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Title: Review. "Origins of the State: The Anthropology of Political Evolution. By Ronald Cohen and Elman Service, eds."

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Source: In *Man*, n.s. 14 (3): 568-569

MAN

THE JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

NEW SERIES

VOLUME 14

1979

Published quarterly

by the

Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland

COHEN, RONALD & ELMAN R. SERVICE (eds). *Origins of the state: the anthropology of political evolution*. 233 pp., illus., tables, bibliogr. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978.

Speculative theses on the formation of the earliest states were regular features of evolutionist social theories of the last century, but played little part in twentieth-century anthropology until the contributions of V. Gordon Childe, Leslie White and Julian Steward together laid the basis for contemporary neo-evolutionism. However since 1967, when Morton Fried's *Evolution of political society* appeared, interest in this question has revived apace, and therewith our understanding of the complexities so neatly hidden by such shorthand terms as 'the origin of the state'. Following Marx and Rousseau, Fried distinguished between pristine and secondary states, and argued that pristine states arose independently in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and perhaps in the Indus valley and China, following increases of population and contractions of resources, as specialised political organisations required to preserve and defend the positions and interests of the propertied classes in societies that were already economically stratified. Thereafter secondary states were created by or in defensive reactions to the expansion of these primary states.

In 1968 Lawrence Krader reviewed the topic obliquely in his *Formation of the state*, but used few data from the New World and did not segregate pristine and secondary states as Fried had done. Krader concluded that states originated in different ways at differing times and places. Two years later Robert Carneiro restated Herbert Spenser's general thesis that the states evolved by processes of war in geographically circumscribed regions such as Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Indus valley.

In 1975 Elman Service reconsidered the *Origins of the state & civilization*, criticised Morton Fried's hypothesis, and concluded that the first states emerged in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus valley, China, Peru and Central America prior to the economic stratification asserted by Fried, when theocratic chiefdoms with urban centres responded to internal and external threats by organising themselves with the consent of their people for effective defence. Service explicitly invokes popular perceptions of ritual, social and other benefits as the decisive condition for conversion of these antecedent theocracies into fully-fledged states.

The alternatives advocated by Service and Fried provide the framework for the present collection of essays. Carneiro's thesis is hardly discussed and Krader's contribution is ignored. The volume therefore concentrates on the

competing theses of Service and Fried—each of whom contributes an essay. Service groups all evolutionary speculations on the origin of the state into two contraposed clusters—namely, conflict theories (e.g. Marx, Spencer and Morton Fried) and integrative theories (e.g. Service, Wittfogel and, oddly, Carneiro's 'circumscription' thesis, oddly, as Carneiro clearly stresses war (e.g. pp. 207–11)). In reply, Fried cites laws and other data from early Mesopotamia that indicate social stratification. However, as Cohen notes in his introductory review of the volume's various essays, these legal data are drawn from established secondary states in that region. They cannot be treated as descriptions of the antecedent society that created the pristine state. We may now never recover decisive texts and supporting data from the periods and sites of the few agreed pristine states in either hemisphere to choose between the overlapping theories of Service, Fried and Carneiro. Cohen accordingly advocates 'a more eclectic, non-doctrinaire position on this topic' (p. 15) and recognises that 'there are multiple roads to statehood' (p. 8), which may include the routes identified by Fried, Service, Carneiro and others.

Of nine essays in this collection, only that by Eva and Robert Hunt on 'Irrigation, conflict and politics: a Mexican case' has been previously published. Henry Wright's nicely argued and illustrated contribution, 'Toward an explanation of the origin of the state', is a revised version of another published article. The essays by Salzman, Cohen, Barbara Price and the Hunts all deal with contexts of secondary state formations, in Iran, in North-eastern Nigeria, and in Mexico respectively, and therefore do not contribute directly to the issues raised by Fried, Carneiro and Service, though they provide interesting materials, approaches and hypotheses. An essay by Wolfgang Weisleder on 'Aristotle's concept of political structure and the state' seems strangely out of place in this company, even more so than Robert Carneiro's concluding piece which, on the principle of competitive exclusion or survival of the fittest, projects a world-state by 2300 A.D.

What does the volume contribute to our understanding of state origins and formation? To an immediate solution of the hoary problem of how or why the first four or five 'states' arose, it makes little advance on Krader, even though Henry Wright's essay, based on research in southwestern Iran, is rich in suggestions which receive some support from other contributions on the formations of secondary states by Barbara Price and the Hunts. However, the real value of the book consists in bringing together the present range

of approaches to the problem of state formations, both pristine and secondary, rather than in offering some simple, universal and untenable solution. It should therefore prove of interest and value to teachers and others interested in contemporary views of the origins of states.

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HARRIS, GRACE GREDYS. *Casting out anger: religion among the Taita of Kenya* (Camb. Stud. social Anthropol. 21). xiv, 193 pp., plates, tables, bibliogr. Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1978. £7.95

I have a special interest in Dr Harris's book. For one thing, it began as a dissertation submitted for the doctorate in my Department at Cambridge twenty-five years ago. At that stage the descriptive ethnography of Taita religion was her primary concern. The book is a transformation of this ethnography into a treatise of fundamental general and theoretical import. It is presented in classical monographic style with analysis and interpretation tied strictly to the particulars of the ethnographic fieldwork. It is a short book (185 pages of text) written with admirable economy of language and conceptual clarity, and so tightly packed that I shall have to limit my comments to the main theme.

Harris declares at the outset that she is 'more concerned with Taita religion as a mode of acting in the world than as a mode of thinking about the world'—which implies an approach that I find particularly congenial and that is the second reason for my interest in her book.

The actor, then, is at the centre of Harris's enquiry. But first comes a description of the Taita world, as it presented itself in the early fifties, when Alfred and Grace Harris carried out their field study. The Taita habitat and subsistence economy and their political and cultural contacts with neighbouring tribes and coastal traders before the missionaries arrived in the 1880's and the British Colonial government took over, are described in outline. Then follows an account of the social structure. It comprised interlocking neighbourhoods and villages based on criss-crossing agnatic, cognatic and affinal connexions generated by the 80 per cent. incidence of intra-village marriage. The village was dominated by non-exogamous patrilineal 'great lineages' and was presided over by elders who derived their authority from their ritual status and control over the 'juridical rites' of oath, ordeal and conditional curse. Last comes an outline of the religious domain. Each community had Seers who transmitted demands from the Creator and other mystical agencies such as the ancestors and the Great Medicines. There