

Editorial Foreword

PERFORMING HISTORY History performed is always tendentious, and unable to cloak itself in the dress of the impartial judge while being the zealous advocate. The first three articles seek to understand how exactly these advocacies are constructed, by, respectively, the warring churches of a Sicilian town, the commodification of Jordanian hospitality, and a coronation ceremony in Zambia.

Berardino Palumbo analyzes the performances that make up the “war of the saints” raging for at least four centuries between contending parishes, “Greek” and “Latin,” in Catalfaro, Sicily. Acts such as pastoral visits, commissioning altarpieces, conducting processions of sacred images along certain streets, claiming parish status for a church, and the like are public performances that are best understood as *jurisdictional* actions, anchored in competing versions of local history which affirm the possession of prerogatives and challenge those of the rival church. The jurisdictional framing (from Angelo Torre) and the concept of social poetics (from Michael Herzfeld) help us get beyond a tendency to reduce such conflicts to a simple instrumentalism.

Andrew Shryock examines the complexities that arise when Bedouin rituals of hospitality involving coffee-drinking and feasting are urbanized, appropriated as symbols of Jordanian national character—often concretely, as colossal coffee pots—and commodified as ethnic experiences for paying tourists. Real hospitality for Jordanians is always something elsewhere to which these signs feebly point, an absent font of authenticity to be found outside the city and nation-state, among Bedouin, in the past. The anthropologist, who is inescapably a guest, appreciates the acuity of the proverb according to which the host fears the guest, because he is company when he sits down to eat, but a poet when he stands up and leaves, blabbing about the experience to all the world.

David Gordon treats the performance of the past in traditional Zambian rituals as *lieux de mémoire* (Nora), sites at which collective memory can congeal and take refuge before the spread of impersonal, universal history. It is symptomatic of that dynamic that many traditional performances are recent creations, such as the Mutomboko Ceremony which, although it uses events long past to enact the identity of the Lunda people, was created only in 1961 for the installation of the chief. The author sees significance in the fact that the ritual was created at a time when chiefly powers were being *eclipsed* by the new nation-state.

COMPARATIVE EUGENICS The wide influence of eugenics in the early twentieth century appears to us in a somber light, after the death camps of

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World War II. Eugenics was promoted by prominent public intellectuals such as Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, and the Myrdahls, and it was adopted as policy by states of the most diverse tendencies.

Alberto Spektrowski examines the “the eugenic temptation” in social-democratic Sweden by the light of comparison, examining the Swedish case in relation to the beginnings and destiny of eugenics in Nazi Germany and the Communist Soviet Union. The benign nationalist socialism of Sweden rejected Marx’s idea of class warfare and in its place created a technocratic welfare state with a state-led productivist tendency. Eugenics, wedded to Mendelian genetics, seemed to require dispassionate, technical intervention to end the reproduction of the unfit. The virulent, racist national socialism of Germany was also deeply committed to a strong version of Mendelian heredity as a force that environment was unable to change. In the Soviet Union, Stalin’s promotion of Lysenko and a Lamarkian view of heredity being modified by acquired characteristics was better attuned to Marx’s vision of human agency, and—at some cost to science—limited the influence of eugenics.

EMPIRE AND IDENTITY The next three studies examine various effects of empire upon identity, in colonial South Africa, in World War II Burma, and among peoples divided by post-imperial national boundaries in Southeast and East Asia.

Saul Dubow, surveying the writings in the *Cape Monthly Magazine* in its first two decades, shows that it was an exercise in finding the place of South Africa—its land, its flora and fauna, and its people—in deep history. At the same time as these are being constituted as objects for scientific investigation, he argues, the colonial intellectual who is the subject of this constellation of sciences (geography, geology, palaeontology, anthropology) is constructing a shared sense of white identity and ownership. Linking together a cohort of resident intellectuals, the *Cape Monthly* articulated a new white colonist identity and asserted its mastery over indigenous peoples and the environment of South Africa.

Tarak Barkawi argues that nationalist essentialism, banished from most spheres of social inquiry by a constructionist sense of the object, nevertheless continues to prevail in the study of warfare. Thus the brutality of conflict is generally traced to preexisting racism and national stereotypes in the warring nations, this move being what he calls the domestication of wartime violence. (A notable example would be John Dower, *War without Mercy*, on the special savagery of the Pacific War.) He argues, contrary to this line of interpretation, that war itself generates race hate, through structural relations that are created by military organization and the hazards of the battlefield. In doing so war contributes to the making of the very identities which, after the fact, appear to have defined and instigated the combatants in the first place. His strategy for showing this is to examine British imperial forces fighting the Japanese in Burma, where combat was exceptionally cruel on both sides. Here the explanation cannot fall back

upon British preconceptions of the Japanese, as the force was composite, British, Indian, and African, and the Indian component was divided up into companies each one of which was of a different class, Sikh, Dogra, Pathan, and Punjabi Muslim. The Indians in particular had little pre-war knowledge of or racial feeling toward the Japanese, yet developed strong, even exterminationist feelings toward the enemy in the course of war. The article explores the reasons why.

As empires are reorganized into national states people are inevitably stranded on the wrong side of new borders. Rogers Brubaker (*Nationalism Reframed*) has examined the case of national minorities separated from their larger, external “homelands” by national boundary-making, generating persistent problems between adjacent nation-states. **Robert Cribb and Li Narangoa** examine a different kind of case, in which the numerical preponderance is reversed, such that the national minority is larger than its external “homeland” population. The instances discussed in the paper are the Inner Mongolia region of China, containing many more Mongols than the Mongolian Republic of the former USSR; the Laos of Thailand, more numerous than those of Laos itself; and the Malays in Indonesia, more numerous than those of Malaysia. “Orphans of empire” of this kind follow a different path; they are not the source of endless conflicts between neighboring states, but tend to draw apart from one another on either side of the boundary. In this case boundaries seem to have their way, making transnational identities impossible to maintain in the long run and creating, thereby, new ethnic identities.

CSSH DISCUSSION **Rebecca Emigh** reviews four recent works on the transition to capitalism or, as she prefers to say, *transitions to capitalisms*.

COMING SOON IN CSSH Works to appear in forthcoming issues include **Margaret Brown** on the descendants of slaves in Madagascar, and **Joseph Alter** on “Indian clubs” and muscular Christianity.

DESIDERATA In the last issue we appealed for more submissions on the ancient world, on the occasion of publishing a pioneering comparative study of the deaths of scripts among three civilizations (Stephen Houston, John Baines, and Jerrold Cooper, “Last Writing: Script Obsolescence in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Mesoamerica,” 2003:430–79). Continuing in that vein, archaeology is a subject in which we get very few submissions, and one in which good manuscripts would be very welcome. As is the case for submissions of every field, such articles would not only have to pass muster with the experts but also speak to our core readership in history, anthropology, and sociology. Many kinds of archaeological work could be of interest to us. The history and politics of archaeology would be especially apt for *CSSH*, but we would also like to see articles on any subject that illuminates topics of interest to our readership.