



# anthropology

*what does it mean to be human?*

FOURTH EDITION

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## How do anthropologists study political relations?

Human societies are able to organize human interdependency successfully only if they find ways to manage relations of power among the different individuals and groups of which they are composed. In this chapter, we survey approaches anthropologists take to the study of political relations in different societies.

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Anthropologists have long been interested in the role of power in human societies. Why are members of some societies able to exercise power on roughly equal terms, whereas other societies sharply divide the powerful from the powerless? In societies where access to power is unequal, how can those with little power gain more? What, in fact, is power?

Human societies are able to organize human interdependency successfully only if they find ways to manage relations of power among the different individuals and groups they comprise. Power may be understood broadly as “transformative capacity” (Giddens 1979, 88). When the choice affects an entire social group, scholars speak of *social power*. In this chapter, you will learn about the approaches anthropologists take to the study of political relations in different societies. Eric Wolf (1994) describes three different modes of social power: the first, *interpersonal power*, involves the ability of one individual to impose his or her will on another individual; the second, *organizational power*, highlights how individuals or social units can limit the actions of other individuals in particular social settings; the third, *structural power*, organizes social settings themselves and controls the allocation of social labor. To lay bare the patterns of structural power requires paying attention to the large-scale and increasingly global division of labor among regions and social groups, the unequal relations between these regions and groups, and the way these relations are maintained or modified over time. The way in which clothing is manufactured now—in factories in Indonesia or El Salvador, Romania or China—for markets in Europe, the United States, and Japan is an example of structural power. People are hired to work long hours for low wages in unpleasant conditions to make clothing that they cannot afford to buy, even if it were available for sale in the communities where they live (Figure 12.1).

## How Are Culture and Politics Related?

The study of social power in human society is the domain of **political anthropology**. In a recent overview, Joan Vincent argues that political anthropology continues to be vital because it involves a complex interplay among ethnographic fieldwork, political theory, and critical reflection on political theory (Vincent 2002, 1). Vincent divides the history of political anthropology into three

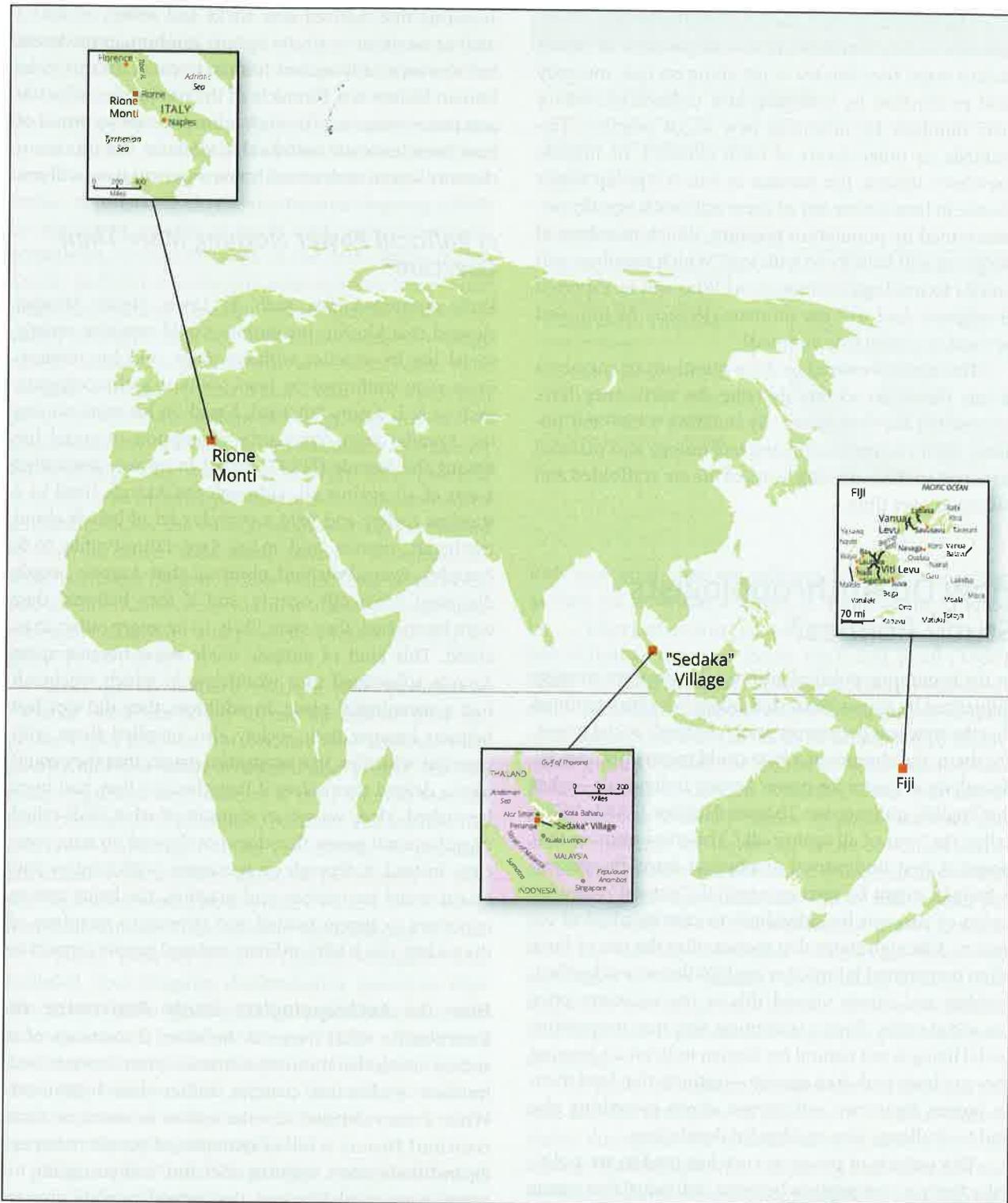
phases. The first phase, from 1851 to 1939, she considers the “formative” era, in which basic orientations and some of the earliest anthropological commentaries on political matters were produced. The second phase, from 1942 to about 1971, is the classic era in the field. It is most closely associated with the flourishing of British social anthropology rooted in functionalist theory and produced well-known works by such eminent figures as E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Max Gluckman, Fredrik Barth, and Edmund Leach. This phase developed in the context of the post-World War II British Empire through the period of decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s. Topics of investigation during this period were also the classic topics of political anthropology: the classification of preindustrial political systems and attempts to reconstruct their evolution; displaying the characteristic features of different kinds of preindustrial political systems and demonstrating how these functioned to produce political order; studying local processes of political strategizing by individuals in non-Western societies (see, e.g., Lewellyn 1993). Decolonization drew attention to emerging national-level politics in new states and the effects of “modernization” on the “traditional” political structures that had formerly been the focus of anthropological investigation. The turbulent politics of the 1960s and early 1970s, however, called this approach into question.

Beginning in the 1960s, political anthropologists developed new ways of thinking about political issues and new theoretical orientations to guide them, inaugurating in the 1970s and 1980s a third phase in which the anthropology of politics posed broader questions about power and inequality (Vincent 2002, 3). Under conditions of globalization, anthropologists interested in studying power have joined forces with scholars in other disciplines who share their concerns and have adopted ideas from influential political thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault to help them explain how power shapes the lives of those among whom they carry out ethnographic research. The cross-cultural study of political institutions reveals the paradox of the human condition. On the one hand, open cultural creativity allows humans to imagine worlds of pure possibility; on the other hand, all humans live in material circumstances that make many of those possibilities profoundly unrealistic. We can imagine many different ways to organize ourselves into groups, but, as Marx pointed out long ago, the past weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living—and the opportunity to remake social organization is ordinarily quite limited.

Human beings actively work to reshape the environments in which they live to suit themselves. Because the resources available in any environment can be used to sustain more than one way of life, however, human

**power** Transformative capacity; the ability to transform a given situation.

**political anthropology** The study of social power in human society.



**FIGURE 12.1** Location of societies whose EthnoProfiles appear in Chapter 12.

beings must choose which aspects of the material world to depend on. This is why, inevitably, questions about human economic activity are intimately intertwined with questions about the distribution of power in society. Some archaeologists have suggested, as we saw in

Chapter 7, that population growth is a constant aspect of the human condition that determines forms of social organization. Marshall Sahlins (1976, 13) pointed out, however, that population pressure determines nothing more than the number of people that can be supported

when the environment is used in a particular way. Members of a society can respond to that pressure in any of various ways: they can try to get along on less, intensify food production by inventing new technology, reduce their numbers by inventing new social practices (infanticide or other forms of birth control), or migrate elsewhere. Indeed, the manner in which a group might choose to implement any of these options is equally undetermined by population pressure. Which members of the group will have to do with less? Which members will control technological innovation? Who will be expected to migrate? And will the ultimate decision be imposed by force or voluntarily adopted?

The answers offered to these questions by members of any particular society describe the niche they have constructed for themselves. By building social and political alliances and mobilizing technology and material resources to make a living, ways of life are scaffolded and sustained over time.

## How Do Anthropologists Study Politics?

In the beginning, political anthropologists were strongly influenced by earlier Western thinkers who had assumed that the state was the prototype of “civilized” social power. For them, the absence of a state could mean only *anarchy*, disorderly struggles for power among individuals—what the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) called the “war of all against all.” This view assumes that power is best understood as physical force, or *coercion*. A fistfight might be seen as a typical, “natural” manifestation of attempts by individuals to exercise physical coercion. Although states that monopolize the use of force often perpetrated injustice or exploitation as a side effect, Hobbes and others viewed this as the necessary price for social order. Their assumption was that cooperative social living is not natural for human individuals because they are born with **free agency**—instincts that lead them to pursue their own self-interest above everything else and to challenge one another for dominance.

Discussions of power as coercion tend to see political activity as competition between individual free agents over political control. When free agents make decisions, no larger groups, no historical obligations, no collective beliefs can or ought to stand in their way. For some, cultural evolution took a giant leap forward when our

ancestors first realized that sticks and stones could be used as weapons not only against nonhuman predators but also especially against human enemies. In this view, human history is a chronicle of the production of better and better weapons. The civilizations we are so proud of have been born and sustained in violence. But this is not the only way to understand human agency, as we will see.

## Is Political Power Nothing More Than Coercion?

Early anthropologists such as Lewis Henry Morgan showed that kinship institutions could organize orderly social life in societies without states, and his observations were confirmed by later political anthropologists, such as E. E. Evans-Pritchard, based on his work among the Azande. Evans-Pritchard’s description of social life among the Azande ([1937] 1976) in no way resembled a war of all against all, although the Azande lived in a stateless society and held a complex set of beliefs about witchcraft, oracles, and magic (see EthnoProfile 10.6: Azande). Evans-Pritchard observed that Azande people discussed witchcraft openly, and if they believed they were bewitched, they were likely to be angry rather than afraid. This kind of attitude made sense because most Azande subscribed to a worldview in which witchcraft had a meaningful place. In addition, they did not feel helpless because their society also supplied them with practical remedies, like vengeance magic, that they could use to defend themselves if they thought they had been bewitched. Here, we see an example of what Wolf called organizational power that does not depend on state coercion. Instead, it depends on *persuasion*. Scaffolded by particular social institutions and practices, the belief system continues to appear natural and rational to members of the society; this is why ordinary, rational people support it.

## How Do Anthropologists Study Resistance to Coercion?

What happens, however, if members of a society decide that the institutions and practices endorsed by their leaders are coercive, rather than legitimate? What if they decided to take action to overturn such coercion? History is full of examples of people rising up against their rulers, resisting coercion, and struggling to create new social relations that would provide greater freedom and justice. Indeed, stories about the founding of modern nation-states like France and the United States often begin precisely with revolutionary accounts of successful resistance to oppression. The framework of analysis in which such accounts are located is dualistic: rulers monopolize power and those who are ruled struggle against that monopoly in order to wrest power away from the rulers.

**free agency** The freedom of self-contained individuals to pursue their own interests above everything else and to challenge one another for dominance.

In the 1960s and 1970s, many anthropologists and others were convinced that efforts by peasants and other subordinated groups were the first wave of a new series of large-scale uprisings that would successfully resist coercive oppression and remake unjust social relations in many parts of the world. When these expectations were not met, however, attention turned to smaller scale forms of resistance that demonstrated ongoing efforts by oppressed peoples to push back against coercion, sometimes in unlikely ways. In the mid-1980s, for example, political scientist and ethnographer James Scott published findings based on 2 years of ethnographic research among peasant rice farmers in a Malaysian village called "Sedaka" (a pseudonym; see EthnoProfile 12.1: "Sedaka" Village). He had learned that poor Malaysian peasants were at the bottom of a social hierarchy dominated locally by rich farmers and nationally by a powerful state apparatus. According to Scott, these peasants were not kept in line by some form of state-sponsored terrorism; rather, the context of their lives was shaped by what he called "routine repression": "occasional arrests, warnings, diligent police work, legal restrictions, and an Internal Security Act that allows for indefinite preventive detention and proscribes much political activity" (1987, 274).

Scott quickly realized that the poor peasants of "Sedaka" were not about to rise up against their oppressors. But this was not because they accepted their poverty and low status as natural and proper. For one thing, organized overt defense of their interests was difficult because local economic, political, and kinship ties generated conflicting loyalties. For another, the peasants knew that overt political action in the context of routine repression would be foolhardy. Finally, they had to feed their families. Their solution was to engage in what Scott called "everyday forms of peasant resistance": this included "foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth" (1987, xvi). These actions may have done little to alter the peasants' situation in the short run; however, Scott argued, in the long run they had the potential to be more effective than overt rebellion in undercutting state repression.

Scott argued that "The struggle between rich and poor in Sedaka is not merely a struggle over work, property rights, grain, and cash. It is also a struggle over the appropriation of symbols, a struggle over how the past and present shall be understood and labeled, a struggle to identify causes and assess blame" (1987, xvii). According to Scott, when peasants criticize rich landowners or rich landowners find fault with peasants, the parties involved are not just venting emotion. Instead, each side is simultaneously constructing a worldview.

## EthnoProfile 12.1

### "Sedaka" Village

**Region:** Southeastern Asia

**Nation:** Malaysia

**Population:** 300

**Environment:** Lush paddy land

**Livelihood:** Rice cultivation

**Political organization:**  
Village within a modern nation-state

**For more information:**  
Scott, James. 1987. *Weapons of the weak*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.



Rich and poor alike are offering "a critique of things as they are as well as a vision of things as they should be . . . [they] are writing a kind of social text on the subject of human decency" (Scott 1987, 23). Scott (1990) refers to such peasant-formulated critiques and visions as **hidden transcripts**: private accounts of their oppression, and alternatives to it, developed by dominated groups outside the public political arena. These hidden accounts contrast with the views that dominated peoples routinely express in public contexts that do not challenge the legitimacy of the dominant political order. The existence of hidden transcripts shows that even though thought alone may not be able to alter the *fact* of material coercion, it still has the power to transform the *meaning* of material coercion for those who experience it. Poor peasants formulating hidden transcripts are exercising their human reflexive awareness, investing their experiences with meanings of their own choosing.

For Scott, the contrast between the worldview of the state and the worldview of peasants in "Sedaka" was revealed during the introduction of mechanized rice harvesting. Traditionally, rice harvesting had been manual labor. It regularly allowed poor peasants to earn cash and receive grain from their employers as a traditional form of

**hidden transcripts** Private accounts of their oppression and alternatives to it developed by dominated groups outside the public political arena. These hidden accounts contrast with the views dominated peoples express in public political contexts that do not challenge the legitimacy of the dominant political order.

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

## Protesters Gird for Long Fight over Opening Peru's Amazon

*Latin American Indigenous people have been organizing in recent years to protect their lands, sometimes from agricultural invasion, sometimes against oil exploration and drilling, sometimes to assert land claims. These are not always peaceful. Simon Romero reports for the New York Times, June 12, 2009 (Andrea Zarate contributed reporting from Lima, Peru).*

Iquitos, Peru—Faced with a simmering crisis over dozens of deaths in the quelling of indigenous protests last week, Peru's Congress this week suspended the decrees that had set off the protests over plans to open large parts of the Peruvian Amazon to investment. Senior officials said they hoped this would calm nerves and ease the way for oil drillers and loggers to pursue their projects.

But instead, indigenous groups are digging in for a protracted fight, revealing an increasingly well-organized movement that could be a tinderbox for President Alan García. The movement appears to be fueled by a deep popular resistance to the government's policies, which focused on luring foreign investment, while parts of the Peruvian Amazon have been left behind.

The broadening influence of the indigenous movement was on display Thursday in a general strike that drew thousands of protesters here to the streets of Iquitos, the largest Peruvian city in the Amazon, and to cities and towns elsewhere in jungle areas. Protests over Mr. García's handling of the violence in the northern Bagua Province last Friday also took place in highland regions like Puno, near the Bolivian border, and in Lima and Arequipa on the Pacific coast.

"The government made the situation worse with its condescending depiction of us as gangs of savages in the forest," said Wagner Musoline Acho, 24, an Awajún Indian and an indigenous leader. "They think we can be tricked by a maneuver like suspending a couple of decrees for a few weeks and then reintroducing them, and they are wrong."

The protesters' immediate threat—to cut the supply of oil and natural gas to Lima, the capital—seems to have subsided, with protesters partly withdrawing from their occupation of oil installations in the jungle. But as anger festers, indigenous leaders here said they could easily try to shut down energy installations again to exert pressure on Mr. García.



Peruvian indigenous leaders Alberto Pizango (R) and Servando Puerta Pena (L) at a press conference in Lima, Peru, in June 2009, requesting an investigation of the clashes in the north of the country that left an undetermined number of people dead.

Another wave of protests appears likely because indigenous groups are demanding that the decrees be repealed and not just suspended. The decrees would open large jungle areas to investment and allow companies to bypass indigenous groups to obtain permits for petroleum exploration, logging and building hydroelectric dams. A stopgap attempt to halt earlier indigenous protests in the Amazon last August failed to prevent them from being reinitiated more forcefully in April.

The authorities said that nine civilians were killed in the clashes that took place last Friday on a remote highway in Bagua. But witnesses and relatives of missing protesters contend that the authorities are covering up details of the episode, and that more Indians died. Twenty-four police officers were killed on the highway and at an oil installation.

Indigenous representatives say at least 25 civilians, and perhaps more, may have been killed, and some witnesses say that security forces dumped the bodies of protesters into a nearby river. At least three Indians who were wounded said they had been shot by police officers as they waited to talk with the authorities.

"The government is trying to clean the blood off its hands by hiding the truth," said Andrés Huaynacari Etsam, 21, an Awajún student here who said that five of his relatives had been killed on June 5 and that three were missing.

Senior government officials repudiate such claims. "There is a game of political interests taking place in which

some are trying to exaggerate the losses of life for their own gain," said Foreign Minister José García Belaunde.

He said the ultimate aim of the protesters was to prevent Peru from carrying out a trade agreement with the United States, because one of the most contentious of the decrees that were suspended on Thursday would bring Peru's rules for investment in jungle areas into line with the trade agreement.

"But," Mr. García Belaunde insisted, "the agreement is not in danger."

Still, the government's initial response to the violence seems to have heightened resentment. A television commercial by the Interior Ministry contained graphic images of the bodies of some police officers who were killed while being held hostage by protesters. The commercial said that the killings were proof of the "ferocity and savagery" of indigenous activists, but an uproar over that depiction forced the government to try to withdraw the commercial.

The authorities are struggling to understand a movement that is crystallizing in the Peruvian Amazon among more than 50 indigenous groups. They include about 300,000 people, accounting for only about 1% of Peru's population, but they live in strategically important and resource-rich locations, which are scattered throughout

jungle areas that account for nearly two-thirds of Peru's territory.

So far, alliances have proved elusive between Indians in the Amazon and indigenous groups in highland areas, ruling out, for now, the kind of broad indigenous protest movements that helped oust governments in neighboring Ecuador and Bolivia earlier in the decade.

In contrast to some earlier efforts to organize indigenous groups, the leaders of this new movement are themselves indigenous, and not white or mestizo urban intellectuals. They are well organized and use a web of radio stations to exchange information across the jungle. After one prominent leader, Alberto Pizango, was granted asylum in Nicaragua this week, others quickly emerged to articulate demands.

"There has been nothing comparable in all my years here in terms of the growth of political consciousness among indigenous groups," said the Rev. Joaquín García, 70, a priest from Spain who arrived in Iquitos 41 years ago and directs the Center of Theological Studies of the Amazon, which focuses on indigenous issues.

"At issue now," he said, "is what they decide to do with the newfound bargaining power in their hands."

Source: Romero 2009.

charitable gift (Figure 12.2). In the late 1970s, however, the introduction of combine harvesters eliminated the rich farmers' need for hired labor, a loss that dealt poor families a severe economic blow. When the rich and poor talked about the harvesters, each side offered a different account of their effect on economic life in the village.

Scott tells us that both sides agreed that using the machines hurt the poor and helped the rich. When each side was asked whether the benefits of the machines outweighed their costs, however, consensus evaporated. The poor offered practical reasons against the use of combine harvesters: they claimed that the heavy machines were inefficient and that their operation destroyed rice paddies. They also offered moral reasons: they accused the rich of being "stingy," of ignoring the traditional obligation of rich people to help the poor by providing them with work and charity. The rich denied both the practical and the moral objections of the poor. They insisted that using harvesters increased their yield. They accused the poor people of bad faith. They claimed that the poor suffered because they were bad farmers and lazy, and they attributed their own success to hard work and prudent farm managements.

Rich farmers, on the other hand, would never have been able to begin using combine harvesters without the

outside assistance of both the national government and the business groups that rented the machines to them at harvest time. Poor peasants were aware of this, yet they directed their critique at the local farmers and not at the government or outside business organizations. After all, the rich farmers "are a part of the community and therefore *ought* not to be indifferent to the consequences of their acts for their neighbors" (1987, 161). The stinginess of the rich did not just bring economic loss; it also attacked the social identity of the poor, who vigorously resisted being turned into nonpersons. The poor insisted on being accorded the "minimal cultural decencies in this small community" (Scott 1987, xvii). The only weapon they controlled in this struggle was their ability, by word and deed, to undercut the prestige and the reputation of the rich. This strategy worked in "Sedaka" because rich local farmers were not ready to abandon the traditional morality that had regulated relations between rich and poor; they still cared what other villagers thought of them. A shrewd campaign of character assassination might have caused at least some of the rich to hesitate before ignoring their traditional obligations to the poor, which would have helped the poor defend their claims to citizenship in the local community. Scott was convinced that if the wider political arena changed



**FIGURE 12.2** Until recently, rice harvesting in rural Malaysia was manual labor that regularly allowed poor peasants to earn cash and receive grain from their employers as a traditional form of charitable gift.

in the future, such that routine repression disappeared, many of the poor peasants he knew might well engage in open active rebellion.

***Are There Limitations to Analyzing Power in Terms of Domination and Resistance?***

Scott's studies of domination and the arts of resistance have become classics in anthropology for a reason: they move beyond crude understandings of political coercion as nothing but the exercise of brute force; they address the role of meaning and morality in political struggles; and they reveal nuanced interpretations that members of oppressed groups are able to offer concerning their situation in the world. At the same time, some political anthropologists who admire studies of this kind nevertheless have suggested that continuing to describe political struggles in such dualistic terms is limiting in its own way. Anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod, for example, was concerned that "despite the considerable theoretical sophistication of many studies of resistance . . . they do not explore as fully as they might the implications of the forms of resistance that they locate. There is perhaps a tendency to romanticize resistance," she concluded,

which could lead anthropologists to give insufficient attention to the complexity and variety of ways in which power operates (Abu-Lughod 2016 [1990], 37).

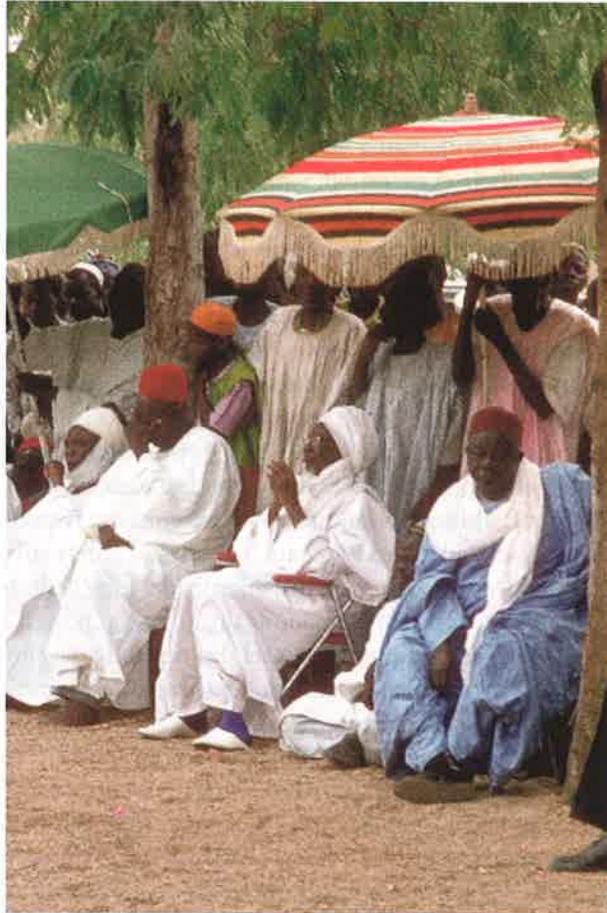
Abu-Lughod was among those who drew attention to political theorists like Pierre Bourdieu, Antonio Gramsci, and Michel Foucault, whose work offered ways for political anthropologists to rethink the ways they conceptualized power. Their writing, she argued, emphasizes "the importance of ideological practice in power and resistance, and works to undermine distinctions between symbolic and instrumental, behavioral and ideological, and cultural, social and political processes" (2016 [1990]: 37). As we saw, Scott's analysis of the peasants' struggle against local landowners in Sedaka village undermined precisely these kinds of distinctions: both sides offered both practical and moral reasons to defend themselves. Indeed, Scott himself had been influenced by the work of Antonio Gramsci who, among other things, offered a fresh view of how cultural understandings could play a role, not only in consolidating power from above, but also in resisting domination from below. Gramsci's perspective can be approached by considering two of his key concepts: domination and hegemony.

## What Are Domination and Hegemony?

Earlier in the chapter, we noted that anthropologists and others have offered different answers to the question of why people submit to institutionalized power. On one hand, they may have been coerced and fear punishment if they refuse to submit. On the other hand, they may submit because they believe that the power structures in their society are legitimate, given their understandings about the way the world works. What could lead people to accept coercion by others as legitimate (Figure 12.3)? A worldview that justifies the social arrangements under which people live is sometimes called an **ideology**. Karl Marx argued that rulers consolidate their power by successfully persuading their subjects to accept an ideology that portrays domination by the ruling class as legitimate; dominated groups who accept the ruling class ideology were said to suffer from *false consciousness*. The concept of false consciousness is problematic, however, since it views people as passive beings incapable of withstanding ideological indoctrination. As we discussed in Chapter 8, this is not a plausible view of human nature.

More promising is the approach taken by Antonio Gramsci (1981). Writing in the 1930s, Gramsci pointed out that coercive rule—what he called **domination**—is expensive and unstable. Rulers do better if they can persuade the dominated to accept their rule as legitimate, both by providing some genuine material benefits to their subjects and by using schools and other cultural institutions to disseminate an ideology justifying their rule. If they achieve all this—while also ensuring that none of these concessions seriously undermines their privileged position—they have established what Gramsci called **hegemony**. Hegemony is never absolute but always vulnerable to challenges: struggles may develop between rulers trying to justify their domination and subordinate groups who exercise agency by challenging “official” ideologies and practices that devalue or exclude them. Hegemony may be threatened if subordinate groups maintain or develop alternative, or *counterhegemonic*, cultural practices. Successful hegemony, by contrast, involves linking the understandings of dominant and subordinate groups into what appears to be mutual accommodation. Gramsci’s contrast between domination (rule by coercive force) and hegemony (rule by persuasion) was central to his own analysis of the exercise of power (Crehan 2002, 153).

James Scott found the concepts of hegemony (and counterhegemony) to be helpful in his effort to explain key features of the struggle between peasants and landowners in “Sedaka” village. The hidden transcripts to which he refers are the raw materials out of which peasants are able to fashion a counterhegemonic critique



**FIGURE 12.3** Prior to colonial conquest by outsiders, Muslim emirs from northern Cameroon had coercive power.

of their situation, demonstrating that they are not suffering from false consciousness. Thus, if peasants refrain from engaging in public political critique, this is not because they have been brainwashed, but because they are choosing to remain silent in the face of routine repression. Many anthropologists find the concept of hegemony attractive because it draws attention to the central role of cultural beliefs and symbols in struggles to consolidate social organization and political control. Although originally developed to analyze how states exercise power, anthropologists have found Gramsci’s concepts helpful in studying the exercise of power in societies with and without traditional state institutions. In attempting to extend Gramsci’s insights into nonstate

**ideology** A worldview that justifies the social arrangements under which people live.

**domination** Coercive rule.

**hegemony** The persuasion of subordinates to accept the ideology of the dominant group by mutual accommodations that nevertheless preserve the rulers’ privileged position.

settings, anthropologists are able to avoid some of the implausible accounts of power that depend on fear of punishment or false consciousness. In place of such arguments, attention can be drawn to the verbal dexterity and personal charisma of leaders with limited coercive force at their disposal who can nonetheless persuade others to follow them by skillfully aligning shared meanings, values, and goals with a particular interpretation of events or proposed course of action.

Consider, for example, the Azande belief that people use witchcraft only against those they envy. The psychological insight embodied in this belief makes it highly plausible to people who experience daily friction with their neighbors. At the same time, however, this belief makes it impossible to accuse Azande chiefs of using witchcraft against commoners—because, as the Azande themselves told Evans-Pritchard, why would chiefs envy their subjects? In this way, hegemonic ideology deflects challenges that might be made against those in power.

In his own writings, Gramsci did not fully develop the concept of hegemony, which has led to disagreement about what exactly he meant by this concept. Anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff, however, have chosen to take this as an opportunity to combine his insights about ideology and hegemony with their own reflections on the connection between culture and power. From their perspective, power has two forms: (1) an *agentive mode*, in which human beings are able to wield power in specific historical situations, and (2) a *nonagentive mode*, in which power is hidden in the forms of everyday life, and not easily challenged, because these forms are assumed to come from the gods or the ancestors or some other nonhuman source and may not be questioned. Yet, as they point out, “the silent power of the sign, the unspoken authority of habit, may be as effective as the most violent coercion in shaping, directing, even dominating social thought and action” (1991, 22).

The Comaroffs’ research shows how, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Tswana experienced a series of profound changes as they encountered European missionaries and merchants and settlers. Over this period, the Tswana were in some cases targets of explicit ideological power that entered culture in the agentive mode: for example, they were targets for conversion to Christian religious practices and for participation in the growing market economy of South Africa. In other cases, however, they adopted new cultural forms seemingly without much notice. Changes in the clothing they wore, how they built their homes, how they farmed, how they learned to measure the time of day using clocks, how they learned to work for Europeans for wages and produce crops for the market, the consequences of learning to read and write—each of these might have

seemed fairly insignificant at the time it occurred, but over time as these changes accumulated, they formed a new kind of silent, taken-for-granted background for everyday Tswana life. Here we see how power enters culture in the nonagentive mode. And yet the result of these changes was *not* the total absorption of the Tswana within a transplanted Western colonial culture. On the contrary, the encounter between the Tswana and Europeans also produced new cultural forms, creating a hybrid heritage that eventually contributed to the overthrow of apartheid in South Africa. Thus, the Comaroffs emphasize what they see as one of Gramsci’s key insights: hegemony may be powerful but it is never absolute, and there is always the potential for hegemony to be overturned. Hegemonic cultural forms can be unmade, in part, by counterhegemonic ideologies crafted by dominated peoples who draw on traditional cultural forms that have been sidelined as well as by the incorporation of new cultural forms that have been introduced from the outside (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 22–25).

### What Are Biopower and Governmentality?

The Comaroffs, as we have seen, shared Abu-Lughod’s concern that anthropologists develop fresh approaches to power that did not confine it narrowly to dualistic contests within political institutions. They also took note of the pivotal work of French political theorist Michel Foucault for inspiration, observing that “in the wake of Foucault, power has long left the formal bounds of ‘political’ institutions and diffused and proliferated into hitherto uncharted terrains” (1991, 17). One of Foucault’s key conclusions is that *power is productive*: that is, power may constrain what we do, but its application always makes new things possible as well (e.g., Foucault 1980). One simple example is the way a student of the violin must practice in a disciplined, focused, repetitive—and therefore constraining—manner in order to become competent at making music with the violin. At the same time, subjecting oneself to such practice eventually does build the skills that allow the student to play—perhaps in a virtuoso manner—complex compositions for this instrument.

This example points to another influential concept developed by Foucault: *discipline*. From one perspective, the virtuoso violinist appears to possess the greatest freedom in playing music on her instrument; thanks to her training and practice, virtually no score will be too challenging for her to perform. From another perspective, however, her freedom was produced by the “unfreedom” of practice, a stern form of discipline that restricted her behavior in numerous ways over many years. Foucault thus argued that the “freedom” of the disciplined subject

is not absolute; and that many of the freedoms people in modern societies believe they enjoy are actually the consequence of disciplines to which they have been subject in a variety of areas of social life, such as the military, in schools, in hospitals, and in prisons (Foucault 1977).

Foucault also examined the ways that European thinkers from the late Middle Ages onward had discussed what was necessary to sustain a peaceful, prosperous state. Together with colleagues, he identified the emergence of a new form of power in the nineteenth century, which he called **biopower**. Biopower is preoccupied with the management of bodies, both the bodies of citizens and the social body itself (Hacking 1991, 183). As Colin Gordon summarizes, biopower refers to “forms of power exercised over persons specifically insofar as they are thought of as living beings; a politics concerned with subjects as members of a *population*, in which issues of individual sexual and reproductive conduct interconnect with issues of international policy and power (1991, 5).

Before the 1600s, according to Foucault, European states were ruled according to different political understandings. At that time, politics was focused on making sure that an absolute ruler maintained control of the state. Machiavelli’s famous guide *The Prince* is the best known of a series of handbooks explaining what such an absolute ruler needed to do in order to maintain himself in power. But by the seventeenth century, this approach to state rule was proving increasingly inadequate. Machiavelli’s critics began to speak instead about *governing* a state, likening such government to the practices that preserved and perpetuated other social institutions.

The example of household management was a preferred model of government. But running a state as if it were a household meant that rulers would need more information about the people, goods, and wealth that needed to be managed. How many citizens were there? What kinds of goods did they produce and in what quantities? How healthy were they? What could a state do to manage the consequences of misfortunes such as famines, epidemics, and death? In the 1700s, state bureaucrats began to count and measure people and things subject to state control, thereby inventing the discipline of *statistics*.

In this way, according to Foucault, European states began to govern in terms of *biopolitics*, using statistics to inform their political policies. Eventually, a new art appropriate to biopolitical management of the state emerged, which Foucault called *governmentality*. **Governmentality** uses statistics to govern in a way that promotes the welfare of populations within a state. To exercise governmentality, for example, state bureaucrats might use statistics to determine that a famine was likely and to calculate how much it might cost the state

in the suffering and death of citizens and in other losses. They would then come up with a plan of intervention—perhaps a form of insurance—designed to reduce the impact of famine on citizens to protect economic activity within the state and thereby preserve the stability of the state and its institutions. Importantly, for Foucault, these interventions need to be understood not as directly coercive, but rather as persuasive, even seductive, actions upon others’ actions, sometimes described as the *conduct of conduct* (Foucault 1994).

Governmentality is at work in the contemporary world, and modern institutions count and measure their members in a variety of ways (Figure 12.4). Although, as Ian Hacking (1991, 183) insists, not all bureaucratic applications of such statistical knowledge are evil, and the fact remains that providing the government (or any

The image shows a sample of a census form titled "Person 1". The form is divided into several sections with numbered questions:

- 1 What is your name? (Person 1 in Table 1)** First name and surname.
- 2 What is your sex?** Male or Female.
- 3 What is your date of birth?** Day, month, year.
- 4 What is your marital status (on 29 April 2001)?** Single, Married, Re-married, Separated, Divorced, Widowed.
- 5 Are you a schoolchild or student in full-time education?** Yes or No.
- 6 Do you live at the address shown on the front of this form during the school, college or university term?** Yes or No.
- 7 What is your country of birth?** England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Elsewhere.
- 8 What is your ethnic group?** A. White (British, Irish, Any other White background), B. Mixed (White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, Any other Mixed background), C. Asian or Asian British (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Any other Asian background), D. Black or Black British (Caribbean, African, Any other Black background), E. Chinese or other ethnic group (Chinese, Any other).
- 9 This question is not applicable in England.**
- 10 What is your religion?** None, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Any other religion.
- 11 Over the last twelve months would you say your health has on the whole been:** Good, Fairly good, Not good.
- 12 Do you look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of:** long-term physical or mental ill-health or disability, or problems related to old age? Time spent in a typical week: No, Yes (1-19 hours), Yes (20-49 hours), Yes (50+ hours).

**FIGURE 12.4** To govern, a state must know who it is governing. Censuses are one way in which the information a state believes it needs can be collected.

**biopower** Forms of power preoccupied with bodies, both the bodies of citizens and the social body of the state itself.

**governmentality** The art of governing appropriately to promote the welfare of populations within a state.

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

## Reforming the Crow Constitution

*Anthropologist Kelly Branam has worked for many years among the Apsáalooke, or Crow, Indian nation in central Montana, and she was able to witness complex negotiations as they struggled in 2001 to reform their constitution. In this passage, Branam discusses some of the reasons why the constitutional process has been so complex and difficult for Crow people.*

With the turmoil facing the Apsáalooke, or Crow, Indian nation in central Montana at the turn of the twenty-first century, including the distrust of their political leaders, a decade of increased chairman decision-making power under "Resolution 90-35," and the lack of large-scale resource development, it is not surprising that the discourse surrounding the 2000 tribal elections included constitutional reform. With the promise of "returning the voice to the tribal council," a new chairman was elected in 2000. In 2001, under this new leadership, the Crow Indian nation accepted a new constitution and a representative democracy. For over 50 years, the Crow Indian nation had been governed under the 1948 Constitution, which maintained a pure democracy system with executive offices of chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, and vice secretary. Why was this system no longer working for the Crow people? Why was a new constitution needed?

For many legal theorists, the importance of constitutions lies in the fact that constitutions outline the relationship the government has to its people. Constitutions restrict governmental power and often ensure citizens' rights. "The theoretical justification for the creation of an independent American nation included, at its center, an assumption that there existed some proper relationship between government and the subjects of government" (Kay 1998, 17). No doubt this is true in other constitutional instances as well. However, when it comes to the unique

position of American Indian nations to the U.S. government, it is important to contemplate the meaning of their constitutions. American Indian tribal constitutions exist not only to outline the relationship tribal governments have to their people, but to outline the relationship the tribal government has to the federal government.

In today's global society, having a written form of a polity's rules outlining the ways in which those rules are made, enforced, and maintained is quintessential for national survival. Despite and often because of Indian nations' "domestic dependent nation" (*Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* 1831) status within the U.S. federal framework, more and more Indian nations are reformulating their tribal governing structures. "If tribal communities want to assert greater control over their economic, political, and cultural lives, they will need more effective forms of government. For many communities there is a growing sense of crisis and movement to remake tribal constitutions" (Champagne 2006, 11). Many Indian nations, including the Apsáalooke, have found constitutions crucial to the maintenance and expansion of their sovereignty.

Analysis of the Crow constitution-making processes reveals the ways in which the Crow Indian nation has resisted federal Indian policies. They have fought to maintain their sovereignty and control their political identity. Through this process, "traditional" notions of governance were redefined, district identity became more important, kinship alliances remained crucial to the political process, and the Crow Indian nation took new steps in defining and asserting their sovereignty in relation to the U.S. government. The ways in which Crows have used constitutions to resist federal assimilationist policies may provide an example for other Indian nations who are also trying to exist under the federal sphere yet maintain traditional notions of governance.

**Source:** Branam Forthcoming.

bureaucratic institution) with detailed vital statistics can be threatening, especially in cases where people are concerned that the state does not have their best interests at heart. After all, states want to tax citizens, vaccinate and educate their children, restrict their activities to those that benefit the state, control their movements beyond (and

sometimes within) state borders, and otherwise manage what their citizens do. In the twenty-first century, anthropologists interested in politics are well aware that local affairs cannot be fully understood apart from the larger political entities within which they are found, and these often turn out to be one or another nation-state.

## Anthropology and Advertising

Timothy de Waal Malefyt and Robert J. Morais are anthropologists who work in advertising. Ethnography, and anthropology more generally, has been recently taken up as consumer research methods by advertising agencies, and there are a number of anthropologists who make a living working either for advertising agencies or as researchers. Working in advertising raises a set of ethical issues that are, perhaps, different from the issues raised by academic anthropology. For more on the ethical issues, we present an In Their Own Words feature in Chapter 14. Here, Malefyt and Morais present an example of what anthropology offers advertising:

A pharmaceutical corporation was planning to solicit proposals from marketing research companies for a study on diabetics. The research would enable them to better understand four psychologically and behaviorally defined patient segments they were evaluating as targets for a new prescription diabetes medication. The company sought a study that would probe deeply into diabetes sufferers' attitudes, emotions, and behavior and deliver insights that would help it determine which target segment offered the highest market potential and inform a strategy for direct-to-consumer advertising. Several months before the request for a proposal (RFP) was to be issued to research suppliers, the marketing research director responsible for the project invited [Robert] Morais to visit the corporation's headquarters to give a presentation on ethnography, which was the methodology that she believed would be best to achieve her team's goals. About halfway through the presentation, the research director stopped Morais and said she wanted to brief him on what she called the "Portrait" study so that he could begin thinking about how his firm would design the research. As she described the goals of the project in detail, it became clear to Morais that in-depth one-on-one interviews (IDIs) in a focus group research facility, rather than ethnographic research, would be a more appropriate methodology to reach her objectives. Ethnography, he counseled the research director, was not needed for the client's learning needs and it would be an inefficient use of research funds. Morais suggested that after the patient segments representing the most sales potential were identified, ethnography would be an excellent way to learn about their everyday lives as diabetics. He made this recommendation with trepidation, hoping that his company would not lose an opportunity

to work with the client, but he felt strongly that IDIs would be a superior research methodology for the client's needs. The research director and a colleague from the marketing department listened attentively, and a few months later Morais's firm received the RFP. Relieved that his company was being considered despite his methodological challenge, Morais proposed a series of ninety-minute IDIs in a focus room facility. He proffered research techniques drawn from his company's skills as PhD-level psychologists and anthropologists. To underscore the difference in his design from the primarily psychologically oriented approaches that he thought the competition would propose, Morais highlighted several techniques and topics that his firm borrowed from anthropology:

- Mining patients' fundamental definitions of diabetes, wellness, and sickness as if the marketing and marketing research team had no knowledge of these concepts
- Identifying patients' rituals regarding the management and treatment of diabetes
- Discovering patient transformational experiences, exemplified by different attitudinal and emotional states, throughout their diabetes life cycle
- Exploring patients' feelings, if any, about belonging to a diabetics "tribe" and what this means for their attitudes, emotions, and behavior
- Researching myths and beliefs about diabetes treatments
- Exploring beliefs in contrast to empirical thinking regarding diabetes medications
- Learning how interactions with health care professionals impact self-management of diabetes

Morais's company won the assignment. When he asked the client research manager why she and her colleagues chose his firm, she said, "We really liked the anthropology." A senior manager from the advertising agency who was also involved in the RFP review process also mentioned anthropology as the agency's reason for endorsing Morais's firm for the project. Ethnography, often conflated with anthropology in marketing research, was not a factor in the decision.

**Source:** Malefyt and Morais 2012, 106–07.

## How Do Anthropologists Study Politics of the Nation-State?

State societies are not new social forms. Nation-states, however, are a far more recent invention. Prior to the French Revolution, European states were ruled by kings and emperors whose access to the throne was officially deemed to have been ordained by God. After the French Revolution in 1789, which thoroughly discredited the divine right of kings, rulers needed to find a new basis on which to found legitimate state authority. The solution eventually adopted was rooted in political authority in **nations**: groups of people believed to share the same history, culture, language, and even the same physical substance. Nations were associated with territories, as were states, and a **nation-state** came to be viewed as an ideal political unit in which national identity and political territory coincided.

The building of the first nation-states is closely associated with the rise and spread of capitalism and its related cultural institutions during the nineteenth century. Following the demise of European colonial empires and the end of the Cold War, the final decades of the twentieth century witnessed a scramble in which former colonies or newly independent states struggled to turn themselves into nation-states capable of competing successfully in what anthropologists Liisa Malkki (1992) has called a “transnational culture of nationalism.”

On the one hand, the ideology of the nation-state implies that every nation is entitled to its own state. On the other hand, it also suggests that a state containing heterogeneous populations *might be made into a nation* if all peoples within its borders could somehow be made to adopt a common **nationality**: a sense of identification with and loyalty to the nation-state. As political scientist Benedict Anderson pointed out long ago, nation-states should be understood as *imagined communities*: that is, as socially and historically constructed communities, associated with geographical territories whose residents

have varying origins and backgrounds and lack regular face-to-face contact with one another. However, a shared identity could take shape over time as these heterogeneous residents came to participate in common, territory-wide, cultural practices, such as reading the same newspapers, traveling on shared infrastructure, or transacting business in the same territory-wide economic or bureaucratic institutions. Anderson was especially interested in how residents of a territorial unit such as a European colony, by virtue of their shared experiences, might come to imagine a shared territorial identity which could become the foundation of national identity once the colony gained political independence. However, the willingness or ability for all residents of a nation-state to adopt national identity is far from guaranteed. Groups with other forms of identity that continue to persist within the boundaries of the nation-state are often viewed as obstacles to nationalism. If such groups successfully resist assimilation into the nationality that the state is supposed to represent, their very existence calls into question the legitimacy of the state. Indeed, if their numbers are sufficient, they might well claim that they are a separate nation, entitled to a state of their own.

To head off this possibility, nationalist ideologies typically include some cultural features of subordinate cultural groups. Thus, although nationalist traditions are invented, they are not created out of thin air. That is, those who control the nation-state will try to define nationality in ways that “identify and ensure loyalty among citizens . . . the goal is to create criteria of inclusion and exclusion to control and delimit the group” (Williams 1989, 407). The hope seems to be that if at least some aspects of their ways of life are acknowledged as essential to national identity, subordinated groups will identify with and be loyal to the nation. Following Gramsci, Brackette Williams calls this process a **transformist hegemony** in which nationalist ideologues are attempting to “create purity out of impurity” (1989, 429, 435). Unfortunately, the practices of subordinated groups that are not incorporated into nationalist ideology are regularly marginalized and devalued. Continued adherence to such practices may be viewed as subversive, and practitioners may suffer persecution and even extermination. Other groups, by contrast, may be totally ignored. Ana Maria Alonso pointed out, for example, that Mexican nationalism is “mestizo nationalism” rooted in the official doctrine that the Mexican people are a hybrid of European whites and the indigenous people they conquered. African slaves were also a part of early colonial Mexican society, but nationalist ideology erases their presence entirely (Alonso 1994, 396).

**nation** A group of people believed to share the same history, culture, language, and even physical substance.

**nation-state** An ideal political unit in which national identity and political territory coincide.

**nationality** A sense of identification with and loyalty to a nation-state.

**transformist hegemony** A nationalist program to define nationality in a way that preserves the cultural domination of the ruling group while including enough cultural features from subordinated groups to ensure their loyalty.

## Nation Building in a Postcolonial World: The Example of Fiji

Nation building involves constructing a shared public identity, but it also involves establishing concrete legal mechanisms for taking group action to influence the state. That is, as John Kelly and Martha Kaplan (2001) argue, nation-states are more than imagined communities; they are also *represented* communities. For this reason, nation building involves more than constructing an image of national unity; it also requires institutions of political representation that channel the efforts of citizens into effective support for the state. But what happens when citizens of a nation-state do not agree about exactly what nation they are building or what kinds of legal and political structures are necessary to bring it about? One answer to these questions can be seen in the South Pacific island of Fiji, which became independent of Britain in 1970 and has experienced a series of political coups since 1987 (see EthnoProfile 12.2: Fiji).

At independence, the image of the Fijian nation was that of a “three-legged stool,” each “leg” being a separate category of voters: “general electors” (a minority of the population including Europeans), “Fijians” (ethnic Fijians, descended from the original inhabitants of the island), and “Indians” (or Indo-Fijians, descendants of indentured laborers brought to Fiji by the British from Bombay and Calcutta in the nineteenth century). Kelly and Kaplan (2001) show that these three categories have deep roots in the colonial period, where they were said to correspond to separate “races.” In the British Empire, race was an accepted way to categorize subordinated peoples, although in many cases—as in the case of the Indo-Fijians—the people so labeled had shared no common identity prior to their arrival in Fiji.

These racial distinctions were concretized in colonial law, and the legal status of the ethnic Fijians was different from the legal status of Indo-Fijians. The status of ethnic Fijians was determined by the Deed of Cession, a document signed by some Fijian chiefs with the British in 1874, which linked ethnic Fijians to the colonial government through their hierarchy of chiefs. The status of Indo-Fijians, by contrast, was determined by the contracts of indenture (*girit*), which each individual laborer had signed to come to Fiji. Thus, ethnic Fijians were accorded a hierarchical, collective legal identity, whereas the Indo-Fijians had the status of legal individuals, with no legally recognized ties to any collectivity.

Inspired by the freedom movement in India in the early twentieth century, Indo-Fijians began to resist racial oppression and struggle for equal rights in Fiji, but their efforts were repeatedly put down by the British. When it became possible for them to vote after 1929, for example, Indo-Fijians lobbied for equal citizenship

### EthnoProfile 12.2

## Fiji

**Region:** Oceania

**Nation:** Fiji

**Population:** 905,000

**Environment:** Tropical marine climate; volcanic mountains

**Livelihood:** Natural resource export, especially sugar; subsistence agriculture; tourism

**Political organization:** Multiparty nation-state

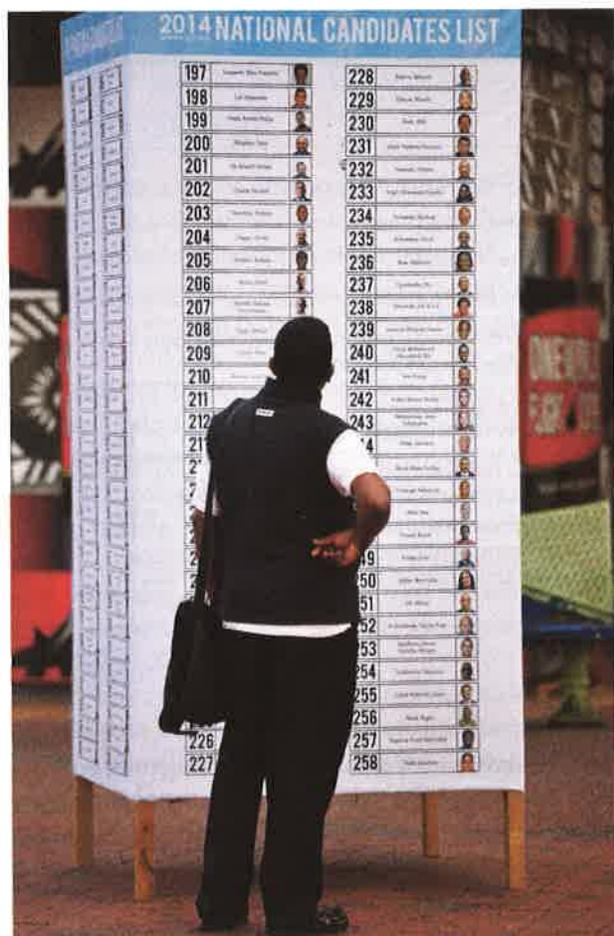
**For more information:** Kelly, John D., and Martha Kaplan. 2001. *Represented communities: Fiji and world decolonization*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.



and the abolition of separate racial voting rolls, and they lost: the voting rolls were divided by race to limit representation for Indo-Fijians in government. At the time of World War II, Indo-Fijians agreed to serve in the armed forces but only if they were treated as equals with white soldiers, and again their efforts were resisted: they spent the war serving in a labor battalion for very low wages, whereas ethnic Fijians joined the Fijian Defense Force. It was primarily Indo-Fijians who pushed for independence in the late 1960s, and once again they engaged in difficult negotiations for equal citizenship and a common voting role—but finally consented to separate race-based voting rolls in 1969 to obtain independence.

Thus, when Fiji’s independence became real in 1970, the constitution insisted that races still existed in Fiji and that they had to vote separately. Since then, political parties have generally and increasingly followed racial lines and the army has remained an enclave of indigenous Fijians. When political parties backed mostly by Indo-Fijian voters won Fiji’s 1987 election, the army staged a coup and took over the country after only a month. The constitution that was then installed in 1990 returned to even more naked discrimination against Indo-Fijians with regard to voting rights (Kelly and Kaplan 2001, 77).

The constitution was revised yet again, in a manner that favored chiefly ethnic Fijian interests and seemed guaranteed to prevent parties backed by Indo-Fijian voters from winning control of the government in the 1999 election. To everyone’s surprise, parties backing ethnic Fijians lost again. On May 19, 2000, came a second coup. Finally, after new elections in 2001, ethnic Fijians



**FIGURE 12.5** A Fijian citizen contemplates the list of candidates in anticipation of the 2014 national election.

won control of the government. The new government lasted until a December 2006 military takeover. One of the military's demands was an end to the "race-based" voting system, to be replaced by a new "one citizen—one vote" system. However, in April 2009, the president suspended the constitution and appointed himself head of state. In September 2009, the British Commonwealth expelled Fiji for its failure to schedule democratic elections by 2010. An election was finally held in 2014, and Fiji was readmitted to the Commonwealth (Figure 12.5).

What lessons does this history suggest about nation building in postcolonial states? The issues are many and complex. But Kelly and Kaplan insist that the image of a united Fijian nation projected at independence was severely undermined by legal mechanisms of political representation carried over from the colonial period, particularly the race-based voting rolls. What became apparent in the years after independence was the fact that Indo-Fijians and ethnic Fijians had imagined very different national communities. Indo-Fijians had supported the image of a nation in which all citizens, Indo-Fijian or

ethnic Fijian or "general elector," would have equal status, voting on a single roll, working together to build a constitutional democracy. However, "few among the ethnic Fijians have yet come to see themselves as partners with immigrants" (Kelly and Kaplan 2001, 41). Ever since independence, and particularly after each coup, ethnic Fijians worked to construct an image of the Fijian nation based solely on chiefly traditions in which Indo-Fijians had no meaningful place. Thus, Kelly and Kaplan conclude, in Fiji (an in many other parts of the world): " 'the nation' is a contested idea, not an experienced reality" (142).

### How Does Globalization Affect the Nation-State?

The Fijian history described earlier points to the kinds of movements and mixing of people that were permitted and even encouraged in the age of European colonial empires, and how the consequences of these processes bequeathed a series of challenging problems to postcolonial territories that wanted to transform themselves into nation-states. Even as Fiji and other postcolonial states have been wrestling with these problems from the colonial past, however, ongoing changes in the world have begun to challenge the territorial boundaries that nation-states have struggled to erect around themselves. Since the end of the Cold War in 1989, processes of globalization, abetted by new forms of communication, transportation, and manufacturing, have unleashed flows of wealth, images, people, things, and ideologies across the world. The pressures of these global flows on the boundaries of nation-states have been profound. National governments have struggled, often in vain, to control what their citizens read or watch in the media: satellite services and telecommunications and the Internet elude state-ordered censorship. Nation-states allow migrants or students or tourists to cross their borders because they need their labor or tuition or vacation expenditures, but in so doing states must be content with the political values or religious commitments or families that these outsiders bring with them. Some have argued that weakening the boundaries between nation-states is a good thing, since border restrictions and censorship need to be overcome, but 25 years after the end of the Cold War, the challenges posed by weakened borders have become more apparent. For example, the Schengen Agreement, adopted in 1999 by the European Union, eliminated passport controls between all member states except for Ireland and the United Kingdom, and it was hailed as a positive achievement. Fifteen years later, however, enormous pressure has been put on the European Union by waves of refugees escaping economic and political pressures in their home nations: thousands

of refugees have died attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea from points in North Africa, and more recently, waves of refugees fleeing the Syrian civil war have passed through Turkey into Greece and then made their way northward by foot, seeking to settle in Germany and other European states that would accept them and offer them safety. Similar pressures have been felt in North America as refugees and migrants, seeking safety and a better life, have encountered increasing hostility on the southern border of the United States, including the erection of a border wall designed to keep them out. In many other parts of the world, political unrest has also pushed people across national borders in search of safety and continued means of survival, making many weakened states vulnerable to chaos and violence.

Migrants and refugees themselves often face a dilemma. On the one hand, they now form sizeable and highly visible minorities in the countries of settlement, often in the poorer areas of cities. There they find opportunities for economic subsistence and political security, encouraging them to stay. On the other hand, hostility and sometimes violence are directed against them whenever there is a local economic downturn. Many migrants conclude that the possibility of permanent assimilation is unrealistic, which encourages them to maintain ties to their places of origin or to migrant communities elsewhere.

### Migration, Trans-Border Identities, and Long-Distance Nationalism

The term *diaspora* is commonly used to refer to migrant populations with a shared identity who live in a variety of different locales around the world, but Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Fouron point out that not all such populations see themselves in the same way. Schiller and Fouron describe different types of “trans-border identities” that characterize different groups of migrants. They prefer to use the term **diaspora** to identify a form of trans-border identity that does not focus on nation building. Should members of a diaspora begin to organize in support of nationalist struggles in their homeland, or to agitate for a state of their own, they become **long-distance nationalists** (Schiller and Fouron 2002, 360–61). “Long-distance nationalism” was coined by political scientist Benedict Anderson to describe the efforts of émigrés to offer moral, economic, and political support to nationalist struggles in their countries of origin. In his original discussion, Anderson emphasized the dangerous irresponsibility of the “citizenshipless participation” of the long-distance nationalists: “while technically a citizen of the state in which he comfortably lives, but to which he may feel little attachment, he

finds it tempting to play identity politics by participating (via propaganda, money, weapons, any way but voting) in the conflicts of his imagined *Heimat* [homeland]” (2002, 269–70).

Schiller and Fouron argue, however, that the conditions of globalization have led to new forms of long-distance nationalism that do not correspond to Anderson’s original description. They point to the emergence of the **trans-border state**: a form of state “claiming that its emigrants and their descendants remain an integral and intimate part of their ancestral homeland, even if they are legal citizens of another state” (Schiller and Fouron 2002, 357). Trans-border states did not characterize periods of mass emigration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At that time, nations sending emigrants abroad regarded permanent settlement elsewhere as national betrayal. They encouraged emigrants to think of migration as temporary, expecting them eventually to return home with new wealth and skills to build the nation. But in today’s global world, political leaders of many states sending emigrants accept the likelihood that those emigrants will settle permanently elsewhere. Some may even insist that emigres retain full membership in the nation-state from which they came, a form of long-distance nationalism that Schiller and Fouron call a **trans-border citizenry**: “Citizens residing within the territorial homeland and new emigrants and their descendants are part of the nation, whatever legal citizenship the emigres may have” (Schiller and Fouron 2002, 358).

Trans-border states and trans-border citizenries are more than symbolic identities; they have become concretized in law. For example, several Latin American countries, including Mexico, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Brazil, permit emigrants who have become naturalized citizens in countries such as the United States to retain dual nationality and even voting rights in their country of origin (Figure 12.6). Special government ministries are set up to address the needs of citizens living abroad. This is very different from Anderson’s “citizenshipless participation.” Schiller and Fouron stress that trans-border states and citizenries

**diaspora** Migrant populations with a shared identity who live in a variety of different locales around the world; a form of transborder identity that does not focus on nation building.

**long-distance nationalism** Members of a diaspora organized in support of nationalist struggles in their homeland or to agitate for a state of their own.

**trans-border state** A form of state in which it is claimed that those people who left the country and their descendants remain part of their ancestral state, even if they are citizens of another state.

**trans-border citizenry** A group made up of citizens of a country who continue to live in their homeland plus the people who have emigrated from the country and their descendants, regardless of their current citizenship.



**FIGURE 12.6** The Dominican Republic permits emigrants who have become naturalized citizens of the United States to vote in Dominican elections. Here, a Dominican woman in New York campaigns in 2004 for a second term for President Hipólito Mejía.

spring “from the life experiences of migrants of different classes” and are “rooted in the day to day efforts of people in the homeland to live lives of dignity and self-respect that compel them to include those who have migrated” (2002, 359).

But some trans-border citizenries face difficulties. First, their efforts at nation building are sometimes blocked by political forces in the homeland that do not welcome their contributions. This was the case for Haitians living abroad while Haiti was ruled by the Duvalier family dictatorship and for Cubans living abroad whose efforts have been blocked by the Castro revolutionary government. Second, the states in which immigrants have settled may regard as threatening the continued involvement of trans-border citizens in the affairs of another state. Such involvement has often been seen as even more threatening since terrorists destroyed the World Trade Center and attacked the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Yet in an era of globalization, attempts to control migration threaten to block the flows of people that keep the global economy going. Moreover, the vulnerability of trans-border citizens in these circumstances often increases the appeal of long-distance nationalism (Schiller and Fouron 2002, 359–60).

**legal citizenship** The rights and obligations of citizenship accorded by the laws of a state.

**substantive citizenship** The actions people take, regardless of their legal citizenship status, to assert their membership in a state and to bring about political changes that will improve their lives.

**transnational nation-state** A nation-state in which the relationships between citizens and the state extend to wherever citizens reside.

The globalizing forces responsible for these changes have undermined previous understandings of what a world made up of nation-states should look like. Indeed, they reveal unacknowledged contradictions and weaknesses of actual nation-states. For example, the existence and strength of trans-border states and citizenries show that some nation-states—especially those sending migrants—are actually what Schiller and Fouron call *apparent states*: they have all the outward attributes of nation-states (government bureaucracies, armies, a seat in the United Nations), but in fact they are unable to meet the needs of their people (Schiller and Fouron 2002, 363). And the existence of apparent states also exposes inconsistencies and paradoxes in the meaning of citizenship in the nation-states where migrants settle.

Schiller and Fouron contrast legal citizenship with what they call substantive citizenship and point out that, for trans-border citizens, the two often do not coincide. **Legal citizenship** is accorded by state laws and can be difficult for migrants to obtain. But even those trans-border citizens who obtain legal citizenship often experience a gap between what legal citizenship promises and the way they are treated by the state. For example, people of color and women who are United States citizens are not treated by the state the same way white male citizens are treated. By contrast, **substantive citizenship** is defined by the actions people take, regardless of their legal citizenship status, to assert their membership in a state and to bring about political changes that will improve their lives. Some trans-border citizens call for the establishment of full-fledged **transnational nation-states**. That is, “they challenge the notion that relationships between citizens and their state are confined within that territory” and work for the recognition of a new political form that contradicts the understandings of political theory, but which reflects the realities of their experiences of national identity (Schiller and Fouron 2002, 359).

## Anthropology and Multicultural Politics in the New Europe

One of the most interesting things about the early twenty-first century is that Europe—the continent that gave birth to the Enlightenment and colonial empires and (along with North America) to anthropology itself—has become a living laboratory for the study of some of the most complex social and cultural processes to be found anywhere in the world.

During the last half of the twentieth century, the countries of Europe, including Italy, were the target of large waves of migration from all over the world. One venerable working-class Roman neighborhood, only a

## EthnoProfile 12.3

## Rione Monti (Rome)

**Region:** Europe

**Nation:** Italy

**Population:** 15,300

**Environment:** Central neighborhood in Rome

**Livelihood:** Urban occupations, ranging from tourism and factory work to restaurants, small businesses, bureaucratic, executive

**Political organization:** Neighborhood in a modern nation-state

**For more information:**  
<http://www.rionemonti.net/>



short walk from the Colosseum, is Rione Monti, which has a fascinating history of its own (EthnoProfile 12.3). In 1999, anthropologist Michael Herzfeld (2003) moved into Rione Monti to explore social change in the uses of the past. Herzfeld found that longtime residents of Monti shared a common local culture, which includes use of the *romanesco* dialect rather than standard Italian, and a strong sense of local identity that distinguished them from “foreigners,” including diplomats and non-Roman Italians. Their identity survived Mussolini’s demolition of part of the neighborhood in the early twentieth century. They successfully dealt with a local criminal underworld by mastering a refined urban code of politeness. The underworld had faded away by the 1970s, but beginning in the 1990s, residents began to face two new challenges to their community. First, historic Roman neighborhoods became fashionable, and well-to-do Italians began to move into Rione Monti, pushing many workers into cheaper housing elsewhere. Second, in the 1990s, another group of newcomers arrived: immigrants from eastern Europe.

Italy is one of the more recent destinations of immigration into Europe, reversing the country’s historical experience as a source, rather than a target, of immigration. However, after Germany, France, and Britain passed laws curtailing immigration in the 1970s, Italy became an increasingly popular destination for immigrants from Africa, Asia, and Latin America; after the end of the Cold War came immigrants from outside the European Union (EU), including eastern Europe. At the time, laws regulating immigration were few, and the country appeared

welcoming. But twenty years ago, this began to change, leading Umberto Melotti to observe: “Italy has not historically been a racist country, but intolerant attitudes toward immigrants have increased. To a large extent, this seems to be the result of a long-standing underestimation of the magnitude of the changes and thus poor policy implementation for a lengthy period, in spite of the best intentions officially proclaimed” (Melotti 1997, 91).

Melotti contrasted the distinctive ways in which immigration was understood by the governments of France, Britain, and Germany. According to Melotti, the French project is *ethnocentric assimilationism*: Since early in the nineteenth century, when French society experienced a falling birthrate, immigration was encouraged and immigrants were promised all the rights and privileges of native-born citizens as long as they adopted French culture completely, dropping other ethnic or cultural attachments and assimilating the French language, culture, and character (1997, 75). The British project, by contrast, is *uneven pluralism*: that is, the pragmatic British expect immigrants to be loyal and law-abiding citizens, but they do not expect immigrants to “become British: and they tolerate private cultivation of cultural differences as long as these do not threaten the British way of life (1997, 79–80). Finally, Melotti describes the German project as *the institutionalization of precariousness*, by which he means that despite the fact that Germany has within its borders more immigrants than any other European country, and began receiving immigrants at the end of the nineteenth century, its government continues to insist that Germany is not a country of immigrants. Immigrants were always considered “guest workers,” children born to guest workers are considered citizens of the country from which the worker came, and it remains very difficult for guest workers or their children born in Germany to obtain German citizenship. (This contrasts with France, for example, where children of immigrants born on French soil automatically become French citizens.)

Coming to terms with increasing numbers of Muslims living in countries where Christianity has historically been dominant has been central to cultural debates within Europe for the past quarter century. Although all European states consider themselves secular in orientation (see Asad 2003), the relation between religion and state is far from uniform. France is unusual because of its strict legal separation between religion and state. In Britain, the combination of a secular outlook with state funding of the established Anglican Church has allowed citizens to support forms of religious inclusion that first involved state funding of Catholic schools for Irish immigrants and later involved state funding for Muslim schools for Muslim immigrants (Lewis 1997;

Modood 1997). In Germany, where a secular outlook also combines with state-subsidized religious institutions, the state devised curricula for elementary schools designed to teach all students about different religious traditions, including Islam, in ways that emphasize the possibility of harmonizing one's religious faith with one's obligations as a citizen. Perhaps as a result of their own history, many contemporary Germans have had less faith than the British that a civic culture of religious tolerance would automatically lead to harmony without state intervention and less faith than the French in the existence of a separate secular sphere of society from which religion could be safely excluded (Schiffauer 1997).

These are, of course, thumbnail sketches of more complex attitudes and practices. But they illustrate the fact that there is no single "European" approach to the challenges posed by immigration. In a way, each European state, with its own history and own institutions, has been experimenting with different ways of coping with the challenges posed by the arrival of immigrants and refugees, and the results of these experiments have influenced the policies toward outsiders that are taking shape in the twenty-first century. Their responses have been complicated by the structures of the European Union, a continent-wide superstate with 28 members. Reconciling the diverse interests and needs of member states has posed enormous challenges for EU members. These challenges have increased even more sharply in recent years, as austerity policies within the EU have threatened the economic viability of states such as Greece, some of whose citizens have responded to the crisis by suggesting that Greece leave the European Union to find financial relief. Similarly, the free movement of EU citizens across state borders has generated anti-immigrant sentiments among some British citizens, which led to the so-called Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom, in which voters by a slim majority favored cutting British ties with the EU. Finally, radical Islamic Middle Eastern terrorist groups such as ISIS (or the so-called "Islamic State") have managed to perpetrate violent terrorist incidents inside a number of European states, perhaps most notably the attacks in 2015 in Paris, first at the offices of the satirical newspaper *Charli Hebdo* in January, and later coordinated attacks in November on several public venues in Paris including the Bataclan concert hall. These events have further stimulated the growth of right-wing anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim political movements in many European countries.

Twenty years ago, Tariq Modood emphasized the need to find ways of supporting European citizenship that allow the "right to assimilate" as well as the "right to have one's 'difference' . . . recognized and supported in the public and the private spheres"; appreciating that

"participation in the public or national culture is necessary for the effective exercise of citizenship" while at the same time defending the "right to widen and adapt the national culture" (1997, 20). Modood further suggested that perhaps such tensions "can only be resolved in practice through finding and cultivating points of common ground between dominant and subordinate cultures, as well as new syntheses and hybridities. The important thing is that the burdens of change . . . are not all dependent on one party to this encounter" (1997, 20). Anthropologist John Bowen's field research in France documented the process Modood describes. Bowen has worked among many French Muslims who are not interested in terrorism but who "wish to live fulfilling and religious lives in France" (2010, 4). He has paid particular attention to the work of a number of French Muslim religious teachers and scholars, whom he calls "Islamic public actors." Other French Muslims come to them for religious instruction and for advice about how to cope with the difficulties of living in a non-Muslim country. In turn, the Islamic public actors Bowen knew are working to craft solutions that, in their view, are true both to the laws of the French republic and to the norms and traditions of Islam.

For example, many French Muslims are concerned about how to contract a valid marriage in France. Ever since the French Revolution, France has refused to accept the legality of religious marriages and recognizes only civil marriages contracted at city hall (Figure 12.7). Yet Muslims who want to marry are often confused about whether a "secular" marriage at city hall is appropriate or necessary. Indeed, some Muslims have argued that city hall marriages are un-Islamic because they did not exist at the time of the Prophet Muhammad. But other Muslims, including some of Bowen's consultants, disagree with this position. They argue that there was no need for civil marriages at the time of the Prophet, because in those days, tribal life made it impossible to avoid the obligations of the marriage contract. But things are different today for Muslims in urban France: Bowen's consultants have seen many tragic outcomes when young women who thought they had a valid Muslim marriage were left by their husbands, only to discover that the French state did not recognize their marriage and could offer them no legal redress.

Because this was not the outcome that Islamic marriage was intended to produce, the scholars Bowen knew looked beyond traditional Islamic marriage practices in order to clarify the larger purposes that Islamic marriage was supposed to achieve. They asked if these purposes could be achieved using the French institution of civil marriage. One scholar told Bowen: "I say that if you marry at the city hall, you have already made



**FIGURE 12.7** A Turkish bride and groom in Clichy-sous-Bois, a poor suburb of Paris. Islamic and French legal scholars are both working to harmonize French and Islamic marriage practices.

an Islamic marriage, because all the conditions for that marriage have been fulfilled" (2010, 167). Those conditions include the fact that both Islamic marriages and French civil marriages are contracts; that both require the consent of the spouses; and that the legal requirements imposed on the spouses by French civil marriage further the Islamic goal of keeping the spouses together. When this kind of reasoning is strengthened by appealing to opinions on marriage drawn from the four Sunni schools of law, many Islamic public intellectuals believe that a way can be found to craft acceptable practices for French Muslims in many areas of daily life.

Because Bowen agrees with Modood that accommodation has to go in both directions, he also shows how some French legal scholars are working to craft solutions to the challenges Muslim marriage practices present to French law. Most French judges agree, for example, that Islamic marriages or divorces contracted outside France remain valid when the parties involved move to France. But French judges can refuse to accept international rules for resolving legal conflicts if they decide that the solution would violate French "public order." Bowen found that the concept of "public order" is basic to the French legal system, referring "both to the conditions of social order and to basic values, and it limits the range of laws that a legislator may pass and the decisions that a judge may make" (2010, 173).

Violations of public order may include customs from outside France that are judged to "offend the morality and values" (Bowen 2010, 173) of French law. Some French jurists argue that consequences following from Muslim practices of marriage and divorce should not be recognized in France if they violate French and European commitments to the equality of women and

men. Other French jurists, however, point to the practical problems that this argument creates: not recognizing the validity of Islamic divorces in France, for example, would mean that a woman divorced according to Islamic law abroad could not remarry if she came to France. Similarly, refusing to recognize polygamous marriage in France would deprive the children of all but a man's first wife of their rights under French and European law. In recent years, Bowen reports, French judges have devised two ways of crafting a solution to these unwelcome consequences. One has been to modify the concept of public order by making so-called practical exceptions for Muslims who emigrate to France. The other is to be more flexible with Muslim marriage and family practices as long as these arrangements involve individuals who are not French citizens. These pragmatic solutions are an improvement over what Bowen calls the "more blunt-instrument approach" associated with the older understanding of public order. Bowen concludes that in France today, Muslim and French jurists alike are both struggling to craft "the legal conditions for common life that are capacious enough to 'reasonably accommodate' people living in different conditions and with differing beliefs, yet unitary enough to retain the hope that such a common life is conceivable" (2010, 178).

Thus, the struggles and dilemmas that faced residents of Rione Monti are widespread in Europe today. But the specifics of each situation, and the cultural resources at people's disposal, have their own particularity. Thus, traditionally left-wing Monti residents resisted attempts by neofascist politicians to get them to turn against immigrant families in the neighborhood. Herzfeld found that the residents of Monti, like other Romans, claimed not to be racists (which

**FIGURE 12.8** Rione Monti is a neighborhood in central Rome where longtime residents and new immigrants are negotiating new forms of relationships.



accords with Melotti's view of Italians in general) and that they seemed less hostile to immigrants of color than to Ukrainians (Figure 12.8). Local and immigrant Monti residents eventually did find ways to get along with each other (Herzfeld 2008, 231). Indeed, during the years when Herzfeld was doing his ethnography, the mix of residents in Monti was changing in other ways, as young professionals, including professors from the nearby university, began to rent apartments in local buildings. The low-income artisans who had traditionally lived in these buildings were finding, however, that rents were rising even as entire apartment blocks remained empty. Their owners had concluded that it was worth their while to keep their buildings empty until real estate prices rose, even though this precipitated a housing shortage.

Prior to this period, struggles among renters, landlords, and the city government of Rome regarding building permits or over rental rates were common, and these disputes had usually been resolved by negotiations among all interested parties, carried out according to the mostly extralegal rules of the traditional neighborhood "code." As a result, low-income renters had often managed to avoid eviction from their apartments. But in the early years of the twentieth century, the rules changed, in large part because some of the key players changed. A lot of outside money was entering the Roman real estate market, deployed by businessmen who knew nothing and cared less about whether low-income renters ought to be allowed to stay in buildings in desirable locations.

Still, Monti residents were politically active, and they banded together when threatened with eviction. Herzfeld followed closely the back-and-forth negotiations that ensued when renters in one particular building staged a rent strike, after the building's new owner threatened to evict current residents. In the old days, this sort of action would likely have been quietly resolved according to the neighborhood code; and at first, the strikers were able to get the building's new owner to agree not to evict them. What nobody had counted on, however, was the clout of the wealthy outside buyers who had entered the Roman real estate market.

This new owner sold the building to another company, which then sold it to a third company, whose owners refused to honor the agreement that the original owner had made with the renters. The current owners then tried to sell the building to the city, which refused to pay the price they were asking. "It became clear that nothing further could be done; this company soon thereafter sold the property to yet another firm, one that was developing extensive interest in the neighborhood, and the struggle finally came to an end" (Herzfeld 2009, 297).

A key component contributing to this outcome was a change in the law that reflected struggles over what kinds of rights residents had to their homes. One of Herzfeld's informants, who had been active in Roman city government, explained to him that the power of the city to intervene in struggles against eviction had changed. In the past, the city had respected the view that people had a *social* right to their homes; but these rights were

no longer legally protected: “under the national constitution, it was now the owner’s rights that were protected. . . . A set of laws, promulgated at the national level by the coalition to which he had belonged at the city level, and reinforced by already existing constitutional guarantees for the rights of property owners, had now effectively undercut any serious prospect of resolving the dispute as an issue of the social right to a home” (2009, 297). At first, the strikers refused to give up, but their legal position was weak; within a year, they had been evicted. There was much bitterness among those who were forced to leave, and even though all of them eventually did find other places to live, many had to leave Monti, which undermined their sense of community and identity.

The experiences of these Monti residents raise interesting and troubling questions about the rights of long-time residents in a place who discover that under the current regime of global neoliberalism, they apparently possess no rights that international capital is obliged to respect. Herzfeld observes that “the intense attachment to place that aroused my sympathies can also be the source of no less intense forms of cultural fundamentalism and racism” (2009, 301). These responses are not limited to Europe, but can also be found in Bangkok, Thailand, where Herzfeld next carried out fieldwork, following what turned into a 24-year-long battle by residents of an inner-city neighborhood to resist being evicted so that the government might modernize space they occupied (Herzfeld 2016). As of January 5, 2017, they were still under threat of removal but had not yet been evicted (*New York Times*, A9). Herzfeld insists that “there is no *necessary* connection between localism and racism and other forms of intolerance, and in fact what has impressed me throughout both field projects . . . has been the firmness with which some reject the seductions of intolerance in the midst of their own sufferings, even as they recognize the bitterness that drives others in far less attractive directions” (2009, 302). He adds that “none of this will make much sense except in the further context of a consideration of the history of nationalism, both in Italy and elsewhere” (302).

## What Happens to Citizenship in a Globalized World?

Our discussion of nationality, nation-states, and nationalism has briefly traced developments from the French Revolution through the spread of European colonial empires through the transformation of colonies into nation-states, ending with the softening of national boundaries that has occurred following post-Cold War processes of

globalization. Challenges to national sovereignty—that is, a nation’s ability to defend its borders and govern itself—have been accompanied by changes in the meaning of citizenship—the rights and privileges of those persons considered legitimate members of the national population. What might citizenship mean in a twenty-first century globalized world?

### How Can Citizenship Be Flexible?

Schiller and Fouron’s contrast between formal and substantive citizenship suggests that notions of citizenship that previously seemed straightforward break down in the context of globalization. Another way of addressing these contradictions is suggested by anthropologist Aihwa Ong, who speaks of **flexible citizenship**: “the strategies and effects of mobile managers, technocrats, and professionals seeking both to circumvent *and* benefit from different nation-state regimes by selecting different sites for investment, work, and family relocation (2002, 174). Ong studied diaspora communities of elite Chinese families who played key roles in the economic success of the Pacific Rim in recent years. Although their success is often attributed by outsiders to “Chinese culture,” Ong’s research questions this simplistic explanation; she documents the ways in which Chinese families responded creatively to opportunities and challenges they encountered since the end of the nineteenth century, as they found ways to evade or exploit the governmentality of three different kinds of institutions: Chinese kinship and family, the nation-state, and the marketplace.

The break from mainland Chinese ideas of kinship and Confucian filial piety came when Chinese first moved into the capitalist commercial circuits of European empires. Money could be made in these settings, but success required Chinese merchant families to cut themselves off from ties to mainland China and to reinforce bonds among family members and business partners in terms of *guanxi* (“relationships of social connections built primarily upon shared identities such as native place, kinship or attending the same school” [Smart 1999, 120]).

The family discipline of overseas Chinese enabled them to become wealthy and provided the resources to subvert the governmentality of the nation-state. The orientation of these wealthy families toward national identity and citizenship, Ong explains, is

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**flexible citizenship** The strategies and effects employed by managers, technocrats, and professionals who move regularly across state boundaries who seek both to circumvent and benefit from different nation-state regimes.

**FIGURE 12.9** Overseas Chinese are to be found in many parts of the world, as here in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. They are not always millionaire businesspeople but are shopkeepers and small businesspeople as well.



“market-driven.” In Hong Kong, for example, in the years leading up to its return to mainland China in 1997, many wealthy Chinese thought of citizenship not as the right to demand full democratic representation, but as the right to promote familial interests apart from the well-being of society (Ong 2002, 178). None of the overseas Chinese she knew expressed any commitment to nationalism, either local or long distance. Quite the contrary. Relying on family discipline and loyalty and buttressed by considerable wealth and strong interpersonal ties, they actively worked to evade the governmentality of nation-states. For example, Chinese from Hong Kong who wanted to migrate to Britain in the 1960s were able to evade racial barriers that blocked other “colored” immigrants because of their experience with capitalism and their reputation for peaceful acquiescence to British rule. When the British decided to award citizenship to some Hong Kong residents in the 1990s, they used a point system that favored applicants with education, fluency in English, and training in professions of value to the economy, such as accountancy and law. These attributes fitted well the criteria for citizenship valued under the government of Margaret Thatcher, while other applicants for citizenship who lacked such attributes were excluded. Citizenship, or at least a passport, could be purchased by those who had the money: “well-off families accumulated passports not only from Canada, Australia, Singapore, and the United States but also from revenue-poor Fiji, the Philippines, Panama, and Tonga which required in return for a passport a down payment of U.S. \$200,000 and

an equal amount in installments” (Ong 2002, 183) (Figure 12.9).

Although wealthy overseas Chinese families had thus managed to evade or subvert both the governmentality of Chinese kinship and that of nation-states, they remained vulnerable to the discipline of the capitalist market. To be sure, market discipline under globalization was very different from the market discipline typical in the 1950s and 1960s. Making money in the context of globalization required the flexibility to take advantage of economic opportunities wherever and whenever they appeared. Ong described one family in which the eldest son remained in Hong Kong to run part of the family hotel chain located in the Pacific region while his brother lived in San Francisco and managed the hotels located in North America and Europe. Children can be separated from their parents when they are, for example, installed in one country to be educated while their parents manage businesses in other countries on different continents.

These flexible family arrangements are not without costs. “Familial regimes of dispersal and localization . . . discipline family members to make do with very little emotional support; disrupted parental responsibility, strained marital relations, and abandoned children are such common circumstances that they have special terms” (Ong 2002, 190). At the same time, individual family members truly do seem to live comfortably as citizens of the world. A Chinese banker in San Francisco told Ong that he could live in Asia, Canada, or Europe: “I can live anywhere in the world, but it must be near an airport” (190).

Ong concludes that, for these elite Chinese, the concept of nationalism has lost its meaning. Instead, she says, they seem to subscribe to a **postnational ethos** in which they submit to the governmentality of the capitalist market while trying to evade the governmentality of nation-states, ultimately because their only true loyalty is to the family business (Ong 2002, 190). Such flexible citizenship, however, is not an option for nonelite migrants: “whereas for bankers, boundaries are always flexible, for migrant workers, boat people, persecuted intellectuals and artists, and other kinds of less well-heeled refugees, this . . . is a harder act to follow” (190). Ong concludes that neither the positives nor the negatives associated with the practices of these overseas Chinese merchants should be attributed to any “Chinese” essence; instead, she thinks these strategies are better understood as “the expressions of a habitus that is finely tuned to the turbulence of late capitalism” (191).

### What Is Territorial Citizenship?

The forms of citizenship we have considered so far—legal, substantive, or flexible—are best understood in the context of forms of governmentality active in nation-states that are concerned to control and manage the biopower of their populations. But what happens when this form of biopolitics—what we might call a biopolitics of concern and interference—is replaced by what Peruvian anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena calls a biopolitics of abandonment (2015, 158)? The biopolitics of abandonment withdraws governmental resources and management from sections of the citizenry, leaving them to meet their needs as they are able and see fit. From one perspective, this looks like a government refusing to meet its obligations to (at least some of) its citizens, and it is. But recall Foucault’s insight that power is productive. In the space left by the withdrawal of the nation-state, it may be possible to develop new forms of citizenship disconnected from the nation-state.

This new form of citizenship is developing among residents of indigenous territories who have been granted full control and authority (or sovereignty) over lands that are located within the boundaries of nation-states. The responsibilities that come with territorial sovereignty may be new to both leaders and residents of indigenous territories and may carry burdens that they are unaccustomed to or unwilling to assume. Juliet S. Erazo has studied the new ways of thinking and acting that have developed in the indigenous territory of Rukullakta, in Ecuador, as its Amazonian Kichwa residents fashion a sense of territorial citizenship. According to Erazo (2013), “Negotiating the specific responsibilities and duties associated with territorial citizenship is one of the key sites of enacting sovereignty” (10).

As we saw in Aihwa Ong’s study of elite Chinese migrants, Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentality has proved extremely helpful in analyzing processes of citizenship formation. Erazo also uses this concept in her analysis of territorial citizenship in Rukullakta, but doing so requires modifying the way governmentality is applied. First, studies of indigenous economic and political development often focus on practices of governmentality issuing from national governments, NGOs, or institutions like the World Bank. By contrast, Erazo (2013) insists that indigenous peoples like the Kichwa of Rukullakta “can also be the agents of governmentality, rationalizing and disciplining their fellow group members while enlisting them in projects of their own rule” (6). Second, many studies often portray governmentality as being exercised in a top-down fashion to manipulate targeted populations in ways that serve the interests of the powerful. By contrast, Erazo argues that this interpretation is too narrow: in Rukullakta, “indigenous leaders’ actions have been critical in assuring their members’ access to land and development funding” (6). Indigenous territories, therefore, provide a fresh setting in which to examine the operations of governmentality, showing “the ways in which those in governing roles have worked to transform individual subjects (in this case, people who thought of themselves primarily as part of a kinship-based group, occupying family-owned land) into active citizens (in this case, of indigenous territories with collective titles and bureaucratic governments)” (Erazo 2013, 6).

Residents of Rukullakta were able to secure title over their lands in the late 1970s because they agreed to form a ranching cooperative, responding to an offer by the Ecuadorian government that viewed such cooperatives as a means of providing economic development in rural areas. But receiving development aid for this project depended on leaders’ abilities to persuade other members of the cooperative to contribute labor by cutting down forests, planting pasture, and caring for the new cattle herds. The negative experiences of many cooperative members during this period led them to resist future attempts by leaders to engage them in demanding collective economic projects. Their resistance shaped the subsequent actions of leaders, who moderated their demands for such active citizen involvement in territorial affairs.

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**postnational ethos** An attitude toward the world in which people submit to the governmentality of the capitalist market while trying to evade the governmentality of nation-states.

Leaders remain concerned about passing down a strong sense of territorial citizenship to younger generations. One current effort involves a local competition for young women that resembles the beauty pageants that occur throughout Latin America. In Rukullakta, however, candidates are judged on their ability to speak about political challenges currently facing their territory, both in Spanish and in Kichwa. "Pageants are therefore key sites in which leaders invite residents to reflect on what could be done to improve the territory, and to become more involved in territorial governance" (Erazo 2013, 184). At the same time, citizens "work actively to shape leaders in a number of ways inducing demanding conflict resolution services, vocally criticizing leaders whom they think are putting their own interests ahead of those of Rukullakta's members, purposely staying away from some of the meetings and events that leaders ask them to attend, and even punishing leaders as if they were children in public spectacles" (Erazo 2013, 194). In Erazo's view, the joint efforts of Rukullakta's leaders and citizens "have contributed to Rukullakta's ability to remain a viable and resilient political entity for over four decades. However . . . these efforts have also involved new subjectivities, new hierarchies, and new ways of relating to people and nature" (2013, 199).

### What Is Vernacular Statecraft?

The processes Erazo identifies among the residents of Rukullakta in Amazonian Ecuador have also been noted by Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld in his ongoing work in indigenous communities in highland Ecuador (2009). Colloredo-Mansfeld also finds the Foucauldian understanding of governmentality (state-initiated "conduct of conduct" of its subject population) to be inadequate for understanding political change in highland Ecuador in recent decades. Erazo addresses this difficulty by showing how indigenous leaders in Rukullakta have devised their own, local forms of governmentality that they use to encourage community members to act in ways they believe will strengthen indigenous sovereignty. Colloredo-Mansfeld found similar political mechanisms at work in highland communities like Otavalo, where state administrative procedures have been repurposed by local communities. He calls these local practices **vernacular statecraft**.

In describing these local administrative practices as *statecraft*, Colloredo-Mansfeld draws inspiration from James Scott's influential discussion of how modern states operate (Scott 1998). Scott uses the term "statecraft" to describe the forms of top-down management technologies that render local communities "legible" to state manipulation. Such legibility, Scott argues, comes about through practices of "strategic simplification" that focus only on those attributes of a community that are relevant to state designs. When local communities adapt management technologies of the state and put them to work for their own purposes, however, these technologies become instances of what Colloredo-Mansfeld describes as *vernacular statecraft*, which he compares to vernacular architecture: "In vernacular architecture, builders imitate and appropriate standard elements of widely used design, adapting them to local conditions . . . Translated into political terms, [vernacular statecraft] combines replicable form, local action and an absence of state intervention" (2009, 17).

For Colloredo-Mansfeld, the *absence* of state intervention is key. Most political analyses using concepts of "governmentality" or "statecraft" presume that local communities are targets of an intrusive state. In Latin America, Colloredo-Mansfeld argues, this presumption is not correct, for two main reasons. First, the model of intrusive statecraft presumes that state and local communities can be sharply differentiated from each other. Colloredo-Mansfeld points out, however, that "in the Andes, community and state are impossible to disentangle" (2009, 16). This entanglement goes back to the middle of the sixteenth century, when the indigenous survivors of the Spanish invasion, devastated by disease and labor exploitation, were organized into newly created communities called *reducciones*, at the head of which the Spanish authorities placed local indigenous authorities called *kurakas*. These state interventions remade indigenous culture: "deputized natives, vested in state authority, enabled the sedimentation of government forms as local culture. Bits and pieces of the state steadily accrued as indigenous custom" (2009, 17).

Second, the model of intrusive statecraft presumes that the state is a constant, powerful presence that actively intervenes in local affairs. However, Colloredo-Mansfeld points out that contemporary Latin American states like Ecuador are better known for their *neglect* of indigenous communities than for their intrusive manipulation of them. When states retreat from effective involvement in local communities, those communities may repurpose state management techniques to run their own affairs. Colloredo-Mansfeld detects a "profusion of vernacular structures" in Andean communities; their complexity

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**vernacular statecraft** The repurposing of state administrative procedures by local communities under circumstances where state institutions are weak, unreliable, or absent.

may be underestimated by outsiders, but all of them "can be treacherous to navigate" (2009, 17).

One feature of Andean vernacular statecraft can be seen in the way Otavalans repurposed the traditional Andean labor practice called a *minga*, or communal work party. Labor *mingas* go back centuries in the Andes and have often been described as spontaneous voluntary efforts. But Colloredo-Mansfeld found that contemporary *minga* membership has been joined to list keeping, with the result that simply residing in a community is no longer sufficient for being considered a community member. Rather, your name must appear on a communal list, kept by officers of the council, and when a *minga* is called, these officers note down who shows up. Family members can substitute for one another to remain on the list, and they earn *minga* points when someone shows up, but families who do not show up will be dropped from the list unless they pay a fine. "The lists cut membership down to discrete moments of community development. Work in past projects may set someone up as a potential participant in the next one, but it does not guarantee it" (2009, 104). As a result, *minga* participation is not automatic but must be negotiated: "The collective unpaid labor mobilized in a *minga* is too tightly pledged to the construction of desired services, too carefully tracked by households, and too systematically monitored by community authority to be glibly described as a voluntary, cooperative effort" (2009, 107).

Colloredo-Mansfeld uses the concept of vernacular statecraft to explain how indigenous communities throughout Ecuador are now able to come together to challenge state power. The 1937 *Ley de Comuna* may have been intended as a way of making indigenous communities legible to the state. But indigenous communities that complied with the law also became more legible to one another. In Colloredo-Mansfeld's view, the tools of indigenous statecraft have provided the means for indigenous communities to ally with one another regional and national federations, such as the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, or CONAIE. "In all this, differences and inequalities are not erased but organized, sometimes in lasting and iniquitous ways, sometimes in passing" (2009, 89). As a result, "When communities arrive at a consensus to act, they frequently mobilize to oppose state policy, rather than speed its implementation. Furthermore, standardized organizational forms allow opposition to scale up quickly" (2009, 7). Colloredo-Mansfeld describes how *mingas* were called out in 2006 to blockade the northern entrance to the town of Peguche, in support of a nationwide general strike called by CONAIE to

protest a proposed free trade treaty between Ecuador and the United States (2009, 186). This use of *mingas* was controversial, especially among local supporters of the proposed treaty, but this disagreement illustrates precisely how the concerns of contemporary indigenous communities reach beyond their borders: "amid debate and dissent, leaders push for programs at provincial, national, and even international levels, linking residents' interests to wider political projects. To insist on either unanimity of support or individual freedom to opt out of any project at will is to hold indigenous groups to a higher standard than other democracies" (2009, 188).

## Global Politics in the Twenty-First Century

Although traditional research in political anthropology began among small-scale societies that might at one time have functioned independently of their neighbors, the fact remains that these ethnographic studies were regularly carried out when these societies had been incorporated into European colonial empires. With the breakup of these empires, most colonial territories were transformed into independent nation-states. But as we saw in the case of Fiji, this transformation has been full of tension and struggle, because different segments of the Fijian citizenry had different ideas about what that modern nation-state would look like, and who would be in charge. Even as such struggles to affirm national sovereignty continue in many parts of the world, these struggles have been complicated by global flows of capital, people, images, ideas, and ideologies. National boundaries have softened. In some cases, nation-states have given up claims to sovereignty over some of their citizens, but some of these same citizens, now moving in the same globalized contexts, have found new ways of asserting their own territorial citizenship. Because power is productive, the results may be positive or negative, depending on the specific case. At the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, however, the globalized world is in a dangerous and unstable condition. While some have been able to benefit enormously from the growth of global capitalism, many others have been left out. As inequalities widen, local leaders and their followers struggle to manage the consequences, with or in spite of the intervention of outside powers. One major consequence has been the increased flows of migrants and refugees seeking to escape the violence. Many long taken-for-granted notions about identity and belonging now seem up for grabs everywhere on Earth.

## Chapter Summary

1. Contemporary cultural anthropologists are interested in how cultures change, but they are suspicious of evolutionary schemes that give the impression that social arrangements could not have been—or could not be—other than the way they are. They also point out that no society anywhere is static. The power that human beings have to reproduce or to change their social organization is an important focus of political anthropology.
2. The ability to act implies power. The study of power in human society is the domain of political anthropology. In most societies at most times, power can never be reduced to physical force, although this is the Western prototype of power. Power in society operates according to principles that are cultural creations. As such, those principles are affected by history and may differ from one society to another.
3. Western thinkers traditionally assumed that without a state, social life would be chaotic, if not impossible. They believed that people were free agents who would not cooperate unless forced to do so. Anthropologists have demonstrated that power is exercised both by coercive and by persuasive means. They have been influenced by the works of Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault. Gramsci argued that coercion alone is rarely sufficient for social control, distinguishing coercive domination from hegemony. Rulers always face the risk that those they dominate may create counterhegemonic accounts of their experience of being dominated, acquire a following, and unseat their rulers. Foucault's concept of governmentality addresses practices developed in Western nation-states in the nineteenth century that aimed to create and sustain peaceful and prosperous social life by exercising biopower over persons who could be counted, whose physical attributes could be measured statistically, and whose sexual and reproductive behaviors could be shaped by the exercise of state power.
4. Nation-states were invented in nineteenth-century Europe, but they have spread throughout the world along with capitalism, colonialism, and eventual political decolonization. Nationalist thinking aims to create a political unit in which national identity and political territory coincide, and this has led to various practices designed to force subordinate social groups to adopt a national identity defined primarily in terms of the culture of the dominant group. When subordinate groups resist, they may become the victims of genocide or ethnic cleansing. Alternatively, the dominant group may try to recast its understanding of national identity in a way that acknowledges and incorporates cultural elements belonging to subordinate groups. If the creation of such an imagined hybrid identity is not accompanied by legal and political changes that support it, however, the end result may be political turmoil, as shown in the recent history of Fiji.
5. The flows unleashed by globalization have undermined the ability of nation-states to police their boundaries effectively. Contemporary migrants across national borders have developed a variety of trans-border identities. Some become involved in long-distance nationalism that leads to the emergence of trans-border states claiming emigrants as trans-border citizens of their ancestral homelands even if they are legal citizens of another state. Some trans-border citizenries call for the establishment of full-fledged transnational nation-states. Struggles of these kinds can be found all over the globe, including in the contemporary states of the European Union.
6. The contrasts between formal and substantive citizenship suggest that conventional notions of citizenship are breaking down in the context of globalization. Diaspora communities of elite Chinese families have developed a strategy of flexible citizenship that allows them to both circumvent and benefit from different nation-state regimes. They seem to subscribe to a postnational ethos in which their only true loyalty is to the family business.

## For Review

1. Define power and the three different kinds of power described by Eric Wolf.
2. What are the different theoretical orientations and subject matters that have interested political anthropology over its history?
3. Explain how power may be understood as physical force or coercion.
4. Compare hegemony and domination.
5. Why is hegemony a useful term for anthropologists?

6. What does the perspective of political anthropology highlight about the history of nationalism in Sri Lanka?
7. What is biopower?
8. Following Foucault, how does governing a state differ from ruling a state?
9. Summarize how kinship affects politics in northern Thailand.
10. What are hidden transcripts? Where do they come from and how do they function?
11. Summarize the argument in the text concerning the powers of the weak, and illustrate your summary with references to the Tswana and Bolivian examples.
12. Summarize the key points concerning multicultural politics in contemporary Europe, with particular attention to the different ways in which the United Kingdom, France, and Germany deal with immigration.
13. How does ethnographic research illuminate the challenges faced by French Muslims who wish to contract a valid marriage?
14. What are everyday forms of peasant resistance? How does James Scott connect them with the political relations of dominant and subordinate categories of people in "Sedaka," Malaysia?

## Key Terms

biopower 373	hidden transcripts 367	political	trans-border state 379
diaspora 379	ideology 371	anthropology 364	transformist
domination 371	legal citizenship 380	postnational ethos 387	hegemony 376
flexible	long-distance	power 364	transnational
citizenship 385	nationalism 379	substantive	nation-state 380
free agency 366	nation 376	citizenship 380	vernacular
governmentality 373	nationality 376	trans-border	statecraft 388
hegemony 371	nation-state 376	citizenry 379	

## Suggested Readings

- Arens, W., and Ivan Karp (eds.). 1989. *Creativity of power: Cosmology and action in African societies*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press. *Contains 13 essays exploring the relationship among power, action, and human agency in African social systems and cosmologies.*
- Fogelson, Raymond, and Richard N. Adams (eds.). 1977. *The anthropology of power*. New York: Academic Press. *A classic collection of 28 ethnographic essays on the varied ways power is understood all over the world. Also contains two important essays based on case studies.*
- Herzfeld, Michael. 2009. *Evicted from eternity: The restructuring of modern Rome*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. *An extended study of the politics of the new Europe as experienced in one historic neighborhood in Rome.*
- Keesing, Roger. 1983. 'Elota's story. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. *The autobiography of a Kwaio Big Man, with interpretive material by Keesing. First-rate, very readable, and involving.*
- Lewellen, Ted. 2003. *Political anthropology*, 3rd ed. New York: Praeger. *The latest edition of a standard introductory text in political anthropology, covering leading theories, scholars, and problems in the field.*
- Vincent, Joan (ed.). 2002. *The anthropology of politics*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell. *An excellent collection of texts that illustrate the development of political anthropology over time and showcase important achievements by influential political anthropologists today.*