The State, Anthropology, and the South: bringing different networks and research traditions into dialogue

International Workshop, May 18 -19, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz

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Since the late 1990s, an anthropology of the contemporary state has emerged as a distinct subfield within the discipline. Contributions to this area of study, however, have been produced largely within networks distinguished and, in some cases, divided by regional orientations, thematic choices, theoretical inspirations, and political or moral standpoints. Moreover, the anthropology of the state has emerged within a global arena imbued with power differentials that reflect, and are reflected in, researchers' own experiences and assumptions regarding state and state-like institutions and practices.

A category that carries particularly powerful implications regarding the perceived legitimacy and normativity of particular states is that of "the South*."* Scholars have shown that states in both the Global and European souths are often *said* to function in ways that deviate from the presumed ideal of the "European," "Northern," or "Western" state. In sites more clearly positioned in the "Global" South, states are often associated with colonial legacies, vulnerabilities to development interventions, compromised sovereignties, and porousness at their margins. As an unruly concept with global resonance, yet with specific contexualized meanings, the "South", and its variants, slips between emic and etic frames in ways that are both tacit and explicit: in the methodological and analytical commitments of researchers, and in the talk of research interlocutors themselves, including citizens, non-citizens, bureaucrats, state functionaries and representatives of humanitarian or development agencies. The "South" (and the constellation of other categories that may accompany it) often provides the backdrop for the deployment of stereotypes in activities of meaning-making, critique, and resistance. It is frequently associated with problematic aspects of bureaucratic practice, organizational structures, and professional ethics (linked to ideas of corruption, inefficiency, or semi-"modernity"), which are often invoked to justify external interventions and forms of political and moral disciplining. Yet the South is also sometimes said to connote "good" qualities, such as flexibility, empathy, generosity, and "authenticity." Furthermore, the notion (or its variants) has historically been closely associated with the anthropological project.

This exploratory workshop seeks to engage the concept of the South in the anthropological study of the state within a comparative regional perspective. The workshop has two key objectives: First, to initiate a dialogue between networks of scholars grounded in diverse theoretical, regional and literature-based formations, in order to identify existing overlaps and variations in approaches to the anthropology of the state; and perhaps also to hone in on further areas for conversation and collaboration. Second, to bring into dialogue scholars doing research on state ideas and practices in the Global South with those working on the margins of the Global North (more precisely, in this first stage, in the South of Europe) to further interrogate what the "South" means when it comes to anthropology's role in researching the state.

By opening a dialogue across research traditions and areas, we hope to touch upon a wider set of questions: How to research states that are variously characterized as states of the South? What is the "South" said to mean in anthropologies of the state and how does it become manifest? To what extent is the framing mechanism of the "South" (whether implicit or explicit) a product of researchers' own assumptions? How are notions of the South encountered,

confronted or reflected in interlocutors' own engagements with state practices and institutions? Are research traditions engaging with states of the South implicitly or explicitly in dialogue, and if so, how (for instance, through ideas of Mediterraneanism; Africanism: Third Worldims; colonialism; development; and other regional or historical frameworks)? And finally, how can we disentangle such tacit or explicit notions of the South from experiential and empirical realities on the ground?

Participants are asked to write short papers (max. 2-3000 words) addressing a selection of the following questions regarding the networks in which they work or the sections of the anthropology of the state which they are familiar with:

- How do scholars in your network define the anthropology of the state, as a distinct enterprise from other disciplines which are also studying the state (e.g., philosophers, political scientists, sociologists, historians?)
- Which manifestations or sections of the state are predominantly being studied? (e.g., state idea vs. state practices, outside vs. inside, bureaucratic back vs. front offices, etc.)
- What do you consider the main analytical achievements of an anthropology of the state?
- What are major analytical terms used?
- What are major new analytical terms developed?
- What are the main theoretical inspirations?
- What was the political context under which anthropologists in your network started studying the state?
- What were the main other disciplines the anthropology of the state engaged with?
- Do anthropologists of the state work in interdisciplinary cooperation?
- What are the main methods used? Were new methods invented?
- Is there a comparative perspective, and how is it made to work?
- Is the anthropology of the state grounded in political engagement? How would you describe this engagement? Is there a political use of research results?
- What would you consider the five most important publications in the field?
- If there was only one text to read, which one would you recommend to fellow participants to read before the workshop?
- What do you consider your best text on the topic?
- In the context of your research, has the notion of the South, or a variant of it, functioned as an important framing device or not? If so, how? In what ways is the concept of the South something that you seek to push back against? To what extent must it be taken seriously?
- What are some of the origins of this idea of the "South," both for you as a researcher and for research interlocutors?

Please send your short papers until **May 1st** to

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