The research project “Political Organization beyond the State in Aceh, Indonesia, and Mindanao, Philippines” under the aegis of the Collaborative Research Center “Weakness Discourses and Resource Regimes” (Sonderforschungsbereich: “Schwächediskurse und Ressourcenregime”) at Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main, Germany, offers a fully funded four-year doctoral research position in the field of anthropology. The position will be filled as soon as possible with a starting date no later than April 1, 2015.

ELIGIBILITY
To be eligible for the position the candidate must hold a Master’s degree in social and/or cultural anthropology with a minimum of 120 ECTS credit points at the Master’s level, or international equivalent. Upon application a minimum of 15 ECTS credit points, or international equivalent, should have been acquired at the advanced level conducting early dissertation and/or other empirical project work. In addition to these requirements, applicants are expected to have good spoken and written command of English, Tagalog and one of the vernacular languages of Mindanao, Philippines (e.g. Maguindanao or Maranao). The candidate is expected to be willing to reside in Frankfurt am Main, Germany and learn the German language during the term of employment. The PhD project must be fully completed by December 31, 2018. Project fieldwork will consist of 12 to 18 months in the field in Mindanao (Philippines) and Aceh (Indonesia).

FUNDING NOTE
The position is fully funded with a gross annual salary of 38,220 Euro. Cost of travel and travel allowances for field research and conference visits will be fully covered by the project budget.

PHD SUPERVISION AND PROJECT TEAM
The PhD project will be supervised by Dr. Susanne Schröter, Professor of Anthropology of Colonial and Post-colonial Orders. The successful applicant will work together in tandem with a post-doctoral researcher and local research assistants in the Philippines and Indonesia during fieldwork.

HOW TO APPLY
Please send
- a letter of motivation explaining your interest in the position with reference to the project (see page 2-5 for project description)
- a full curriculum vitae
- two letters of recommendation from academic faculty
- your academic transcript
to Prof. Susanne Schröter (s.schroeter@em.uni-frankfurt.de) and Gunnar Stange (Stange@em.uni-frankfurt.de) no later than December 31, 2014.
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Summary and Research Questions

The terms "weak state" and "failing state" refer to an alarming situation in international politics that is associated with arbitrariness and terror and that, especially since 9/11, has come to be regarded as a threat to the international community. For this reason, state-building has become an important part of international development work; and Western countries, the UN and other international organizations try to influence local actors in post-colonial countries, either through financial rewards or military sanctions, and to commit them to the building of a democratic state.

Yet, so far these endeavors have met with little success. In many countries development efforts are undermined, democratization processes run aground, and western organizational models are culturally transformed. Most difficult to implement is the state's monopoly on the use of force. Non-state, ethnic and religious elites retain their political power, new parastatal actors emerge, and state representatives are involved in shadow economies and non-state political associations. Worldwide such structures are becoming more common. Despite the apparent failure of attempts to build bureaucratic, democratic states along western lines, no one has yet asked why local populations cling so tightly to anti-state structures, or, rather, what makes these so attractive.

In this project, we aim to approach this question from a perspective that casts aside neo-evolutionary models of political development. Instead, we will examine how indigenous models of political organization function in specific contexts and how they develop under the influence of international development efforts.

In keeping with the approach of the Collaborative Research Center “Weakness Discourses and Resource Regimes”, the project will focus on the one hand on the outlining of academic discourses on comparative politics and competing orders that exist “in situ”/on site, and, on the other hand, on drawing attention to competing modi of resource allocation between state and non-state orders. The latter perspective in particular, with its relatively broad conception of the term "resource", promises to provide important insights highly relevant to recent research as well as, by virtue of the comparative perspective taken, make important theoretical contributions.

Current State of Research and Project Aims

Research on the conflictual relationship between state and non-state political structures is not new to anthropology, but goes back as far as the 1930s when British social anthropologists were asked to examine the political structures of indigenous populations in order to secure the colonization of Africa. Subsequent research in political anthropology was also of a very applied nature, but often criticized the policies of state actors and international organizations. Georg Klute and Trutz von Trotha point out that the post-colonial state is often regarded by competing local actors as a lucrative source of "booty", the control of which entails power over the allocation of political and financial resources. More recent studies by Klute focus on the manifold interactions between state and non-state actors in Africa and the phenomena of the para-state and heterarchy.

However, in all these studies the question remains as to whether attempts to implement a strong state and the rule of law tend to meet with resistance or end in failure and "new wars" ("neuen Kriegen", Münkler 2002) because these attempts drew on the wrong means per se, or were simply too poorly planned. Only very few scholars have suggested that perhaps the problem lies with the concept of the state itself, and that this is what local communities reject in favor of non-state forms of political organization, on the grounds that they perhaps find the latter to be more suitable. Among these scholars is James Scott, who
has in his work on the mountain regions of mainland Southeast Asia argued that in this area economic surplus was explicitly NOT invested to maintain parasitic power structures (as the peoples in the lowland areas tended to do) and that they always resisted subjection to the nation-state. In Scott's view these "anarchic" peoples, despite their political weakness (in the modern sense), are in fact the stronger actors; their behavior is far more rational than that of those who have engendered state organizations, or who have willingly let themselves be incorporated into them. And although critics have accused Scott of idealizing violence and criminal machinations, he most certainly is to be credited with voicing a very germane critique of the contemporary paradigm in social science and political research that a functioning state is per se desirable, or even necessary.

Preliminary research for this sub-project was conducted in the framework of several preceding research projects: the direction of the DFG-funded research project "Cultural and Political Transformation in Post-Tsunami Aceh" ("Kulturelle und politische Transformationen in Aceh nach dem Tsunami", 2009-12), which involved three researchers. The supervision of the completed project "Utilizing Local Indigenous Knowledge into Reconciliation Process: an Alternative for Post Conflict Approach in Aceh, Indonesia", conducted by Umar Bin Abd. Aziz. The supervision of a research project conducted by Birte Brecht under the aegis of the University of Frankfurt's Cluster of Excellence "The Formation of Normative Orders", the results of which were submitted as a dissertation in October 2011.

Research Program
The project is an empirical study of local anti-state structures in two Southeast Asian regions, the southern Philippines and the Indonesian province of Aceh. In the first case we are dealing with a conflict area, in the second case with a post-conflict area. In both cases the state’s weakness is considered to be the cause of violence and instability, and state-building thus an important component of international development programs. The sub-project aims to take a different perspective by focusing on the functioning of non-state structures. These entail organizational forms that are grounded in kinship or territorial relations, as well as social networks and patron-client relations. Following Klute, the project will examine the interactions and negotiations between state and non-state organizations and local structures of authority and power. The aim is thus to understand why state structures are often rejected by local actors for being inefficient, culturally inappropriate or even outside impositions, why a weak state is even regarded as a positive development not only by a small group of non-state actors, but by wider segments of the local population.

The situation in the southern Philippines has been characterized as politically precarious, which in anthropological discourse has been circumscribed by the term "no peace no war" (Richards 2004). Until the US occupation it was populated mostly by Muslims. However, through the systematic settlement of Christians, Muslims have in many areas become a minority population. Local groups responded to the demographic warfare of the colonial and post-colonial state by rebelling and by organizing guerilla movements. In addition to conflicts with Christian settlers there have been military confrontations between the Filipino military and local militias. The latter are largely organized along ethnic lines. The presence of ethnic groups, clans and other kinship organizations, members of religious communities, militias, guerilla fighters, drug kingpins, weapons dealers and a few members of Jihadi groups lead many observers to conclude that the state has failed. The disastrous situation is compounded by rido, blood feuds, by which local clans regulate their intra-clan relations. In her work on Maranao, Birte Brecht showed that although on the surface the local situation appears completely chaotic, it is in fact not so. The members of local communities do not act arbitrarily, but rather within an intricate network of social and political structures that are shaped by local traditional norms and values as well as within the context of specific practices of negotiation that are used to regulate access to material and immaterial
resources. A more detailed study of these structures (institutions?) among the Maranoa as well as other ethnic groups has yet to be conducted and constitutes an important desideratum.

However, the situations of the province of Aceh and the southern Philippines differ in several important ways. Aceh, which is dominated ethnically by the Acehnese, has been embroiled in a 130-year-long war of independence. This war began with attempts on the part of the Dutch colonial government to integrate Aceh into the Dutch East Indies. For forty years the population of Aceh resisted these attempts and was led in its efforts by Islamic religious elites and the local nobility, which declared a holy war against the colonial state. Following independence, the Acehnese continued their resistance, this time directing it against the post-colonial state and pushing for an autonomous Islamic state within the Indonesian republic. Following the defeat of the Indonesian army, there was a relatively quiet but uneasy intermezzo, until the 1970s when a bloody war broke out between the "Free Aceh Movement" and the Indonesian national army. The tsunami in December 2004, which in Aceh claimed the lives of 160,000 people and destroyed large parts of the island including the capital of Banda Aceh, brought a sudden end to this dynamic. With the help of international mediators a peace agreement was drafted and finally signed by all parties. The province was granted extensive autonomy, and the guerilla was transformed into a political party, which since then has come to constitute the government in power. As part of the reconstruction and peace-building efforts, great emphasis was placed on the promotion of the rule of law and a strong state. Programs promoting democratization, political participation, gender equality and good governance were initiated and ended (as scheduled, after a period of five years) upon the termination of the reconstruction and development project. Now that the international development agencies have left, it is becoming clear that many programs were subverted, and that many local political structures that do not conform with prevailing ideas of democracy and the rule of law continued to exist, or were re-established. The project seeks to examine the role that categories such as religion and kinship (real or fictive, as is in the case of brothers-in-arms) play in the constitution of hidden political structures and how the use of political, social and economic resources is organized within these structures.

Cited References


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i Cf., for example., Fortes/Evans-Pritchard 1940; Middleton/Tait 1958.


vi Brecht's research focuses primarily on women's scope of action so that it will be used as a point of departure for a broader study.