

Edited by **Bruce J. Berman**,  
**André Laliberté**, and **Stephen J. Larin**

# **The Moral Economies of Ethnic and Nationalist Claims**



**UBC Press** · Vancouver · Toronto  
Sample Material © UBC Press 2016

## **Ethnicity and Democratic Governance Series**

How can societies respond to the opportunities and challenges raised by ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural differences and do so in ways that promote democracy, social justice, peace, and stability? The volumes in this series seek answers to this fundamental question through innovative academic analysis that illuminates the policy choices facing citizens and governments as they address ethnocultural diversity. The volumes are the result of a collaborative research project on ethnicity and democratic governance under the general editorship of Bruce J. Berman.

### **Volumes in the Series**

Avigail Eisenberg and Will Kymlicka, eds., *Identity Politics in the Public Realm: Bringing Institutions Back In*

Bruce J. Berman, Rajeev Bhargava, and André Laliberté, eds., *Secular States and Religious Diversity*

Kristin R. Good, Luc Turgeon, and Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos, eds., *Segmented Cities? How Urban Contexts Shape Ethnic and Nationalist Politics*

Avigail Eisenberg, Jeremy Webber, Glen Coulthard, and Andrée Boisselle, eds., *Recognition versus Self-Determination: Dilemmas of Emancipatory Politics*

Karlo Basta, John McGarry, and Richard Simeon, eds., *Territorial Pluralism: Managing Difference in Multinational States*

Bruce J. Berman, André Laliberté, and Stephen J. Larin, eds., *The Moral Economies of Ethnic and Nationalist Claims*



Ethnicity and Democratic Governance

Sample Material © UBC Press 2016

© UBC Press 2016

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without prior written permission of the publisher.

---

**Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication**

The moral economies of ethnic and nationalist claims / edited by Bruce J. Berman, André Laliberté, and Stephen J. Larin.

(Ethnicity and democratic governance series)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Issued in print and electronic formats.

ISBN 978-0-7748-3314-1 (hardback). – ISBN 978-0-7748-3316-5 (epdf)

1. Economics – Moral and ethical aspects. 2. Economics – Political aspects.  
3. Ethnicity. 4. Nationalism. I. Berman, Bruce J., author, editor II. Laliberté, André,  
author, editor III. Larin, Stephen J., editor IV. Series: Ethnicity and democratic  
governance series

HB72.M67 2016

174'.4

C2016-904948-5

C2016-904949-3

---

Canada

UBC Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support for our publishing program of the Government of Canada (through the Canada Book Fund), the Canada Council for the Arts, and the British Columbia Arts Council.

UBC Press

The University of British Columbia

2029 West Mall

Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2

[www.ubcpress.ca](http://www.ubcpress.ca)

# Contents

Preface / vii

Acknowledgments / ix

Introduction: The Moral Economies of Ethnic and  
Nationalist Claims / 3

*Bruce J. Berman and Stephen J. Larin*

- 1** Moral Economy, Hegemony, and Moral Ethnicity:  
The Cultural Politics of Modernity / 23

*Bruce J. Berman*

- 2** *Majimboism* and Kenya's Moral Economy of Ethnic  
Territoriality / 49

*Gabrielle Lynch*

- 3** Rights, Wrongs, and Reciprocity: Change and Continuity  
among Kenyan Maasai / 70

*Lotte Hughes*

- 4** “Economic Man in East Africa”: Ethnicity, Nationalism,  
and the Moral Economy in Tanzania / 101  
*Emma Hunter*
- 5** China: The Moral Economy of Empire / 123  
*André Laliberté*
- 6** Establishing a Buddhist Economy in Thailand: Competing  
Perspectives on Moral Economy in State and Society / 148  
*Manuel Litalien*
- 7** From Patron-Clientelism to Ethnonationalism: Moral  
Economy and Transitions in Palestinian Arab Elite Political  
Mobilization in Israel / 178  
*Oded Haklai*
- 8** Modernity, the Canadian State, and the Shifting Politics  
of Ethnocultural Claims Making / 198  
*Yasmeen Abu-Laban*
- 9** Aboriginal Identities, Moral Economies, and the Canadian  
Settler State / 219  
*Leslie Doucet*
- Conclusion: Moral Economy and the Analysis of Ethnic  
and Nationalist Politics / 236  
*André Laliberté and Stephen J. Larin*
- Contributors / 254
- Index / 258

# Introduction

## The Moral Economies of Ethnic and Nationalist Claims

Bruce J. Berman and Stephen J. Larin

“Moral economy” is an evocative, potentially ambiguous term that carries several different and sometimes incompatible meanings. It became a subject of interest and debate in the 1970s through the work of historian E.P. Thompson and political scientist James Scott, both of whom use it to refer to an analytic concept. For Thompson, it is a way of explaining the character of eighteenth-century food riots and other forms of working-class protest in the early stages of capitalist development and the industrial revolution; for Scott, it is a means of explaining peasant uprisings in Southeast Asia in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century during the early decades of the colonial incorporation of rural society into the capitalist global economy. Interest faded in the 1980s, when debates on “development” were dominated by the neoliberalism of the “Washington Consensus” on globalized “free-market reforms” and political science dominated by related “rational choice” theory. However, in the context of crises in structurally adjusted societies, increasing violence among ethnic communities, the growing flow of economic and political refugees from the global South to the developed West, and the global financial catastrophe that began in 2008, moral economy is current again. Thompson’s and in particular Scott’s works have regained their influence, especially among historians and anthropologists. Karl Polanyi’s *The Great Transformation*, which was originally published in 1944 and provided much of the historical basis for the concept of moral economy without using the term, was republished in

2001, and is now widely used internationally as a text for undergraduate courses on development. And Mike Davis's widely read *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (2000) recalls the catastrophic famines in Asia fashioned by the laissez-faire moral economy imposed by Western powers.

This book explores and demonstrates the explanatory value of the concept of moral economy with regard to the internal and external politics of ethnic and national communities and their relationships to the development of the modern state and market across a range of contexts. We also hope to show how this concept enriches our understanding of the process of hegemony, its connection with the development of capitalism and the state, and the dynamics of cultural change and the material and cultural origins of contemporary ethnic politics. In short, our goal is to investigate the extent to which the analytic concept of moral economy describes a common element of human experience and can help us to understand the development and meaning of politicized ethnicity in varied and unique historical settings.

### **Moral Economy**

In this volume, the term "moral economy" refers to those elements of culture (customs, beliefs, and practices) that normatively regulate and legitimize the distribution of resources such as wealth, power, and honour or status in a society. It is an economy because it deals with the unequal distribution of scarce resources that characterizes almost all known human communities. Thompson and Scott developed the concept of moral economy with reference to peoples caught in the throes of the development of a capitalist market that threatened their security and violated what they believed were their long-established rights regarding access to subsistence, just wages and prices, reasonable taxes, and protection against the vicissitudes of nature and the market by local dominant classes. In so doing, they revealed something important about the politics between dominant and subordinate classes and their mutual obligations in circumstances of wide inequalities in the distribution of wealth and power.

### **A Brief Conceptual History**

Thompson first developed the concept of moral economy in his book *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), though he did not address it substantively until his later article "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century" (1971). In a retrospective essay published

in 1991, he said that he believed the term comes from the eighteenth century, but he was unable to find a reference earlier than an 1837 Chartist polemic against political economists. His objective in “Moral Economy of the English Crowd” was to provide an explanation of early-eighteenth-century food riots that did not reduce them to a simple stimulus response (i.e., people protested because they were hungry), because this ends investigation at the point where it becomes interesting: “Being hungry ... what do people do? How is their behaviour modified by custom, culture and reason? And does their behaviour contribute to any more complex, culturally-mediated function which cannot be reduced ... back to stimulus once again?” (1971, 77-78).

Moral economy is the focus of Thompson’s alternative explanation. The proximate causes of the riots were soaring prices, malpractices among dealers, and hunger, Thompson concedes, but

these grievances operated within a popular consensus as to what were legitimate and what were illegitimate practices in marketing, milling, baking, etc. This in its turn was grounded upon a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community, which, taken together, can be said to constitute the moral economy of the poor. An outrage of these moral assumptions, quite as much as actual deprivation, was the usual occasion for direct action. (1971, 79)

The men and women of the crowd believed that they were defending traditional rights or customs, and this belief was generally shared by the wider community – including, on occasion, the authorities. As Thompson succinctly puts it, his “object of analysis was the *mentalité*, or, as I would prefer, the political culture, the expectations, traditions, and, indeed, superstitions of the working population most frequently involved in actions in the market; and the relations – sometimes negotiations – between crowd and rulers which go under the unsatisfactory term of ‘riot’” (1991, 260).

The influence of a moral economy on the behaviour of the poor is demonstrated by the fact that, rather than disorderly and unpredictable violence, the food “riots” involved stylized, indeed almost ritualized, behaviour in which stocks of flour or baked bread were forcibly seized and distributed among the crowd, who “paid” for what they took home according to what was understood to be a fair price. This behaviour reflected both the common understanding of a “just price” as the most essential component of the



standard of living of the poor and their reaction to the incomprehensible increases in the price of flour and bread occasioned by the spread of the market and, often, the large-scale purchase of flour by royal agents for the provisioning of the armed forces. Variation in the price of bread by only a few pence made the difference for the poor between subsistence and privation. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, local authorities who understood and largely shared this moral economy often refrained from violent intervention to prevent the act of redistribution contained in the “riots.” By the end of the century, with the market more fully pervasive on a national scale and determining the price of agricultural commodities, the authorities, including agents of the state such as the militia, were now prone to violent intervention to prevent the appropriation of property by the crowd.

Scott’s objective in *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (1976) is to explain the normative roots of major peasant rebellions that swept much of colonial Southeast Asia during the Great Depression of the 1930s and of peasant politics more generally. Like Thompson, Scott is dissatisfied with simple stimulus response explanations: exploitation and rebellion, he says, are “not just a problem of calories and income but ... a question of peasant conceptions of social justice, of rights and obligations, of reciprocity” (vii). The peasant family’s predicament, he explains, “was to produce enough rice to feed the household, buy a few necessities such as salt and cloth, and meet the irreducible claims of outsiders ... Patterns of reciprocity, forced generosity, communal land and work-sharing helped to even out the inevitable troughs in a family’s resources which might otherwise have thrown them below subsistence” (2-3). Together these arrangements constitute what Scott calls the “subsistence ethic” derived from the peasants’ moral economy, defined as “their notion of economic justice and their working definition of exploitation – their view of which claims on their product were tolerable and which were intolerable” (4). Rebellion required the perception of persistent violation of the moral economy.

Scott cautions that it is a serious mistake to romanticize the peasant moral economy that he describes: it is inegalitarian and often coercive. “So there is no misunderstanding about the normative standing of my argument,” he says,

it should be clear that my analysis is essentially phenomenological. Although I may have deduced the safety-first logic from the material basis of

peasant life, the persuasiveness of my analysis depends ultimately on demonstrating that this logic is reflected in peasant values and experience. It is not necessary for my argument, nor would I necessarily claim, that the peasant's view of relative equity is to be preferred on normative grounds to any other standard of exploitation. In fact, the argument is in no way inconsistent with a view that would label this peasant notion of exploitation a form of false-consciousness. (1976, 31-32)<sup>1</sup>

Although neither of the two important works by Karl Polanyi and Mike Davis uses the term "moral economy," each documents the collapse of traditional premodern moral economies in early industrial Britain (Polanyi) and colonial India and imperial China (Davis). Polanyi focuses on the fate of the "Speenhamland System," a doomed attempt by the rural dominant class of a declining agrarian economy to meet their obligations to a growing number of poor and unemployed labourers and their families by a system of wage subsidies and relief payments pegged to the price of bread that was the fundamental condition of their survival. Legislatively enacted in what became known as the "Old Poor Law," the system granted relief payments only to those born in a parish, thereby constraining the development of a national labour market by restricting the movement of labour into and out of the developing urban centres of industrialization and reducing the pressure on unemployed rural labour to seek work elsewhere. Although the Speenhamland System endured for almost five decades, it became one of the first acts repealed following the Reform Act of 1832, which opened Parliament to the rising industrial bourgeoisie of Britain, and was replaced with the "New Poor Law" that put intense pressure on labour to move to find work. The sheer social destructiveness of the unregulated "free market" and coercive brutality of the New Poor Law could not be the basis of a new legitimate moral economy and led to what Polanyi called the "double movement." The second part was a reaction that produced the socialist movements, trade unions, humanitarian philanthropies, and political parties that, through the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, produced increasing democratization and the halting, piecemeal emergence of a moral economy in which the state increasingly took responsibility for the stability and security of the lives of all of its citizens. In Polanyi's work, the dominant and intertwined roles of the market and state in producing the long struggle for a hegemonic moral economy in Britain and other Western states took front and centre in the analysis. The outcome in Western liberal democracies, in the aftermath of the catastrophe of the

1914-45 global crises, was the Keynesian welfare state in which, for a generation, macroeconomic management and regulation of the market were combined with the state assuming the responsibilities of the traditional moral economy of reciprocity, redistribution, and security.

Davis examines the social and natural forces that led to the decline and collapse of the moral economy linking the imperial states in India and China in a tacit compact of state protection with the peasantry, such as the state's hydraulic works to limit the impacts of drought and control of the distribution and price of grain in times of dearth to ensure the survival of rural populations. He shows how in India the British colonial state, the Raj, abandoned maintenance of the hydraulic works and water reserves of the Moghul Empire, which fell into catastrophic disrepair. When droughts occurred in several regions, the Raj declined to control the prices of grain available from other areas and permitted its export to Britain from Indian ports only a few hundred miles from areas where peasants were boiling the thatch of their huts for food, on the grounds that it would not interfere with the "natural laws" of the market and that, like Ireland, India was facing a "Malthusian correction" of its overpopulation. In China, however, it was the combined impact of external pressures from European states to integrate China into the global market and the destructive internal social turmoil and cost in lives and resources of revolts such as the Taiping Rebellion that undermined the capacity of the imperial state to sustain its hydraulic works, food reserves, and market controls and led to the calamitous famines of the end of the nineteenth century. As André Laliberté shows in his chapter, the fall of the weakened Qing dynasty in the early twentieth century led to more than fifty years of turmoil over efforts to establish an effective state and hegemonic moral economy on the ruins of the empire, including the failed republican effort between 1911 and 1949, the appalling violence and coercive control of the Maoist regime that followed, and, since 1980 and reforms that opened China to the world market and rapid industrialization in the era of globalization, efforts by the Communist Party of China to find a new moral economy incorporating elements of the old imperial one.

It is important to emphasize that, for each of these authors, moral economy is an analytic concept used by the external *observer*, and as such it neither assumes that this is how participants understand themselves nor judges the normative correctness or desirability of the cultural values or practices being analyzed – something occasionally misunderstood because of the potential ambiguity of the adjective *moral*. As Thompson puts it,

“neither English food rioters nor Burmese peasants acted with a vocabulary of ‘norms,’ ‘reciprocity’ or ‘legitimacy’ on their lips ... Food rioters did sometimes appeal to justice (or ‘fair’ prices) and they certainly protested against unfair practices; but the language of ‘duties,’ ‘obligations,’ ‘reciprocity’ and even of ‘rights’ is mostly our own” (1991, 349-50). Moreover, use of the concept of moral economy does not imply any moral judgment of the complex and often torturous process by which a particular moral economy is constructed, disputed, legitimized, disrupted, destroyed, or revised; the objective is explanation, not justification. Reflecting on this issue, Thompson remarks that he “could have perhaps called this ‘a sociological economy,’ and an economy in its original meaning (*oeconomy*) as the due organisation of a household, in which each part is related to the whole and each member acknowledges her/his several duties and obligations” (271).

### Hegemony

Moral economy is crucial to understanding the process of hegemony, of which it is the central subject, and the political dynamic of the transformation of one form of social order into another. Polanyi, in analyzing the “great transformation” of English society into industrial capitalism, utilized the anthropological research of the time to argue that in precapitalist societies the distribution of resources, particularly the allocation of labour and its social product, was embedded in hierarchical social relations of authority and subordination and of social honour and status. The legitimacy of such inequalities was based upon recognized rights of the subordinate classes to subsistence from the social product created by their labour, to access to land and means of production to do so, and to protection from the ravages of natural disaster or external attack. For acquiescence by their subordinates to relations of inequality, ruling groups had reciprocal obligations to honour these rights and to redistribute, if necessary, their resources to ensure survival of the community. In short, as Scott put it, “the only justification for economic inequality is the benign community-serving use of power: elites, to validate their power, must do their duty” (1976, 52). At the same time, it is clear that both superiors and subordinates constantly seek to evade, violate, or renegotiate their reciprocal obligations in establishing the complex mix of force and consent that we call hegemony.

The negotiations of moral economy range across a myriad of historical social forms, from small-scale societies such as the Kikuyu of Kenya, lacking institutions beyond extended lineages, where dependants “flourished in a big man’s shade”; to small states where the chief’s or king’s herds and

granaries provided the community's strategic reserves; to the empire of China, in which the ruling class recognized a tacit compact with the peasantry to provide protection through the maintenance of "ever-normal" granaries<sup>2</sup> and sophisticated hydraulic systems. Underlying all of them were grassroots patriarchal family structures and familial metaphors of social power that infused wider political institutions, paternal and (more rarely) maternal ties of superiors and subordinates, and fraternal ties of social equals. These relations were all personal ties or bonds between individuals in the dominant class and with individuals in subaltern groups, genders, and generations (excepting, of course, common forms of involuntary servitude, slavery, etc.). In larger-scale societies with formal political institutions, such ties were through graded hierarchies of rank, with individuals at the bottom linked to higher authorities only indirectly through ties to intervening subordinate ranks. Such hierarchies could be highly elaborate and formal, as in European feudalism, in which serfs were linked to kings through complex intervening ranks of subjection and nobility. The relations between superior and subject typically take the form of patron and client, the "lopsided friendship" of anthropologists, which links unequal individuals in mutual ties of loyalty and support.

In practice, such relationships were often far more disorderly and coercive than their idealized reconstructions suggest. The key point, however, is that they were personal, generally face-to-face, ties of supposed mutual benefit between individuals of unequal status. A leader used the material resources that he had accumulated through the labour or payments of his subjects to reward his network of client subjects to meet his obligations and sustain their loyalty. Patron-client relations have been, and probably remain, the most universal and widespread of human power relations. These relationships do not involve policies in the modern sense of impersonal distributions of public goods and services to social classes, geographical regions, or interest groups; rather, they involve patronage in the allocation of public and private resources. The collective, impersonal relations of the nation-state, one of the most dramatic discontinuities of modernity, define patron-client ties as "corruption" within the framework of contemporary moral economies.

Finally, relations of premodern moral economies involved the supernatural sanction and legitimation of secular hierarchies. First, in the most ancient and probably the most widespread of human religious systems, ancestor worship, the authority of the most senior male elder of an extended family or lineage rested on his closeness to the ancestors (soon to be an

ancestor himself) and his performance of rituals on behalf of the welfare of the whole group. This included the paternalistic roles of chiefs or kings in wider political institutions, who as “fathers” to their people were crucial intermediaries between their ancestors and any pantheon of deities and their subjects, acting for the welfare of the whole community. More complex cosmologies and theologies generally had heavenly pantheons that mirrored the political hierarchies of the secular world, as in the Hebrew Bible’s frequent reference to God as “Melech ha Gado,” the “high king,” a typical title of supreme authority in the states of the ancient Middle East. In the diverse versions of the “divine right of kings” in early modern Europe, the sacred order legitimated the secular order and sanctioned the distribution of power, wealth, and social honour. Where there were differentiated hierarchies of religious authorities, they generally operated in close collaboration with and the mutual support of secular political authorities. Second, underpinning the intertwining of sacred and secular power was a broader belief in the unity of the mundane material world and the supernatural realm, with the latter ultimately determining the former (i.e., the “enchantment of reality”). The events of the natural world and the affairs and projects of humanity succeeded or failed according to the will of the gods or ancestors.

The link between hegemony and moral economy is clearest where a dominant class exercises power with a substantial degree of consent from the subordinate classes, largely through incorporating some of their interests into its political discourse and claiming to represent the interests of society as a whole. However, as Kate Crehan points out, for Antonio Gramsci (1971) hegemony was a process, not a condition – a combination of force and consent that varies from context to context. No hegemonic culture is free from contradiction and conflict, and its continued reproduction can never be assumed. For Gramsci, societies are fields of struggle in which radically different conceptions of the world vie for primacy. Hegemony can never be total but is always, in varying degrees, a struggle in process; a particular hegemonic landscape is but a moment in a ceaseless power struggle (Crehan 2002, 96-97, 104, 145-46, 175). The concept of hegemony provides, as we shall see, the basis for historically understanding moral economy and the wider politics of culture.

Equally important, for Gramsci (1971), hegemony involves not only beliefs or ideas but always includes “practical activities” and the actual social relations that produce inequality, as well as the ideas by which it is explained and normalized. He rejected the mechanical Marxist division

between base and superstructure that reduced the realm of ideas and culture to a determined reflection of the material basis of society, and he found them organically linked in the materiality of power in the social relations of a particular social order. Hegemony is about how power is lived in a specific context and how such regimes of meaning and material distribution are produced and reproduced in everyday life (Crehan 2002, 174-76, 200; Smith 2007). In particular, a social order requires the routine social relations by which values are allocated, based upon the subjective sharing of the meanings of those actions. Such sharing of expectations does not imply an equal level of consent to the ideas, values, and unequal distributions of values – what the hegemonic process is all about: whose ideas and beliefs about “how the world is” dominate. This is the “politics of common sense,” of how particular understandings of nature and society become routinized as the taken-as-given reality at a particular moment in a particular historical social context.

Moral economy is thus the substantive cultural content of what the process of hegemony addresses. Within that context, peasants, for example, practise a wide variety of what Scott has called “everyday forms of resistance,” such as “foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson and sabotage,” behind the façade of common sense reality that he calls the “weapons of the weak” (1985, xvi). Such underground resistance is often tacitly accepted by rulers and ruled and has little impact on the practice of domination. The crucial power of hegemony lies in determining the structure of rules, formal and tacit, within which such struggles are fought out, allowing for the emergence of local variations of custom and practice but actually facilitating long-term reproduction of the system of power and domination.

All societies possess moral economies. Historically, as Polanyi pointed out, a moral economy is instituted through principles of redistribution and reciprocity of obligations between rulers and ruled, rich and poor, elders and juniors, men and women in specific social contexts. Whether the relations so mandated are moral in a normative sense to the communities involved is a central issue of internal political dispute. A moral economy establishes the framework of social trust: that is, the stability of mutual expectations among social actors that permits the structured patterns of action ensuring social production, reproduction, and security. All human communities that achieve a degree of stable reproduction over time have a functioning moral economy, at least to a minimal degree, though we can

make no assumption about the extent to which it is subjectively accepted by all of its members. In the context of modernity and the development of industrial capitalism and the nation-state, the struggles over hegemony operate at three interacting levels: the asserted dominance of an elite moral economy, increasingly ideologically articulated and enforced by the cultural regulation of the state; popular resistance and protest, which Gramsci understood as ideologically inchoate and contradictory; and the counterhegemonic ideologies of the mass movements of Polanyi's double movement.

### **Moral Economy, Ethnicity, and Nationalism**

How, then, can we understand the connections among moral economy, ethnicity, and nationalism? All of the examples mentioned above focused on the acute social crisis that accompanied the impact of capitalist modernity through the dominant institutions of the nation-state and market on pre-modern agrarian societies in which new sources of power, wealth, and social inequality undermined traditional, paternalistic, patron-client-based moral economies and introduced new social cleavages. The British case analyzed by Thompson and Polanyi involved the development of industrial capitalism that spread throughout Europe shaping the contentious development of modern nation-states and economies that was the basis of what Europeans called "the national question" and "social question" and dominated European politics throughout the "long" nineteenth century (1789-1914). The development of state and market also spread rapidly to the European colonies of settlement in the New World, particularly in North America, where the crisis of moral economy was particularly harsh in relation to the conquered and dominated indigenous peoples, and later embraced the social integration of waves of European immigrants fleeing the political and social turmoil of the national and social questions. European imperialism spread the development of state and market and the disruption of traditional moral economies through large and culturally diverse pre-modern states in Asia, such as India, which fell under direct colonial control, and China, which did not, as well as to numerous smaller-scale societies in Africa that came under colonial rule.

The application of moral economy to the analysis of ethnicity and nationalism is relatively new. We believe that one of the first scholars to explore the relationship is the historian Ward Stavig in his article "Ethnic Conflict, Moral Economy, and Population in Rural Cuzco on the Eve of



the Thupa Amaro II Rebellion” (1988). He argues that the 1780 Native rebellion in Peru was shaped by a complex set of factors, but one of the most important was the Native moral economy as expressed both in the Native community and in relations with the colonial state. The most obvious aspects of the moral economy revolved around the latter relations, he says, rooted in traditional Andean norms of conduct and reciprocity that had come, over two centuries of Spanish domination, to legitimize Native “service and tribute to the colonial state in exchange for access to rights and resources that allowed them to maintain their way of life” (739). Native community relations were at least as significant, however, and diverse issues such as the relationship between a community and its *curaca* (Native magistrate), “crop failure, population growth or fluctuation, and long-term structural changes such as an increasingly restricted sense of ethnic identity also affected and helped determine the nature of the moral economy” (740). In fact, Stavig contends, though various pressures on Native-state relations led to violent protests or revolts (similar to the riots discussed by Thompson), “these acts were more attempts to restore or maintain a rapidly disintegrating order than attempts to destroy the colonial system itself” (754). Full-scale rebellion required the breakdown of the moral economy within the Native population, which occurred in part because of conflict among different Native ethnic groups.

Stavig uses the concept of moral economy to understand and explain popular action in at least three ways similar to the analyses offered by Thompson, Scott, and the contributors to this volume. First, he identifies a crucial relationship, based upon the moral economy between the colonial state and indigenous elites, that brokered the reciprocity of the exchange of service and tribute to the state for access to land rights and resources that sustained the communities. Second, he demonstrates that increasingly distinct ethnic communities emerged within this specific context. Third, he shows that conflicts emerged over appeals by the local populations for the system to meet the obligations of its established moral economy in the face of disruptive crises and changes.

More recently, John Lonsdale (1992, 1994, 2000, 2004) and Bruce Berman (1998, 2004a, 2004b, 2006) have offered similar but more developed analyses of the relationship between moral economy and ethnicity in the context of the state and market of colonial Africa.<sup>3</sup> Lonsdale (1992) first applied the concept of moral economy to Kikuyu ethnicity and nationalism in the final essay of their collaborative book *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya*

*and Africa*, and Berman later extended the concepts of “moral ethnicity” and “political tribalism” that Lonsdale developed for that purpose to African ethnic politics more generally. Lonsdale identified five contending approaches to explaining the roots of African ethnicity and the political and economic contexts of its politicization: (1) “modernization theory,” which suggests that ethnicity or tribalism is a primordial holdover from traditional society that will be transcended with modernization; (2) ethnicity as a “mode of resistance to capitalist exploitation and state oppression”; (3) ethnicity as a “colonial invention”; (4) ethnicity as “false consciousness”; and (5) ethnicity as a form of nationalism, which Lonsdale himself endorses.<sup>4</sup>

In precolonial Africa, as in pre-industrial Europe, he explains, “ethnicities used to co-exist in a non-competitive manner in decentralized economies where state power was either non-existent or undemanding ... , each with their own ‘moral economy’ ... Their relations were generally characterized by the exchange of specialized products, including rulership, rather than by domination” (1994, 136-37). From the late nineteenth century and the development of the modern colonial era, however, these ethnic communities became more self-conscious, socially bounded, and competitive, and ethnic nationalism and political mobilization developed in response to key aspects of colonial modernity, notably the generalization of commodity and labour markets, migration, urbanization, the spread of literacy, industrialization, and the intensification of state intervention and control. The differing modes of integration into the colonial state and economy – as labour reserves for workers in colonial mines and plantations, regions of export cash crop production, or zones of pastoral communities – as well as differential exposure to European missionary activity and Western education produced increasing inequalities and cleavages both within and between communities that undermined traditional moral economies and regional communal relations. Internally, increasing inequalities produced by differential access to the resources of the colonial state and market disrupted existing relationships and produced increasing conflict between a colonial elite of official chiefs and headmen and a growing literate intelligentsia employed in the state and market with their poor kin and dependants. This conflict focused on the reciprocal obligations of the rich and powerful to the poor and dependent as they governed access to the crucial resources of life, especially land, livestock, and marriage, as well as the new resources of modernity of the colonial state and market. It also increasingly dealt with the definition of social boundaries and cultural authenticity –

who was or was not a real member of the community and who had a recognized claim to access its resources. Thus, arguments over moral economy became arguments over moral ethnicity. While colonial states attempted to divide their territories into administrative units intended to contain a single culturally and linguistically homogeneous and ancient “tribe” that rarely corresponded to the diverse and hybrid reality, colonial elites adopted the ethnic categories as a framework for establishing the boundaries of ethnic communities and revising moral economies based upon re-interpretations and inventions of history and culture that reinforced their power, so moral economy became moral ethnicity. Lonsdale notes that the colonial imposition of capitalism disrupted existing relationships and “forced people to debate such formerly implicit moral economies within increasingly explicit ‘moral ethnicities’” (1994, 139), while Berman states that African ethnicity “emerged out of the consequent conflict over and renegotiation of the rules of custom and identity as individuals struggled to take advantage of the opportunities of colonialism or protect themselves against its disruptions (1998, 324). Whereas earlier conventional wisdom assumed that Africans could have either tribe or class, understanding the contested process of moral ethnicity reveals that they struggled with both.

Lonsdale and Berman define the term “political tribalism” as the external counterpart of moral ethnicity’s internal politics. Just as moral ethnicity was socially constructed in local debates about authority, property, and social honour in the face of growing social cleavages, so too political tribalism expressed intercommunal conflict over growing differences in the distribution of wealth, resources, and access to the state and market among the increasingly sharply defined ethnic communities. These modern horizontal cleavages, deriving from the different modes of integration into colonialism analyzed by Frances Stewart and her colleagues (2008), were the basis for the ethnic clashes of the contemporary era rather than the false conventional wisdom of “ancient tribal hatreds.” Unlike moral ethnicity, political tribalism “did not involve a search for a moral community of rights and obligations, but rather collective political organization and action across the boundaries of communities defined by moral ethnicity, first against the alien power of the colonial state and then, increasingly, against the competing interests of emerging rival ethnicities for access to the state and control of its patronage resources” (Berman 1998, 324). The contentious processes of moral ethnicity and political tribalism merged in the struggles of elite factions to be recognized internally and externally as representing

and advancing the interests of their community, conflicts in which the claims of indigeneity and authenticity played prominent roles.

What, then, of the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism? The conventional wisdom in social science about Africa was that ethnicity, or “tribalism,” as it was usually referred to, and modern national identity were fundamentally incompatible and that tribalism undermined the building of a modern nation-state. The assumption was that a modern nation-state was built on the European pattern of a single national language and culture of deep historical roots. Curiously, given the New World origin of a large proportion of the scholars involved, little consideration was given to the colonies of settlement that involved diverse ethnic communities, both indigenous and immigrant, integrated in nation-building mythology into single nations. Moreover, as contemporary research has shown, if both ethnicity and nationalism in Africa are of modern origin, stemming from the impact of the same social forces of colonialism and globalization and often constructed by the same people (Berman and Lonsdale 2013), then the relationship between them is far more complex and ambiguous in its outcome. To understand the relationship, we have to go back to the European experience and the origin of the modern phenomenon of ethnicity.

The reaction of the nineteenth-century European right to the twin threats of secular capitalist modernity and socialism was to define the nation in terms of a single, supposedly homogeneous, community of language and culture based upon biological descent. It combined the active invention of tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) with scientific racism to define national communities as distinct “races,” replaced in the mid-twentieth century with the more culturally focused term “ethnic,” derived from the Greek *ethnos*, which labelled the uncivilized “other.” In the late nineteenth century, conceptions of citizenship in European nation-states became increasingly “ethnicized” as ethnic and religious minorities were either subjected to increasing pressure to assimilate to the dominant national language and culture or rejected as alien to and excluded from the national community and equal rights of citizenship. The concept of ethnicity was actually brought to Africa by European colonial officials, missionaries, and anthropologists in their conception of African “tribes” and incorporated by African intelligentsias in their constructions of the historical and cultural origins of their communities. In the African context, however, states with a single dominant ethnic group are rare. Instead, nation-states have developed with several ethnic communities claiming

status as original inhabitants of the nation against immigrant “foreigners” or “outsiders” originating in the population movements of colonialism. In both Europe and Africa, conceptions of ethnicity and nationalism intersect in the increasingly bitter conflicts of “autochthony” (Geschiere 2009).

Underlying much of contemporary ethnic politics at local, national, and global levels are the confrontations over moral economy that emerge as communities are absorbed into market economies and national states in the contemporary era of globalization that has produced both unprecedented movements of peoples, especially from the southern hemisphere to the northern hemisphere, and increasingly intense hegemonic struggles in which ethnicity and class are increasingly intertwined. In communities largely based upon patriarchal family structures, this has produced numerous differing versions of strikingly characteristic political confrontations. First, there are issues of authenticity and belonging, who is really a member of the community and has claims on its resources and who has a legitimate claim to lead and represent the community to the state and other communities. Second, there are issues of the status of women and young men as male communal elites struggle to maintain their control as traditional moral economies are undermined. These issues are seen in widely variant forms not only in rural and urban communities throughout the “Third World” but also in the new immigrant communities in Western societies in which older male communal elites sometimes demand that the wider society and state recognize their traditional control over their families (e.g., through *Shari’a*). They are also seen in the conflicts between the moral economy of the wider society and state and ethnic communities, often in flux in the face of highly uneven, iniquitous, and disruptive impacts of rapid industrialization and globalization.

In the contemporary epoch that is the primary focus of the chapters in this volume, a major shift in the global context has been the aggressively asserted hegemony of a neoliberal moral economy that displaced the Keynesian social democratic moral economy dominant in the era of development into the 1980s. The state-centric moral economy in which the elite obligations of security and redistribution were assumed by state and parastate agencies of “development” proved to be penetrable by the never legitimately recognized ethnic networks of patron-client relations. This produced the subsurface webs of what Jean-François Bayart (1993) called the “rhizome state” and the confrontations of political tribalism over access to and control over the state’s resources. The rapid process of globalization

and hegemony of neoliberal ideology not only displaced the Keynesian moral economy but also renewed the threat to indigenous moral economies already struggling to deal with the development of the state and market.

Neoliberal ideology was not just an imposition of market fundamentalism and hostile to any redistributive state intervention; it also delegitimized expressions of group rights or collective interests and focused on market transactions and competition among isolated individual actors as the sole legitimate forms of social action (Amable 2011). Development, globally, was redefined solely as economic growth. Neoliberalism was intellectually justified by the asserted scientific authority of “rational market” neoclassical economics and of rational choice political science, both of which are empty of any historical or cultural content. Neoliberal ideology was forcefully imposed on both developed and developing states through structural adjustment programs, “deregulation” of financial markets, and removal of international restraints on the free flow of capital and investment (Klein 2007). By the end of the twentieth century, neoliberal hegemony was producing unprecedented increases in inequality in developed states, especially the United States (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010), in the rapidly industrializing “BRIC” (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) states, and in Africa, what James Ferguson (2007) called some of the steepest inequalities in human history. The result was yawning horizontal and vertical disparities of ethnicity and class in which hegemonic struggles both undermined the legitimacy of national states and exacerbated the existing conflicts within and between ethnic communities (Berman 2012). Ethnic claims focused on assertions of moral economy addressing recognition of group identity and belonging, relations between majority and minority ethnic and religious communities, and access to the state and its resources.

The remaining chapters in this book apply the concepts of moral ethnicity and hegemonic politics to diverse experiences of the relationship among ethnic politics, capitalist development, and the nation-state. They deal with cases in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, but also the advanced capitalist liberal democracy of Canada, to highlight the value of the concept of moral economy in explaining ethnic and nationalist politics in often strikingly different contexts. Their similarities and differences are discussed in more detail in both the following chapter, written by Bruce Berman, which elaborates some of the themes introduced here, and the conclusion, written by André Laliberté and Stephen Larin.