RETHINKING THE COLONIAL STATE

POLITICAL POWER AND SOCIAL THEORY

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SERIES EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to present this special volume of PPST, "Rethinking the Colonial State." Derived partly from papers given at a conference and a workshop held at the University of Copenhagen, this volume helps us reconsider an otherwise elusive object of historical, social, and political analysis. We at PPST are honored that the co-editors, Søren Ivarsson and Søren Rud, have chosen us to publish this collection. Thanks to them and to the authors for the contributions.

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Julian Go
April 2017
Boston, MA

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RETHINKING THE COLONIAL STATE: CONFIGURATIONS OF POWER, VIOLENCE, AND AGENCY

Søren Ivarsson and Søren Rud

ABSTRACT

The main theme of this special volume is the colonial state and its governmental practices. This chapter introduces and contextualizes the contributions by providing a brief induction to recent developments within the study of the colonial state. It then presents the contributions under three perspectives which represent separate yet interrelated themes relevant for the understanding of the colonial state: practices, violence, and agency. Hereby, we also accentuate the value of a non-state-centric approach to the analysis of the colonial state.

Keywords: Colonial state; historiography; practices; violence; agency

In the language of many contemporary political and sociological observers, the concepts "collapsed states," "failed states," "fragile states," and "weak states" denote the various types and degrees of lack or inadequate ability of nation-states to live up to the expected qualities. Scholars tend to draw on discourses of "state failure" that suggest that failures to provide services or uphold control and stability are indicative of the states' unsuccessfulness (Eriksen, 2011, pp. 230−234). The emergence and growing obtrusiveness of international

terrorism has given rise to increased attention to the dangers associated with state failure.

Many of the states perceived to deviate, by being collapsed, failed, fragile, or weak, are also postcolonial states. Indeed, postcolonial scholars have — from an early point — reflected upon and analyzed the effects and legacy of the colonial state. In an interview given in 2007, Chatterjee, for example, notes that the dissatisfaction with the repressive nature of the postcolonial state in India led (Subaltern Studies) scholars to reflect upon the conceptual and institutional legacy of the colonial state (Chatterjee, 2007). One of the features often identified by scholars of colonial governance is the coercive nature of the practices of governance enacted by the colonial state (Chatterjee, 1993; Guha, 1997; Prakash, 1999).

From the image of coercive colonial states lacking the ability or will/intent to enact rule through the governmental practices and institutions that characterized Western states flows the image of underdeveloped and failed postcolonial states (see, e.g., Herbst, 1996-1997, 2000; Milliken, 2003; Rotberg, 2003, 2004). In the same vein, political scientist Stein Sundstøl Eriksen basically sees the "low-trust environment of weak post-colonial states" as a function of the derivations from the deficient colonial state when measured against the Western model of the state: for example, the limited infrastructural power, the lack of popular sovereignty, and the autonomy of local leaders (Eriksen, 2011, pp. 240−242).

In a chapter in a recent handbook on state formation and transformation, sociologist Matthew Lange (2015) suggests a simple equation: the states of former indirectly ruled colonies are commonly fissiparous and decentralized with limited infrastructural power and limited bureaucratization, whereas former directly ruled colonies has generally evolved into less fissiparous more bureaucratic states with more infrastructural power, and the capacity to follow developmental policies. In this manner, the political form of colonial rule is typically brought forward as the master explicator for the trajectories of postcolonial forms of the state.

The distinction between direct and indirect forms of colonial rule may be relevant in relation to understanding postcolonial states — for example, their effectiveness, their embeddedness in local society, or their degree of bureaucratization. Such a perspective, however, is not without problems. As Julian Go has noted in a review of another of Lange's publications, such a narrow focus on the forms of colonial rule — direct or indirect — neglects potential influence from other causes like, for example, the specificities of available natural resources and their impact on state development (Go, 2010). Likewise, in this volume, Zophia Edwards shows how the power of local labor movements needs to be taken into account as an explanatory factor that forced the colonial state to implement reforms that increased state capacity. In doing so, Edwards accentuates the role of local agency in understanding the colonial state's capacity. Further, from a historical and anthropological point of view, the

colonial states, and the diversity of forms and practices, merit more attention than the direct−indirect distinction can reveal. As John Comaroff observed: "to speak of the Raj, at the height of its elaboration, in the same breath as the administrations of, say, Lesotho or Zanzibar is not unlike treating an elephant, an emu, and an egret as the same kind of creature because they are all animals" (1998, p. 336).

The varied types of colonial state formation over time and space should caution us against establishing images of easily identified generic entities. Yet, in spite of the great variations, the colonial state as a target of analysis generally represents a number of interesting challenge; not least because, as it is often stressed, the colonial state, by definition, lacks some of the markers of modern stateness, which lie at the heart of its Western definition.

In his study of the African colonial state in comparative perspective, Crawford Young identifies three attributes of stateness lacking in colonial states. First, the colonial state is a state without sovereignty. The very nature of being colonial constitutes a degree of dependency upon the colonizing, metropolitan state. Second, unlike modern nation states, the colonial state was not built around the idea of a nation − rather, nationalism (in the form of anticolonial resistance) was perceived as a dangerous threat to the colonial state. Finally, the colonial state was not recognized as an actor on the international scene (Young, 1997, p. 43).[1]

However maintaining a simple dichotomy between the model of origin in the metropole and the deviant model of lack in the colonies entails the risk of blocking a more detailed understanding of the complexities of state formation in a colonial setting. It is important to remember, as Daniel Neep notes in his study of the colonial state in Syria, that "colonial states may be colonial, but they are also states" (2012, p. 2). That is, instead of simply conceptualizing the colonial state as an anachronistic and deviant form of a Western model caught in-between traditional and modern forms of stateness, we should engage seriously in analyzing and understanding the specificities of how various mundane practices produces the colonial state − as both a material practice and an imagined entity. Through a more nuanced understanding of the workings of state in colonial settings, we may also reach a more nuanced understanding of the nature of the post-colonial state in the present. In the same vein as Edmund Burke has noted with reference to colonial and post-colonial histories in general: "Unless we re-imagine colonial history as existing in its own right, apart from the progress-oriented narratives that have operated until now, we will be unable to gain much intellectual understanding of post-colonial histories" (Burke, 1998, p. 16).

With this chapter we introduce and contextualize the contributions to this volume. What ties them together is their interest in analyzing the colonial state and its governmental practices in its own right. Furthermore, as the following will make clear, the contributions point to a nascent tendency to apply non-state-centric approaches to the analysis of the colonial state which

hitherto has been dominated by classical state theory and accordingly characterized by its otherness.

Following a brief induction to some recent developments within the field, we present three perspectives which represent separate yet interrelated themes relevant for the understanding of the colonial state: practices, violence, and agency. In the section, "Practicing the Colonial State" we show how the late work of Michel Foucault can provide a fruitful background for engaging with various state-building practices in colonial settings. In the section, "Colonial Violence" we aim to show that in spite of their often coercive nature colonial states were not necessarily malfunctioning or weak states. Rather, what appears to be random and unstate-like acts of violence were often part and parcel of specific state-building processes. Finally, in the section "Agency and the Colonial State" we address the importance of local resistance and agency in relation to colonial state.

THE COLONIAL STATE AS A FIELD

In the last decades of the 20th century, the state as an object of analysis has constituted a very dynamic academic field encompassing a broad variety of academic traditions. Studies like Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol's anthology *Bringing the State Back In*, marked an effort to bring the state back as an analytical category in studies of political and social conditions (Evans, Rueschemeyer, & Skocpol, 1985). A common feature of the state-centric approach (neo-statism) is that the state acts as an independent actor, not just in service of the economy or civil society, and that the state is perceived as a unit that is clearly separated from society. Other state-centric approaches include Michael Mann's writings on the autonomous power of the state as a product of the usefulness of enhanced territorial-centralization to social life in general (1984), Charles Tilly's theory of state-making, revolving around the intimate link between war and state formation and of the state as "protection racket" (1985, 1990), and Anthony Giddens' conceptualization of the nation-state as a "bordered power container" linked with control of the means of violence and effective surveillance of society (1987).

However, a number of challenges to such state-centric perspective soon emerged. One important challenge came about in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, when Pierre Bourdieu began focusing on the nature of the modern state (Bourdieu, 2014; Bourdieu, Wacquant, & Farage, 1994; Wacquant, 1993). This focus is reflected in a number of contemporary texts, but is even clearer after Bourdieu's lectures at Collège de France have begun to be released. With his analytical approach, Bourdieu wanted to do away with both the classic conception of the state − as a neutral entity that serves the public good − and with the Marxist mirror image of this perception − the

state as an oppressive institution whose legitimacy is rooted in an ideological apparatus (Althusser, 1971) or a hegemonic condition (Gramsci, 1971). According to Bourdieu, both these positions lacked to examine the structures and mechanisms that produce such conditions. Hereby, Bourdieu also wanted to provide an alternative to the already mentioned "Bringing the State Back In" − wave, which relaunched the state as a unitary entity. Thus, Bourdieu asked rhetorically: "what if the state was nothing but a word, upheld by collective belief? A word which contributes to making us believe in the existence and unity of this scattered and divided ensemble of organs of rule […]" (Wacquant, 1993, p. 41).

For Bourdieu, the state constituted a bureaucratic field marked by struggles between different groups for various forms of capital (symbolic, cultural, and social as well as economic). With this conceptualization of the state as a field, Bourdieu distanced himself not only from a perception of the state as a unit but also from a perception of the state as an unequivocal historical subject. For Bourdieu, the concept "state" was simply a "stenographic designation" for something, which is, in fact, marked by tensions and conflicts − not an unambiguous unit (Wacquant, 1993, p. 41). In accordance with this idea, Bourdieu wanted to analyze the strategies by which those who have put themselves in a dominant position by creating the state − the state nobility − has secured a monopoly on defining and promoting the interests of society. In Bourdieu's words, the state nobility "gradually built up this thing we call the state, that is, a set of specific resources that authorizes its possessors to say what is good for the social world as a whole, to proclaim the official and to pronounce words that are in fact orders, because they are backed by the force of the official" (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 33). Thus, Bourdieu perceived the "state" as the place where *nomos* − the fundamental and dominant principle that governs practices and experience in a field − is constituted (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 10; Wacquant, 1993, p. 42). Hereby, the mythical entity of the state, which ultimately exists through the collective belief in its existence, becomes the author of pre-reflexive principles of classification and thinking. In this manner, Bourdieu emphasizes how what we refer to as the state comes into being through concrete discursive patterns and practices, all of which points back to the "state" as a source of symbolic capital.

In spite of this widespread interest for the state, theorists and historians have, as George Steinmetz notes, "been slow to recognize the uniqueness or even the existence of the colonial state" (2007, p. 27). In his innovative and highly influential book *The Devil's Handwriting*, Steinmetz pioneered the replanting of Bourdieu's perspective to the colonial setting. Steinmetz argued for the importance of analyzing the colonial state, by highlighting its specificity and independence, from metropolitan as well as local interests. Tiny European staffs relatively unhindered by structural pressures meant that "a single official could have enormous impact on the direction of policy" (Steinmetz, 2007, p. 31).

According to Steinmetz, explanations of colonialism's diverse forms within the disciplines of political science, sociology, and history have emphasized the role of socioeconomic and material determinants. In neo-Marxist approaches, the state's principal role is to organize the "long-term political interests" of dominant social classes, and accordingly the "state constitutes the political unity of the dominant classes" (Poulantzas, 1978, p. 127). However, Steinmetz noted that structuralist neo-Marxist analysis of the colonial state, such as Berman and Lonsdale's *Unhappy Valley* (Berman & Lonsdale, 1992) fails to recognize that colonies generated specific class structures rather than mirrored metropolitan power configurations (Steinmetz, 2007, p. 20).

Steinmetz takes up the lead from Bourdieu, insisting, however, on the specificity of the colonial state, claiming that colonial states were ethnographic states. Accordingly, he analyzes the colonial state as a field in which colonial officials were engaged in a competitive struggle for recognition through ethnographic knowledge. Moreover, informed by Bourdieu's work on the state, Steinmetz sees the colonial state as a stage for an exaggerated version of the class struggle between German elite social groups in which ethnographic sagacity was the common currency. This specificity of the colonial state meant that, unlike its metropolitan counterpart, it "was compelled to focus on native policy, and this placed a premium on claims to ethnographic acuity" (Steinmetz, 2007, pp. 52−53).

The link between ethnographic knowledge about native society − for example, customs, religion, and law − and colonial rule is, of course, a classic theme in the literature on colonial projects. Notable examples include Cohn's (1996) classic study of the investigative modalities in relation to British colonial rule in India, Burke's (2014) coining of the "colonial archive" and the "ethnographic state" in relation to French rule in Morocco, or Goh's (2007) transcribing ethnographer-official who encapsulates the close links between ethnographic discourse and colonial state formation.

While these in different ways focus on aspects of the links between ethnography and the colonial state, Steinmetz has utilized analytical tools used by Bourdieu when he deals with ethnographic knowledge in relation to the battle amongst actors in the bureaucratic field. While Bourdieu's field theory has also been applied fruitfully to conceptualize the global arena and empires (Buchholz, 2016; Go, 2008), the application of a Bourdieusian theoretical apparatus to studies of colonial situations is still a nascent field and is not reflected in the contributions to this volume.[2]

PRACTICING THE COLONIAL STATE

In many ways the presented Bourdieusian perspective belongs to a wider tendency, which over the last 20 years has put a rethinking of the state on the

agenda. Researchers from different fields have, under keywords like "state effect" (Mitchell, 1991, 1999), "maddening states" (Aretxaga, 2003), "imagined state," and "states of imagination" (Hansen & Stepputat, 2001) challenged the state-centric understanding. This rethinking has not dealt with the state as an institution, but rather with the processes that make the state appear as a unit and as a social force in everyday life.

Approaches within this tradition focus on analyzing the order and meaning-generating practices that are helping to shape and preserve the impression of a social order consisting of state and civil society. This shift in attention from a government's power center to processes that create a state illusion or effect moves attention away from the bureaucratic apparatus to everyday life practices. From this follows an understanding of the state as an effect of everyday practices that organize people and space. From such practices, the state arises as an open field with multiple boundaries, without being stable and institutionally or geographically anchored. One can say that it is the local (order-creating) practices and the thickening of these which constitute the state's existence, not the other way around.

The work of Foucault has had significant influence on the development of a decentralized understanding of the state. While Foucault (2008, pp. 76−77) claimed that he did "do without a theory of the state, as one can do and must forego an indigestible meal" he explained that his investigations had concerned the "continuous takeover of by the state of a number of practices, ways of doing things, and, if you like, governmentalities." As Lemke (2012, p. 40) has remarked Foucault's shift to practices, strategies, and technologies does certainly not constitute "a light meal." Thus, Foucault analyzed the historical process through which the state came to authorize and coordinate certain forms of power. Following from this work springs an image of the state as a circulation point for decentralized power technologies and practices.

A vast literature has emerged around the concepts of biopower, biopolitics, and governmentality which proliferated in Foucault later work. These concepts predominantly belong to a period in Foucault's work in which he aimed to write the genealogy of the modern state in order to challenge the dominating notions about the nature of governmental control over the population. The studies founded in these concepts can accordingly be understood as drawing on a Foucauldian approach to the state or, perhaps rather, *state practices*. As Valverde (2008, p. 18) has stated: "[…] it is the practices that are regarded as primary objects of analysis, with the state, correctional institutions, and medical institutions being regarded as coagulations of practices."

While Said (1978) was instrumental in introducing Foucault's thinking to colonial studies, he primarily focused on the concept of discourse and the power-knowledge complex. The colonial state was indeed rather absent in the field of postcolonial studies inspired by Said's work. Since the mid-1990s, however, an important aspect of inquiry within the postcolonial scholarly field has been informed by the Foucauldian concept of governmentality and the question

of whether, how, and to which extent the forms of power found by Foucault to be characteristic of western modernity was at play in the colonies.

David Scott and Nicholas Thomas were among the first to implement the Foucauldian notion of governmentality in the study of colonialism. First and foremost the concepts of colonial governmentality marked a turn away from the one-dimensional understanding of colonialism. Thomas (1994) insisted on abandoning the idea of colonialism in the singular in favor of a recognition of wide spanning diversity between various colonial projects. Scott (1995) insisted, against Chatterjee's (1993) important formulation of the racial nature of colonialism as "rule of difference," on the importance of recognizing temporality in regards to colonialism.

In his influential book *Colonialism in Question*, however, Cooper (2005, p. 20) criticizes this use of Foucault's concept of governmentality stating that it "locates modern governmentality in a space that is amorphous in time and amorphous in agency and causality." Cooper launched this critique as part of a wide-reaching attack claiming that the postcolonial field (often building on Foucault) has ended up portraying colonization as an ugly reflection of modernity – as a vaguely defined metahistory rather than actual social situations in which people actually acted (Cooper, 2005, p. 54). According to Cooper (2005, p. 16), "[t]he 'colonial' of postcolonial studies is often the generic one, […] It is spatially diffuse and temporally spreads out over five centuries; its power in determining the present can be asserted even without examining its contours." Accordingly, Cooper urges us to dispel generic conceptualizations of colonialism.

At a more general level, Cooper also argues that the Foucauldian perspectives lead to "epochal fallacy" under which history is seen as a succession of epochs. Relatedly Valverde has critiqued a tendency within studies informed by the Foucauldian approach to generate images of successive epochs characterized by one form of power. However, rather than parting with the perspective, Valverde has emphasized the methodological potential in Foucault's interest in concrete practices and technologies of governance: "[…] many if not most readers missed the radical methodological revolution brought about by focusing on practices of governance rather than quasi-epochal generalizations" (Valverde, 2008, p. 16).

Whereas Cooper, and others, is right in warning against ready-made ideas about the nature of colonial projects, and calling for historically and geographically situated analysis, he tends to overlook the potential in applying a Foucauldian approach to governmental techniques and practices. In our view, some existing studies have in fact produced nuanced insights by targeting colonial governmental practices.

Take, for example, Gyan Prakash's seminal transplantation of the Foucauldian notion of governmentality to the colonial setting in India (1999). Prakash pushed the agenda forward by addressing the way in which the colonial version of governmentality in British India constituted a breach from the

metropolitan version. In Prakash's view, the British could not enact the modern techniques of government characteristic of the West, since they lacked the institutions through which western subjects were formed to comply with certain norms. In other words, Prakash argues, colonial governmentality was more authoritarian. However, this divergence was, in Prakash's view, also what provided the Indian elite with the opportunity to appropriate and reinscribe the techniques of government. In this way, Prakash's analysis highlights a specific configuration of power that breaks with the epochal fallacy and is consistent with the analytics of power relations that Foucault presented during his lectures on governmentality in 1977–1978 (Foucault, 2007).

In these lectures and elsewhere Foucault described the coexistence of three forms of power: sovereignty, discipline, and government. Sovereignty is a power form modeled over the sovereign's power over its subjects within a given territory – specifically the sovereign's right to take life or let live. The law and juridical systems constitute the sovereign power's primary institutions. In Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* he famously contrasted a sovereign form of power which punished through public spectacles of torture and death on the one hand, with a disciplinary power which seeks to mold the soul of the criminal in modern penal institution on the other hand (Foucault, 1979). Foucault found the modern prison to be emblematic of the normative regulation enacted in disciplinary institutions throughout the modern (disciplinary) social world. Finally, the third form of power identified by Foucault – government (or governmentality) – conceptualizes activities which aim to shape the conduct of subjects by affecting their life-worlds and thereby their desires and aspirations. Foucault stressed the interplay between the three forms of power which should not be understood to be replacing each other, one epoch following the other, but rather as mutually supportive: "So we should not see things as the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a society of discipline, and then of a society of discipline by a society, say, of government. In fact we have a triangle: sovereignty, discipline, and governmental management, which has population as its main target and apparatuses of security as its essential mechanism" (Foucault, 2007, pp. 107–108).

Since Foucault, several studies have articulated a similar complex understanding of the configuration of colonial power in which the forms of power identified by Foucault are not taken to belong to separate epochs – rather they coexist in various configurations during the colonial period, which was not always coherent. Such studies illuminate, for example, how penal power formed a central element of colonial governmentality in India in the 19th century (Brown, 2014), how authoritarian, liberal, and humanitarian forms of governmentality were worked out by a variety of actors and coexisted in 19th century Ceylon (Duncan, 2007), and how types of power identified by Foucault were intermeshed in order to making practices in colonial Deli in the first half of the 20th century (Legg, 2007).

Such studies are all attuned to historical and socially specific settings and thus indicative of the potential of further studies, such as those in this volume. Lanny Thompson, Kristoffer Edelgaard Christensen, and Rasmus Sielemann all demonstrate this potential in various ways. With reference to the specificities of the local conditions – protracted warfare and a marked military nature of the state in the Philippines versus the more peaceful conditions in Puerto Rico and a purely civilian state – Thompson highlights the different configurations of power in two different colonies of the United States. In doing so, he historicizes Foucault's triangle of governmentality. While Thompson's contribution involves a comparison of the configurations of power in two colonial contexts, Edelgaard Christensen compares mechanisms of power in the metropole of Denmark with the mechanisms of power in the Danish colony Tranquebar at the end of the 18th century. He argues that his case study portrays a configuration of power in Tranquebar as a more extreme expression of dispositions already operating within metropolitan government. Instead of difference he points to parallels between the two configurations of power. In doing so, Christensen calls for a comparative approach to the analysis of the colonial state that is attentive to similarities and differences, interplay and co-dependence that unfolded within an imperial space.

Finally, Rasmus Sielemann finds traces of governmental power in an unlikely place by analyzing the problematics of colonial government in the slave society of the Danish West Indies in the late 18th century. With his analysis of the slave laws, Sielemann draws our attention to how interventions were increasingly being directed toward a domain of colonial society that was articulated as beyond the legally defined property of the master over his slave. Hereby, he opens up a more complex understanding of colonial government in slave societies. Thus, Thompson, Christensen, and Sielemann all demonstrate that much can be gained by utilizing Foucauldian concepts in regards to analyzing practices of state building in colonial settings.

COLONIAL VIOLENCE

The studies dealt with so far in the introduction focus primarily on techniques and rationalities of power different from the violence and torture associated with sovereign power. Hereby, they offer interesting insights into certain aspects of colonial rule. Still, such perspectives should not divert our attention from the violent and brutal aspects of colonialism. Indeed, for many the ambivalent relationship between the rule of law and widespread use of violence – both in times of war and peace – encapsulates the fundamental defining feature of colonial projects that sets it apart from the workings of sovereignty in non-colonial (European) contexts.[3]

Still, as Neep has observed, postcolonial studies which deal at length with social power in colonial projects and offer interesting insights into certain aspects of colonial rule often remain "mute regarding practices of colonial violence" (Neep, 2012, p. 6). Thus, colonial violence has rarely been addressed as a tool of imperial structure within postcolonial studies. In Neep's view, Foucault's hegemonic position in postcolonial studies has led a keen attentiveness to the productive aspects of modern power. Violence and "military force" on the other hand remains somewhat overlooked as a "direct, blunt and unsophisticated force of the sovereign" which stands in opposition to power: "For Foucault, as for Arendt, power cannot function in the presence of violence" (Neep, 2012, p. 15). One of the problems Neep finds to be associated with this position is that Foucault's perspective "smuggles in Eurocentric notions of linear progression from a state of violence to a state of liberal government" (Neep, 2012, p. 16). Accordingly, these studies build on an implicit evolutionary schema for the development of the state. Here, Neep cautions us against seeing colonial violence as an anachronistic and puzzling exception from liberal government.

Such an understanding of colonial sovereignty as an exception to European standards is embedded in Mbembe's conceptualization of "necropolitics" and "necropower" (Mbembe, 2003). Here, Mbembe twists Foucault's terms "biopolitics" and "biopower" – denoting how power works through the care of life and life-enabling techniques – to emphasize how colonial sovereignty also rested on politics of death or the technologies of control through which life is strategically subjugated to the power of death. Foucault relates to the same politics of death in relation to the Nazi state – but in the sense that the politics of death becomes an exception to the more general features of biopower and biopolitics.

In Mbembe's reading of colonial sovereignty, however, necropoltics and necropower are not exceptions but part and parcel of colonial sovereignty. Drawing on Schmitt (2014 [1921]) and Agamben's (1998) definition of sovereignty as the capacity to declare the exception, Mbembe sees the colony as a "site where sovereignty consists fundamentally in the exercise of a power outside the law" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 23). Therefore, the colony constitutes a "terror formation" or as one example of the "repressed topographies of cruelty" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 40). Colonial sovereignty does not work through life-enabling techniques but through the arbitrary use of brute force under the permanent exception from the rule of common law, and this situation of lawlessness stems from the peculiarities of the colonial state space – not war on other states but on people within the state based upon racial difference.

The theme of the "state of exception" has become a recurrent theme in studies of colonial sovereignty and others have mapped out how race, geography, law, violence, and the state of exception have played out at specific moments in time and space. Studies of punishment in colonial settings, for example, quite commonly identify a state of exception vis-à-vis a European model. Cooper, in

his criticism of the application of Foucauldian concepts and ideas on colonial cases, notes that colonial penology made use of punitive techniques like flogging, collective punishment of villages and kinship groups, and penal sanctions for contract violation, which gave colonial punishment a more brutal and violent form than the metropolitan version (Cooper, 2005, p. 143).

Closely related to the issue of punishment is the role of the rule of law in a colonial setting. While Mbembe linked colonial sovereignty as a whole with the state of exception, others have mapped out more specifically – in terms of chronology and space – instances where the state of exception has been applied in relation to colonial law. Such studies show, for example, the ambiguous nature of colonial law – how racial exceptions were built into the legal system and made it possible for physical violence to become part of the everyday colonial encounter and how the idea and the promise of colonial justice provided a language for criticizing the biases of the law in practice (Kolsky, 2010). Or they show how the cultural logics of space, race, and religion came together to create "the fanatic" within colonial law that enabled spectral displays of power and violence on the north-western frontier of India (Kolsky, 2015), and how two colonial strategies of domination (direct and indirect rule) both denied colonized populations political rights, either by centralized or decentralized despotism (Mamdani, 1996).

In his chapter in this volume, Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo reminds us, that violence was not only an intrinsic feature of colonial rule before World War II. Jerónimo shows that during the 1950s Portugal reinforced past initiatives in Angola and Mozambique. Under the influence of international and local criticism of colonial endeavors, the well-established "aggressive tax-exaction and forced labor recruitment, became supplemented by and combined with developmental drives." Jerónimo argues for interdependence between the developmental and repressive facets of the late colonial state and uses the phrase repressive developmentalism to denote this transformation of the colonial states in question.

Other studies have underlined how the mundane micro-practices of violence were central to the constitution of the colonial state. Instead of seeing violence as a deviation from rule of law then they see it as key to how the state was constantly made and remade in local setting. Through an analysis of a series of violent confrontations between the colonial (and postcolonial) state and the population, Taylor Sherman, for example, has examined the practices of punishment and state violence in India (2009, 2010). For Sherman, the key to understand such phenomena is not a disciplinary system of imprisonment. Instead, she directs her attention to what she coins as a "coercive network." The coercive network worked through improvised violence and spectral display, and comprises practices of violence carried out by a variety of interconnected institutions and individuals through which the state by which the state penetrated the population.

However, instead of associating the workings of the coercive network with the governmental technique of a powerful and highly bureaucratized state, Sherman sees the coercive network as a reflection of a colonial state that is fractured, vulnerable, and negotiated. State violence was not a bureaucratized coercive practice but it was typically perpetrated by actions of individual officers operating under wide discretionary powers. Therefore, the defining feature of India's coercive network "were not disciplinary and regimentation, but unpredictability and contingency" and "the extensive use of spectacular and arbitrary violence was a routine way in which state power was exercised" (Sherman, 2010, pp. 7, 171). Law and order signified absence of unrest.

So, following Sherman, the state is also constituted through acts of corruption, coercion, violence, and failure. And she argues that it is necessary to "move beyond the idea that some colonial penal tactics violated a legal order which was otherwise just. We must recognize that they constituted specifically colonial systems of law which had little to do with the clichéd and idealized sense in which the term 'rule of law' was often used" (Sherman, 2010, p. 174). In this manner, physical violence was constitutive of the colonial state.

With reference to the colonial state in Burma, Saha (2012, 2013) argues that acts of misconduct and corruption was not simply aberrations from normative bureaucratic behavior — they were also constitutive of the state: "Subordinate officials' corrupt applications of the law were not only transgression of the British ideals of the rule of law; they were also what the law was" (Saha, 2012, p. 191). He argues that we should not understand colonial law as a monolithic and ever-present system in colonial societies. Rather, in the same vein as Sherman argued in relation to punishment, he represents colonial law as a bricolage of practices and institutions open to multiple interpretations and hereby break with the idea of the state as a monolithic object. Instead he highlights the more fluid, amorphous, and contested nature of the state. A state which from a bottom-up perspective was performed and constituted in local society not so much through a rationalized and bureaucratized rule of law but through misconduct, corruption, coercion, and indeterminacy.

Adding to this perspective, Marie Muschalek, in this volume, shows that the police force *Landespolizei* in the German colony Southwest Africa, by oscillating between violence as punishment on the one side and as education on the other, was involved in the production of a moral economy of violence. Rather than being restricted by bureaucratic administration of the monopoly of violence their practices fostered legal and administrational rationalization. In other words, Muschalek argues that the everyday violent practices were in fact "everyday practices of state formation." She challenges the idea that the limits of the colonial state necessarily equals ineffectivity by highlighting how policemen established practices "which often were retro-actively justified and inscribed into written regulations or even law." In other words, Muschalek argues that the policemen were involved in processes of state formation which "included making law on the beat."

Relatedly Wyrtzen (this volume) explores the productive character of violence in his analyses of the relational processes of territorialization in what later became Morocco and Libya. Wyrtzen shows that colonial powers produced territorialized state spaces in relation to counter-imaginings of local autonomous political space and regional and international context. In Wyrtzen's words: "It was in and through the exigencies of total colonial war that spatializing technologies like cartography, surveying, aerial photography, physical occupation, and scientific surveying were deployed to unprecedented degrees in North Africa."

Muschalek and Wyrtzen's contributions to this volume are both indicative of the way in which violence played a crucial role in the formation of colonial states. Not only as a deviation from the metropolitan norm but also as part and parcel of practices which produced the colonial stat as an abstract and physical reality.

AGENCY AND THE COLONIAL STATE

A recurrent theme within the study of colonialism is the question of agency and resistance. In the early 1980s, concern and surprise over the fact that India's independence in 1946 had not led to a just and equal society, gave rise to the Subaltern Studies scholars' work with Indian history.

As Ranajit Guha pointed out the colonial state lacked the hegemonic character of the metropolitan bourgeois state and was fundamentally reliant on coercion rather than persuasion. In other words, the colonial state was unable to win the consent of the civil society of the colonized and was accordingly, in Guha's words, marked by dominance without hegemony (Guha, 1997, p. 24). Moreover, a structural split between the elite and subaltern domains of politics had subsequently led to a lack of genuine popular support to the national ideology of the ruling elite in the post-colonial phase. For the subaltern scholars the post-colonial state built on many of the colonial state's power techniques and the relationship between the post-colonial state and its population was an important theme.

Part of the Subaltern Studies historians' work was based on reworking the classic Marxist analysis where the "non-modern" elements of Indian culture had been considered an obstacle to a "maturing" society. As Robert J.C. Young writes, the Subaltern Studies historians "were prepared to reconsider all aspects involved in the history of the Indian independence movement, and to develop a new politics of the left that took into account those people which the rigidity of Marxist orthodoxy had hitherto excluded from its political calculations" (Young, 2001, p. 356). The early Subaltern work focused primarily on the Indian peasants who constituted the largest group in the demographic sense but had only very limited influence. Where classical Marxist analysis tended to

perceive these groups utterances as "pre-political" the Subaltern Scholars understood them as legitimate political actions, despite their invocation of various non-secular concepts such as gods and spirits.

In subsequent work influenced by the development of the subaltern-concept the term has been used to denote all marginal groups, which has been accorded little role in history and the social in general. In this sense, the subaltern concept has become common in approaches which seek to understand and analyze the role of marginalized and seemingly powerless groups — that is, peasants, women, workers, colonized elites (Chakrabarty, 1989, 2000; Chatterjee, 1986, 1993; Hardiman, 1993, 1995; Prakash, 1999; Spivak, 1985).

In her contribution to this volume, Zophia Edwards heeds the subaltern studies tradition through her discussion of the role of local agency in relation to reforms implemented by the colonial state that increased state capacity in Trinidad and Tobago. Edwards locates this local agency in the mobilization of labor into a unified, multi-sectoral, multi-racial, social movement, which, in the 1919–1920 and 1933–1939 periods, organized extensive marches, strikes, and riots in the two colonies. These agitations did not only have local reverberations but in fact challenged British imperial interests at large. This was due to the strategic importance of oil production in these two localities. Since 1910, the British Navy had converted from the use of coal to oil, and Trinidad and Tobago formed Britain's only secure oil source for the Royal Navy. Edwards shows how the labor movement — in this particular political and economic context — successfully pressed for institutional reforms for improving the quality of life of subordinate classes, economic reforms, and political liberalization. In Edwards's analysis, the labor movement forced a weak, repressive colonial state to launch a series of reforms to create stronger state institutions. Hereby, she offers an alternative approach than an elite-focused account of colonial state-building.

Holger Droessler presents a historically situated analysis of colonial governance in Samoa in the last part of the 19th century. He argues that the practices of governance derive from the specificities of the colonial situation in Samoa in the late 19th century. At that time, Samoa was under formal colonial rule of three powers — Great Britain, Germany, and the United States — which created a special colonial situation Droessler coins as "colonialism by deferral." It is this specific situation in Samoa — and not a generic nature of the colonial state a priori — which dictates the nature of colonial governance and opens up a space for local agency.

RETHINKING THE COLONIAL STATE

As already noted the colonial state has recently begun to receive more scholarly attention. This growing attention seems pertinent, not least because the colonial state holds an explanatory potential which is routinely activated in relation to contemporary problems.

The contributions to this volume share in the bourgeoning interest in bringing the colonial state to the agenda, not only as a flawed or deviant version of the metropolitan state but also as a social object in its own right. Two moves are especially important here: first, by highlighting the diversity and particularity of various colonial state-formations (without denying the obvious commonalities), the contributions bring nuances to the simple juxtaposition of metropolitan and colonial governance and state structure. Second, the articles push the analysis of the colonial state away from traditional state-centric approaches and contribute to the theorization of the colonial state by introducing aspects from non-state-centric approaches.

The analysis of the colonial state is not exhausted with this volume. Rather, by highlighting the state perspective in a variety of colonial settings and introducing new theoretical angles the volume contributes to a growing agenda which aims to rethink the colonial state.

NOTES

1. See, however, Legg's discussion of India's anomalous situation as the only non-self-governing member of the League of Nations that opens up for an exploration of the complexities of colonial sovereignty that goes beyond merely judicial and territorial aspects (Legg, 2014).

2. However, one of the contributors, Jonathan Wyrtzen, has in another publication also highlighted how Bourdieu's field analysis can be applied fruitfully to an analysis of what he calls a "colonial political field" − the space in which interactions between state and society took place, how identity struggles took on distinct forms in this space, and how the stakes of these struggles are defined. With this approach, Wyrtzen puts a broad spectrum of actors at the center of his analysis − colonial and local, elite and non-elite − and he emphasizes how identity was politicized through the interactions of these diverse actors (Wyrtzen, 2015). For a discussion of Bourdieu's thinking on colonialism, see Go(2013).

3. These more violent and brutal aspects have been amply documented in, for example, the *Livre noir de la colonialisme* (Ferro, 2003). More specifically Adam Hochschild has spread the message of the brutality of Belgian rule in Congo to a wider audience (1998). While Caroline Elkins's *Imperial Reckoning* brought forward a tale torture, sexual abuse, and other crimes committed by the British in detention camps in Kenya in the 1950s (Elkins, 2005). Elkin's book also formed the basis for the so-called Mau Mau torture hearings in the United Kingdom, which paved the way for compensation to victims and an official British apology. Similarly, Richard Gott has documented how violence in general formed an intrinsic part of Britain's empire (2011).

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