

Editorial Foreword

LANDSCAPES AND HISTORIES The relations of landscapes to the histories that take place upon them are not easy to specify, but attempting to do so seems worth the effort and the risk. It is better than ignoring the shaping effects of landscapes, as historians so often do, and treating them as blank slates upon which histories inscribe themselves. The first essay is distilled from a multivolume book-in-progress on the economic history of the Indian Ocean under Islam.

André Wink looks at medieval history from the vantage of India and the Indian ocean, continuing a discussion inaugurated by Henri Pirenne (*Mohammed and Charlemagne*, 1939) but from a perspective well outside the Mediterranean. Medieval India was a fusion of two types of society: the densely settled but unstable legitimate society of the river plains and the illegitimate frontier society of mobile wealth, nomadism, raiding, and long-distance trade, Wink holds. Geography provided a blueprint for the medieval synthesis of the civilizations of India and Islam, characterized by greater geographic mutability, urban impermanence, political volatility and mobility of people, goods, and precious metals than in the medieval West.

LANGUAGES AND IDEOLOGIES Language is especially susceptible to ideological loading, and the next two essays are valuable contributions to a growing literature on the topic.

In 1606 Bernardo de Aldrete argued, correctly, that Castilian was derived from Latin, against the rival theory of Primordial Castilian propounded by López Madera. Today Aldrete is usually depicted as a pioneer of scientific linguistics, as well as a propagandist of empire. **Kathryn A. Woolard** argues that what was at stake in this conflict was the unspoken issue of the treatment of Spanish Muslims, the Moriscos. Aldrete provided theory and evidence that implicitly supported mixed marriage and continuing attempts to convert the Moriscos and opposed calls for their expulsion or extermination. Viewed contrastively, the clashing texts on language history reveal significant and consequential differences of vision concerning ideas of humanity, nation and empire.

H. Paul Manning examines the relations of Welsh and English in the slate industry of nineteenth-century Wales. English owners or their agents meet with Welsh quarriers two times a month to set the terms of their bargain for the period at its beginning and to settle accounts at its conclusion. This periodic, discontinuous relation between owners and workers divides the language of slate: the unworked rock speaks Welsh, but finished slates bound for market have English names.

LEGAL RELATIONS The archives of the law are rich sources for the reconstruction of ordinary lives; see, for example, “Ayesha’s World: A Butcher’s Family in Nineteenth-Century Bombay” by Asiya Siddiqi in 43,1:101–29 (2001). The next essay draws on records from Ottoman Damascus.

Najwa Al-Qattan uses court records of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Damascus to show the everyday practice of coexistence among Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Christians and Jews regularly resorted to Muslim courts for matters of family law in the absence of courts of their own, to which they were entitled as *dhimmi*s under the *shari‘a* law. Much can be known of the residential spaces of the three communities, which were complexly intertwined due to the inheritance of fractional shares of buildings. Episodes of communal violence were spectacular but rare, coexistence the norm. (Also on late Ottoman religious relations see “‘There Is no Compulsion in Religion’: On Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire: 1839–1856” by Selim Deringil in 42,3:547–75 [2000].)

DISPLAYS OF POWER The next three essays examine power in its many moments: being clothed in legitimacy, embodied and put on view, admonished by longsuffering taxpayers.

Donald Ostrowski ponders the appeal of the absolutism model for historians of early modern Europe—the model, that is, of absolutist monarchs aggrandizing their power at the expense of a feudal nobility, and making possible the transition to centralized, modern bureaucratic states. The hold of this model in histories of Western Civilization, in spite of the critiques of Henshall and other specialists, has perhaps to do with the lack of an alternative model, which Ostrowski proposes to supply in the idea of a “facade of legitimacy.” The ruler and the ruling class, so far from being in a zero-sum struggle for power, normally papered over the “divisions, factions, compromises, and personality conflicts within the ruling order, so that decisions seem to emanate from a single authority—the monarch.” Analysis of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Russian tsar and nobility illustrates the collaboration of ruler and ruling class, and the will to share power while cloaking it in an idiom of absolutism.

Andrew Apter opens up the middle ground of imperial spectacle, located between the imperial center and the colonial periphery. Drawing colonial Nigeria into a history of seeing, the author examines how indirect rule and the logic of capital are visually implicated in ethnographic photography and the staging of *durbars* in which “tradition” is performed and in which the ruled enact the roles into which the colonial relation has cast them.

Patricia M. Thornton considers, within a frame of the social history of memory, the Chinese enthusiasm for composing parallel couplets. Derisive or insulting couplets surreptitiously pasted around the front doorway of a victim’s house include an unforgettable verse on the night-soil tax from the Nationalist period. Doorway couplets have a thousand-year past and are enjoying popular-

ity today. Their politics are complex; whatever its originating impulse, the remembered couplet on the night-soil tax contributes to the invention by the revolutionary state “of a collective social memory of exploitation and resistance, of unjust domination and righteous rebuke, in the pre-revolutionary period.” (See also Chang-Tai Hung, “Repainting China: New Year Prints (*Nianhua*) and Peasant Resistance in the Early Years of the People’s Republic,” 42,4:770–810 [2000].)

CSSH DISCUSSION **Aram Yengoyan** reviews a collection of writings on culture by Georg Simmel and a book on German Philhellenism.

FELICITATIONS We are happy to report news that two *CSSH* authors have recently won prizes for their articles: Nancy Caciola, for “Mystics, Demoniacs, and the Physiology of Spirit Possession in Medieval Europe,” 42,2:268–306 (2000) (the Berkshire Conference Article Prize); and Peter H. Hensen, for “Confetti of Empire: The Conquest of Everest in Nepal, India, Britain, and New Zealand,” 42,2:307–32 (2000) (the Walter D. Love Prize of the North American Conference on British Studies).