algerian war, things got completely out of hand a couple of years later, they panicked again and brought them back, hoping for legitimacy. In so doing they transformed the king, Muhammad V, from a subservient, rather callow cardboard figure, indistinct, middle-aged, and virtually forgotten, into a national and—for the moment at least—a nationalist hero. Projected into the center of the cloud of competing somebodies, he brought the throne back less as a transcending, Grand Turk authority, which it had never in any case been, than as a consequent player, a largest-bear-in-the-garden *intrigant.* What he had recovered, or what had been recovered for him, was less an office than a license to practice. And when, four years later, he died, suddenly and prematurely, after a nasal operation thought to be minor, the mass outpouring of grief that ensued completed the process of a popular restoration, and his much more determined and battle-ready son, Hassan II, by then the army chief of staff, succeeded to a fully reinvented, refurbished, and resanctified kingship. He had only—only!—to set it into motion, to make it (and himself) real.

The vehemence with which he pursued this aim and the success he had in it is perhaps the one thing about him, his career, and his person that is generally known. In the sixties he crushed, one after another, a whole series of rural uprisings in the north, the east, and the south of the country, the traditional regions of tribal (and thaumaturgical) dissidence. In the seventies his dramatic, hairbreadth escapes from two attempts on his life, one in the air piloting a jet coming back from France, when he feigned death in the cockpit, and one at an Arabian-nights seaside picnic crowded with foreign dignitaries, a number of whom died while he survived hiding beneath a handy piece of cardboard and talking his would-be assassins out of their intentions, made headlines everywhere. The drastic and unforgiving vengeance—lightless incarcerations in desert citadels—that he inflicted on his intimate enemies and the friends and relations of his intimate enemies during the grim, so-called years of lead which followed; his 1975 "Green March," nearly a half-million people dispatched on foot into the abandoned Spanish Sahara to claim it for his realm; and the quick and dirty suppression of large urban riots in 1965, 1981, and 1990 simply added to the effect. By the time he died in 1999, after 38 years of movement, maneuver, evasion, bluster, obduracy, and striking back, the materials of his kingship were fairly well in place.

But it was (and, now that his son, Muhammad VI, a much less emphatic personality, has succeeded him, calling himself, rather hopefully, "the people's king," it still is) an axis, a focal point, or a numinous presence around which an endless and intricate countrywide jockeying for domain and position takes place, not an overweening concentration of organized power. For all the flash and the off-hand violence and for all the celebrity of royal display, the kingship is as much a defensive (and a mediatory) institution, struggling to maintain its place and its quite relative and situationally dependent ascendancy in a vast field of large, small, and medium-sized machinators, provocateurs, adventurers, upstarts, and faction leaders—sheikhs, caids, chorfa, ulama, party bosses, ministrales, landlords, pashas, proprietors, café intellectuals, the famous miracle-working marabtin, sufi lodgemasters, qadis, and to Paris-and-back (or America-and-back) semiexiles—as it is a superlative force. Himself a semisacred figure, a *baraka*-charged descendant of the Prophet, enacting fidelity and defending faith, he has at the same time been, and has been forced to be, an intensely secular, intensely competitive, cut-and-thrust politician—a legislator, party chief, policy maker, *éminence grise*, and lightning rod, a player among players in a multiparty parliamentary system complete with ministries, pressure groups, local machines, and only somewhat manipulable elections. As a polity, "the Kingdom of Morocco" is a dispersed, pluralized, harsh, and haphazard clash of views and interests that, in its lack of definite form and consistent direction, looks more like a political Brownian motion than like the steady application of a Leviathan will.

This breathless and bravura comparison of two long-in-formation, complex, and troubled polities is not intended to be a remotely sufficient account of their workings or their evolution. For that, or something approaching it, one needs to read, for Indonesia, the works of such scholars as, *inter alia*, George Kahin (1952), Herbert Feith (1962), Benedict Anderson (1972), William Liddle (1970), James Siegel (1986), and Donald Emmerson (1974); for Morocco, those of, also *inter alia*,

John Waterbury (1970), Rémy Leveau (1976), Abdullah Hammoudi (1997), Edmund Burke (1976), Dale Eickelman (1976), and Lawrence Rosen (1984), from whom I have derived, without either their knowledge or their consent and certainly without their agreement, my little vignettes and large summations. In invoking whole histories and sensibilities in so off-hand and reduced a manner, I am not attempting to set them in the tight and abstract categories of the social sciences, to fix them upon a typological wheel or place them in a *table raisonné.* Even less do I seek to discern their futures, which are quite out of sight. What I am attempting to do is to use them, or my figurations of them, to make an exact and wholly general point: namely, that they *are* figurations. What is a state if it is not a sovereign? The institutional projection of an ongoing politics, a display, a delineation, a precipitate, a materialization.

The state in Indonesia and Morocco, as in Nigeria and India (or, for that matter, in Canada, Colombia, Belgium, Georgia, or the United States) is less the shadowing forth of a quasi-natural peoplehood, the summarized will and spirit of a *pluribus unum* nation, neither of which seems more than wishfully or residually to exist, than a rather hurriedly concocted social device designed to give form enough and point to a clatter of crossing desires, contending assumptions, and disparate identities. The Indonesians live in a jagged, discontinuous, peoples-and-islands country gathered up for them by accident and the Dutch, in which the close-in immixture of cultural groupings—intimate, intricate, and charged with wariness and apprehension—is a primary fact of political life and its translocal, transethnic ordering. The Moroccans live in a country cut out of a more-or-less continuous and connected desert-edge landscape by late and incidental French and Spanish incursions, in which the putting together and taking apart of personal connections and private loyalties, the forming and unforming of ad hoc, handshake alliances, mount up toward a hardly more settled, more stabilized, or more exactly located center.

When these new men and women, these new Indonesians or Moroccans (to echo Crèvecoeur on the post-revolutionary American farmer) look beyond their immediate horizons of family, place, and community, which, by now, they do almost constantly, what they see is not a broad sweep of national feeling flowing inward toward and outward away from Jakarta or Rabat, gathering up everyone in its path into a general and consuming identity, an overriding and exclusive final loyalty. What they see in those central and consequential places is what they see close at hand: the working out of a particular and distinctive sort of politics in a particular and distinctive sort of world; how things happen around here, what sorts of things they are, and what sorts of ways are available to deal with them, harness them, or defend oneself against them.

This appears with particular clarity when one looks at what suddenly, over the past few years, has emerged as an acute and immediate, in some sense state-threatening phenomenon: irregular violence in the name of religion—Islamic terrorism. Both countries have, in fact, a history of Islamist dissent and sedition. I have mentioned the repeated religiously inspired uprisings in northern Sumatra, starting as early as the nineteenth century, and during the first, uncertain years of the republic's existence its very legitimacy was openly and violently challenged by an armed rebellion under the banner of Darul Islam (The House of Islam). (One of the first American anthropologists to work in the new state [I followed him by only a few months], Raymond Kennedy of Yale, apparently died at its hands in West Java.) In Morocco, matters have been a bit less dramatic, consisting of the periodic appearance of Muslim cliques and coteries, especially in the universities, and the periodic jailing or house arrest of their leaders, although after the rise of the Islamic Salvation Front in neighboring Algeria in the 1990s sent that country into a spiral of killing and counterkilling, concern with "the Islamist threat" spread rapidly in Morocco as well. In any case, with the 2002 bombing in Bali, which killed 202 people, and the 2003 one in Casablanca, which killed 41, jihadist Islam came, specifically and definitively, to both countries.

I cannot, obviously, go into the details, fine and unfine, of all that here. (Most of them are yet to emerge. Death sentences and prison terms have been given out in both places, but developed responses by either state, if they are to come, are not yet evident. And, of course, everything is further complicated by the alarums and excursions of U.S. foreign policy.) But that the distinct and characteristic political styles that I have just so sketchily outlined will inform and animate both the expression of Islamic furor and the response to it of the governmental apparatuses—Indonesia's vacillating presidency, Morocco's brushed-up monarchy—is already clear.

In Indonesia, the incursion, for the most part from elsewhere, of radical, totalistic Islam has fallen quite readily into the groups-and-countergroups pattern of the country I have been describing—has been taken up into the intense fear of separatism that is endemic to it. In Aceh, what began as and to a fair extent remains a hit-and-run insurrection by a small group of Islamist extremists, as much anti-Jakarta and anti-Javanese as they are puritanical and ultra-orthodox in their aims, has been turned into what has all too accurately been called "Indonesia's Chechnya" by the persistent perception of it by the central government and especially by the army as a country-dismembering separatist threat to be met with uncompromising hegemonical force—11,000 dead in 27 years of on-again, off-again quagmire repression. At the other end of the archipelago, in the "spice island" Moluccas, where the impact of Christianity under the aegis of Dutch missionization was particularly marked, a series of confrontations between self-proclaimed jihadists, many of them immigrant from other islands round and about (including, perhaps, the southern Philippines), and long-rooted, in-place Christians have also led to organized riots, hundreds of deaths, and again indiscriminate and largely unavailing army intervention. But, again, the pattern is general. Throughout the country confrontations between intrusive groups and those pre-

viously settled in this place or that—what Indonesians call *pendatang* (newcomers) and *asli* (originals)—have led not just to sectarian eruptions but to ethnic, cultural, tribal, ideological, and economic ones as well. (Petroleum deposits, being place-bound, are not—as Nigeria also demonstrates—altogether conducive to national unity.) If, as I believe, neither the separation of Indonesia into more workable and homogeneous parts nor the integration of it under the aegis of a pervasive, difference-drowning identity is, save perhaps here and there, in the cards, the country will have to develop effective ways of containing and stabilizing such multiplex and multiform differences—something it has hardly as yet begun to do.

And in Morocco, that master-and-disciple state, the situation is similar in its different way. The interplay and management of semisecret personal alliances and oppositions that characterize the larger part of political life there are all too readily penetrable by the Al Qaida–type small-cell, network terrorism that has come to be associated with Islamist subversion in the Middle East and North Africa. If it prospers, as it has in Algeria and is beginning to in Saudi Arabia, it will form a direct challenge to the religiously based, *amir al-muminin* "commander-of-the-faithful" legitimacy of the monarchy, the linchpin, so far as there is one, of the whole system. The ability to construct, sustain, disrupt, and reconstruct effective chains of personal loyalty is the key to order here, not an overall sense of national purpose and collective solidarity, which, so far as it exists, is a reflex of political life not its cause and foundation.

The general point, whatever the truth or lack of it in my surely debatable contrasts and characterizations, is that, in these complicated places anyway, the compact and sovereign nation-state animated by a distinct and singular populace—civic France or monadic Japan, Catholic Portugal or Buddhist Thailand—is neither present nor anywhere near to coming into being. What, its hour come round at last, is coming into being? Discerning that, not wishing-in the future or indicting the past, is, I would suggest, our urgent and instant task as scholars—professors of what happens.

If nothing else, I hope that I have by now persuaded you that the "journey into history" I described at the outset of this discussion as engulfing the anthropological careers of both Mintz and myself in the nineteen-fifties is fully under way. (Indeed, it has since engulfed those of the overwhelming majority of our contemporaries as well. The notes-and-queries bush ethnologist, ferreting out marriage rules and tabulating kinship terms, is almost as anomalous now as we were then.) The issue is no longer whether to undertake it or even where (anywhere they will let us in and someone will talk to us). It is what we are supposed to do, now that we are fair and certainly thus embarked. What is anthropology's contribution as a special science (not the vague and imperious "study of man," which I, at least, am ready to leave to the scholiasts and the textbook writers), a particular direction of thought and argument, of method and intent, in a research enterprise—political development in forming states—crowded these days with skilled and well-armed, all too confident special scientists (I use the term loosely, which is the only way to use it): historians, economists, political scientists, sociologists, philologists, health workers, development agents, pundits, lawyers, psychologists, philosophers, *littérateurs*?

What I have been implicitly suggesting here and will now claim explicitly is that social anthropologists, even we Old Boasians, are peculiarly well-adapted, preadapted actually, to such research, to the study of politics in complicated places. And, now that Islam is the second religion of both France and Britain, 20 million Indians live outside of India, and immigration accounts for two-thirds of America's (and all of California's) annual population increase, that means just about everywhere. Save perhaps for Iceland, which seems to have kept its gene pool fairly well intact, all the countries of the world and all the states that are, well or badly, designed to govern them and to give them a collective presence in the world are as intricate as German verbs, as irregular as Arabic plurals, and as various as American idioms. They are made, that is, for the comparative, morphological, ethnographic eye.

That eye looks less for iron law and repetitive cause than for significant form and revelatory detail, less for the conclusions toward which everything tends or the ideal which everything imitates than for the specificities that everything takes. The anthropological concern with difference, often misunderstood as a preference for it and an aversion to theory, is hardly more than the recognition, hard-earned in hundreds upon hundreds of detailed and extended field investigations, that difference is what makes the world go round, especially the political world. Heterogeneity is the norm, conflict the ordering force, and, despite ideological romances, left and right, religious and secular, of consensus, unity, and impending harmony, they seem likely to remain so for a good deal longer than the foreseeable future.

Consider, as an only somewhat dramatic example of how things stand these days, here, there, and everywhere, Neal Acherson's (2003:37) recent description of that Caucasian originality, Nagorny Karabakh:

> "Nagorny" means "mountainous" in Russian, and "Karabakh" means roughly "black garden" in Turkish. Up to 1988, Nagorny Karabakh could be described as a hilly territory with a largely Armenian population, assigned to the Soviet republic of Azerbaijan; it was an enclave separated on its western side from the Soviet republic of Armenia by a belt of Azerbaijanian-settled territory. The Armenians are traditional Christian and speak Armenian; the Azeris are traditional Muslim and speak a language close to Turkish. Large Armenian minorities lived in Azerbaijan, especially in its capital Baku on the Caspian shore, while large Azeri minorities lived in Armenia. Even the population of Nagorny Karabakh was mixed. The town of Stepanakert was mainly Armenian; the old hilltop city of Shusha was mainly Azeri.

The interplay here (to have a kinder word for the migrations and murderings that have actually happened) of political arrangements—that is, states and substates, new states and old states (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, the Soviet Union, now supplemented by the intrusions of Western and Near Eastern powers prospecting for oil)—and a wild assembly of languages, religions, histories, myths, lies, and psychologies, is, as I say, only relatively speaking extreme. The Balkan dilemma, how to govern a conglomerate, divided population, is now quite general. Nagorny Karabakh or Morocco or Indonesia is what "the field," our testing ordeal and measuring destination, for the most part looks like now.

There are, indeed, signs that we are beginning at last to recognize this and to abandon the, to my mind, rather shrill and overintellectualized villain-and-victim moralism that has marked so much of our recent work in this area for a more realistic and pragmatic approach—one dedicated to developing lines of research and frames of analysis that can both represent Nagorny Karabakh situations and uncover the directions in which they might conceivably be induced to move. Work on notions of "cultural citizenship" by Renato Rosaldo (2003) and his Southeast Asianist colleagues, on "states of imagination," by Thomas Blom Hansen and his Indianist ones (Blom Hansen and Stepputat 2001), or on the political charge of witchcraft fears in the new South Africa, by Adam Ashford (2000), are perhaps genuine straws in a real wind, as are Andrew Apter's (1992) on Yoruba rites of centrality and power, Michael Meeker's (2002) on the Ottoman shaping of Republican Turkey, and, if I may say so, my own on the theater state in Bali and Java (1980). The journey into history that Sidney's and my generation undertook under the impetus and guidance of that preceding us now continues, in its own way and with its own resources, in those that follow us. One of the few advantages of an unexpected longevity, as I am sure he will agree, whatever else he thinks of all of this, is the high good fortune of watching it happen.

Comments

JOHN R. EIDSON
Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Advokatenweg 36, 06114 Halle (Saale), Germany (eidson@eth.mpg.de). 10 VII 04

Geertz insists that our efforts to comprehend political developments in the postcolonial and postsocialist states require "serious rethinking." He himself has been rethinking this topic since he arrived in Java over 50 years ago. He carried out his first fieldwork project during a period of "after-the-war exuberance," but his results foreshadowed a later phase characterized by "the divisions of the . . . cold war" and "the romances and disappointments of Third-Worldism" (Geertz 2002:2). In Java, he concluded, "there is a great deal of antagonism between the adherents of the various religious orientations" (*abangan*, *santri*, and *prijaji*, as he called them), and, despite moderating factors, "this antagonism is probably increasing" (Geertz 1976 [1960]:355).

Since formulating these conclusions to his first book, Geertz has taken up similar themes repeatedly, whether in analyses of state formation under conditions of "ethnic, religious, linguistic, racial, regional, [or] ideo-primordial" diversity or in critical reflections on the "large ideas . . . inherited from Western philosophy and political theory" (e.g., Geertz 1973*b* [1963], *c*[1971], 2000). Over the years, his emphases and his references to the secondary literature have been updated but his central concerns have remained remarkably consistent. With the collapse of the colonial empires and now also of the Soviet Union, political actors in the new states "find themselves obliged to define and stabilize their relationships both to other states and to the irregular societies out of which they arose" (Geertz 1973*c* [1971]:238). The unavoidable task of reconciling the "demand for progress" with the "search for identity" (Geertz 1973*b* [1963]:258) creates apparently irresolvable difficulties not only because progress is often framed in "Western" terms that conflict with indigenous identities but also because indigenous identities are themselves multiple, complex, and conflicting—"nationalisms within nationalisms" (1973*c* [1971]:237) or "an enormous catalogue of hybridized and shape-shifting parochialist groups."

In his comments on Indonesia here, Geertz touches only briefly on the massacre of hundreds of thousands of people—especially alleged communists or communist sympathizers—in Java, Bali, and elsewhere beginning in September 1965. Much to the displeasure of some critics (e.g., Reyna 1998), he has consistently interpreted these massacres not in terms of the interests of capital, the CIA, and the Indonesian army but as extreme expressions of "culturally inflected partisan conflict" (see also Geertz 1973*b* [1963]:282; 1995:6–10). Reyna and others suggest that he should do more to explain the extraordinary scale of the carnage marking the transition from the Sukarno to the Suharto regime, but he remains focused on the underlying cultural contradictions, which, in his view, provide a kind of matrix for "ideo-primordial" conflict and which, in the post- or neocolonial setting, may serve as the point of departure for extreme violence. This is evident from the following passage, which was written several years before the massacres (Geertz 1976 [1960]:365):

> The connection between . . . rapidly changing social structures . . . [and] heightened feelings of anxiety and aggression and the consequent fantasy search for scapegoats . . . is well-attested in the literature of the social sciences. . . . Fantasies (again aside from any judgment as to their realistic elements) of *santri* persecution of non-*santris* if they come to power, of the suppression of Islam and the murder of *kijajis* if the "Communists"—a term often applied with about the same degree of accuracy as it has been recently by some of the more politically primitive ele-

> ments in the United States—come to power, and other similar ones tend to account for anxiety. They also legitimize rather more open expression of hostility than the Javanese value system and patterns of etiquette traditionally allow. Such anxiety and aggression arise not only out of realistic social fears, of which there are enough, but also out of the psychologically wearing process of rapid social change.

Reyna (1998) is right to insist that this is not the whole story or even the most obvious part of the story (as Geertz himself admits); but, like it or not, Geertz is not one to agree that his variety of cultural interpretation is adequate for cockfights but not for mass murder or genocide. It's not just about "fluff." Rather, it's about the consequences of developments among Pleistocene hominids, especially the evolution of symbolic communication and everything else that that implies, which allowed for unprecedented flexibility in adaptation to variable environmental conditions but also meant that the Darwinian "struggle for existence" became inextricably intertwined with the problems of building societies and of explaining, justifying, or otherwise reflecting on social arrangements and actions that are never the only possible ones (Geertz 1973*a* [1966]). Geertz's main point is that—despite or perhaps because of political and economic "rationalization" and despite our idealization of that peculiarity of nineteenth-century Europe, the nation-state—the resulting complications are not going to go away (Eidson 1996).

THOMAS HYLLAND ERIKSEN
Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo, P.O. Box 1091 Blindern, N-0317 Oslo, Norway (t.h.eriksen@soci.uio.no). 22 VI 04

Students who plan to carry out fieldwork in the rich societies of the North Atlantic area ("the West") are often advised, and well advised, to read the anthropological classics closely, since empirical and analytical insights from afar have the dual effect of creating distance from one's own corner of the world and stimulating the intellectual imagination required to say something interesting about that which is nearby, something beyond the "home truths" once mentioned by Geertz in a similar context.

Geertz's examination of the rise in the postcolonial world of localist, regionalist, ethnic, and other political movements which are smaller than the state but larger than the extended kin group makes it tempting to take the complementary position: If you want to study the dynamics of collective identification in Africa or Asia, take a close look at extant work grappling with related issues in Europe and North America. We now have, as Geertz is aware, a very large academic literature on transnationalism and migration, and citizenship has been a major preoccupation for hundreds of social scientists for some years. Exclusionary practices, stigmatizing hegemonic ideologies, elected governments talking about "integration" while what they really mean is "assimilation"—these and related topics have been studied extensively in the past few decades, and, similarly, the dynamics of cultural meaning and social identity among people on the move—hybridity and modern essentialism, transnational kinship and belonging, fundamentalism and ambivalence, hijabs and miniskirts—have been the subjects of rather intense scholarly interest, not to mention the enormous academic industry gravitating around the dreaded term "globalization."

In taking his cue from general theories of nationalism and concepts such as "nation building," Geertz silences these and many other contributions to the issues. With Partha Chatterjee's (1993) work on the fragmented Indian nation, James Scott's (1998) on the homogenizing drive of the modern state and its counterreactions, and Jean and John Comaroff's (1992) on African modernities, most of the questions discussed by Geertz are being dealt with authoritatively and well already. More than 20 years ago, Walker Connor (1978) pointed out that few nation-states are ethnically homogeneous (he believed the actual number might be 12, Portugal and Iceland included), and the centripetal and centrifugal forces of modern state societies have been explored extensively since. And so have many of the paradoxes of similarity and difference. The irony of the modern politics of identity is that the more similar people(s) become, the more different they (or, more accurately, some of them) try to be—but the more different they try to be, the more similar they become.

This said, Geertz's call to arms remains pertinent. Anthropologists should stick to what they are best at doing, that is, reminding the rest of the world that human worlds are created intersubjectively, based on experience, locally specific, and so on. Our job, I suppose, is still primarily to crawl around on our knees with a magnifying glass, leaving the helicopter and the binoculars to macrosociologists and political scientists. This method makes it impossible to take slippery concepts like "nation," "state," and "people" at face value and reveals anthropology to be a deeply subversive kind of activity. Instead of reproducing hegemonic discourse about groups and identities, however inadvertently, we need to produce fresh, detailed ethnographies indicating how people are (dis-) integrated at various levels of scale (kinship, locality, ethnicity, humanity, and so on) and how these levels are articulated with each other. For example, many immigrants in Western Europe are well integrated at the level of family and community (*Gemeinschaft*) but are barely aware of the institutions that prop up the larger society (*Gesellschaft*), and yet some of them may be active participants in transnational kin networks and enthusiastic supporters of the de facto globalization of "Islam" as a shared abstract identity for Muslims. In identifying such complexities and the conflicts associated with them, anthropology remains a fundamental discipline when it comes to making sense of the human world.

Scale, hardly mentioned by Geertz, is crucial in any examination of what states might be. Comparing Dominica with Nigeria, subsuming both under the general heading of "states," is neither here nor there. The identity politics following from the insight that states are too small for some tasks and too large for others can, however, lead

to "federalism" in both cases: Nigeria being federalized and Dominica joining other small island states in setting up a federation. Anthropologists can and do problematize such postulated abstract identities, including the ones being promoted in contemporary Europe.

As usual, Geertz eschews generalization and glorifies difference. I would have concluded differently: there are some obvious human universals waiting to be distilled from the manifold ways in which people strive to create order and existential security—but since this is a fundamental disagreement it probably has little practical import.

STEPHAN FEUCHTWANG
Department of Anthropology, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, U.K. (s.feuchtwang@lse.ac.uk). 7 VII 04

There are statistical norms and normative norms, and Geertz jumbles them in his article. I do not think it possible or desirable to keep them apart in our work, but we can certainly discuss them separately. For instance, Geertz is restating the obvious when he points out how foolish it is to assume, as if it were an empirical fact, that the normal nation is culturally homogeneous. Neither is this an obviously desirable ideal. But it is not absurd to say that states claiming to represent or to lead a "people" in its best interests do (normally, in a statistical sense) try with all their considerable might and media to forge a single story and cultivate bases of unification. Similarly, it is obvious that within the borders of states as well as across them other organizations of force are either allowed or subcontracted by the same state and many other organizations of force prevail. But one can claim with empirical reason that the organization and production of the means of violence by states are normally much more forceful and extensive than any others'. The big question is whether states are at the disposal of their subjects to regulate violence. Here we come to normative norms—in the sense of a project directed at an ideal that is practically possible.

Should we ignore the discussions of sovereignty by the founding political philosophers of Europe (Spinoza, Hobbes, Montesquieu, et al.)? The world they describe in different ways is a world of mixed, vulnerable, and conflicting sovereignties, of "warre" (Hobbes) within each and across each sovereign's land. Recognize it? Their critical judgement of that world raises for our consideration the incipient sovereignty of the pursuit of life and the realization of desires—self-realization in association with others. To be sure, this is an ideal. As Rousseau writes, opening his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, "Let us begin then by laying all facts aside." But should we, as fact-finders, set his and other philosophers' ideals aside, as Geertz seems to suggest with one of his lengthy strings of shudder quotes?

European philosophers are a fact of Eurocentric life and its responses of hope and critique to a world of violence. They are to be evaluated on grounds of their intrinsic arguments (their logical inconsistencies or contrary ambivalences) and the contingencies of the contexts to which they may have referred. So as anthropologists we can treat all those we study as bearers of stories, hopes, and worlds and write what we know about the conditions of their realization. When we use and modify the concepts of state, sovereign, and sovereignty we are in any case engaging the assumptions of our usage, its theoretical and philosophical formation, with what we understand to be their equivalent in those whom we study. Not to do so would make anthropology a lot less critical and adventurous.

Geertz prides himself with good reason on being among the first to argue for a state that is a performance. Anthropologists since then have been good at reconstructing imaginations of state, their discursive lives, and their practical effects, but this simply provides grounds for modifying, not abandoning, the concepts of state and sovereignty in their more traditional sociological and philosophical senses. To assert as Geertz does that "compacted sovereignty, centered and inclusive, is hard to locate" is to ignore the centralizing references for authority and the organization of military and police forces, courts, prisons, and school systems. Of course, they are challenged in civil war and invasion and by the endemic economies of threat and protection within and across their borders. But does one tell a prisoner that his incarceration and his status—as a hostage or a prisoner of war, a terrorist or a criminal—are hard to locate?

I agree that anthropologists describe mediatory institutions, including those of state sovereignty. We study what we could call "arranged states" whose fault lines are more or less openly violent or held together procedurally. But it is foolish to ignore scales and extents of powers of coercion as material facts. Local sovereignties are asserted within and themselves invoke those greater scales, the greatest of which are those of states and the treaties and organizations of states. Suharto was a general; Hassan II was army chief of staff. Both claimed to lead a people and effectively led unificatory, ideological and forceful sanctions. Anthropologists should be able to live up to the challenge of an empirically based critique of their claims to further the sovereignty of their "people." I cannot see any good reason to abandon the critical analytical impulse to report, on the basis of empirical enquiry, how and whether organizations and uses of violence and the economic facts of life destroy, stunt, appropriate or realize the worlds that the people we study imagine for their self-realization.

DANIEL M. GOLDSTEIN
Department of Sociology and Anthropology, College of the Holy Cross, 1 College St., Worcester, MA 01610, U.S.A. (dgoldste@holycross.edu). 25 VI 04

Geertz provides an accurate portrayal of the state of the contemporary state, but his depiction of contemporary anthropological theorization of it is less convincing. Few would dispute his characterization of national states today as "tangled conglomerations," entities in which "not

only is legitimacy dispersed and contested, but an enormous catalogue of hybridized and shape-shifting parochialist groups . . .rub up against one another in almost continuous friction." His thumbnail sketches of Indonesian and Moroccan history amply illustrate the arbitrary, constructed nature of the modern nation and the fragmentary, shifting condition of the modern state, perpetually warding off challenges and laboring to fashion a coherent-seeming polity over which to rule out of a heterogeneous and fractious multitude of forces, alliances, ethnicities, and so on. One can certainly endorse his call for anthropologists to turn their analytical attention more fully to the study of complex, heterogeneous nation-states—to bring our ethnographic skills and respect for, even fascination with, difference, dissensus, and contradiction to "the study of politics in complicated places."

And yet, despite Geertz's own efforts at self-historicization, his essay is remarkably silent on the historical development of anthropological thinking about the state. He contends that anthropologists generally regard the state "first and foremost as a leviathan machine, a set-apart sphere of command and decision," and that instead we must regard it in terms of the complex and confusing social context in which it is embedded. But this view of the state as leviathan does not to my mind represent current or even recent anthropological thinking. Since the 1970s, anthropologists influenced by Marx, Gramsci, and Williams have regarded the state not as an unassailable, homogeneous monolith but as a complex project of the instantiation of power, a construct that must be continually reinforced and renewed against the clamor of alternative projects that would seek to challenge or displace it. The work of the English historians Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer (1985) introduced to anthropology the idea of the state not as some kind of social structure but as a lived social process, not just a political but a profoundly cultural project of state *formation,* saturating the daily lives of subject populations to make the state seem inevitable and timeless, inviolably "real." Geertz's suggestion that the state be understood as an "institutional projection" and "a display" is valid but echoes earlier work by such influential Marxian scholars as Philip Abrams (1988 [1977]) (who called the state "an a-historical mask of legitimating illusion") and William Roseberry (1989). Much ethnographic work over the past decade or so reflects these various influences, already having taken up the gauntlet that Geertz in this essay throws down.

That being said, there is much value in Geertz's call for greater anthropological attention to the state as a particular configuration of power in the modern nation. Following Foucault, much recent enthnography has moved in the direction of understanding the workings of power in society as diffuse, unlocalized, immanent in the social formation, and operative through discursive and regulatory practices that inculcate power's machinations in individual bodies and subjectivities. The attention paid to the practices of governmentality, for example, is indicative of this trend in recent anthropological writing, which, though concerned with social regulation and the construction of national subjects, often elides the processes of state formation which governmentality entails. Geertz's essay reminds us that however immanent power may be in postmodern society, the state remains a locus through which power inevitably flows and an object of struggle even in "postnational" society. Indeed, even as transnational processes knit the world into tighter webs of economic and political integration, the state, rather than "withering away," remains a key site through which globalization must operate and the object for which national elites, minority (or ethnic or indigenous) groups, and global entities (even international terrorists, as Geertz suggests) struggle and compete. The nation-state today may not be sovereign in the way that Geertz defines sovereignty—that is, as a single, compact entity representing a single, uniform populace—but sovereignty nevertheless has become critical in determining which groups or forces can hold state power. In nations like Bolivia (the ethnographic context I know best), the democratic state is accused of having failed to protect Bolivian resources for the benefit of the Bolivian people, instead allowing foreign entities either to expropriate (e.g., natural gas) or to eradicate (e.g., coca) the national "patrimony." The extent to which particular states can be said to represent "their" national populations autonomously and without caving in completely to the demands of multinational, globalizing forces—that is, the extent to which they can act with sovereignty—may indeed be fundamental to the future legitimacy of the nation-state itself.

MARIANNE GULLESTAD
Institute for Social Research, Munthes Gate 31, P.O. Box 3233 Elisenberg, N-02080 Oslo, Norway (marianne.gullestad@samfunnsforskning.no). 5 VII 04

Geertz's remark about showing "how increasingly difficult it is these days to find culturally solidary entities functioning as organized and autonomous (the techno-word is "sovereign") political communities: Norway, maybe, but there are Pakistanis there now" reflects Norway's ambiguous position in anthropology: It is located at the margins of Europe, but in contrast to southern Europe it has not been extensively studied by anthropologists from Britain and the United States. I want to inform American readers that Norway is a complicated place with political developments which cry out for anthropological investigation.

Having been the junior partner in a union with Sweden for almost 100 years and before that a region under the Danish crown for 400 years, Norway became an independent nation-state in 1905. A Danish prince and a British princess were asked to become king and queen. Its independence was broken during the Nazi occupation from 1940 to 1945. Nationalism has historically been a positive, liberating, and democratizing force, and for many people the word "union" carries a negative ring. This is part of the reason Norway remains outside the European Union and there has been relatively little reflection on the oppressive aspects of nationalism in re-

lation to historical minorities such as the Sami (formerly called Lapps), the Finns, the Romani (Tatere), the Rom (also called Gypsies in English), and the Jews and the many different minorities produced by extra-European immigration since World War II.

Extra-European immigrants did not start coming to Norway in any numbers until the late 1960s, later than to many other European countries. The proportion of "immigrants" (including people born in Norway with two parents who were born abroad) has increased from 2% in 1980 to 7% at present. About half of the "immigrant population" now comes from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Since an immigration ban was imposed in 1975, newcomers have been accepted only if they are family members, experts, students, refugees, and people who have been granted asylum. About 200 languages are currently spoken in Oslo, which is home to almost half of the extra-European "immigrants." Their transnational lives in diaspora constitute a tremendous challenge to the current conception of the nation-state.

Considerable discrimination is taking place in the housing market, the labor market, and everyday life. Nevertheless, the organized groups of violent racists and neo-Nazis consist of only a few hundred individuals. On several occasions thousands of people have demonstrated publicly against the actions of these extremist groups. There is a profound majority embarrassment attached to the smallest suspicion of being accused of racism, and this embarrassment acts as a barrier to the public discussion of discrimination. At the same time the "lack of integration of the immigrants" is hotly debated, with a focus on extreme cases of oppressive practices with regard to women, honor killings, and crime.

The Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet) is the main political vehicle for right-wing populism in Norway. One of the largest parties, it fights for the reduction of taxes, duties, and public bureaucracy, fewer regulations, more money to care for the elderly, more police, and a more restrictive immigration policy. Its current leader, Carl I. Hagen, has been the unchallenged head of the party since 1978. Although less extremist in some respects, it can be compared to the Dansk Folkeparti in Denmark, the Freiheitliche Partei in Austria, and the Front National in France. Its leaders never use Nazi, neo-Nazi, or traditional racist arguments. On the contrary, parts of the populist right, both within and outside the Progress Party, are trying to appropriate the resistance to the Nazi occupation during World War II rhetorically by drawing an analogy between that occupation and what they term the present-day invasion of Norway by Muslims. Politicians in the Progress Party build on and renew deep-seated cultural ideas about national belonging and non-belonging with a focus on descent. Politicians in other parties have gradually become receptive to their proposals about restrictive measures in relation to both incoming asylum seekers and resident minorities. Like the other leaders of right-wing populist parties in Europe, Hagen is an excellent communicator on TV. With its characteristic blend of entertainment and information, television has created a powerful platform for charismatic politicians who appeal to the emotions of the audience by simplifying and dramatizing complex issues. In contemporary politics, the media are as important as the parliament.

To sum up: There is at the moment no reason to look to Norway—or to any of the other small rich countries in northern Europe—for a pristine and uncomplicated political life. At the same time, there is a great need to look anthropologically not only at the minorities in this region but also at the majorities if we are to understand the challenges of present-day national and transnational politics and to decolonize the anthropological discipline by making it truly comparative.

DAVID HENLEY
KITLV, Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology, Reuvensplaats 2, 2311 BE Leiden, The Netherlands (henley@kitlv.nl). 9 VII 04

The question "What is a state if it is not a sovereign?" seems to me to exaggerate the novelty of the present predicament. In most states at most historical periods, surely, sovereignty was in practice incomplete, divided, and contested even when ideal models insisted on the divine right of kings. Likewise, the nation as "un plébiscite de tous les jours" was always an ideal more than a definition, and that it still "seems quite out of reach" today should not really surprise us.

Nevertheless, it may be true that the era of "nation building," like that of authoritarian developmentalism and state socialism, has passed with the demise of modernism and its millenarian faith in the perfectability of the world. In practice what nationalism often means today is simply that no group of people *other* than the one identified as the nation is seen as providing a *better* foundation for a sovereign state. Indonesia has survived, I think, because a lot of effort—ideological, organizational, economic—went into constructing it and to destroy it now would require a comparable investment of resources and emotions in alternative, smaller nations credible enough to make both their inhabitants and the rest of the world believe in their potential equivalence to the existing nation-states. This may yet be possible in the case of Aceh or Papua, but the chances that it will be so in Riau or Ambon are slim.

While the postmodern "cultural turn" in political thinking has enhanced support for the rights of ethnic minorities, the accompanying disillusionment with grand political projects has made people less inclined to embed that support in demands for separate statehood. What might be called the original cultural turn, which followed the breakdown of religious universalism in Europe, promoted nationalism by encouraging cultural groups (nations) to assert and improve themselves in this world by means of the state. The current disillusionment, which extends to science and reason as well as politics and the state, leaves less scope for reconstruction and renewal. The result is that "elephantine" states like Indonesia and Nigeria lumber on in a muddle of com-

promise and conflict, and even in "failed" states like Somalia and Congo the urge to try the nationalist project again on the basis of different, smaller peoples and territories is weak.

CLAUDIO LOMNITZ
Graduate Faculty, New School University, 65 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10003, U.S.A. (lomnitz@newschool.edu). 27 VII 04

When Clifford Geertz published *Negara*, more than 20 years ago now, his main objective was to show political scientists that politics, too, was "a cultural system." Since that time, various conceptions of culture have been appropriated by other disciplines and, indeed, by the general public. Today, editorialists and commentators the world over discuss "political culture," often reducing "it" to a variable that can be manipulated and changed at will. In the face of the simplification and reification of the concept of culture, some anthropologists have found themselves in the all-too-familiar position of expressing regret for their "complicity" in the fabrication of a concept that has been so readily added to the tool kit of contemporary governmentality while simultaneously groping to reinvent themselves (yet again!). In the essay that is before us, Geertz takes a more constructive and less contrite approach.

Globalization, he acknowledges, has troubled a set of key social science concepts, including "culture," "society," and "the state." The boundaries, coherence, and systematicity of their referents have become difficult to define and to conceptualize. This seems especially to be the case in what he calls "complicated places," referring, it seems, to states that are both insufficiently consolidated and sufficiently imploded to preclude the application of a Weberian definition of the state.

At first glance, Geertz's concept of "complicated places" seems little more than a glib stand-in for concepts such as "developing nations" or "The Third World." There are, however, real stakes in this tentative measure of substitution. In Geertz's formulation "complicated places" are not on the path to becoming Weberian states or Herderian nations; for them "England, France, or Germany, Russia, the United States, or Japan is not in the cards." These places, then, are complicated, first of all, because we cannot now figure their future. Today's poor nations are clearly not on a Rostowian path to development.

This conclusion alone would not have come as a surprise to Latin America's dependency theorists of the 1960s, who had already concluded that "underdevelopment" was itself a form of development. However, there is a second characteristic of today's "complicated places" that was not on the horizon in the 1960s and '70s. "Complicated places" have a contemporary history. Geertz's characterization of the poor countries of his early fieldwork days matches up with the underdevelopment of the old dependency theory. The societies in question were "semi-literate, peasants and plantations, clerics and curers, capitals and provinces, classes and masses." In other words, in the 1950s these states were insufficiently consolidated to feature fully fledged Weberian bureaucratic rationality. But their trajectory since then has, in many cases, involved a disturbing combination of modernization and state implosion, resulting in "ethnic upheavals, failed states, kleptocracy, stagnation, sacrificial terror, and madding crowds"—no Rostowian development but also no successful Marxist or populist program of national development, no great leaps forward. A provisional concept such as "complicated places" is perhaps a useful conceptual place-holder in this context, when images of the future range from the tentative to the incredible.

As states, "complicated places" do not lend themselves to normative and systemic representation. They require, instead, careful historical understanding, a particularistic approach that is attentive both to political resources and to semiotic process—less Hobbes and more Machiavelli, as Geertz puts it.

The complicated places of the "Two-Thirds World," however, seem resistant to cultural analysis, since they are shot through with networks of relationships that reach beyond the state or fail to be interpellated by it. Geertz's own methodology in *Negara*, a book that emphasized cultural homology between state, village, and domestic organization, is ill suited to the contemporary context. Viewed from another angle, however, these places today are marked by a kind of excess of culture, an excess of difference. Indeed, it is this characteristic that makes anthropology's penchant for the particular and its concern with signification so very well adapted to the social analysis that the situation requires.

In this essay we do not get much of a sense of whether Geertz believes that there is much promise for an anthropology of the state in rich countries. These states surely have their own forms of "complication," their own limits to bureaucratic rationality, their own teleological anxieties. By leaving rich states conceptually unmarked, Geertz leaves open the possibility of anthropological inquiry in that zone but says little about its form and foundations (does more Hobbes imply less anthropology?).

Still, it is very gratifying to see how, rather than mooning over the implications of globalization for anthropology as some members of his generation have been prone to do, Geertz lightly shrugs off the moth-eaten mantle of the "Study of Man" and expresses his confidence in anthropology's footing in the contemporary world.

HENK SCHULTE NORDHOLT
KITLV Leiden/Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands (h.g.c.schultenordholt@uva.nl). 9 VII 04

Geertz says that his main focus is state formation, but there is surprisingly little about this subject in his brief essay. Instead, he discusses the complexity of present-day nation-states, which is a slightly different topic. He argues

that, as nation-states have fallen victim to fragmentation, anthropologists are peculiarly well suited to the study of these processes in complicated places. Geertz also embodies, so to speak, anthropology's journey into history. His *Agricultural Involution* (1964) and *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (1980) were indeed very influential but were also criticized as historical misconceptions (White 1983, Schulte Nordholt 1996). His message here is that an anthropological focus on difference plus a historical perspective will offer us a new view of the state. Eloquence is not, however, synonymous with methodology, and it remains less clear where and how the new research should be conducted and where exactly history fits in. Unfortunately, Geertz starts by caricaturing the nonanthropological view of the state as a rational machine operating apart from society and the nation-state as a homogeneous and integrated whole. This is, of course, a matter of strategic taste—who is actually being addressed here?—but only to some extent does it help to clear the ground.

Apart from my usual problems with the sometimes impressionistic way Geertz sketches certain phenomena and my surprise at some outright mistakes (resistance in Aceh is *not* led by Islamist extremists, although that is what Indonesian intelligence people want us to believe), there are two issues I want to raise. The first has to do with context, the second with history.

Although Geertz briefly refers to the post–cold war era, he does not mention the worldwide expansion of neoliberalism and its impact on state structures. He has never shown much interest in this sort of political economy, but neoliberalism has advocated democratization, decentralization, privatization, and the rise of civil society and resulted in the breakdown of the strong state for the sake of free markets. If this context is not taken into account, anthropological analysis may still have meaning but will float in a political vacuum.

History is indeed important, but it encompasses much more than the lifetime of a famous senior anthropologist when we consider the fate of the postcolonial nation-state. I doubt that the summary of historical developments in Indonesia and Morocco, presented as sequences of impressions, offers much analytical insight. The emphasis on difference sounds a little bit like the old-fashioned historians' claim that every period or epoch was different (but, in those days, still *unmittelbar zu Gott*). But how different were Suharto and Hassan II, and what did they have in common?

"Postcolonial" is not a term exclusively reserved for diaspora intellectuals from former colonies who find themselves imprisoned in colonial discourses of the former imperial metropoles and reflect on their postcolonial condition in postmodern terms; it should also be applied to the power arrangements that the newly independent nation-states have inherited from their colonial predecessors. Blom Hansen and Stepputat 2001:12) remind us in this respect that colonial states were never full-fledged states, for they had no sovereignty, only limited autonomy, and a very problematic embedding in society. Hence, it is the incompleteness and abnormality of the colonial state that informed the institutional framework of the nation-state. Usually historians study either the colonial period or the postcolonial period, with the struggle for independence as a sort of semiautonomous in-between category. Instead, we should concentrate more on the transition from colonial to postcolonial conditions in order to understand the fractured way in which power is (dis)organized in many contemporary nation-states.

I wonder whether it helps for the state to be conceptualized in vague terms such as "styles," "displays," or "figurations." Following Blom Hansen and Stepputat (2001:14), it seems more promising to focus on the state's appearance in the everyday life of ordinary people as a multitude of discrete operations, procedures, and representations. Research on how the state is *experienced* in everyday life offers a clear perspective and does indeed require anthropological skills, but in order to recognize differences our approach must be framed in broader political and historical contexts.

Reply

CLIFFORD GEERTZ
Princeton, N.J., U.S.A. 7 VIII 04

The scatter of these comments and, save for that of Claudio Lomnitz, their tendency to substitute passing remark for developed argument (that the CIA brought on the Java massacres, that "the founding political philosophers of Europe" ought to be better attended to, that "various influential Marxists" have exposed the state as "an a-historical mask of legitimating illusion," that Norway is a more complicated place than I let on, that Achenese Islamism is a Jakarta concoction, and, most delicately, that I have perhaps lived too long and grown too famous) makes ordered reply unusually difficult. A number of these commentators—Goldstein, Eriksen, Schulte Nordholt—complain that I have been unduly hard on anthropological theories of state formation, but, hand-waving aside, there is very little here as to what those theories, as opposed to ideological *parti pris* or *tiers mondiste* nostalgia, might be. Foucault is interesting, and Gramsci as well (I'm not so sure about Raymond Williams), but I don't know what to do with their mere invocation. Stein was right: remarks are not literature. And they are not critique either.

As for Eidson, the notion that the Indonesian convulsion of 1965–66 was the result not of deep-going domestic tensions, cultural, social, and economic, in a besieged and forming country but of CIA maneuvering (most of it, actually, confused and bumbling—Dullesville comedy) simply denies any internal politics at all to the country. Whatever happens there is a simple reflex of the West (East-bloc meddling, rather more obvious, in point of fact, and much more effective, is passed over in silence)—a rather colonialist, view-from-the-metropole conception when you come to think about it. As for Henley, who says that I exaggerate (*exaggerate?* Darfur?

Mumbai? Chechnya? central Nigeria?), that sovereignty has been contested—as opposed to merely resisted—"in most states at most historical periods" is—"surely"—a proposition in need of more than bald assertion. Feuchtwang wants yet *another* discourse on the difference between the general will and the will of all or the restless desire of power after power that ceaseth only in death, but what that would do to encourage "hope and critique [in] a world of violence" is obscure to me. Gullestad seems to have taken my wry irony—a dangerous trope, that—about the absence these days of even remotely homogeneous states as a straight-on description. I hasten to reassure: Norway quite qualifies as "a complicated place." Welcome to the post-Wall world. Scale is indeed important, as Eriksen says, and needs to be more explicitly addressed. But—considering Sri Lanka, Nepal, Eritrea, and Bosnia—it is rather more various a variable than might first appear. And as for Schulte Nordholt, I am at a loss to respond to so much invective, so randomly applied: history is indeed important; I apologize for eloquence; I myself pointed to Blom Hansen and Stepputat's work as one way to go but perhaps too far into the essay for him to have noticed it; down, indeed, with "neoliberalism," the sovereign cause of everything bad.

Lomnitz's comment, which does address the argument of my paper with point and precision, raises a number of critical issues. The first is the range of instances to which that argument applies. I do not, in fact, say much about the promise for an anthropology of the state in more developed countries. But, as his own work on the vicissitudes of Mexican nationalism (1992, 2001) and Gullestad's "invaded Norway" show, it clearly has such relevance—not least, indeed, for the United States, where cultural pluralism is intense, pervasive, and rapidly growing. Another is the usefulness of the master concepts of social science—"culture," "society," "state," "nation"—in their classic formulations for understanding contemporary politics. That is, in fact, the central question underlying my discussion and motivating its direction, and it is warming to have someone notice it. The answer, what sort of analysis "the excess of difference" in "a world in pieces" in fact demands, remains uncertain and unclear, and the resistance of "complicated places" to "normative and systemic representation" remains strong. But, along with Lomnitz, I am convinced that "anthropology's penchant for the practical and its concern with signification" can move us forward toward a more exact understanding of what the hell is going on and at least moderately optimistic—the signs are mixed, but then they always are—that it in fact will do so.

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