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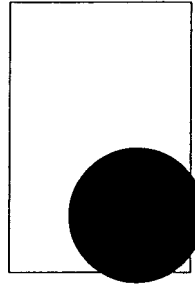
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New formations of power, the oligarchic-corporate state, and anthropological ideological discourse

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Abstract

The article presents a broad claim that the political environment of the nation-state is complicated by the emergence to dominance of state and state-like oligarchic-corporate state formations. These are considered as a relatively new kind of political departure that constitutes a reconfiguration of the relation of controlling interests to social realities. The argument develops the suggestion that some recent anthropological orientations to the state are relatively unreflective as to their own ideological positioning.

Key Words

class • corporation • ideology • imperialism • oligarchy • nationalism • state

Current configurations of global, imperial and state power relate to formations of oligarchic control. A major feature of this is the command of political organizations and institutions by close-knit social groups (families or familial dynasties, groups of kin, closed associations or tightly controlled interlinked networks of persons) for the purpose of the relatively exclusive control of economic resources and their distribution, these resources being vital to the existence of larger populations. For many theorists the state, throughout history and in its numerous manifestations, was born in such processes and continues to be so. Moreover, the oppressive power of state systems (e.g. the denial or constraining of human freedoms, the production of poverty and class inequalities) and the expansion of these in imperial form is a consequence of oligarchic forces. A diversity of political theorists of different persuasions (from anarchists and Marxists to liberals) have developed such themes. This article continues their argument but is concerned to

show that the oligarchic formation of political processes and, indeed, the character of the state, is undergoing significant transformation(s) or transmutation(s) in the current historical moment. The state takes multiple forms and defies most attempts to arrive at an adequate definition of long-standing worth. The once broadly accepted Weberian definition of the state as that authority with the legitimate monopoly of violence over defined territory seems to be undergoing challenge in many global regions. Difficult to define, it is nonetheless a hard, if often different, shifting and uncertain, imagined and felt reality in the experience of most. Rather than define the state in some absolutist sense, what I intend to do is to explore its formation as a commanding and differential organizational complex of power in relation to oligarchic processes.

What is broadly referred to as globalization (a catch-all term and conceptually problematic despite its trendy appeal) is widely conceived of as subversive of the state, particularly in its modern territorially defined nation-state form. But the concept of globalization disguises the emergence to unchallenged (if momentary) global imperial dominance of the USA, whose own claim to international sovereignty reduces the sovereignty of many nation-states. Globalization, in other words, is both the cause and the effect of the emergence to political and economic dominance of a relatively new political formation (with many historical antecedents) that I will refer to as the oligarchic-corporate state formation. Although they do not describe it in the same terms, Hardt and Negri in *Empire* (2000) essentially recognize this fact and point to many of the key distinctions of this formation from other kinds of state orderings that continue in the environment of what I call oligarchic-corporate political emergence. I am well-aware that the particular contemporary rise of oligarchic-corporate power might be better described as having state effects (see Trouillot, 2001) rather than being the development of a relatively original state formation.¹ But writing of state effects might reduce an understanding of the force and implications of what is taking form which while not reducible to what is often conventionally assumed to be state orders (frequently conceived in historical realities once dominated by the still far from defunct nation-state) are indeed state formations though of a relatively original kind.

Anthropologists have been recently struggling anew with the concept of the state and this often appears to have a political agenda of its own relevant to debate within the subject. The state, specifically the European and North American nation-state, is conceived as being the context in which a static, totalized, hierarchical, deterministic, over-homogenized understanding of power and society took shape. The critique of the state and an attempt to reconceptualize it by some anthropologists (see Ferguson and Gupta, 2002; Geertz, 2004) is also a critique of anthropology and by implication the participation of its proponents (even if unintentionally) in the institution of the humanly destructive and oppressive orders of the state at home and abroad. Many of the points are well taken and are impelled in an attempt to forge a new more open-ended anthropology which stresses the hybrid, flexible, contested and negotiated aspects of human realities that an earlier anthropology is held to have neglected. Contemporary globalization became of intense interest for many anthropologists (mainly postmodern and oriented within the North American intellectual frame) because it highlighted the limitations of a previous anthropology and attacked the state orders which gave rise to such an anthropology. Even if anthropologists (e.g. Hannerz, 1996; Appadurai, 1997) are ambivalent about the effects of globalization, there is a sense that some of the

disasters that have come in its train have something to do with the dying struggles of the nation-state brought about by globalization. While undoubtedly there is much truth in this, these anthropologists have overlooked the emergence of what I regard as new kinds of state formation and political orders, their structural processes, and original forms of sovereignty (or 'wild sovereignty'; see Aretxaga, 2003; Kapferer, 2004a, b). There has been a tendency to oppose globalization to the state rather than concentrating on the new state formations that are emerging within globalizing processes and, indeed, are integral to it. A new economic determinism and related rationalist thought has sometimes burst onto the anthropological scene (e.g. Comaroff and Comaroff, 2001, 2003) with an insufficient attention to the kinds of socio-political processes that are taking shape (and within which the economic itself becomes conditioned). Perhaps more problematic, some of the anthropological writing against the state, for example, right down to new methodological recommendations as part of the overhauling of anthropology, is organic to new forms of political-economic formations and processes. The virtual business-management-speak of some anthropology inspired within contemporary globalization insufficiently recognizes that it manifests some of the ideology that is vital in the coming to dominance of new oligarchic-corporate forms (Marcus, 1998, 1999; Comaroff and Comaroff, 2003). By so doing anthropologists run the risk of blunting their critical edge by becoming blind to important dimensions of the political context (the often new state formation in which they are participant) for the production of their own innovative discourse.

A broad argument that I develop is that contemporary globalization, and what are deemed to be its effects (the failure of the regulative function of postcolonial states, porosity of borders, the privatization of erstwhile state-controlled institutions of redistribution), is a feature of oligarchic processes coming into new internal and external relations with the political-bureaucratic machinery of nation-states (orders, I add, that are still highly relevant). More importantly, I explore the engagement of these processes in the generation of critical shifts in the orders of state power and the formation of new kinds of state structure.

A note of caution before I start. I often use the concepts of oligarchy and corporation together. This is so to indicate not only a connection but the social dynamics of the connection. Broadly, in my usage, oligarchy refers to a particular organization of power usually founded in dynastic processes tied to family and kinship. Corporation refers to a body that routinely comes together, undifferentiatedly, in common interest, this, in the contemporary context, being the unmitigated search for economic profit. The corporation in some legal definitions has all the rights of a person; although it may be internally complex and differentiated, it acts and responds as a singular entity (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2003). As anthropologists (Smith, 1960; Peters, 1991) have noted, there is a similarity between modern notions of the corporation and powerful kin-based structures which act in concert to protect their political and economic resources. Such powerful kin-based orders are described as corporations, their unitary self-directed interest overcoming any propensity of individuals within them to act independently. Modern corporate power indeed can have a similar overwhelming sense and is in ironic contradiction of the very contemporary individualism that is often the environment of corporate action and an ideological support for its corporate pursuits.² 'Corporations' as also 'oligarchies' refers to their internal system of autocratic power (frequently closed

and exclusive) based on principles of personal association, patterns of patronal distribution and ideals of loyalty often oriented in the real or fictive idiom of family, kinship, and lineage. The oligarchic power in corporations (sometimes the basis for their foundation or else emergent within them) is both a source of their potency and often of their vulnerability.³

OLIGARCHIC FORMATIONS

Oligarchic formations are present throughout recorded history and themselves took a state form apparent in ancient systems (e.g. Mesopotamia, Athens, Carthage and so on), in feudal Europe, and especially evidenced in Italian city states – Venice and Florence being both outstanding examples. Political strife in ancient systems has repeatedly been expressed in rivalries between and within oligarchies which also embroiled loose and shifting alliances of dependents or ordinary citizenry within the wider population (e.g. the conflicts between factions relating to populist reforms involving the Gracchi in Imperial Rome, or the much later struggles between the Guelphs and Ghibellines through Europe.)

However, I suggest that in the modern period (with the formation of centralized territorially bounded nation-states in Europe and later in North America) oligarchic forces defined their economic interests and power through varying kinds of alliances with mass populist movements and sentiment through which they gained control of the machinery of state, developing it away from absolutist monarchical domination. Indeed, revolutionary movements (increasingly of left/right designation) over the last couple of centuries centred their struggles in relation both to entrenched oligarchic interests and newly forming oligarchies developing from the expansion of trading ventures (as a result of old and new world exploration, colonial settlement). This gathered pace from the Protestant Reformation on, coming to a head in the 17th century through to recent times. The kind of state that came into being was, of course, highly various, dependent often on the degree of popular involvement in its formation or the degree to which already entrenched political and economic interests took a part or controlling direction in the creation of their state-political circumstances of existence e.g. the Cromwellian vis-a-vis the French Revolution. Broadly, the modern nation-state in its variety of forms – nationalist elite, egalitarian democracies, fascist, socialist, or class (oligarchic) dictatorships, frequently military – took shape each with its particular compact with previous or newly created oligarchic interests. These interests were, by and large, pursued through the order of the state (or subordinated to state concerns), its machinery either being captured by oligarchic groups or else such groups themselves being captured by populist forces in control of state apparatuses that were external to the social orders of local oligarchies. This latter aspect was the extreme feature of the fascist nationalisms of Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy whereby family corporate/industrial concerns either formed willing and beneficial compacts with political interests or were forced into line or simply stolen through policies of racial terror and extermination, as in Germany.

But mass populism was a critical element in the formation of most modern nation-states (both dictatorships and democracies). It was also a vital factor in the creation of state-regulated systems for the distribution of wealth. Oligarchic interests were constrained within national orders even as they were oriented to the control of the

political machinery of these states (and by a diversity of means from dictatorial coups to democratic election). The regulation of oligarchic practice (with or without the approval of oligarchs) operated in the interests of oligarchic/industrial and other economic ventures both in controlling competition (e.g. through anti-monopoly legislation) and in maintaining, as Marx argued in *Capital*, a reserve army of labour. (The close connection between advertising, consumerism and nationalism has been widely noted and is a factor in the influence of oligarchic interests in nation-state control.) The nation-state system permitted the expansion and further development of capital and simultaneously operated to order the mass of nationally-defined populations in expansive capitalist interest (see Arrighi, 1994; Harvey, 2003).

However, the current moment indicates both continuities with the relatively recent past and also new developments. One major shift is the breaking of oligarchic power away from the containing and regulative political order of the state. The development of the modern corporation has been of importance in this, further facilitated by the development of new technologies, especially relating to cyber-space, and new kinds of productive labour use. As summarized by Hardt and Negri (2000), production is now decentred and widely distributed (across different productive systems, tribal, peasant and so on) in a postmodern 'putting out' system articulated via computer technology – what Hardt and Negri label as post-Taylorist Toyotism. The state has become in many instances a hindrance to oligarchic/corporate expansion, and the rhizomic mushrooming of corporations, interlocking directorships, shadow companies and other organizations, has reflected state constraints but also creative ways of escaping them and the revenues which states had been able to command. Organized extra- and trans-state oligarchic and corporate orders gathered an increasing political significance (as a function of their economic power and other influence), their organizations operating as independent political structures *without* a dependent population (apart from shareholders whose interests are thoroughly in accord with oligarchic and corporate self-interest). This key difference from state polities (which must enter into some kind of social contract with their populations, a key aspect of state promulgated nationalist ideologies), as these have hitherto developed, results in a relative lack of concern for populations except as consumers. Corporations are more or less immune from populist social demands and likely to be little interested in long-term programmes of social development that do not serve oligarchic and corporate self-interest. Rather, their approach is more in the direction of charitable assistance. The USA is an example. In many ways, it can be described as an oligarchic state par excellence whose charitable foundations are the key institutions of public support but intensely tuned to oligarchic/corporate interest. The privatization of public–state programmes in the contemporary era of corporate dominance over the state or release from state constraint is not merely a means for opening avenues of capital expansion but constitutes a way of increasing the indebtedness of populations (which, of course, is a major form of political and social control). In addition, it removes the capacity of populations to politically challenge corporations (especially in contexts where there are either no or weak unions), indeed the democratic possibility of the mass (or multitude as Hardt and Negri, 2004, following Marx would say) is dramatically reduced. While oligarchies and corporations may have some interest in controlling populations, their capacity to move outside the state (and effect shifts in state orders – to corporatize them) paradoxically

can – at least in the short-term – be an effective means of subordinating the mass to oligarchic and corporate control.

So I am arguing that the growing independence of oligarchies and corporations from state control is producing a change in the state form. I am also suggesting that the nature of oligarchic and corporate orders is also changing. They are assuming increasingly state-like potencies but without the obligations of states. They are the global state form – states without borders and in many ways not reducible to notions of the state born in a history of nation-state formation.

CORPORATE AND OLIGARCHIC STATE EFFECTS: THE PRESENT IN THE PAST AND CONTEMPORARY MUTATIONS

The modern transnational corporation and aspects of a global oligarchic power were prefigured in the trading companies of the largely northern European colonial and imperial expansions from the 16th century onward. They acted like predatory states with virtually no moral obligations except to make money. In this they were much like modern corporations (see Bakan, 2004). But brought within state regulative control they assumed a clear state, often bureaucratic, form, effectively parallel states.⁴ This is evident in the British East India Company, the British West Africa Company and, of course, the British South Africa Company that in southern Africa was virtually the state (or a state within a state) right through to the end of colonial rule and after. The mining companies of southern Africa operated in a socially constitutive way, creating a society within the society of the encompassing colonial state.⁵

Contemporary corporate/oligarchic activity continues patterns that were evident in the colonial era (as Ho, 2004, stresses in the context of the World Trade Center attacks). They are involved in the creation of mobile global elites and simultaneously what could be called a global working class. Perhaps Marx is more relevant today than ever before as far as the creation of class relations is concerned – a point that Hardt and Negri (2004) optimistically elaborate upon and indicate in their development of the concept of the multitude. My own view is that this multitude is much weaker than in earlier eras. It is highly fragmented and much more vulnerable (see Kapferer, 2002). It is relatively powerless before the coherent organized and often socially cocooned elites sponsored by company oligarchies.

A major distinction from the past in the present is that corporations and trading oligarchies were largely based in the nation-state, empowered by it as they were ultimately regulated by it. Fundamentally, they were formations of the state or nation-state (the freebooting extension of the state that acted as if it were independent) that operated a state-like bureaucratic system which continued through into postcolonial state orders. Acting apparently independently of the state, they were not bound by state legitimating moralities or inter-state diplomatic arrangements but were the under cover of the state, acting in its interests.

In the current context the situation is almost reversed. Nation-states are becoming the instrumentality of oligarchic empires and corporations. (The influence of News Corp and Fox is one example but there are many other less publicly visible examples.) These, as I have said, are not only independent of states (are deterritorialized states) but have a state form all their own, managerial rather than bureaucratic, with a tension to person-centred autocracy stressing flexibility rather than rule-driven impersonality (Sennett,

2000). Moreover, the modern state (the nation-state) is transforming in the corporate direction rather than the other way around, as in the past.

Corporate forms and practice are being fused with state processes so that the state itself is taking a corporate shape as well as a more overt oligarchic political form. The Hobbesian idea of the state (as mediating between rival groups and in a contractual relation to society) is in retreat. The Singapore model is becoming more evident in the sense that state forms and practice are becoming modelled after corporate organizational/management ideals.⁶ This was the potential in the very beginnings of the USA and integral to its already established distinction from the monarchical bureaucratic centralized states of Europe. The individualist and oligarchic tendencies were explored early by De Tocqueville and provoked the excitement of the anarchist Kropotkin (1993 [1898]), who appreciated the individualist and oligarchic autonomy (and what he recognized as their innovative and creative flexibility) and the effectively anti-nation-state direction of America. The USA might be considered the modern and postmodern exemplar of the oligarchic state, though territorialized. Another example of contemporary oligarchic state formation is the European Community. It is a transitional form sharing some of the territorializing dimensions of the nation-state with the deterritorializing encompassing shape of the corporate state form. Its much commented upon bureaucracy, I suggest, is a hybrid elaborating around new managerial practices (Shore, 2000). Overall the newly emergent corporate state recognizes far more thoroughly than in the past the economic as the political. The market is its transcendent ideal and gives it ontological direction. This direction has minimal interest in either control over persons (except through the dictates of the market) or control over territory (other than that 'territory' defined by consumption).

I should add that the imperialism that is generated from Hobbesian state processes is distinct from what could be described as the imperialism of the corporate state. The imperialism of the former involves an expansion of the boundaries of sovereign territory (Queen Victoria becomes the Empress of India). The imperialism of the corporate state respects no boundaries, is trans-territorial and denies sovereignty of any territorial kind, operating primarily a logic of control (of the market) rather than a logic of rule (of power over persons and populations).

The discourse of globalization is, I suggest, imbued with the logic of corporate control and can be conceived of as unfolding an ideology related to the emergence of the imperialism of corporate state forms. The fledgling organizations of control (e.g. the World Economic Forum at Davos, the G8) of the new corporate imperialism are in neutral political state territorial zones (Davos as a site is qualitatively distinct from Geneva) or else is shifted between different urban centres of economic articulation so that none is given political pre-eminence over that defined in economic terms. It is worthwhile contemplating the symbolism of Davos as distinct from Geneva and also Brussels. Brussels, as the centre of the European Community, betrays its birth within a state political imagination, the European Community being transitional between the nation-state and corporate state forms. Davos eschews completely the image of the bureaucratic nation-state. It is located in a veritable oligarchic skiing playground for the families of the rich. Not only is this an expanded version of modern, largely corporate, gated communities but also it is potent with the image of sport and play, key metaphors of corporate managerial logics.

The nationalism of the oligarchic/corporate state

Oligarchies (contemporary ones that create the social on the basis of economic organization in relation to the market) have an associated mythos that is increasingly delocalized. They might be described as alienated dislocated forms. Superficially they bear some similarity to nation-state ideologies, with the critical difference that they are not territorialized. They have kinship, religious and communitarian aspects but are generalized in an open space without borders. Their character is akin to product loyalty, the territory that they define marks out a space of consumption as a way of existence or life that can be shared across great differences in actual social and cultural practice. Religion, the community, the family become products for consumption (e.g. evangelist preaching, new pentecostalist movements such as Hillsong in Australia and in Europe)⁷ and exist chiefly as a product, virtually a fantasy, that can only be truly lived in the space of the product.

The USA as the wellspring of oligarchic nationalism provides numerous examples. The well-known discussions on Disneyfication or McDonaldisation provide some illustration. The ideological development of the family in the USA was a conscious state-supported effort to forge a national unity among an extraordinarily diverse immigrant population. Corporations were at the forefront, advertising agencies being strongly influenced by Freudian subliminal theories (see BBC Documentary, *Centuries of the Self*). The national ideology of the family (iconic with one definitional aspect of oligarchic power) is an alienated virtual fantasy space lived perhaps most concretely in the roadside diner or the larger company chains (McDonalds, Cracker Barrel and so on). Peter Weir's film *The Truman Show* gives a marvellous sense of a global all-encompassing family-centred oligarchic-controlled cosmic possibility. Whereas state-nationalism centred and opposed populations on the basis of a territorialized national cultural difference, oligarchic nationalism decentres, deterritorializes yet unifies populations in relation to corporate generated totalities and values. In the latter, culture is created through consumption, labile and moveable, whereas in the former culture is embedded, essential, and grounded.

It might be added here that in the emergence of corporate state forms, what was once public space held in the larger public interest is made into corporate space. Paradoxically that which was common (the Commons) is transmuted into corporate territory and given back to the public as part of corporate largesse. The nation-state – even if only ideologically – protected the public interest, the commons as public right. The corporations capture or create 'public space' (often making it internal to the corporation, a right of the corporation) and link it with what I have already referred to as the charitable practice of binding populations in the moral economy of the gift.

The ideologies and practice of oligarchic state forces not only contribute to what some might identify as a growing tide of popular conservatism (intensifying processes of alienation) but also constitute a new structuring of power bolstering the capacity of corporations to define the society of populations and to simultaneously politically tighten their grip over them. Outside the USA, the corporate and oligarchic invasion of the once public sphere is everywhere in evidence from attacks on institutions concerned with the redistribution of social justice (education, health, social security) to the privatization of a vast array of public services.

The oligarchic state as an alternative to the nation-state (and certainly subversive of it) was implicitly expressed in an interview on Fox News with Shimon Peres concerning

the transfer of Gaza to Palestinian control. Shimon Peres (interview, Fox News, 10 April 2005) recommended (echoing US policy in Iraq) that corporations should take over the task of development and socio-economic reconstruction. In other words, the Palestinian state should not be a nation-state but an oligarchic state in which corporations should take the key roles. The idea is undoubtedly encouraged in the vision of Palestinians as fragmented by kinship and lineage (a factor that often seems to be the understanding behind the failure to achieve unity, ignoring the fragmenting, overweening power of the Israeli state) and thus suited to oligarchic/corporate political forms. These, as I have said, are by and large antithetical to the nation-state as an institution of regulation and distribution (factors that might provide for the social-political unity of the state against Israel).

A NEW STATE FORM

The emergence of what I have described as the oligarchic corporate state is a relatively new form, as too are corporate orders powerful enough to work independently of state regulation and controls. The nation-state may be in decline but it is giving way to a relatively original state order or political/economic formation with multiple state-like effects that is able to act in ways systemic with deterritorializing global processes. What I have labelled the corporate state and the emergence of corporations with state-like effects was developed in the context of nation-states, but through breaking free of state constraints or coming into control of state apparatuses new exploitative possibilities are opened. The corporate apotheosis is already indicating effects reflected in growing poverty, failures in public facilities, and an increased sense of insecurity – dimensions of Beck's (1992) 'risk society'. The issue of public order, the Hobbesian legitimation behind the nation-state, has been transformed into the problem of security. This is increasingly a private matter and has been corporatized. Security and surveillance have become a major concern for the corporate state, in many ways a means for protecting ruling interests against the public.

If the nation-state frequently abused the rights of its citizens, this is now a strong potential of the corporate state, which both privatizes the means for violence and turns the greater violent power of economically dominant groups against the general citizenry. State violence takes a new oligarchic and corporate form. The nation-state is ceding the monopoly of violence as embodied in the military increasingly to private corporations, as Singer (2003) demonstrates. Corporations guard or secure themselves against the public, which suggests a vision of the mass that accords with the most abject visions of the essential baseness of humankind (sometimes attributed to Hobbes but vital in the most dismal economic thinking). If we are in a risk society it is now also a society of intense suspicion. I suggest that this is not so much a consequence of the so-called War on Terror but generated in the very dynamic of the growth of the corporate state whose logic is founded in a dialectic of competition, control and self-protection.

Corporatization and, of course, the capitalist ethos which it further impels and transmutes, is founded in a discourse of desire and envy. The current stress in some scholarly areas on the larger political relevance of a psychoanalysis of desire, insightful as it undoubtedly is, is also organic to a contemporary rise of oligarchic and corporate power. The War on Terror is to a great extent fuelled in the formation of the corporate state whose participants both present themselves as objects of desire and of envy and who

must be protected – such protection, of course, becoming itself a product for consumption and profit.

The nation-state was incorporative (often oppressively so), creating public order in a society of the state. The corporate state is oriented differently. It is not concerned to totalize society or to provide uniform regimes of order. The problem of order is resolved not by ordering the mass into a relatively static whole but rather by retreating from it, enclaving and guarding against the dangers of the mass at large. The corporate state is oriented to the creation of micro social orders of total control highly adapted to a social world premised on movement and displacement in which the social is always in the process of being reconstituted, often as a direct result of oligarchic and corporate action. If the nation-state gave rise to the impossible paradox of society against the state, the corporate state escapes such a paradox by sealing off spaces where persons must submit to control as a condition of access and participation in them from other spaces in which control is more open.

Human beings are made to choose continually between relatively open and closed social, political and economic worlds. As in nation-states, but motivated in different ideological commitments (which often accentuate individual freedom and which are antagonistic to government or ‘big government’), populations are being made complicit in their own domination, engaged in the acts of making choices between personal freedom and control – choices that they have little opportunity to avoid and which are oriented in the direction of willing submission.

A somewhat stark example is Iraq. This is becoming a corporate state par excellence, certainly distinct from the totalitarianism of Saddam Hussein. More a system of distributed totalitarian enclaves in which the citizenry is routinely given the choice – a choice that is more or less impossible to refuse – to forego personal freedoms in order to gain access to the means of survival. Moreover, the public is engaged in its own control and surveillance (the BBC reports that Iraqis engaged in security work, now the main employment, outnumber the occupying troops). This self-policing is a feature that scholars following Foucault describe as governmentality. Developed as part of nation-state systems, it is at least as crucial to what I am calling the corporate state and its rather distinct processes of ordering.

The post-imperial or postcolonial peripheries have become regions where the violence of the state against society as a function of oligarchic and corporatizing processes is apparent. West Africa is conceived as a region where the nation-state appears to be in collapse. This is often seen as a consequence of traditionalizing forces – the big man complex, clientalism and so on (see Bayart, 1999; Chabal and Deloz, 1999). If so, these were conditioned and made anew in the context of the Indirect Rule of colonialism, as I have described, a kind of corporate state in the making which encouraged self-rule through corporate-like groups, those based in kinship, ethnicity and religion focused around key patrons. The nation-state that took form had an intense oligarchic and corporate possibility already locked into it (a fact that is evident across a great number of states formed in the wake of colonialism). The unequal encounter with new corporate expansion from Europe and North America especially has exacerbated the situation, accelerating the corporate enclaving (often along kinship, religious, and ethnic lines) and a violence of protection and also extortion. The point is that the violence at the periphery is not a mere fact of the failure of state orders, nor of traditionalism, but of the

appearance of new forms of ordering practice that are part of the modern emergence of the corporate state.

A CONCLUDING COMMENT: GEERTZ AND THE STATE

Clifford Geertz has recently, in his now accustomed imperious essayist style, argued that recent historical developments demand a reconception of common approaches to the state and sovereignty:

... 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 Macchiavelli; less the imposition of sovereign monopoly, more the cultivation of the higher expediency; less the exercise of abstract will, more the pursuit of advantage. (Geertz, 2004: 580)

Here Geertz, writing from within the socio-political order of the most powerful oligarchic-corporate state of today, advises an anthropology of the state that could hardly be more perfectly ideologically attuned to contemporary formations of Real Politik. As so often before, Geertz has caught aspects of the increasingly dominant political sense but in a spirit of endorsement rather than critique. Anthropology from within the dominant native's point of view. He catches, as do all ideologists, some of the vital aspects of what I have been presenting.

Certainly there is a shift from Hobbesian state formations (centralized, monarchical, territorialized nation-states) and orderings of socio-political and economic power to those perhaps more Macchiavellian in operation. Macchiavelli wrote in the context of Italian city-states, powerful units of a distinctly oligarchic-corporate kind, and drew much of his inspiration through the analysis of the oligarchic-corporate struggles that characterized Republican and early Imperial Rome. Expediency and the pursuit of advantage are ruling spirits of oligarchs and corporate leaders alike, to be instilled and taught (as Macchiavelli intended for his Prince) rather than inbred (more appropriate to the Hobbesian vision). I note that airport bookshops are stocked with edifying books for aspiring corporate leaders, which draw on the expeditious exploits of the likes of Sun Tzu and Genghis Khan. My current favourite is Wess Roberts' *Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun* (Time Warner Quick Reads). The advertising promotion states that the author 'draws from the imagined thoughts of one of history's most effective and least beloved leaders, Attila the Hun, to discover leadership principles you can apply to your own situation' (Amazon.com). Dale Carnegie, move over!

Geertz suggests a less remote vision of the state; one that is more socially embedded, produced in, as it is productive of, a more chaotic social reality. Here he pushes a view that fits with that North American postmodern anthropology with which he aligns himself, which he cites approvingly, and which in many ways he inspired. Thus he distances himself from an ordered, systematized idea of Society appropriate to Hobbesian nation-state conceptions. No less ideological, Geertz's directive for an anthropology of the state is organic with what I have described as oligarchic-corporate state and state-like organizations of controlling power.

What I have outlined as contemporary oligarchic-corporate formations of power, of which the USA is only one particularly commanding example, engage an ideology of deregulation, freedom and so on to the practice of control, albeit of a different kind from that conventionally associated with nation-states. If the Hobbesian idea of the state is remote then this is also, although distinctly, a dimension of oligarchic-corporate structurings of power that seal off their domains of control and reduce the degree to which the general population can participate in their deliberations. The territorial forces of nation-states are being actively deconstructed in the re-territorializing moves of oligarchic-corporate machineries of power, or of nation-states-becoming-oligarchic-corporations. This is a feature of developments in some areas of Africa. It is a major dimension of moves in east Asia where the controlled oligarchic-corporate transformation of China is establishing harder boundaries and challenges (as in the current wave of apparently orchestrated rioting against Japan) to the predatory and penetrative power of competing oligarchic-corporate states. What looks like a continuation of old nationalisms may also be demonstrating new parameters (which has parallel in the USA) linked to the expansion (and consumption) of the product and carrying with it new potentialities for violence.

What Geertz and others assert as the confusions and chaotic socio-political processes of embedded state and state-like dynamics of power are no more true today than they were in the past. However, they have certain distinct characteristics that demand a critical exploration of the relatively original formations of power and of the state which are taking shape and which have direct relation to widespread confusions and uncertainties. This is important not just for an anthropological discourse on the state but for an anthropology that should be more than aware of the ideological grounds of many of its methodological pronouncements.

Notes

- 1 Clearly corporations are not states in the conventional sense of a complex of governing institutions which hold sway over territorially defined populations. However, many have state-effects in the senses that Trouillot has outlined. But I am also suggesting that there are developments in corporate control and organization that are taking on a firmer state dimension. This is so in their appropriation of domains of public space and service, previously in control of states, through which state-governing institutions exercised control and regulation of populations. Also I am pointing to the increasing determination of state policies by corporations and, as well, the formation of transnational or transterritorial organizational structures in which corporate alliances (often involving governments as well) are beginning to have major force over the life-chances of populations.
- 2 The development of modernity, especially in Europe and North America, is frequently described in terms of a growth in individualism often associated with a coming to dominance of an egalitarian and increasingly secular ethos. The development of the modern corporation – which seems to feed on an ideology of individualism and free choice – is a major contradiction of such ideological value, enjoining a disciplinary conformity of its members and a subordination of their will to the project of the corporate whole. This whole is not the sum of its collective parts, but a totality in itself that is defined by its capacity to generate profit.

- 3 I refer to their extreme vulnerability to factionalism often along familial lines. In this regard it is interesting to watch developments concerning the succession in Rupert Murdoch's NewsCorp which manifests a high fissile potentiality.
- 4 They were, in effect, incorporated within the state. Their often dramatic fiscal failures enabled states to take them over. Of course, the agents of the trading companies had heavily engaged the political interests of the state in their operations and the takeovers were largely a formalization of the state-political controls that were already integral in operations that had the open appearance of being independent.
- 5 In South Africa and in Zambia the domains controlled by the mining companies were extremely tightly controlled, more regulated and far more autocratic than even the colonial orders within which they were embedded and upon which they were dependent.
- 6 The managerialization of state bureaucracies subverts conventional bureaucratic hierarchies' command and promotional structures. On the surface this may increase participation, for example, in decision-making (this and flexibility being its ideological justification). However, the effect is to circumvent the power of bureaucrats (which is a dimension of their alleged inefficiency and slowness) as it may concentrate power in particular individuals which, nonetheless, is always limited or subject to results as these are defined in terms of the overall objectives of the corporate or corporatized organization. The limitation of the power of state-institutional/corporatized functionaries (expressed in higher rates of turnover in key managerial positions) reduces their capacity to impede the power of those oligarchic interests or groups who exercise control through access to and command over state instrumentalities. I am suggesting that the state in its corporatization is not only changing but increasing its power ultimately in oligarchic interest.
- 7 Recent fieldwork by Judith Kapferer and myself among new Pentecostal churches in Australia indicates their powerful corporative and secretive/surveillance nature. Their growing alliance with the corporatizing state of the current Prime Minister John Howard is noteworthy. What is often described as the growing Christian religious fundamentalism in the USA and in Australia has a powerful corporate dimension to it. There is a degree of identity between the corporate structure of some of the relatively new evangelizing church congregations and the corporate/managerial style of government.

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