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Editorial Foreword

BUILDING WEAK STATES In the world of statecraft, there are many ways to be weak. Some are treated as dysfunctional, and they typically include a government's failure to protect its citizens, secure their health, or sustain an economy. Other inabilities are valorized. Certain political philosophers (and politicians, too) have a warm place in their hearts for states that cannot infringe easily on the rights of citizens, do not prey ruthlessly on the resources of their elites, and do not habitually invade the territories of neighboring states. How we talk about weak states is largely dependent on how we think sovereign and subject should interact, in what spaces, on what terms. These assumptions are not fully contained within the political process. Instead, they condition politics, turning the state's "weakness" into a variable quality that can be assessed only in relation to morally compelling notions of law.

Daragh Grant and **Besnik Pula** dissect weak states that are very different in constitution. Grant takes us to early colonial South Carolina, where a small number of white landowners dominated a plantation economy that ran on the slave labor of a much larger population of Native Americans and Blacks. The colony managed this situation, Grant argues, by constructing a legal culture in which "savages" (Indians and Blacks) were by definition unfree and whites, as exemplars of civilization, could be governed only by a state that controlled the right to legitimize slave/master relations. Pula, writing about the early decades of the Albanian nation-state (1919–1939), describes a setting in which highland communities were at first successfully governed through official recognition of customary law. When the nascent state decided that it would no longer recognize customary law, its control over the highlands diminished even though its administrative and policing capacity had actually improved. In both cases, cultures of legality—those defining civilized status, or those concerning oaths and rules of vengeance—defined spheres of influence in which a weak state was likely to succeed, and those in which it was more likely to fail.

ALTERNATIVE WAR STORIES Modern warfare is complex, involving a vast apparatus of economic, media, and governmental structures. Soldiers firing guns, and generals making battle plans, are not enough to win a war, but they still dominate war stories, which are very much about the military dimensions of war. Indeed, old and irresistible ways of talking about war create massive narrative spaces in which little can be said, and little attention will be paid. If history is written by the winners, it follows that historical accounts of war will seldom reflect the interests and aspirations of those who lost, not to mention those who did not want to fight at all. This observation applies not only to histories written about former enemies; it is even more the case when the subjects of history belonged to "our" side but did not support the war, or they supported "enemy" forces for reasons that are unacceptable now, but had not been decided, ideologically or morally, during the conflict. To tell stories that make these characters central, one must work against political (and narrative) tendencies as complex as modern warfare itself.

Jeremy E. Taylor and **Tobias Kelly** work against the backdrop of the Second World War, telling stories of conscientious objection and collaborationist regimes. Taylor introduces us to the career of Wang Jingwei, leader of Japanese-occupied China, whose personality cult developed in contradistinction to that of his famous rival, Chiang Kai-shek. Wang is virtually unknown today, but as Taylor shows us, the propagandistic imagery associated with Wang reveals the means by which the weak allies of strong patrons—they become "collaborators" only after their patrons lose—are forced to play politics of a tightly scripted sort. Ironically, the same feeling of constraint pervades Kelly's account of conscientious objectors in Britain, who exercised a moral freedom protected by liberal democracy, yet were compelled to defend this choice using a narrow range of reasons acceptable to government authorities. The ability to opt out of violence was not always authorized by the state. Many objectors were imprisoned or forced to serve in the military, an inconsistency in the defense of individual liberty that makes their (war) stories hard to tell. The objector and the collaborationist, whose motives are seldom identical, often find themselves in the same stigmatized frame.

SPECTACLE AS MORAL ECONOMY We know that states come in weak and strong forms, and that cultures of legality are central to channeling a state's powers. It would seem that, across these variations, political actors are drawn to spectacle, and that spectacle can be especially alluring when states are weak. Spectacle, in the sense of "putting on a show," pre-exists state formation. Humans have been party animals longer than we have had party politics. The mesmerizing effects of spectacle, manifest in pomp, ritual, elaborate feasting, magnificent costumes, and eye-catching personal adornment, are too valuable for states to do without. In regions where states are routinely depicted as failed, vestigial, or absent, we encounter a profusion of spectacles, loudly displayed accumulations of gifts, people, exotic commodities, and spiritual and secular forces, which flourish in spite of the state. The formative power of spectacle—like that of violence, or legitimate cultures of law—is a resource any viable state, incipient or fully formed, will want to master.

Julien Brachet and **Judith Scheele**, and **Florence Bernault** invite us to attend a diverse array of spectacles. Beginning in a remote region of northern Chad, Brachet and Scheele unpack the chaotic, extravagantly wasteful investiture ceremony of the *derdé*, the "traditional" leader of the Teda. What is the point of this celebration? If it is to establish rule, Brachet and Scheele argue, the event betrays a taste for autonomy and a distrust of governance. Of greater importance are wealth and the ability to make it appear (to be siphoned off and destroyed) in flamboyant style. A similar emphasis on appearances, on striking, unsettling, and intimidating images, shapes Bernault's account of aesthetic politics in Gabon, where spectacle has been absorbed in larger regimes of governance. Ranging from displays of the female body to nationally televised charity give-aways, these spectacles enable people to acquire riches and circulate power. They are, Bernault contends, a form of transactional life that imbues both economy and polity with moral force.

INDIGENEITY-IN-PROGRESS The politics of indigeneity shuttles endlessly between two existential claims: "We really were here before you" and "We are made in relation to you." Adhering to both positions at once makes for political (and analytical) trouble, yet it is impossible to affect either stance without constant resort to the other. Because it always is and can never be an "invented tradition," indigeneity must be transmitted as inheritance, resurrected through historical interventions, and asserted through the display of expressive cultures permeated by double consciousness, by an alertness to what things mean to "us" and what they mean to external observers whose tastes and expectations are part of the indigenous self. This project can be liberatory and forward-looking; it aligns fluidly with progressive politics. But it can succeed only if it maintains key relations to hegemonic notions of primitivism and the precontact past. These ideas are often indigeneity's most valuable assets in its representational struggles with settler society.

Grant Arndt, **Sergio Miguel Huarcaya**, and **Paja Faudree** analyze New World cases. Arndt looks at indigenous politics before indigeneity, tracking the career of Mitchell Redcloud, Sr., a Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) tribal leader and newspaper columnist who, in the 1930s, carved out space for Indian participation in Wisconsin's media and political culture. Huarcaya considers similar themes of self-representation in the Andes, giving close attention to performance theory. Status hierarchy, political protests, and ethnic festivals are contexts in which performance and performativity are reshaping Andean identities, and indigenous populations in Ecuador and Bolivia, Huarcaya claims, have been more successful than Peruvians in overturning their subaltern status. Faudree explores self-representation among Mazatec speakers in Mexico, who must craft their identities in relation to "magic mushrooms" and a global drug culture that has brought their region fame and attention, not all of it desired. As with the Ho-Chunk and Andean cases, Mazatec identity is a work in progress, and its performance draws on objects, meanings, and political commitments that both localize indigeneity and connect it to a larger world.