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In his book, James Scott presents the history of "Zomia"—a transnational zone of withdrawal within Southeast Asia where, over centuries, political communities sought and found refuge from the encompassing reach of empires, kingdoms, and states. Scott's double thesis is that Zomia is a political order apart and that its natural, social, and cultural features combined to maintain the hill peoples (the plural is crucial) as "'runaways' from state-making processes in the lowlands" (p. 24). The author analyzes the factors that sustained the highlands as an intentional refuge zone. He also analyzes the dynamics that—after the retreat to Zomia—consolidated the single state lowlands and transnational highlands as mutually constitutive: assertive and encompassing states, retreating and consolidating highland peoples. He emphasizes the hill peoples' refusal of states as something more than resistance, in the process raising interpretive and reflexive issues that reach well beyond the Southeast Asian massif.

The remoteness of the mountain regions bridging Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, and Burma—compounded by the complexities of interior transit—might seem naturally to yield a measure of isolation and backwardness; however, Scott rejects such determinisms along with any analysis that would bracket the upland societies as premodern holdovers. Throughout, his emphasis is on the elements of the social, cultural, and built environment that sustained a centuries-long pattern of rejection, withdrawal, and readiness for flight on the part of peoples who literally took to the hills as states ventured control. Scott refers to these combined effects as "the friction of terrain"—the literal and figurative terrain sheltering and supporting the fugitive political cultures. He draws on wide resources to develop a multistranded historical narrative that braids together topography, agrarian practices, political forms, dynamic schisms and alliances, and ethnogenesis (among other things). Crucial to his thesis is the contention that it was the state itself that was at issue, and not merely antipathy to a particular regime or program. While his focus is on the highland peoples, that negative relation to states is also always in view as the time-space of the new regional narrative offered in this book.

Scott is concerned to show that concepts such as resistance and disorder—keywords in the cultural turn in state theory—are only partly adequate for the state of affairs in Zomia. As such, the book asks readers not only to rethink what they thought they knew about Southeast Asia but also more generally to rethink cores and margins, state

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and nonstate orders, embeddedness and movement, agency and association—and what makes these issues significant in the ways history, sociology, politics, anthropology, and law theorize states. The discursive habits that insert "stateness" unbidden into history and social theory are in question in the book's subtext. Modern states—anywhere—can be understood afresh in relation to internal and external processes of "cultural refusal" (p. 20), and the reflexive implications of Scott's account are never far off the page. This is not to say that we are all hill peoples now, nor is it merely a question of what people want from—or *if* they want—citizenship. More fundamentally, it means attending to how states are imagined and enacted in theory and practice.

Scott modestly presents the book's thesis as merely "connecting the dots" established by others (p. 25), and he sets clear limits to his project. His "anarchist history" ends in 1945, since (he says) at that point modern technology trumped the elements that kept Zomia apart as a political order. He acknowledges having "come to see this study . . . as a fragment of what might properly be considered a global history of populations trying to avoid, or having been extruded by, the state" (p. 328), but he purposely leaves those larger implications aside, limiting his conclusions to the materials at hand. Such reserve (or, as I read it, ethnographic and historical accountability) is welcome, and in pursuing some lines of implication beyond the text, I follow trails indicated by the sourcing of his interpretive repertoire. As he makes the case for a new narrative of Southeast Asian history, Scott draws on anthropology, history, cultural theory, development studies, and postcolonial and subaltern studies (among other sources from diverse regions and disciplines) to uncouple the conventional association of state formation and modernization in order to make room for the construction of Zomia's political order over time as a "state effect" (pp. 36 ff.). His purposes and evidence may be region specific and time bound, but his range of reference makes room for readers such as myself who approach the book from the farther reaches of its story line.

The book travels well. Readers lacking expertise in Southeast Asia but familiar with Scott's earlier work on domination and resistance, hegemony and hidden transcripts, and "seeing like a state" will readily find their footing here as he critically reengages elements of those themes in this more complex social, political, and historical ambit—yielding an entirely fresh account of the interpretive demands of resistance that is widely applicable beyond the region. The author himself does not dwell on his earlier contributions, and there is no trace of repetition here. Still, receptivity to this book is likely to be due in part to the influence of his earlier work on the ethnography of politics, in particular his alertness to the subaltern forms of political agency and the codings of counterhegemonic discourse in fugitive media.

As suggested, however, even first-time readers of Scott's work will recognize the relevance of his analysis to contemporary critical trends in the disciplines adjacent to his own. Rethinking states puts disciplinary knowledge practices into play wherever innovative questions of political agency, such as abound in his book, challenge the premises that naturalize the spatialization of states, their unidirectional development, and the "scalar axis" of states and transnational processes.[1] Accordingly, I briefly consider the implications of Scott's book in relation to the interrelated issues of migration, social movements, and flows of (political) capital that are central to his account.

The author's thesis regarding population movement in the constitution of Zomia resonates with recent transnational migration studies elsewhere that emphasize the importance of emigration as yielding insights into the politics of citizenship.[2] In particular, François Weil's thesis regarding French emigration emphasizes regional resistance to the nationalization of the French state (e.g., in the Pyrenees and the Auvergne) in the nineteenth century.[3] More generally, the question of how the "bordering dynamics" of nation-states expose and unsettle their "national encasements" marks an opening for "a sociology of globalization."[4] Independent formulations such as these regarding the state implication of intentional displacement in other regions suggest that the relevance of Scott's emigration thesis is not limited to the Southeast Asian massif—nor are his constructive "reversals" of the conventional narrative limited to that region's "civilization" (p. 7). He makes a major demonstration of teasing out the complex cultural and political labor involved in maintaining the illusion of states as analytically neutral surfaces. Social and legal conventions tend to overascribe continuity and contiguity to states, as if they were continuous social platforms; however, as noted previously, such spatializations require careful and complex management, as well as critical forms of erasure.[5] David Harvey associates this mystique with the universalism of liberalism: "The facts of geography and anthropology are occluded, if not actively repressed, in liberal theory (and its derivative discourses such as economics) because they are judged irrelevant to the universality of its basic conceptions."[6] As historian Thomas Bender emphasizes in his own analysis of emergent comparative horizons in migration studies, the "respatialization of historical narrative" potentially "liberate[s] us from the enclosure of the nation."[7]

Scott addresses regional specialists directly, and beyond that circle, anyone interested in the local-state dimensions of regionalism and the significance of cultural difference in relation to states and transnationalism. For some readers, perhaps especially anthropologists, these latter issues arise primarily under the rubric of globalization—a theoretical location where metaphors of flow and friction retain their lively currency as references to localized synergies of interrelation.[8] That said, states have not, for the most

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part, featured in anthropology's varied engagements with globalization—and thus Scott's thesis regarding zones of refuge and cultural refusal of the state form registers as a novel theoretical and reflexive possibility.

Indeed, once one absorbs Scott's analysis as a robust theoretical challenge to the overascription of "stateness" as modernity's dominant social form, other connections follow.[9] It is obviously provocative as a point of departure for thinking about the turbulent career of state formation in other transnational highland regions, some of them persistent or episodic war zones in our own times, as well as about transnational "terrains of friction" in other topographies (literal and figurative). In a different vein, the book is also valuable to think with alongside current ethnographies of social movements and political mobilization within what Bret Gustafson calls "plurinational states"[10]—particularly in the implication that the vision of *the state* entailed in such multiple nationalist assertions is not necessarily (or even likely to be) constant or common. Ethnographers who attend directly to the contemporary politics of state formation have tended to give more attention to projects of inclusion than to withdrawal, but these same ethnographers also suggest the extent to which political movements may envision a substantially different state, and not merely a change in administration—particularly with respect to the transnational positioning of states relative to indigenous rights, the status of the poor, and control of natural resources in relation to global neoliberal capitalism.[11] These are not direct parallels to state contestation in Zomia, but Scott's reading of state disavowal and deliberate (re)action is suggestive in terms of lodging or enlarging the interpretive possibility that states may be refused from within.

As John and Jean Comaroff have argued, the idea of the "modernist state" that was "put in place with 'decolonization'" tends to mask the extent to which "law and lawlessness . . . are conditions of each other's possibility."[12] Their account traces the mutual imbrication of legality and criminality sustained by pervasive privatization and government outsourcing in the "postcolony." But (as they also note) it is not only in postcolonial situations—nor in crime—that privatization creates and sustains new sites for "amassing value"[13] and law is "fetishized"[14] in the competition of interests between states and private actors. "Lawfare"—the use of legal instruments for political control—pervasively dissolves the association of legality with order, within states and beyond them.[15] The active challenge to the legitimacy of state regulation (in favor of private contracts) is central to the mobilization of some elements of the antiregulatory movement. As the recent U.S. scene demonstrates, the "judicialization of politics"[16] around regulation and taxation scrambles the arithmetic of association, germinating alliances (e.g., "tea parties") across "runaway" groups that are otherwise socially distant with disparate interests.

In a related vein, Scott's analysis is also suggestive with respect to contracts and rulemaking among large multinational firms and other institutions in the transnational nonstate sector.[17] Such connections at the higher social margins of transnationalism may seem counterintuitive, given his attention to marginalization in the more conventional sense. But the implications of his critique are not limited to subaltern communities, since the mutual constitution of states and political communities is a feature of the modern liberal state.[18] The modern liberal state couples recognition and alienation—appropriating the social and moral discourse of select constituent communities, building democratic representation on a suspension of the distinction between public and private, and inscribing violence in the force of law (and vice versa).[19] The massive private ordering that constitutes the transnational market sphere challenges the long-established conventions of legal instrumentalism and their social science extensions, as Roger Cotterrell has recently argued.[20] Among Cotterrell's considerations is his observation that private contracts may constitute "withdrawal" from state legal regimes.[21] Such analysis runs counter to those who would find law in all forms of agreement or rule making, precluding more or less by definition runaways and rogues in favor of a generalized notion of pluralism (and cultural difference). But under contemporary conditions—and perhaps within Zomia, too—social distance is no sure measure of political distance. In our own times, too, in other words, state formation does not guarantee the conditions that might sustain a national society.

This itinerary might seem to carry us some distance from Scott's immediate concerns. However, reading by Zomia's light, we can see how states themselves provide the means for "escape" through law. They do so not only by their proximity to criminality and violence[22] or by the willingness of politicians to compromise on and off their electoral platforms. They also do so routinely by means of administrative practices in the thick gray zone between governments and markets, such as deregulation, privatization, exceptions, and exemptions. Implications of Scott's thesis are thus to be found not only in analogies to the situation of Zomia (though, as noted, these are potentially significant) but also in the contemporary conditions of escape from state regulation that have been built up on the myth of the self-regulating market, as elaborated by Karl Polanyi.[23] That myth envisions the market as the convergence of state and society, a horizon where private interests double as public goods—a pervasive discourse even where corporate self-regulation is not endorsed as such.[24] The major enterprises of global capitalism—multinational firms and global financial institutions—have access to the figurative massifs of our own day and place, at the outer verges of state regulation, or in some cases beyond them. There are differences, of course. In Zomia, the hill peoples mostly left the valleys behind; in

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our own milieu, those transnational actors who escape the regulation of single states retain a degree of control (or at least bargaining power) over the routes, sustaining a discourse of responsible choice as the amalgam of a global order.[25]

Connecting the dots from Scott's work along the horizons of his interpretive resources leads in more than one direction. The terrain of friction may have smoothed out in Zomia, but it remains steep elsewhere, including the high end of global capitalism.

Notes

1 Bender 2002, 8; Scott, 7–8.
2 Bender 2002; Coutin 2007; Green and Weil 2007, 1.
3 Weil 2000.
4 Sassen 2007, 220.
5 Ferguson and Gupta 2002.
6 Harvey 2009, 38.
7 Bender 2002, 8; see also Hurrell 2007, Chapter 10.
8 On "flow," Appadurai 1996 and 2001. On "friction," Tsing 2004.
9 "Stateness" is a term Scott uses as a reference to the perceived or imagined characteristics, functions, and effects of states in relation to state practice (including legitimacy claims). For discussion of this keyword, see, e.g., Hansen and Stepputat 2001.
10 Gustafson 2009, 7 and 204.
11 For example, Coronil 1997; Fernandes 2010; Paley 2001; Warren 1998.
12 Quoted passages are (respectively) from Comaroff and Comaroff 2006a (vii), and 2006b (21).
13 Comaroff and Comaroff 2006b, 5.
14 Comaroff and Comaroff 2006a, viii ff.
15 Comaroff and Comaroff 2006b, 30 ff.
16 Ibid.
17 Especially Cotterrell 2009; Riles 2001. See also Granovetter 1985.
18 Corrigan and Sayer 1985.
19 Abrams 1988; Comaroff and Comaroff 2006a and 2006b; Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Shamir 2008; Weber 1954.
20 Cotterrell 2009.
21 Cotterrell 2009, 487.
22 Comaroff and Comaroff 2006b; Weber 1954.
23 Polanyi 1944, 3. See also Riles 2008.
24 See contributions to Greenhouse 2009.
25 See, for example, "The National Security Strategy" of 2002 (White House 2002).

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> There's nothing particularly wrong with the valley understanding of the agro-ecology, social organization, and mobility of the peoples who elude them. They've sorted these people, as it were, into the right bins. In addition to radically misunderstanding the historical sequence, however, they have got their labels wrong. If they merely substituted "state-subject" for "civilized" and "not-a-state-subject" for "uncivilized," they'd have it just about right" (p. 337).

This is the last paragraph of James Scott's important book *The Art of Not Being Governed.* The paragraph is a bit immodest, but is also a bit disarming. It may lead us to think that the main theme of the book is to demonstrate that there are nonstate peoples who are "civilized," or to rid us of the idea of "civilization," or even more contestably, to hold that contrary to the conventional wisdom, civilization has been a disaster, and that humanity would have been better off had we not become civilized and maintained, *per impossible,* the condition of statelessness—anarchy.

Civilization, of course, derived from *city,* those urban centers that had an expanded division of labor—including manual laborers but also poets, priests, and philosophers—and were early or proto-states ("city-states"). It is no doubt widely assumed that civilization is much to be preferred and that it requires a state. Yet there have also been some dissenters from this view. Rousseau, usually misread, is one. In his wonderful 1754 *Dissertation on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality,* he wrote that it was "society and the law" that

> bound new fetters on the poor, and gave new powers to the rich; which irretrievably destroyed natural liberty, eternally fixed the law of property and inequality, converted clever usurpation into unalterable right, and, for the advantage of a few ambitious individuals, subjected all mankind to perpetual labour, slavery and wretchedness.[1]

Rousseau erred, to be sure, in his picture of the prestate condition. Scott makes considerable headway in drawing on the ethnographic literature of Southeast Asia to give us a persuasive picture of not the "prestate" but the *nonstate* condition. Prestate is just plain wrong since, as he insists, not only are there still nonstates (his area of concern is "Zomia"—a very large nonstate space in upland Southeast Asia),[2] but that until at least 1945, a nonstate condition was also a real option (p. 7). Indeed, his "hill people" are not "pristine stateless," but "better understood as post-irrigated rice, postsedentary, postsubject; and perhaps even postliterate" (p. 337).

Scott certainly aims to undermine the "barbarian/civilized" dichotomy and, most critically, he agrees with

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