
Summaries

Sacred kingship as a politico-symbolic structure: a re-evaluation of Frazer's thesis

by Luc de Heusch

Frazer's views on 'divine' kingship contained important insights which were distorted by the functionalist criticisms of his Anglo-Saxon successors. De Heusch prefers the term 'sacred king' (or 'chief'). He analyses this ritual institution as a 'means of illusionary production'. It is to be considered as a symbolic structure subject to a certain number of transformations. In its different forms, sacred kingship emerges from a rupture in the symbolic familial order. In this sense it constitutes an ideological revolution. However, it does not necessarily coincide with the emergence of the State. It only makes the State in its various historical developments possible by introducing a breach in the domestic mode of production.

The state as unity of analysis in cultural anthropology – problems and possibilities for regional comparative research

by Albert A. Trouwborst

Anthropologists have often used the concept of 'the State' in a loose way, hardly distinguishing it from other, equally vague concepts such as 'nations', 'peoples' or 'tribes'. In Africa this presents specific problems in view of the considerable historical variations in the composition and compactness of 'states'. Trouwborst discusses problems in identifying and defining states, taking his examples from the Interlacustrine Region (around the Great Lakes of East Africa). Comparative analysis on a regional scale seems to offer a solution to these problems. Dutch anthropologists have proposed the concept of a 'field of ethnological study' for such comparisons. However, Trouwborst prefers an approach in terms of a 'field of interaction' for the comparison of states, because he wants to focus on the relations between the elements constituting such a field. Historical studies from the Interlacustrine Region have shown that especially by taking this interrelatedness into account the dynamics of state formation can be understood and a more subtle demarcation of states is possible.

Rwandan chiefs and bureaucratic norms? Conflicts under Belgian colonial rule, 1916-1940

by Filip Reyntjens

The process of colonisation can be viewed as an extreme case of rapid modernization imposed from the outside. In such a context, the introduction of 'bureaucratic' norms in a

'traditional' society is bound to lead to overt conflicts. Developments in Rwanda during the interbellum offer striking examples of this. The Belgian authorities claimed to pursue here a policy of Indirect Rule. However the local political institutions were rapidly transformed. Somewhat inconsistently the Belgian government professed to 'respect' but also 'develop native institutions'. The territorial organisation was 'rationalised' and rule of the Tutsi aristocracy, an ethnic minority, was expanded over the whole colony, including peripheral zones which had remained semi-autonomous until colonial conquest. The chiefs had to conform to bureaucratic standards and tributes were converted into taxes. However the imposed norms hardly took root. This became clear during the Rwandese revolution at the end of the fifties when the Tutsi were violently expelled. After Independence, the official norms of the central authority – efficiency, integration and the achieving of unity – were expressed again in terms of traditional norms and values.

**Hegemonical regimes and popular resistance in post-colonial Africa:
Bayart, Gramsci and the state in Cameroon**
by Peter Geschiere

State formation in post-colonial Africa challenges current approaches to 'the State'. Some authors refer to 'the capricious State'. Recent Marxist or 'marxizing' approaches in terms of *dependencia* or class-formation prove to be of limited use. Especially the apparent contradiction between the strongly authoritarian character of African states and the relative autonomy – the 'uncapturedness' – of the peasantry raises questions. According to the French political scientist Bayart, such contradictions can only be analysed by adopting a broader view of the state than a purely politico-economic one. In his analysis of state formation in Cameroon, he concentrates, more or less following Gramsci, on the struggle over the 'civil society' in the attempts of state regimes to establish their 'hegemony'. Geschiere applies Bayart's ideas to his research data on regional developments in Southeastern Cameroon. A central issue is the relevance of Bayart's insistence on ideological initiatives of the regime for understanding relations between state and peasantry. To what extent is the idea of a struggle over the civil society helpful for recognizing popular forms of protest against the imposition of new forms of hegemony?