State Formation and Political Legitimacy, Volume 6: **Political Anthropology**
Ronald Cohen and Judith D. Toland, eds.
New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1988. vii + 207 pp. $28.95 (cloth)

Reviewer: Michael Blake
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This volume brings together 10 essays dealing with the role of political legitimacy in states, both early and modern. One of the questions I usually ask about such topical collections is: should I read the whole volume or are there only one or two papers worth looking at? The short answer is that if one is interested in the dual problem of state origins and maintenance, then one must examine the issue of political legitimacy, and this volume provides an excellent jumping-off point for such an enquiry.

In his introduction, Cohen identifies the central focus of the volume with the following question: how do people come to accept enormous inequities where generally "1 to 2 percent of the population . . . enjoy up to one-half of the volume of everything produced in an entire society?" (p. 1). Clearly, such a situation, which in pre-state polities would have been unacceptable, can only be supported if a large portion of the populace agree to its legitimacy. Political legitimacy is traditionally taken to mean that a given system is "acceptable and justifiable to all who live within its rules" (p. 3). However, in all of the case studies that follow, it becomes clear that none of the numerous strategies of legitimization create political orders that are "acceptable and justifiable to all." Therefore, the processes of trying to maintain and extend political control requires that the people in power seek as much legitimacy as possible. In fact, their efforts to this end are usually a good measure of the degree of resistance or opposition to state control.

Cohen sums up the problem with four propositions concerning legitimacy welded together in the following theorem: "The legitimacy of a state governmental system is a function of its coercive capacities, the benefits derived from compliance, the moral validity of governmental practices, and the continuing evaluation of these by the polity members" (p. 16). The papers that follow examine one or more of these propositions in light of historic and ethnographic data. They fall into two main groups, those that look at traditional and/or feudal states (H.J.M. Claessen, R. Launay, R. Cohen, R. Willis, N. Yoffee and J.D. Toland) and those that examine modern and/or colonial states (H.M.J. Claessen, J. Vincent, S.F. Moore and P.T. Manicas). Most of the authors, with the exceptions mentioned below, take a straightforward political-historical approach to their data, examining the emergence of, or changes in, state legitimization strategies in historical context. Two of the authors, Cohen and Willis, however, venture from historical analysis by examining political legitimacy using origin or sovereignty myths. Yoffee's study of the political uses of Early Mesopotamian legal codes, such as Hammurabi's, also provides a refreshing contrast with the standard historical approach that most of the other authors have taken. Of the authors that examine modern or colonial cases, only Manicas clearly emphasizes that the world-wide political and economic interactions which arose in the 18th and 19th centuries created problems of state

legitimation that were fundamentally different from those in the pre-capitalist, pre-industrial societies.

This stimulating collection of essays provides much insight into the tricky topic of political legitimation of state structures and activities. It becomes clear in reading these essays, however, that the question of how the legitimation of social inequality came about and operated in states cannot be completely answered without addressing the distinction between individual vs. structural motivation. Few of the papers deal with this question directly; most imply that the state, as a socio-political structure, promotes its own legitimacy, while at the same time recognizing that it is individual rulers, nobles, commoners and so forth, who make the decisions that create or undermine legitimacy. The small number of élites who control the state constantly seek to promote their own individual legitimacy as well as the legitimacy of the political order itself. It is clear that individuals, then, have the most to lose by failing to establish or maintain legitimacy while the state, not itself being a sentient entity, can have nothing to lose because "it" has nothing. The studies in this volume show that rulers from Hammurabi's time to the present understood this process all too well, and often with disastrous consequences for those they ruled.

The Making of a Transnational Community: Migration, Development, and Cultural Change in the Dominican Republic
Eugenia Georges
New York: Columbia University Press, 1990. xi + 270 pp. $37.50 (cloth)

Reviewer: Raymond E. Wiest
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This book presents yet another community study of the impact of migration, but it is one with a difference: Georges contributes significantly to the linkage of micro and macro phenomena by attending to Dominican historical processes stimulating migration. Recipient of the Columbia University Bancroft Dissertation Award, Georges offers a thoroughgoing, well-written, and theoretically informed analysis of migration from a forested, agricultural region of the Dominican Republic to the United States. The 1980-81 field study focusses on a village with a high incidence of migration to the U.S., but also draws comparisons from a smaller village in the same region from which few people migrate internationally.

A concise evaluation of two major orientations to migration studies—equilibrium and historical-structural models—sets the analytic expectation. The latter approach is favoured, but the author argues that it only yields good results when one looks at "intermediate processes operating on the ground: the organization of households, the composition of networks, and the local formation of classes and class segments" (pp. 9-10). In several chapters, Georges establishes the peripheral nature of development in the Dominican Republic, treats the history of the study village (with attention to the Trujillato), unfolds the historical development of international migration from the village and the migration strategies adopted by people from Los Pinos, and discusses the impacts of migration on the local econ-