

Editorial Foreword

FREE AND FORCED LABOR The belief that free labor is better than forced labor is one of the ethical certainties of our age. Slavery is now a crime, not an economic institution, and the very use of the terms “forced” and “free”—one evoking whips, the other wages—is proof that a moral argument has been won. Yet the triumph of free labor is historically incomplete, and hardly innocent. In much of the global economy, work is unsafe or unrewarding, and “slave wages” are the only compensation laborers can expect; millions of people still work against their will, for no real wages at all, under conditions that can only be described as slavery. The line between forced and free labor continues to shift, and two of our authors explore historical contexts in which this line was drawn differently, producing moral dilemmas that still shape our understanding of human labor as a domain of choice and constraint.

Alessandro Stanziani takes us back to the Panopticon, the architectural design that, thanks to Foucault, became the archetypal image of surveillance and modern discipline. The Bentham brothers originally devised the Panopticon not as a means to control prison workers, Stanziani notes, but to monitor skilled British wage laborers on a Russian estate the Benthams had been invited, by Grigorii Potemkin, to manage. Stanziani travels with the Benthams across English and Russian regimes of labor management in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, showing how notions of bound and free labor varied in these settings. In England, “free” labor was largely understood in terms of service and indenture, whereas “serfdom” in Russia was a system in which the customary rights of workers, foremen, and landowners were far more elaborate, and contradictory, than contemporary accounts allow. This variability posed special managerial problems for the Benthams. Understanding their solutions requires attention to shifts in the legal status of wage labor, and Foucauldian approaches, Stanziani suggests, have tended to overlook these transitions.

Dennis Hodgson follows similar themes into the New World, where he examines the role Malthus’ *Essay on Population* played in the slavery debates. Malthusian ideas were popular in the United States, but they were interpreted differently in the North, where they were deployed in defense of wage labor, and the South, where they provided justification for slavery. The inevitability of population increase and the accompanying human misery Malthus predicted led Americans to conclusions that seldom fit contemporary stereotypes of a progressive North and morally retrograde South. The loudest Malthusian arguments coming from Northern states opposed slavery because

it would fuel black population growth and displace free whites. Meanwhile, Southern advocates of slavery stressed the moral degradation of wage labor, the virtues of racial harmony, and the need to protect America's black population from genocidal Yankees. What these positions reveal, Hodgson argues, is not only the multiple agendas Malthusian ideas could serve, but also the overwhelming constraints American sectional interests placed on how labor, forced or free, could be understood.

CONVERGING WORLDS It is one thing to notice resemblances between state formations—between, say, Ottoman and Safavid bureaucracy, or American and Soviet military alliances—but it is quite another to explain them. In some cases, imitation and regional integration account for likenesses; sometimes competition generates similar organizational forms; but the most interesting convergences often are those that facilitate, require, and produce acts of translation. As a political project, translation itself breeds convergence, but only through the systematic reinforcement of key distinctions, and this apparent contradiction makes the translator, and the media of translation, a source of deep political concern.

E. Natalie Rothman focuses on the careers of Venetian translators in the Ottoman Empire. Known as dragomans, these men served as language specialists in the house of the *bailo*, the official Venetian representative in Istanbul. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the dragomanate flourished as a semi-hereditary class drawn from the ranks of native-born Venetians, noble families displaced by Ottoman expansion in Europe, and Istanbul's indigenous Catholic population. Success as a dragoman depended on facility with languages, but also on cultural savvy, family connections, and careful placement within the elite household structures that were everywhere the locus of Ottoman, and Venetian, power. Because dragomans opened channels of communication between potential and actual enemies, they were a constant source of anxiety to Venetian and Ottoman authorities. Their liminality, Rothman argues, rendered them “trans-imperial subjects.” Neither local nor foreign, dragomans traversed regional political formations, welding Ottoman and Venetian institutions. The dragomanate also cultivated important, sometimes invidious distinctions between Venice and Istanbul, a tradition that produced both cosmopolitanism and Orientalism.

Gary Urton analyzes striking convergences between Inkan and Spanish empires, political formations that were not as evenly matched as Venice and Istanbul, but which showed pervasive similarities in their conceptions of moral order. In both societies, virtue and vice were treated as matters of accountability, and the accumulation of “sin” (*pecado* in Spanish; *hucha* in Quechua) was leveled by acts of confession. The Catholic rite of confession was ordered, according to Urton, by the same principles that guided double-entry bookkeeping. Among the Andeans, sins were recorded on the same knotted

cords, *kipu*, that were used to calculate other debts and assets. In both societies, managing sin, individually and collectively, was crucial to the maintenance of social order. This similarity was not based on centuries of imitation and competition; it was present at first contact in 1532, and it called for translation on both sides. The notion of “sin” was understood differently by Spaniards and Andeans. Catholic clergy brought *kipu* into rites of confession but tried to eliminate what they considered heretical uses. These “transcultural confrontations,” Urton suggests, produced erasure and accommodation; as such, they were central to European colonization in the Andes.

ARCHAEOLOGY ANNEX The relationship between archaeology and nationalism has been long and fruitful. Indeed, it is hard to imagine contemporary archaeology without heavy state involvement, and it is equally difficult to imagine a fully modern nation-state that professes no interest in its archaeological heritage. The mechanics of this relationship are perhaps best revealed when national boundaries abruptly shift and the ties between archaeology and its objects must be renegotiated on terms defined by new state sponsors.

Stefanie Gänger examines a case of wholesale archaeological conquest. In 1883, Chile annexed the coastal territories of Bolivia and Peru after four years of military conflict. The principal spoils of war were the rich nitrate beds of the Atacama Desert, but additional booty included a wealth of archaeological remains. Chile had little ideological investment in its indigenous cultural past prior to the annexation, and its archaeological establishment was not impressive. This lack of interest in archaeology as heritage politics, Gänger argues, cleanly exposes several other ends to which archaeology can be put by modern states. After looting Lima’s museums and archives, Chileans set about establishing their own authority as legitimate curators of what had been a distinctly Peruvian and Bolivian antiquity. This new archaeological regime was not used to create authentic links between the indigenous past and the national present; instead, its agendas were international. Archaeology would prove to the world that Chile—more than Peru and Bolivia—was a modern, progressive country, fully engaged in scientific debates of the day. The relationship between archaeology and modernity, Gänger concludes, was mutually confirming in the Chilean case, and most contemporary attempts to configure antiquity as a national interest, whatever their particular features, are motivated by this desired outcome.

ACTING SCHOOL The good actor and the good ethnographer are engaged in similar work, and they succeed for similar reasons. They must be able to imitate and anticipate behaviors, to embody “roles” convincingly, and they must do so at an interpretive remove (in time and space) that is artificial but not entirely alienating. The stage and the social field are full of actors, and several analytical traditions in the social sciences have drawn heavily on the language and imagery of theater. But what could ethnographers learn if, instead of focusing

on “social actors” and “social dramas,” they treated real actors and actual theater works as contexts in which the social imagination is performed? More to the point, what if they assumed that these performances were not reducible to the moment of “acting”? Two of our authors show how observing actors, and learning about acting, can produce interpretive insights that are rich and unexpected.

Alaina Lemon attends acting classes at the Russian Academy for Theatrical Arts, carefully parsing out exchanges between students and teachers who are engaged in the creation of characters. The point, in the session Lemon reconstructs, is to use specific techniques—of memory and association—to portray characters empathetically, without collapsing Other and Self, and without producing a caricature. The task is complex and difficult for the teacher to convey. Lemon plays on this pedagogical tension, transposing it into larger and larger interpretive contexts. An acting exercise meant to produce a character from the Soviet era becomes a study in chronotopes, peculiar framings of time and space that enable a story to be told. The chronotopes available to Russian actors, Lemon suggests, circulate in overlapping spheres of reference, and empathetic portrayals stand or fall on the ability to create vivid, embodied links between those spheres. When effective links are inaccessible, empathy fades. The results play out far beyond the stage, where a global array of commentators and constituencies—like inexperienced actors—resort to stereotypical associations that make empathy impossible. Lemon’s close reading of “bad acting” doubles as a critique of “bad analysis” of the Soviet past, a genre marked by unsympathetic portrayals of Russia’s relationship to its own communist past.

Maury Hutcheson deals with a very different acting school, and his interpretive pursuit is not empathy, but intelligibility itself. Recording the dance dramas performed by K’iche’ Maya at Guatemalan saints festivals, Hutcheson is startled to discover that the actors in these dramas, and the directors as well, cannot give him a sensible narrative account of what the dramas are about. Yet the dances clearly have a sequence, and they are “brought out” in recognizable forms each year. Slipping into detective mode, Hutcheson sets about the difficult task of piecing together the key elements of the Serpent Dance, a performance whose narrative exists, but is oddly distributed in time and space. The original script of the Serpent Dance, it seems, has been lost, but using the rough notes produced by the owner of the play, Hutcheson dissects the choreography and pacing of the dance. Beneath the elaborate costumes, and behind the wooden masks that obscure the words of the actors, are the remnants of a Spanish language play that, after multiple renditions, is now virtually overwhelmed by Mayan clowning routines. The latter, Hutcheson argues, were originally written into the play in an attempt to folklorize them and give them a safe context within the more elevated genre of Spanish/Ladino theater works. The history of the Serpent Dance is ultimately one of hybridized cultural production in which linear narrative has succumbed to Mayan

chronotopes of libidinous play. Like Urton's tiers of *kipu* strings, the serpent dancers are engaged in "transcultural confrontations," but unlike the Inka, the Maya are winning.

NUCLEAR EXCEPTIONALISM Their immense destructive power and the scientific sophistication needed to produce them set nuclear weapons apart from the weaponry that came to be known, during the Cold War, as "conventional." The nuclear was the hypermodern; it combined the greatest dangers of contemporary life (radiation, thermonuclear war) with the promise of scientific advance (as a source of energy, medical treatment, and national security). The people who produced nuclear materials were exceptional, with training and work routines regulated by special agencies of the state. Yet the privileges and special protections extended to workers in nuclear industries were not distributed equally around the globe; they accumulated in metropolitan Europe and North America, while Third World workers (especially Africans) who supplied the raw, radioactive materials of the nuclear age were not protected by the regime of nuclear exceptionalism.

Gabrielle Hecht explains the elaborate means by which Africans were kept on the margins of nuclear technopolitics, even though their work in uranium mines provided the raw material for atomic bombs and nuclear power plants. Hecht takes us on a global tour of radioactive mining, with stops in Madagascar, Gabon, and South Africa. At each site, workers were exposed to significant health risks, and protections that were routine in France or the United States were absent or unevenly applied. In some cases, workers were not told about radioactivity; in others, acceptable exposure rates were increased to keep workers in the mines longer. In South Africa, race was an obvious factor, as white miners worked cooler shafts, with lower radioactivity, while black workers worked hotter shafts, yet neither group was informed of their exposure for decades. In all of these cases, the reality of racism and postcolonial hierarchy trumped the demands of nuclear exceptionalism, which should have subsumed African workers in the elite cohorts of nuclear production. For a vivid sense of how stark the African exclusions were, compare the work conditions Hecht describes to those described by Joy Parr, whose essay on Canadian nuclear power plant workers appeared in *CSSH* 48-4.

CSSH DISCUSSION The essays that appear in this journal lead highly productive lives. They contribute to vital trends in scholarship, inspire new research, and, in many cases, find their way into influential books. We have traditionally grouped our essays under rubrics, hoping to encourage comparative readings, but these groupings are made by the editors, not the authors. We often feel that our ability to produce comparative insights is limited by a lack of real dialogue between our authors, and we sometimes wonder what our authors would say to each other, were they to discuss their work. To satisfy this

lingering curiosity, and to prompt livelier forms of comparison and debate, we have decided to invite *CSSH* authors to take part in occasional exchanges about their own work and current trends in research. Our inaugural conversation, with Marc Baer and Ussama Makdisi, deals with matters of tolerance and religious conversion in the Ottoman Empire.