

Foreword

The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures were originally conceived in 1961 by Bernard Cohn, who was then chair of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Rochester. A founder of modern cultural anthropology, Morgan was one of Rochester's most famous intellectual figures and a patron of the university; he left a substantial bequest to the university for the founding of a women's college. The lectures named in his honor have now been presented annually for over fifty years and constitute the longest-running such series in North America.

The first three sets of lectures commemorated Morgan's contributions to the study of kinship (Meyer Fortes in 1963), native North Americans (Fred Eggan in 1964), and cultural evolution (Robert M. Adams in 1965). They were originally delivered to public audiences on Tuesday and Thursday evenings over a period of two to three weeks and published as book-length monographs. A public lecture is now delivered on a single evening, followed by a day-long workshop in which a draft of the planned monograph is discussed by members of the Department of Anthropology and by commentators invited from other institutions. But the public lecture and the monograph are still intended to present an example of current anthropological thinking to a general audience.

The present volume is based on the Lewis Henry Morgan Lecture that Professor James Ferguson delivered at the University of Rochester

in October 2009. The formal discussants who participated in the workshop that followed the lecture included Marina Welker (Cornell), John Western (Syracuse), Dunbar Moodie (Hobart and William Smith), Mary Moran (Colgate), Douglas Holmes (Binghamton), and Daniel Reichman (Rochester). Ferguson's argument touches on many of Morgan's key interests, including the development and transformation of communal and individual forms of property, the role that kinship and the state play alongside the market in the distribution of economic resources, and the way that non-capitalist societies around the world can serve as "concrete forms of political inspiration" for the future.

Ferguson's primary concern is with new forms of distribution that are emerging across the global South in nations like South Africa, Namibia, Mexico, Brazil, and India. In view of the fact that the current phase of global capitalism has rendered a growing proportion of the population in these nations chronically unemployed, many political activists have begun to question the assumption shared by both capitalists and Marxists that only waged workers have a right to a share of the social product. Ferguson notes that many figures in the radical democratic tradition, such as Tom Paine and Peter Kropotkin, argued that value is produced by society as a whole, that all members of society should be regarded as shareholders in a collective enterprise, and that everyone thus has a right to a share of the total social product. Others, such as Marcel Mauss and Julius Nyerere, developed different arguments about the just distribution of the collective social product without basing it on the labor of individuals.

One of the most radical proposals circulating in South Africa and Namibia today is that every member of society should receive a basic income grant without reference to their age, gender, employment, or family configuration. Ferguson notes that such a grant would help undermine the value system associated with industrial capitalism in which it is socially demeaning for adult men to be dependent on anyone but themselves while it is socially acceptable for women, children, and the aged to be dependent on male kinsmen or on state benefits. This value system perpetuates both gender inequality and the criminalization of the long-term unemployed. By contrast, in the kinship-based societies and subcultures traditionally studied by anthropologists, the cultivation of economic and moral interdependence within a network of effective kin is one of the

main goals of social life. Proposals like the basic income grant seek to scale this sort of morality up to the level of the nation-state and beyond.

Just as previous studies by anthropologists of actually existing forms rather than of ideal models of capitalism and socialism provoked political economists to think about the role of markets and planning in a new way, Ferguson's study of the actually existing forms of mutuality that are emerging across the global South should provoke political activists to think about social justice in a new way. The book seeks to go beyond the now-familiar critiques of neoliberal capitalism and open up a new debate about what a better future might look like for us all. In doing so, it remains true to the radical spirit of anthropology that Lewis Henry Morgan himself practiced.

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